Heli Villanen

OUR PLACE, MY FUTURE AND THEIR PROJECT

REFLECTING CHILDREN’S LIFEWORLD IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
HELVI VILLANEN

OUR PLACE, MY FUTURE AND THEIR PROJECT
Reflecting children’s lifeworld in education for sustainable development

Academic dissertation to be presented with the assent of the Doctoral Training Committee of Human Sciences of the University of Oulu for public defence in the OP auditorium (L10), Linnanmaa, on 4 December 2014, at 12 noon

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Abstract

This thesis is based on the premise that formal education could promote ethical relationships with the environment and empower children to act towards a better future. The aim of the thesis is to create understanding about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in relation to the definition of sustainable development and everyday experiences. In order to strengthen the practical relevance and an alternative educational approach in ESD, both children’s and teacher’s perspectives are explored in three studies. Methodologically this thesis follows qualitative and phenomenological guidelines. Method pluralism is applied in order to illuminate the complexity of lived experiences. Methods such as written reflections, drawings, evaluative walks and focus group interviews are used. Qualitative analysis in the studies aims to be transparent, starting from data collection and right up to the thematic discussions.

The first study focused on children’s experiences in a schoolyard and resulted in three themes: learning, social relations and institutional boundaries. These themes described a schoolyard as a lived place and children’s outdoor experiences as part of the continuum of the whole schoolday. The second study focused on children’s visions of the future and elucidated how children relate to temporality through moral, temporal and spatial distances. Children’s visions of the future are necessary to address in ESD due the aspect of intergenerational justice. In the third study teachers experiences of an ESD school-project were studied by focus group interviews. This study emphasized teacher’s institutional circumstances in working with ESD and their understanding of environmental awareness. The study suggested that in classroom situations the contradictory nature of sustainable development was often replaced by teaching more conventional issues related to the environment. All the three studies related to a need to engage ESD with children’s lived experiences and local issues, but also acknowledge tensions between the local/global nexus. Two pedagogical ideals, action competence and Place-Based Education PBE, are according to this study alternative ways to strengthen children’s perspectives in ESD.

Keywords: empowerment, environmental education, justice, phenomenology of the lifeworld, sustainable development
Perusopetuksen mahdollisuudet edistää lasten eettistä ympäristösuhtetta ja voimaantuttaa heidät toimimaan paremman tulevaisuuden puolesta ovat tämän tutkimuksen lähtökohtat. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on lisätä ymmärrystä kestävän kehityksen kasvatuksesta (ESD) suhteessa kestävän kehityksen käsitteen ja arkielämän kokemuksiin. Sekä lasten että aikuisten näkökulmat ovat esillä tässä tutkimuksessa, jossa pyritään vahvistamaan ESD:n käytännön merkityksellisyyttä sekä etsimään vaihtoehtoisia kasvatusnäkökulmia. Tutkimuksen metodologia seuraa laadullisen ja fenomenologisen tutkimuksen suuntaviivoja. Tässä väittökirjassa sovelletaan useita eri metodteja, kuten lasten kirjallisia pohdintoja, piirroksia, kävelykierroksia ja aikuisten focus group -haastatteluja. Laadullisen aineistoonalyysin päätavoite oli prosessin läpinäkyvyyden alusta loppuun.


Asiasanat: elämismailma, fenomenologia, kestävä kehitys, oikeudenmukaisuus, voimaantuminen, ympäristökasvatus
Villanen, Heli, Vår plats, min framtid och deras projekt. Reflektioner om barns livsvärld i lärande för hållbar utveckling
Forskarskolan vid Uleåborgs universitet; Uleåborgs universitet, Pedagogiska fakulteten; Thule Institut
Uleåborgs universitet, PB 8000, FI-90014 Uleåborgs universitet, Finland

Sammanfattning

Den första studien fokuserade barnens erfarenheter av en skolgård och resulterade i tre teman: lärande, sociala relationer och institutionella gränser. Dessa teman beskrev skolgården som en levnplats och barnens erfarenheter utomhus som en del av ett kontinuum av skolgården. Den andra studien fokuserade barnens visioner om framtiden och belyste hur barnen relaterar till tiden genom moraliska, tidsliga och rumsliga distanser. Barnens visioner om framtiden är nödvändiga att belysa i ESD med tanke på aspekter av rättvisa gentemot kommande generationer. I den tredje studien genomfördes fokusgruppsintervjuer med lärare som deltog i ett projekt om ESD. Studien belyste lärarens institutionella förutsättningar för att jobba med ESD och deras förståelse av miljömedvetenhet. Studien visade att hållbar utvecklings många gånger motsägelserfulla budskap ersattes med mer konventionella miljöfrågor i undervisningen. Samtliga tre studier visade på behovet av att koppla samman ESD med barnens levda erfarenheter och lokala frågor, men också att lyfta fram spännings mellan det lokala och det globala. Två pedagogiska ideal, action competence och Place-Based Education, är enligt slutsatserna i denna avhandling alternativa vägar till att stärka barnens perspektiv inom ESD.

Ämnesord: egenmakt, livsvärldsfenomenologi, lärande för hållbar utveckling, miljöundervisning, rättvisa
To my dad (Isälle)
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I started my journey towards this doctoral thesis as early as in 2003 at Oulu University. Although the journey took many twists and turns, the possibility to finish my thesis in Oulu, at the Faculty of Education feels like coming back home at last. I am most grateful for Municipality of Piteå and Thule Institute for financing this thesis.

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My dearest thanks belongs to my family Kristofer, Benjamin, Mette, Lina and Jacob. There are no words to describe how much you mean all to me.

2014/09/12 Heli Villanen
**Abbreviations**

CCESD  Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development  
EE     Environmental Education  
ESD    Education for Sustainable Development  
PBE    Place-Based Education  
PISA   The Programme for International Student Assessment  
UN     United Nations  
UNCRC  The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child  
WCED   The World Commission on Environment and Development
List of original publications

This doctoral thesis is based on three original articles, which will be referred to in the text by their roman numerals (I–III). All the articles have been printed with the kind permission of the publishers. Original publications are not included in the electronic version of the dissertation.


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1 INTRODUCTION

...Utopian ideals (such as democracy, social justice, and sustainability), because of their idealistic, universal franchise, and wide open meanings, can easily become doxic knowledge, accepted, taken for granted, and practiced with little regard for real meaning or purpose. (Lotz-Sisitka 2008: 136).

People live in a mutual relationship with the environment, which is influenced by natural phenomena but also different utopian ideals. Sometimes natural changes are slow like the formation of mountains or the rising of the land. Some changes are very sudden like the earthquakes in Indonesia and Haiti in 2010. These are changes that humans have to adapt to as they occur. These extreme situations are examples where people face situations where social institutions are not useful in the first place, although they come along afterwards. Another source of change in the relationship between human beings and the environment are the things caused by human action. One such event occurred in April 2010, in the Gulf of Mexico when oil spilled into the sea after the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig was destroyed. The Gulf ecosystem was greatly harmed, as well as the fishing industry. Complex relationships between humans and the environment are shaped at differing rates and due to various causes. However, the children’s lifeworld especially in this complex relationship is a matter of the present thesis. Children’s experiences in classrooms, schoolyards, neighbourhoods, playgrounds as well as the experiences they gain of culture and media, especially social media, are interesting from the educational point of view. The lifeworld approach has consequences in education which will be discussed throughout this thesis.

Utopian ideals, such as sustainable development are one possible way to view human–environment relationships. My point of departure is that human relationships with the environment are institutionalized and socially mediated, but also sometimes directly experienced with none or little interrelation with social structures. In extreme cases, natural catastrophes form drastic human relationships with the environment. Less dramatic situations may include, for example, seasonal changes and experiences people have in nature, like walking in the forest or along the beach. Feeling a summer breeze or hearing the sound of snow under foot are experiences that have a significance in the human relationship with the environment. The mutual relationship between humans and the environment changes the way we are and is the reason for looking into the lifeworld of children in this thesis. My interest is to explore how education can
promote active and ethical relationships with the environment. One dimension of this relationship is an unreflected experience of the world, both physical and social. Another dimension are reflections (abstractions) such as the utopian ideals mentioned earlier.

Following the increased importance of globalization, individualization and debate of practical relevance to Education for Sustainable Development [ESD] (see Laessoe & Lenglet 2012, Jickling & Wals 2012, Doubluie 2013, Lozt-Sisitka 2008, Reid 2005, Sauve, Brunelle & Barryman 2005, Rizvi 2009), this thesis seeks to illustrate how phenomenology of the lifeworld can be an innovative approach in the field. I have explored lived experiences in the context of ESD, from children’s and teachers’ perspectives. This thesis is based on three original articles and seeks to tie these together and deepen the reflections outlined in each paper. Additionally, recommendations for future research are presented at the end.

Considering the history of ESD, I underline the importance of placing this thesis in the field of sustainable development, not merely in the field of Environmental Education [EE]. This duality, EE versus ESD, will be discussed later on (see also Paper II). Critical tones against ESD suggest that ESD has a globalizing tendency, which moves education in a more instrumental direction and allows economic ideologies from the World Bank or the World Trade Organization to govern education (Bengtsson & Östman 2012, Sauvé, Brunelle & Berryman 2005). Moreover, the essential difference between EE and ESD is specially the future orientation (see Carmi 2013), and the focus on coming generations, which is more emphasized in ESD tradition. The holistic nature of ESD is apparent when the concept is embedded in national curriculums as a specific tradition. This is obvious when we look at Swedish and Finnish national curriculums, for example, which state that ESD is about the integration of three essential aspects: ecological, economic and social (SOU 2004:104, Opetushallitus 2004: 34, OPS 2016).

The novelty of this thesis lies in several aspects. One of these is a combination of the phenomenology of the lifeworld with empirical studies in ESD. More specifically this thesis is inspired by the Gothenburg Tradition of the lifeworld approach (see Bengtsson 2013). Explained briefly, this means that research questions are aimed at looking into the meanings of everyday experiences. In addition, the novelty of this thesis could be described as an analysis of the two basic concepts, time and place, as fundamental aspects of the lifeworld and connecting this to reflections of ESD. Additionally, concepts of temporality and embodiment add new input to discussions of time and place within ESD.
Thus, phenomenology of the lifeworld guided the process of the empirical studies. These guidelines characterized the studies of children’s experiences (see Paper I and II) as well as the study of teachers’ ways of constituting meanings within an ESD-project (see Paper III). Three studies were meant to complete understandings of practical challenges concerning implementation of ESD in formal education. Additionally, I will reflect on the utopian character of ESD. According to Lozt-Sisitka (2008: 144) there are just a few studies that debate whether democracy, social justice or sustainability are possible achievements for society.

1.1 The more the better?

As mentioned in several United Nations declarations, such as Agenda 21, Chapter 36 (UN 1992), Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg (UN 2002) and The Millennium Development Goals (UN 2008), education is one of the key factors for sustainable development. But what kind of development and what sort of education should be discussed? Issues of sustainable development cannot be answered just by saying “the more education, the better future”, without taking into consideration what kind of education is needed. I suggest that there is a need to consider more profoundly, what kind of approaches teachers apply in ESD.

Both in research and education, ESD has many nuances. Just to mention a few practical examples (beside the UN reports) there are several webpages and games available on internet about ESD, such as the sustainability resource for kids, Ollie’s World\(^1\). Moreover, teachers can easily find information and inspiration from books and seminars. Since the year 2000 an organization named “Den Globala Skolan\(^2\)” has operated in Sweden and offered free seminars and arranged international fieldtrips for teachers with the intention of promoting intercultural meetings and ESD. Organizations such as WWF\(^3\) and Friends of the Earth\(^4\) offer support and learning materials about sustainable development for a wide audience. Alongside these forums with open access, there have been specific projects for teachers in Sweden. One of the projects was a major school development project – the “HUS project” that included around 40 teachers, organized in 9 teams and representing different subject areas, school types and geographical areas in Sweden.

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\(^3\) See www.wwf.se/esdsverige/. Cited 2014/10/16.
\(^4\) See www.foe.co.uk/. Cited 2014/10/16.
The project book “Hållbar utveckling i praktiken. Så gjorde vi på vår skola”, [Sustainable Development in practice. That’s the way we did it in our school] was published in 2004.

The latest report, Hållbar utveckling i skolan – vad god dröj [Sustainable development in school – please wait] (2014), from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation states that Swedish municipalities poorly promote ESD and the possibilities for teachers to work with it. The problem is that outcomes of projects are often short-term and limited. Likewise, the evaluation after the “HUS-project” indicated that engagement in environmental issues and environmental education declined in many schools after the project (Rudsberg & Öhman 2010). The EkoSuKAT-project5 also indicated that sometimes teachers find issues of sustainable development and active citizenship strange and difficult compared to environmental education (Villanen 2006b). On a more fundamental level, a recent concern within ESD has been the question of how we approach education, and education for sustainable development, in particular, at a local/global nexus? (Lotz-Sisitka 2008, Stevenson 2008, Saylan & Blumstein 2011, Nakagawa & Payne 2014). Moreover, the question of promoting ESD at the pre-school level and widening classroom teaching towards virtual communication technologies and local communities are issues identified as current needs in the development of ESD (Stevenson 2008, Laessoe & Lenglet 2012).

1.2 The aim and research questions

In this thesis I will discuss three studies conducted in the North of Sweden during 2010–2012. The aim of the thesis is to create understanding about ESD in relation to the definition of sustainable development and everyday experiences. The research questions are:

a) How can ESD relate to the children’s lifeworld? (see Paper I & II)
b) How do teachers constitute the meanings of an ESD project? (see Paper III)

These two research questions are meant to complement one another so that the reader can reflect on ESD from two directions, from both children’s and teachers’

5 EkoSuKaT-project explored eco-efficiency in several municipalities in Finland between years 2003–2005. Children and teachers were one of the participating groups in the project.
perspectives. The two research questions are needed to comprehend the different horizons of ESD in formal education.

In the field of ESD, research into complexity and the utopian character of the concept of sustainable development is discussed by Lotz-Sisitka (2008), Mogensen and Schnack (2010) and Jickling and Wals (2012), to name but a few. Following, the dilemma of global/local in sustainable development falls right into the spotlight of the pedagogical debate – how to make sense and find connections between global issues of sustainable development and everyday experiences? Empirical studies are regionalized around the concepts of time and place to grasp the issue of sustainable development. As Bengtsson (2005) claims, phenomenological studies need to clearly point out which “region” of the lifeworld they have under investigation, because the lifeworld has multiple parallel regions which are characterized by subjective and institutionalized forms.

It is not the blindness towards temporal or spatial dimensions of sustainable development that this thesis focuses on. Instead, a relatively small number of studies based on children’s lifeworld within ESD motivates the thesis. Additionally, the institutional possibilities for ESD and teachers’ perspectives on school projects complete the thesis in the third paper. The purpose of the third paper was to look at a school project on ESD from the teachers’ perspective in relation to the lifeworld approach as well (see Table 1).

Children’s perspectives are applied in this thesis for several reasons. First of all, almost every country in the world (except Somalia and USA) ratified the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. According to the ratification all children have rights to protection, development and participation. In Article 29, it is even declared that education of the child shall be directed to the development of respect for the natural environment. Much research has stressed the importance of listening to children (see Kostenius 2008, Matthews 1999, Hart 2002, 1992, Tsevreni 2011, Eliasson 1995). Kostenius (2008) and Eliasson (1995) for example claim that there are valuable insights gained from the children’s lived experiences for us adults (as teachers and parents). Eliasson (1995) argues for the ethical responsibility of taking the standpoint of the weakest⁶. Additionally, Matthews (1999) looked into the status of children in society and claimed that children are

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⁶ Eliasson (1995) define “the weakest stand point” as a relational issue that changes over time. Ultimately the weakest is defined in relation to others who could for example speak for that group or make decisions for them, without hearing or respecting them.
sometimes marginalized into a “citizen-in-waiting” position. Tsevreni (2011) studied an alternative approach to environmental education to find out how children can contribute towards urban planning through expressing and communicating their own ideas. Following Tsevreni (2011), local participation could yield self-confidence in children and expand understanding of local issues. Though, Spyrou (2011), presents a critical insight into the ways children’s voices are produced in research he underlines the importance of recognizing and accepting the ways children’s voices are multi-layered and ambiguous. That means that there is no single method that can guarantee successful representation of children’s voices. Instead, researchers need to become familiar with the conditions that form children’s voices and researcher’s own analysis and interpretations of children’s experiences (ibid.).

The contexts for the studies in this thesis were elementary schools and preschools in small villages and two middle size cities in the county of Norrbotten in the North of Sweden. The county of Norrbotten has approximately 250,000 residents and is geographically the largest county in Sweden. The cities of this thesis were situated on the Gulf of Bothnia, one with 41,000 residents and another with 75,000 residents. Except for the coastal areas, the county of Norrbotten is sparsely populated. Generally, primary schooling in Sweden comprises of grades 1 to 9, and the children are between 6 to 16 years old. Children between one to five years old can apply for a place in a pre-school. All children between 3 and 5 years old are entitled to at least 15 hours per week of pre-school education. Moreover, children between 6 and 12 years old can attend leisure-time recreation before and after schools and this is organized in connection with the schools. This thesis examines perspectives towards pre-schools, elementary schools and leisure-time recreation organized by municipalities. Children who participated in the studies were all between 11–12 years old (grade 6). Teachers that were interviewed worked with children between one to 15 years old. The smallest unit that teachers worked at was a preschool of 37 children and biggest unit was an elementary school of 234 children. In total 50 children and 24 teachers participated as informers in the empirical studies of this thesis. Empirical data, research context and methods are summarized in Table 1.
Table 1. Composition of the three papers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Papers</th>
<th>Paper I</th>
<th>Paper II</th>
<th>Paper III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>28 children, aged 11–12 years</td>
<td>22 children, aged 11–12 years</td>
<td>24 teachers, (5 groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions posed to informers</strong></td>
<td>What is the best thing that happens in the schoolyard?</td>
<td>What will the future look like when you are grown up?</td>
<td>What are your expectations of the project? / How have these expectations been fulfilled?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method 1.</strong></td>
<td>Written reflections</td>
<td>Drawings</td>
<td>Focus group interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method 2.</strong></td>
<td>Evaluative walks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schools and pre-schools</strong></td>
<td>Elementary school of 250 children</td>
<td>Elementary school of 450 children</td>
<td>Pre-schools and elementary schools (between 37 to 234 children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context of data collection</strong></td>
<td>Classroom and a schoolyard</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Classroom or a coffee room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data</strong></td>
<td>28 A4 papers of written reflections and researchers field notes</td>
<td>22 drawings completed with written and verbal comments</td>
<td>Total 9 interviews (each 30 min.)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the papers exploring children’s experiences was conducted at a school of 450 children and it was the biggest primary school in the town (Table 1). The school was located about three kilometres from the city centre. Another school where children’s experiences were studied had 250 children and it was located in a suburban area about 20 kilometres from the city centre. To briefly describe the geographical context of this thesis, empirical studies were conducted in the northern but semi-urban context. The definition of “semi-urban” in this case means a suburban area near the city centres, but having also sparse land use and

*Two interviews with each group, except 1 interview that was cancelled. 7 interviews were audio recorded and two handwritten according to a request from the group.
open countryside nearby. Closeness to city centres means good opportunities for using public transport and other services.

This thesis consists of seven parts. The introduction is followed by the summary of papers. Two key concepts, sustainable development and ESD are presented in their own chapters. Thereafter the theoretical orientation to the phenomenology of the lifeworld is presented. The theoretical framework is closely connected to the methodological orientation and choices made in the empirical studies. The phenomenology of the lifeworld approach influenced how the research questions were formulated and how the empirical studies and analysis were conducted, as well as how the findings were discussed. Following this, chapters 5 and 6 are closely connected to each other. Finally, I will conclude the central findings of the three papers together with the theoretical background. The research questions will be discussed in the final chapter together with recommendations for future research.
2 SUMMARY OF THE PAPERS

This chapter briefly presents the original articles. Summaries of papers I and II are completed with the description of my specific contribution in each one. All the papers have been printed with the kind permission of the publishers.

2.1 Paper I


In this paper we explored some aspects of the schoolyard as a place from a phenomenological lifeworld approach. The paper should be viewed mostly as a theoretical contribution to the field of educational research, but with the theory exemplified by, and connected to, children’s experiences. The aim of this paper was to elucidate and develop greater understanding of the significance of the schoolyard. We highlighted and discussed these questions by exploring previous research from a general perspective concerning the relationship between a human being and places, but also with a special focus on children’s relationships with places. Additionally, we explored children’s own experiences. Altogether, 28 children in grade 6 reflected, both in writing and verbally during an evaluative walk, on their experiences of the schoolyard.

Children’s written and transcribed verbal responses were analysed repeatedly and thoroughly in order to find qualitative similarities and differences that finally formed patterns. These patterns formed the basis for different themes that are discussed with respect to the children’s individually lived experiences and connected to the context of the research and aims of the study. Three themes emerged: (i) The schoolyard as a place for learning, (ii) The schoolyard as a facilitator for social relations and (iii) Beyond the boundaries – desire for freedom. We could conclude that the things that attract and challenge children also promote learning and well-being. We described a sense of place as an interaction between the place and the individuals who inhabit it. The mutual interplay between human beings and places is best understood as a realm of lived places. The place acquires its significance when people experience it. The focus of this paper was on children’s everyday experiences that are not fragmented.

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8 We make no difference between the words schoolyard and schoolground, but to be consistent we prefer a schoolyard. We refer to an outdoor areas at the school, both green areas and asphalt areas, where children are allowed to spend their breaks.
but more a continuum of a pluralistic reality. Children take their own initiatives to find and create places for learning and social relations. Children are far from being passive in a schoolyard, rather they are active, expert users of these places. From the children’s perspective a schoolyard could be seen as children’s place (our place). Pedagogical opportunities for place-based education rest on the recognition of children’s expertise in this respect and opening the pedagogical space for defining the significance of a place together with children.

I wrote the introduction and purpose of this paper together with Eva Alerby, Professor in Education. I had the main responsibility for writing about the children’s experiences and the sense of place. Methodological considerations were formed together, but I carried out the data collection and central part of the analysis. Furthermore, I had the main responsibility for writing about place-based education, but the conclusions we drew together. Eva Alerby had the main responsibility for the section “Phenomenology of the lifeworld – an approach for exploring the schoolyard as a place”.

2.2 Paper II


This paper provided a perspective on how children imagine their futures based on their lived experiences. Inspiration for this research emerged from the notion that the general goal of sustainable development is having a responsibility towards coming generations. The aim of this paper was to illuminate and discuss the future from the children’s perspective in the framework of ESD. Exploration of the temporal dimension and especially a focus on the future is needed in ESD research to a more profound extent (Persson, Lundegård & Wickman 2011, Tsevreni 2011, Ojala 2007, Hicks & Holden 2007, Hutchinson 1997).

Altogether 22 children in grade 6 in an elementary school in northern Sweden participated in the study. Theoretically the study was based on a phenomenology of the lifeworld. Relying on a lifeworld approach, the point of departure for the study was a phenomenological understanding of a person’s being-in-the-world and experiencing it bodily (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The method applied was to examine children’s drawings and oral comments connected to the drawings. Children were asked the question, “What will the future look like when you are grown up?” In the analysis, we tried to reach the meanings embedded in the drawing. Drawings and
comments were viewed as a unit, where qualitative similarities and differences were noted. Sometimes it was the children’s oral or written comments that made the difference. Eventually four themes were crystallized:

a) Technology for the future
b) Making a career and envisioning a working life
c) When the world goes under – apocalypse
d) It will be good anyway – sameness

The results of this study elucidate an aspect of distance. We were able to illuminate how temporal, spatial and moral distances could clarify some of the differences and similarities between the themes. Moreover, we wanted to discuss distance from the children’s perspective, using their experiences as a point of departure. We concluded that no matter how far away on a moral, temporal or spatial scale someone’s visions of the future are, the other end of the scale is firmly fixed in the lifeworld of a child. In a way, from the children’s perspective, the study explored the issue of “my future”. Moral closeness was connected to the temporal dimension: the closer the imagined future situation was, the more likely it was to see personal responsibility, according to this study. All in all, we considered ESD to be a context where visions of the future need to be faced and challenged. More precisely, children’s own visions of the future should be the obvious starting point in ESD.

I wrote the introduction as well as a theoretical and methodological framework together with Gunnar Jonsson, Senior Lecturer in Education. I had the main responsibility for collecting and analysing the empirical data. The results of the empirical data were written in collaboration with Gunnar Jonsson as well as the discussion and conclusions.

2.3 Paper III


This paper explores how teachers constitute meanings in an ESD-project. In focus group interviews teachers from pre-schools and elementary schools in Sweden discussed their expectations and experiences about a specific school project. This particular school project aimed at promoting teaching of energy issues, and more generally, sustainable development. During the first year of the project, teachers
attended a university course as part-time students. During this period I met teachers on several occasions and conducted nine focus group interviews in total.

Phenomenology of the lifeworld is the theoretical point of departure for this study as well. Following this theoretical framework methodological and analytical consequences ensue, such as openness and humbleness towards the lifeworld and analysing the data without predetermined categories. According to teachers in this study, three themes emerged that illuminate the meaning of the project: awareness, confirmation, and collaboration. This study opened up two horizons of the teachers’ lifeworld: the meaning of sustainable development and the meaning of prerequisites for their work. According to this study, teachers focused more on the prerequisites for the project such as institutional frameworks, than on ESD subjects and controversial issues.

According to the conclusions of the study, the relationship between social and ecological issues need local relevance and people require an opportunity to debate controversial issues. The teachers constituted the meanings of ESD in terms of awareness, such as increasing awareness of everyday technology and seeing familiar things from the new perspectives. Hence, the results showed a gap between pursuing environmental awareness in general and in connection to local issues or more precisely in connection to the children’s lifeworld. The teachers formulated aims for ESD projects as a promotion of hope for the future and for the ability to make smart choices in the future, for example.

Many of the teachers focused a lot on the prerequisites of their work. Following the results of this study, to work in a project breaks the routines of everyday practices and raises expectations from colleagues and importance of building new networks of collaboration. According to findings in this study pre-school teachers wished for closer collaboration with primary schools. Elementary school teachers reflected more on the collaboration outside the schools. They saw possibilities positively for joining an exhibition with children, although they did not reflect on the pedagogical significance of that activity in the interviews. Taking a children’s perspective it could be asked whether the project was the teachers’ or the children’s project?
3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The so called Brundtland Commission’s report “Our Common Future” (WCED 1987: 43) established the definition of sustainable development: “to meet the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This definition intertwines temporal and ethical demands. Future generations are essential in this definition of sustainable development as well as a matter of basic human needs. Ten years after the Brundtland’s report there was at least 300 definitions available on sustainable development and the number was increasing (Dobson 1998). It is probably impossible and even pointless to count how many definitions there are about sustainable development now, 27 years after the first definition was formulated. Sustainable development still holds an ethical importance, which is discussed in this chapter. According to Norton (1999) the sustainability question, to put it crudely, is: what should we save for the future generations? He has summarized three philosophical problems relating to obligations towards future generations:

a) The distance problem – how far into the future do our moral obligations extend?

b) The ignorance problem – who will future people be and how can we identify them? And, how can we know what they will want or need, or what rights they will insist upon?

c) The typology of effects problem – how can we determine which of our actions truly have moral implications for the future? (Norton 1999: 122–125)

Norton’s (1999) three philosophical problems and theories of intergenerational justice are discussed in this chapter. These issues are reflected in order to show the complexity of the concept of sustainable development, which then is implemented into field of education. The needs of future generations are central to the basic definition of sustainable development, but remain at the same time surprisingly little discussed issues in the field of ESD (Carmi 2013).

Human freedom in relation to commons was already being discussed in the 1960’s by Hardin (1968) who wrote about “the tragedy of the commons”. According to “the tragedy of commons” each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limits – in a world that is limited. Giddens (2009) points out that The Brundtland Report considered that economic growth is necessary in order to bring greater prosperity to the developing world and thereafter better environmental
conditions could follow. Acts against poverty are emphasized in this definition. Giddens (2009) claims further that sustainable development brought together two previously discrepant communities; green ‘anti-growth’ groups and pro-market authors. Contradictory interests embedded in this situation cause a constant tension beneath the concept.

The concept of sustainable development has its origin in the global discourses that are formulated in the international declarations concerning the environment, economics and human well-being. The “development” in the context of being sustainable always indicates something ‘political’ argues Knutsson (2013). On a global level, issues of poverty and human well-being have played a central role in several declarations. However, Dobson (1998) points out that both poverty and wealth actually contribute to environmental problems but through different mechanisms.

Clearly an understanding of sustainable development is problematic and a coherent understanding is missing (Bonett 2002) or is even stated as being an illusion (Jickling & Wals 2008). Bengtsson and Östman (2013) on the other hand suggest that the internal insufficiency of the concept of sustainable development could be seen to result out of the need to create equivalence among a number of distinct discursive positions. In this thesis the dilemma of sustainable development is reflected mostly from the phenomenology of the lifeworld approach. Thereafter, the internal insufficiency of the concept is tackled here not primarily as a discursive problem, rather as an issue of everyday experiences.

3.1 Intergenerational relations

The novelty of sustainable development, compared to previous environmental ideologies, rests upon the acknowledgement of future generations and their needs. As Kemp (2005) states, the definition of sustainable development brought explicit focus on coming generations, as well as continuing development towards better living conditions for following human generations. That is why deeper discussions on intergenerational relations are so vital in ESD (Kemp 2005).

In biological terms one human generation is approximately 30 years. That means that intergenerational relations exist in parallel, but also at different times. Sometimes, though, intergenerational justice refers to timescales of hundreds or thousands years, as in a framework of environmental ethics (Norton 1999). Kaplan et al. (2005) and Ballantyne et al. (2006) on the other hand have focused on the intergenerational imperatives as being the interrelationship between the young and the old. Kaplan et al. (2005) states that intergenerational dialogue is an important part of environmental
education and extends the learning process for both generations. The reciprocity in learning processes between different generations (children and their parents for example) is also discussed by Ballantyne et al. (2006) who encourage further exploring the impact that children have on adult learning.

Visions of the future may serve as a starting point for reflecting intergenerational relations as we argued in the Paper II. However, reflections of justice are not necessarily included in children’s visions of the future. Here is the core of ESD as I see it: to promote education that combines reflections of the future and intergenerational justice in connection with the lifeworld of children.

3.2 The distance problem

Both Löfquist (2008) and De-Shalit (1995) agree that it is impossible to predict the needs or preferences of future people. Many actions taken now are irreversible, for instance disposal of radioactive waste. De-Shalit (1995) describes a communitarian theory of intergenerational justice and divides our obligations into a) positive and b) negative ones. Positive obligations are those merely preventing damage and providing resources in the near future. Negative obligations refer to the avoidance of causing enormous harm in a very remote future. Additionally, De-Shalit (1995) claims that positive obligations ‘fade away’ somewhere between the near and remote future. The dilemma between short-term and long-term interests is named as a temporal conflict by van Lange and Joireman (2008).

Differences between the near and remote futures were also found in the Paper II. Children expressed a personal relation to the visions nearby in the future, such as having a working life. Personal relations to the visions “faded away” when they described an apocalypse, for example. In apocalyptical visions human responsibility was placed in the institutional context, not in the realm of personal responsibilities (see Paper II). The main idea in De-Shalit’s theory of trans-generational community relies a metaphysical justification of the community. This means a sense of community that stretches and extends over many generations. He claims that a transgenerational community requires cultural interaction and moral similarity. De-Shalit’s communitarian theory is one possible way to approach the distance problem (see Norton 1999).

However, Dobson (1998) criticizes De-Shalit’s view of the transgenerational community with the view that obligations would “fade away”: decline in strength over time. This has implications for example on the specific question of nuclear waste.
that is a problem over an extreme long time. Moreover, Dobson (1998) criticizes “the glue” between generations, that De-Shalit calls moral and cultural similarity. Also Löfqvist (2008) finds limitations in De-Shalit’s theory where non-members of a community, e.g. remote future generations, lie outside the range of justice. In reaction to De-Shalit’s theory, Löfqvist proposes an alternative to extend and define the concept of community to include all humans: a community of mankind.

Beckerman (1999) argues that it would be paradoxical to claim that intrinsic values are held by a community that does not even have an intrinsic identity. Beckerman’s (1999) position is that values cannot exist if they are not held by somebody. This means that values are relational concepts referring to someone who holds the value. According to Beckerman (1999) the best way to provide a decent society for future generations is to improve the institutions that strengthen simple humanitarian values. Löfqvist (2008) on the other hand stresses the importance of a narrative theory. This is a theory of common human experience, like the experience of the passing of time. Following the narrative theory our responsibility towards future generations is justified because present and future generations should be understood as being participants in the same narrative (Löfqvist 2008).

3.3 The ignorance problem

Justice in relation to intergenerational relations is more complex than a question of what we want the future to be. From the justice point of view it is reasonable to ask, how to keep open the possibility for actual future generations to define and meet their needs. This point of departure describes value-oriented anthropocentric environmental ethics (Kronlid & Öhman 2013). Intergenerational anthropocentrism includes people alive today and future generation as moral objects. Kronlid and Öhman (2013) add that this ethical position is commonly found in climate change discourses and energy policy discussion, for example.

Dobson (1998) state that justice and sustainability have two different agendas. He claims (ibid.) that they may intersect, but how they do this should not be taken for granted. He refers to ‘duties to nature’ instead of obligations or justice, because the last two would imply that nature somehow has a claim upon us in respect of obligations or justice. The principle of reciprocity as a central premise of justice is a problem for intergenerational justice. Dobson (1998) claims that social justice is problematic in this context especially due the temporal aspect (the difference between present and future generations). In other words, future generations cannot harm or
benefit us, i.e. reciprocity is missing. Thereafter, a theory of justice built on reciprocity cannot work in the framework of sustainable development.

According to Page (2006), reciprocity means that only individuals, who contribute to the well-being of others, have the full range of ethical duties. He (ibid.) finds a solution to the dilemma of reciprocity from the ‘chain of concern’ model. According to this model, generations can engage with justice between generations without needing a principle of reciprocity. This is possible if we assume that A cares for his offspring, N for his, and so on. Thereafter, it would be a matter of fairness to include other generations into the range of justice. Page (2006) stresses that even people, who do not have for some reason a relationship with the next generation, need society. Societies need new generations, at least from the survival point of view. This means that as long as it is worthwhile to wish for the survival of society and humanity, coming generations fit into the range of ethical obligations. This type of reasoning is one way of answering Norton’s (1999) ignorance problem concerning who future people will be. If we focus on society’s perspective, needs of the coming generations will have a different connotation than if we focus on individuals, such as our grandchildren, for example. Ethical relationships and caring for other people is a part of human existence regardless of age (see Johansson 2003), which is a reason for exploring children’s ethical reflections and experiences. In accordance to Johansson (2003) many psychological theories of children’s emotional development have stated incorrectly that children under 8 years old are not capable for understanding ethical issues. However, with the lifeworld approach the children’s perspective is highlighted in a radical way, and even small children’s ethical reasoning becomes possible to explore (ibid.).

### 3.4 The typology of effects problem

Following Barry (1999), we owe equal opportunities – a spectrum of options, for future generations. Consequently, justice should perhaps not focus on well-being at all, rather giving future generations a fair part of society’s resources, quite independently of well-being. Similarly, Norton (1999) claims that the core to sustainability is to keep options and opportunities open for the future. This is one answer to the typology of effects problem, which is a question of how we can determine which of our actions truly have moral implications for the future.

To conclude the discussion in this chapter, intergenerational justice cannot rely on the reciprocity or intrinsic value of human well-being. However, maintaining the range of options for future generations may serve as an intrinsic value. But,
maintaining the range of options is also a complex and controversial issue which is not easy to find common agreement upon. As Barry (1999) declares, it is unfair to decide on behalf of future generations, what they should consider as a good life. Thereafter, he claims that we must respect the creativity of people in the future and leave options open for them to decide how they will live.

Following Barry’s (1999) arguments ESD could focus on redefining sustainable development and reflecting on the range of options. Redefining sustainable development is accordingly an ongoing activity, taking into account the temporal nature of social reality. In other words, sustainable development is a concept that does not work as a fixed state of affairs, but is rather a phenomenon that has its meaning as part of people’s lifeworld. Hence, the lifeworld approach is one possible point of departure to redefine sustainable development in the context of ESD. The lifeworld approach lends a voice to subjectively lived experiences that are anchors for social structures. As a methodological point of departure phenomenology of the lifeworld offers ways to promote the creativity of children and allow their expressions to flourish. Following, lived experiences could be seen as a form of access to enter reflections of range and meaning of intergenerational justice in ESD.
ESD – a broken compass?

What sustainable development means in education depends on the definition of the concept, and the globalized context of education and pedagogical ideals, which are explored in this chapter. Jickling and Wals (2008) stresses that whether or not sustainable development is an appropriate aim for education depends on how education is conceptualized. They claim that if educators manage to avoid a false global consensus and an un-problematic view on sustainable development, ESD may become a stepping stone for transformative learning about existentially relevant issues (Jickling & Wals 2008). This thesis stresses that whether or not sustainable development is an appropriate aim for education depends foremost on how education manages to take children’s lifeworld into account.

Already at the beginning of the 90’s Jickling (1992) pointed out risks of considering education as preparation for the achievement of some instrumental aim, instead of enabling people to think for themselves in an evaluative and critical way. Phenomenology of the lifeworld is one of the approaches that turns against instrumental thinking and specifically puts the lifeworld into the core of education. The concept of instrumentality is connected to the view of ESD as a tool of neoliberalist globalization (Bengsson & Östman 2013). The question seems to be now, whether ESD is capable of renewing and criticizing itself or not? Jickling (2013) repeats his concern from 1992 by saying that ESD still has a risk of becoming a plastic rhetoric that is easily manipulated in ways that favour the global status quo. The same is stated by Lozt-Sisitka (2008), who claimed that utopian ideas of sustainable development contain a risk of becoming a form of doxic knowledge.

However, through the recognition of paradoxes, utopian ideals can become a means of critiquing the present and thinking about a radically different future (Lozt-Sisitka 2008). On the same page were also Sauve, Brunelle and Berryman (2005) in their study of 29 international documents dealing with environmentally related education and education for sustainable development. According to that study, ESD has become “a must” in many countries, which means that it is a necessity that has to be ‘generalized’, ‘universalized’ and locally adopted and adapted everywhere (Sauve, Brunelle & Berryman 2005: 279). Sauve, Brunelle and Berryman (2005: 280) evoke that researchers in ESD must at least question and examine the various theoretical foundations and pedagogical practices which ESD actually rests upon, and the worldview it fosters.
4.1 A globalized world

The demand to strive after global cohesions and a citizenship that would rely on the acceptance of differences and multiple truths is one of the biggest challenges for education in a globalized world. Mistry and Sood (2012) claim that the world is now more of a global village in which children need to develop the understanding of different cultures and ways of life. As Singh et al. (2005: 10) argue:

No analysis of contemporary transitions in education policies, pedagogies, and politics can be fully serious without placing at its very core sensitivity to the ongoing struggle over ‘globalization from above’ that constantly reshapes the terrain on which educators of all kinds operate.

Issues of globalization are relevant to touch upon while pursuing a comprehensive picture of ESD. This is because ESD is a field of education that was initially born from the global environmental concern i.e. globalization from above. Additionally, neoliberal educational policy and expressions of neoliberal globalism are threatening the contributions public schools do to the sense of community, mutuality and reciprocity that has been so important in building and sustaining democratic societies (Reid 2005).

Reid (2005) seeks an answer to the dilemmas of globalization from the re-theorizing the role of public schools. He explains, that where public schools have been key sites for the production of the nation-state and its citizens, public schools now need a new discourse which moves beyond the language of nation building. Public schools need according to Reid (2005) a cosmopolitan-globalist view of democracy that rests upon universal human rights and obligations. This, on the other hand, is a contradictory idea to the democracy that the contemporary neoliberal policies drive. Neoliberalism focuses on the individual economic benefits of education and forces public schools to compete in quasi-education markets (Reid 2005).

Reid (2005) states, that there is an urgent priority to search for ways to promote global commonality and cohesion. Hence, there is a need for arenas where people can share and understand differences, as well as demonstrate a collective concern for all members of the global/local society. Without such arenas, nation-states are in danger of becoming societies of isolated individuals exclusively concerned about themselves (Reid, 2005). Kemp (2005) among others, point out that communication between multicultural, moral traditions is challenging. In line with this, Reid (2005) argue that democratic societies need a forum for thinking about and negotiating differences, not
with a view to reaching agreement, but with a commitment to recognizing that there are ways other than our own to view the world. Similarly, Lundegård and Wickman (2009) claim that the lack of agreement on the understanding of future problems and their solutions should be a starting point for ESD.

According to Payne (2010a) an ecocentric\(^9\) value theory could be an alternative to the neoliberal projects and its mantra of ‘freedom of choice’. Payne (2010b) highlights the possibilities of embodied meaning by examining the nature of experiences and the experiences of nature. Furthermore, Rizvi (2009) argue that learning itself needs to become cosmopolitan, which means challenging the prevailing orthodoxies both about education and about cultural formations. What globalization does is not only to describe a new form of global economics and political architecture, but more significantly it implies the development of a new form of subjectivity (Rizvi 2009). Here, argues Rizvi (2009), education has a major role to play in helping children to realize that each experience of belonging has a specific history from which it has emerged, and that global belonging is a dynamic phenomenon, politically and historically changing. He (ibid.) adds that teaching about global belonging should begin with the local, but it should quickly address issues of how our local communities are becoming socially transformed through their links with communities around the world and with what consequences. A practical example of a cosmopolitan education topic that intertwines local and global issues is food consumption. Payne (2006) describes how for example food consumption is an everyday experience that can be explored to reveal how embodied experiences actually reconstitute environmental relations and local – global consequences. Here is an important point to make in accordance to the lifeworld phenomenological approach of this thesis: the possibility to combine everyday experiences with the issues of globalization and sustainable development.

Öhman and Östman (2004) formulated the dilemma of ESD by saying that sustainable development is like a compass in a school; it says a lot about the direction but little about the way which will take you there. I would like develop this metaphor further in accordance to the critical issues presented above. If sustainable development is like a compass in school, it shows different directions depending on how education is conceptualized and related to globalization but most of all how it manages to find a foothold in a lifeworld. Without exploring these issues ESD become more like a broken compass.

\(^9\) Ecocentric value theory means nature-centred instead of human-centred system of values.
4.2 From environmental education to ESD

I rely on the notion of Sauvé, Brunelle and Berryman (2005) that environmental education (EE) is closely associated with or replaced by ESD. EE is frequently mentioned as one of many ‘disciplines’ contributing to ESD. Sauvé, Brunelle and Berryman (2005) state that talking ‘only’ about EE is now considered too narrow in its approach. McKeown’s and Hopkins (2007) further state the difference by saying that EE emerged from environmental concerns but ESD emerged from anthropocentric concerns. Additionally, ESD has been formulated as a development of previous environmental traditions in the direction of socio-cultural theories combined with a renewed focus on the future (Taylor et al. 2009: 319). I will illuminate the general development of ESD tradition with a special emphasis on the Swedish context, since the empirical studies were conducted in Swedish schools and pre-schools. What is remarkable in Sweden (as well as in Denmark) is that the step from EE to ESD was almost frictionless compared to many other countries, especially Australia and Canada (Laessoe & Öhman 2010). According to Laessoe and Öhman (2010:4) one reason for this might be that the concept of sustainable development has its origin in European social democratic politics, flavoured with Scandinavian influences with Gro Harlem Brundland from Norway as a key figure.

The United Nations declared 2005–2014 a Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, which led to many school projects around the world. Research interests specifically regarding ESD started to increase as well. Today, several studies have explored the implications and meanings of the concept of ESD (Tani 2006, Kaivola & Rohweder 2007, Wals 2007, Wals & Kief 2010, Björneloo 2007), as well as the action competence (Almers 2009, Schnack 2008, Breiting 2008, Carlsson & Jensen 2006) and ethical dimension of the phenomenon (Lundegård 2007, Östman 1995, Öhman 2008, Stenmark 2000). Moreover, some studies have focused on environmental awareness (Palmberg & Jeronen 2008) and socialization content (Sund 2008). In 2012, two years before the decade ends UNESCO is preparing a set of international guidelines to commit countries to take responsibility for the promotion of Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development CCESD (Laessoe & Lenglet 2012).

As Breiting and Wickenberg (2010: 10) point out, the Nordic countries share a common northern European culture and historical background that over the past 50 years has formed the basis for joint cooperation on matters of culture, education and research (Nordiska Ministerrådet, established after World War II). However, the collaboration between Denmark and Sweden is especially close, and has been called a
‘tandem perspective’ of EE and ESD (Breiting & Wickenberg 2010). Breiting and Wickenberg (2010) state that the recent tendency in Swedish schools has been a focus on order and discipline in a classroom, as well as improvements in international school tests. The same trend is found in Norway (Baeck 2012) and many other countries in Europe, where PISA as well as national tests have been used as arguments for reforms in education (Jakobsson 2013a). Both Schnack (2008: 194) and Liedman (2011), among many other researchers in Nordic countries, point out that we live in an era of assessment and evaluation where the focus tends to be more on educational outcomes than processes. Jakobsson (2013a) criticises the application of huge-scale international school tests by saying that they produce artificial and insufficient results. This is a result of actual test-situations which are not reminiscent of usual situations where a child is comfortable (Jakobsson 2013b). Moreover, tests in general do not acknowledge national differences enough in education systems and curriculums. The educational, philosophical approach of this thesis presents a totally different perspective on children’s learning compared to the testing-paradigm. The lifeworld approach is a possibility to highlight individual voices of children and apply qualitative research results in the promotion of ESD.

Education towards democratisation and sustainable development becomes problematic if these concepts are primarily understood as a means rather than an end (Schnack 2008). However, the Swedish National Agency of Education does refer to the Brundtland Commission’s definition and state that sustainable development is a comprehensive concept for the whole school system. The Swedish National Agency of Education describes education for sustainable development as a process oriented insight, which can be reached through the democratic methods (Skolverket 2010). The Swedish National Agency of Education (2012) states furthermore that social, economic and ecological dimensions are all important for ESD. Despite the formulations, Sandell et al. (2005), Wickenberg (2000), and Björneloo (2004) among others, claim that the essential signs of ESD are not formulated clearly enough to be graspable and operational at the local school level. Therefore, the research approach focusing on the lifeworld is now discussed as a complement to the existing debate on the practical relevance and implications of ESD.

A review of the history of Swedish environmental education shows a shift from EE to ESD (Sandell 2005, Breiting & Wickenberg 2010). Although Björneloo (2007:166) claim that EE has a solid (maybe too solid) ground in Swedish schools, where often teachers in science have been responsible for this part of the education. Regardless, there are basically three different traditions in Swedish environmental education and ESD: fact-based EE, normative EE and pluralistic EE (Östman 2003,
Öhman 2006, Sund 2008). These traditions are similar in all Nordic countries (see Breiting & Wickenberg 2010, Nyström 1992). The fact-based tradition was formed during the development of EE in the 1960s (Sund 2008). At that time, environmental issues were mainly regarded as ecological issues that could be solved by learning more about the natural sciences. In the 1970s, outdoor education was a typical way of practicing environmental education (Breiting & Wickenberg 2010). This tradition is also known as being education about the environment (Taylor et al. 2009: 319, Palmer 1997). A step to the normative tradition occurred during the 1980s in connection with international declarations and debates about e.g. nuclear power (Sund 2008). Following this change, environmental issues became primarily understood as questions of values, and people’s lifestyles were seen as the main threat to the natural world. This tradition has also been called education for the environment (Taylor et al. 2009, Palmer 1997).

After this, a pluralistic tradition developed, in the 1990s, in connection to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro 1992 (Sund, 2008). Following the Earth Summit in Rio, sustainable development was highly prioritised in Swedish schools and preschools (Breiting & Wickenberg 2010). During this period Eco-Schools were established in Sweden. In Denmark, on the contrary, the focus of ESD in 1990’s was mainly on adult and professional education (Breiting & Wickenberg 2010). Towards the end of the 1990s ESD made a breakthrough into the field of EE. Perspectives on sustainable development brought matters such as global issues, time perspectives, conflicts of interest, health, poverty, immigration and gender into the picture more clearly than before (Breiting & Wickenberg 2010: 16). Following this paradigm shift, green school certifications emerged. Firstly came the ‘Award for Environmental School’ and in the beginning of the new millennium the ‘Award for a School for Sustainable Development’ (Breiting & Wickenberg 2010). Different traditions are according to Sund and Wickman (2011) a tacit framework of what teachers consider as a good form of EE. Sund and Wickman (2011) stress furthermore that teaching cannot happen strictly according to different traditions. Different traditions rather overlap and change according to the teaching situations.

4.3 Pedagogical ideals

As the basic definition of sustainable development rests upon acknowledgement of future generations and their needs, research relating to future visions is now reviewed and then discussed in relation to the two specific educational ideals, action competence and place-based education [PBE]. The two pedagogical ideals are closely
connected to ESD tradition and presented in this thesis because of the significance of the children’s perspective and children’s participation embedded in these theories. Also the recognition of entity and diversity of the contexts makes the chosen pedagogical ideals suitable for the theoretical background of this thesis.

After the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (UN 1992) and Agenda 21 came the Thessaloniki Conference in 1997. The Thessaloniki Conference resulted in a protocol of “Education for a Sustainable Future: A Transdisciplinary Vision for Concerted Action”. This document declared, perhaps more clearly than other UN documents before, the idea of ethics of time, which refers to the continuity of well-being as an ethical link between before, now and after. The protocol of Education for a Sustainable Future claimed that the present problems including poverty, exclusion and threats to the environment must be solved in the interest of both present and future generations (UN 1997: 109). The protocol underlines that each generation takes care of the use of natural resources and should ensure that future generations are not exposed to pollution which may endanger their health. Additionally protection and transmission of common cultural heritage is set as a goal for intergenerational responsibility. Still, the temporal dimension of the concept has gained surprisingly little attention in ESD research.

However, Hutchinson (1997) claimed that explicit orientation towards the future is missing from school curriculums and children have images of the future that are covered by a passive hope (hope that relies on scientific or technocratic solutions). Rubin’s (2002) study showed how Finnish young people’s thoughts of the future were dichotomist. When the question was about the personal future, thoughts were generally success stories of wealthy suburban families. On the contrary, when the focus turned from the personal future to the future of society, stories changed to a tale of horror. Ojala (2012) states that there is a shortage of studies focusing on connections between emotions and environmental engagement. She argues that hope is a factor complementing values, knowledge, and social influences in predicting engagement in global environmental problems. Ojala (2012) found in her studies that hope based on denial correlates negatively with pro-environmental actions whereas constructive hope correlates positively. Additionally, one conclusion in her study was that constructive hope can help young people to maintain their engagement and balance between critical but positive thinking. Moreover, Hicks and Holden (2007) claim that young people need guidance to think more critically and creatively about the future.

However, Fleer (2002) and Barraza (1999) reported in their studies based on children’s drawings about the environment that children’s hopes for future are
pessimistic. Furthermore, Eckersley (1999) claims that the gap between the ideal and real futures for young people is getting wider. Both Strife (2012) as well as Connell and Fien (1999) come to the same conclusion that young people are generally pessimistic about the future and feel powerless in relation to environmental problems. Strife (2012) found that television programs and movies are a central source of children’s environmental information and a source of negative emotions towards environmental problems. Strife (ibid.) suggested that children need more opportunities to engage and participate in environmental stewardship and civic responsibility. Here the links between future orientation, hope and creativity, are connected to issues of participation addressed also in action competence and the PBE approach (presented later in this chapter). Research results show how future visions are often formulated pessimistically especially in connection to environmental issues.

4.3.1 Action competence

Danish ESD tradition relies on a theory of action competence that focusses on learning to take responsibility. Danish tradition exists in a state of tension between critical educational theory (emancipation) and behaviour orientation (transformation) in education (Jensen & Schnack 1997, Schnack 2008, Mogensen & Schnack 2010, Breiting & Wickenberg 2010). According to Jensen and Schnack (1997: 167) “The characteristic feature of an action is not that one performs a physical activity, but that there is an intention in the actor”. They formulated an idea of action competence as an activity that is targeted at solving a problem and where children are involved in processes.

Schnack (2008) exemplify the tension between critical thinking and behaviour with a case of energy saving and battery collection in schools. These kinds of activities can have instrumental or functional goals. Actions may be evaluated according to the amount of energy saved or batteries collected, or the activity may be evaluated in accordance to what the children learned about society, their community, and themselves by being involved in these activities (Schnack, 2008: 183). In short, action competence is an educational ideal, not a teaching method nor an objective to be reached or measured (Schnack 2003).

Action competence deals with children’s active participation in schools but also generally in communities. Hart (2008: 29) argues that the core of children’s participation lies in comprehension of how children think of themselves as members of a larger community. According to Hart (2008) there is a contrast between individualist and collectivist cultures in the way that children are guided to see
themselves as members of a community. A relevant question is therefore, whether children are “in waiting of full membership” in community or whether children gain their membership from the beginning. This issue relates with the general question of how a society sees childhood and what roles children are able to gain in the decision making processes, or in education, for example.

If we look at the schools as an arena for children’s participation, it has often taken the form of school councils. Some school have even had environment clubs, which sometimes unfortunately result in depoliticising children’s activism causing feelings of apathy (Stevenson 2008). As Carlsson and Sanders (2008) point out the development of children’s motivation, engagement and ownership does not automatically follow the attendance of school councils. Hence, Breiting (2008) has outlined the concept of mental ownership as a crucial component of children’s participation. Breiting (2008) sees mental ownership as a sibling concept to a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility. Issues of children’s participation challenges school cultures that are historically dominated by the notion of knowledge being passively transferred (Carlsson & Sanders 2008). School councils need to renew themselves in order to promote children’s active participation or more profoundly, school cultures need to open up to a review of children’s active citizenship in general and welcome new initiatives according to action competence. School cultures in relation to collaboration and children’s participation are discussed particularly in Paper III.

Almers (2013) emphasizes a broad definition of action competence. She suggests that action competence for sustainability is the same as a willingness and capacity to influence living conditions, as well as lifestyles, in a way that involves intergenerational and global responsibility. Here, action competence is connected explicitly to pedagogy that takes intergenerational relations into account, which is of interest in this thesis too. Also Carlsson and Jensen (2008) argue that action competence depends on a number of factors, one of which is the ability to promote children’s ideas, dreams and perceptions about their future lives and the society in which they will be growing up. They name this central concept of action competence a vision.

According to Breiting (2008) schools have two options to work practically towards a sustainable future. The first alternative is to focus on short-term benefits, such as campaigns and rewards. However, this type of approach has a very limited connection to learning (Breiting 2008). Another alternative for schools is to focus on long-term consequences. This approach develops children’s action competence. It has although been recognized that the action competence approach sometimes faces
resistance in school organizations (Carlsson & Jensen 2006). Subsequently, children’s participation may become real or just symbolic. Carlsson and Jensen (2006: 245) describe that when the schools’ role in a society is seen as “a consumer”, the world outside is brought into the classroom. This is done for example by inviting guests or occasionally schools can visit a place (see also Paper III). When schools are seen as consumers their role is to passively receive information. On the other hand, if the school is taking the role of “a political agent” the collaboration becomes a two-way process between a school and a community. Carlsson and Jensen (2006) mention the negotiation of issues, making agreements and initiating joint actions as examples of political agency. Carlsson and Jensen (2006: 257) crystalize the idea of action competence by saying:

"Seen from the perspective of the school, the overall criterion will always be ‘what students learn from what they are doing’ and not simply ‘what they are doing.’"

Furthermore, schools’ collaboration with external partners in society can be seen as a significant contribution to the development of environmental citizenship (Carlsson & Jensen 2005: 242). Carlsson and Jensen (ibid.) emphasize that collaboration is a process that requires a shared arena for action as well as mutual expectations and equality. According to Paper III, this is a rather challenging demand for schools which are establishing “new” networks and collaboration outside the school. Moreover, regarding the children’s citizenship, it could be further discussed as to how citizenship is constituted in ESD practices. Liljestrand (2012: 90) for example states that to participate as a citizen is not a question of maturation but of being incorporated into society in everyday experiences and public life. He (ibid.) claims that children should not only have a right to participate in civic issues, but they should also have a legitimate right not to participate. Hence, the issue of children’s participation in ESD needs more nuances starting from children’s rights and their lifeworld without predefining specific types of participation as the one and only correct one.

### 4.3.2 Place-Based Education

PBE is an educational ideal that emphasizes how the actual diversity needed in education is best found outside a school and the classroom (Gruenewald 2008; 2003). At the same time studies show that opportunities for out-of-school learning are decreasing and the physical environment is an underused resource for children (Thomas & Thompson 2004: 22). PBE intersects with ESD as both approaches aim to
meet demands of globalization and confront the alienation of school education from local contexts. Historically, Knapp (2005) sees roots for place-based education in Aldo Leopold’s environmental ethics and thoughts about the conservation ecology. According to Knapp (2005), place-based education starts with a notion of a sense of place that is developed through making meaningful personal connections to the land. A sense of place and personal meanings are familiar issues in phenomenology of the lifeworld as well, and motivates the importance of discussing PBE in this thesis.

Experiences of the global world are in relation to the sense of local place and experience of local identity. Individualization of social identities and the role of education in promoting children’s well-being have been widely discussed (see Geldens & Bourke 2008: 282, Stevenson 2008, Ahonen et al. 2008, Björneloo 2007). Björneloo (2007) claim, for example, that ESD should promote basic social security and children’s self-esteem in order to build children’s individual sustainability. However, Nakagawa and Payne (2014) criticize PBE of ignoring the subjective and historical dimension of place experiences. In other words, pedagogy cannot insist that learners are universally expected to sense and appreciate a place with certain assumed qualities. Moreover, PBE has to work with issues such as basic social security and children’s self-esteem (ibid.).

PBE is most often defined as education that takes seriously negative impacts of globalization and the alienation of school education away from the immediate contexts of community life (Gruenewald & Smith 2008). However, PBE does not mean abandoning institutional education. It means challenging some assumptions schools are relying on and making connections between the school and a community stronger. Sobel (2005) formulates the idea of PBE as teaching that advocates for an integrated curriculum and emphasizes project-based learning as well as teacher’s collaboration and extensive use of community resources. These issues are discussed in papers I and III. The initial idea for the school project in Paper III emerged from the teachers’ interest in being part of local community development and paying attention to the construction of a wind farm nearby. In practice, teachers preferred to deal with general issues of sustainable development instead of placing local and controversial issues on the agenda (see Paper III). The question of connecting local and controversial issues in teaching relates to the issue of improving collaboration between different subjects, grades and schools, but it is also an issue of teacher education and school cultures. The point I want to emphasize here is the perspective on conditions under which teachers may establish a “new” networks of collaboration. Paper III focused on the “external” project but the project was a part of the larger institutionalised structures and was formed in a local school context.
The “networks” outside a classroom obviously have many nuances and meanings for children as well (see Paper I). Children are interested in negotiating institutional boundaries, which is an interesting point of departure. Children’s ability and interest in participation and influencing local issues seems to be an undeveloped issue in school practices, though not in theories and curriculum texts (see Paper I). Gruenewald and Smith (2008) remind us that PBE must not be turned towards nostalgic or homogenous images of the local. The diversity within places and the diversity between places is a more accurate approach. Moreover, he (ibid.) argues that schools at present are disconnected from community life and have a fundamental lack of diversity. Additionally, Breiting and Wickenberg (2010) underline that much ESD is most probably taking place outside school – in the family, among and within peer groups, in the local community and in society in a broader sense. However, both ESD and PBE understood as educational ideals ought to challenge schools from the inside with respect to the reality that children live both in and outside a school.

In Paper I, a schoolyard was elucidated as being a place of significant experience for children. Results that emerged from this paper illuminated aspects of learning, social relations and norms within a specific area. From the phenomenology of the lifeworld approach, a place, such as a schoolyard, must be understood as being a lived place (see Paper I). Gruenewald (2008) claims that the focus on the lived experiences of a place demonstrate the interconnection between culture and environment. Schoolyard can also be studied from the child-friendliness perspective. That would mean that a place is studied from the children’s perspective and with a focus on emotional responses to the place and accessibility to the place (Broberg et al. 2013, Kyttä et al. 2009, 2012).

PBE requires children’s participation, which on the other hand is a question of citizenship. Öhman (2008) stresses that learning democracy means participating in situations of democratic communication where diverse experiences, opinions, arguments and views are openly exchanged. He (ibid.) continues that in order to create such learning situations children must be recognised as social and moral agents and as already democratic citizens. Additionally, Chawla and Cushing (2007) emphasize that teachers play a critical role in political socialization by creating opportunities for discussions of public issues in the classroom. This way public issues gain personal meaning and children have the opportunity to acquire a collective sense of competence (ibid.).

The point of departure in the Paper I was to explore children’s experiences of the places which they considered positive. Following the formulation of a question some vital parts of the children’s lifeworld experiences obviously remain untouched in this
study. The meaning of the study was not to undermine the importance of negative experiences. Both negative and positive experiences are equally important in pedagogical practice. Dealing with negative experiences requires responsibility from the researcher to take issues further and deal with children’s negative experiences with respect, care and with the intention of improving the situation. This is an ethical responsibility for the researcher. Under circumstances where I could visit the school only occasionally (i.e. my involvement with the class was limited), I preferred to focus on the positive experiences.

A sense of place is something other than a location or a place that we can give a name to, as Resor (2010) claims. A sense of place is one way to describe human relations with the world; how people inhabit the world (see Merleau-Ponty 1996). Following this, PBE promotes learning that goes beyond the seemingly obvious appearance of things and individuals and community perceptions (Resor 2010). A sense of place is a question of both place attachment (connection between people and places) and place meaning (symbolic meanings ascribed to places) (Kudryavtsev et al. 2012). What Kudryavtsev et al. (2012) mean is that a sense of place is created not only through direct place-based experiences but also through stories, myths, literature and paintings, for example. Consequently, places can even hold a meaning to a person who has never actually visited the location. Therefore, a sense of place relates to the issues of intergenerational justice and visions of the future as well. A sense of place is possible to connect with future places, through ethical reflections.
PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE LIFEWORLD

As Saylan and Blumstein (2011) mentioned, the documentary on Al Gore’s campaign about global warming from 2006, An Inconvenient Truth, marked a turning point in the public awareness of global warming. However, they state that environmental messages cannot be effective unless they are relevant to the lives of those they are meant to affect (Saylan & Blumstein 2011: 47). One way to promote relevance of sustainable development is to approach it from the phenomenology of the lifeworld point of departure. The fundamental importance and relevance of lived experiences within this tradition is even stated as being part of the post-critical approach reaching beyond the modern illusions of separation of subject and object, and global and local (Nakagawa & Payne 2014). The theoretical duality of mind and body is most often related to interpretations of Descartes, but dualistic thinking has a long legacy starting from Plato’s philosophy and Christian metaphysical tradition (Anderson 2003: 92). Phenomenology of the lifeworld is an ontological and epistemological base for this thesis. Ontological and epistemological issues are fundamentally intertwined and thus presented parallel in the following two chapters.

Basically, phenomenology of the lifeworld is a philosophy in which the world is considered ‘already there’ before reflections begin (Merleau-Ponty 2002). This tradition is part of the critical movement towards transcendental idealism and subjectivism (Uljens 2004). We can simplistically say that phenomenology of the lifeworld is one of the approaches starting from the intersubjective being-in-the-world (Uljens 2004, Johansson 2004). Inter-subjectivity is un-reflected and taken for granted according to Uljens (2004). This kind of phenomenological research seeks the meaning of lived experiences. Bengtsson (2013) states that the lifeworld approach is a well-established research tradition in the Nordic countries, and even has its own special research body at the Centre for Lifeworld Phenomenological Research, which is located at the Faculty of Education, University of Gothenburg. This thesis has taken some inspiration from this tradition, mostly in accordance to the theories of Merleau-Ponty.

Just a few studies in the field of ESD have been conducted within the tradition of the phenomenology of the lifeworld. Although, Almers (2009) thesis was based on phenomenology of the lifeworld and interpreted three stories of young people, focusing on their participation and ambition of being active in issues related to sustainable development. According to this study, young people find motivation and a driving-force for sustainable actions from emotions, a desire to act and longing for meaningfulness to mention a few of the themes (Almers 2009). Johansson (2004) has
studied children’s moral values in the tradition of phenomenology of the lifeworld. Her point of departure is that the approach enables researchers to study children’s moral values in their complexity and with the emphasis on embodiment. Thereafter, the lifeworld approach makes it possible to illuminate how even small children aged 1 to 3 years old, can experience moral good and bad, right and wrong, in social interaction. At the same time Johansson (2004: 256) stresses that small children are intertwined in learning here and now without the same number of concepts and experiences that adults have in order to make moral evaluations. According to Johansson (2004: 258) children’s moral values are possible to understand by observing their bodily expressions and how they act in social situations. This is a distinctly different approach to studying children’s moral values than studies relying on children’s interviews, for example.

Doubliene (2013) suggests that the phenomenological approach promotes dialogical and ethical relationships in research that is not instrumental. Accordingly, exploring the meaning of lived experiences, some guidelines need to be clarified. Schütz (1967: 45) explains that the structure of our experiences vary according to whether we surrender ourselves to the flow of duration or stop to reflect upon it. This structural difference between the lived experiences and reflection is basically a difference between two different levels of consciousness, as Schütz (1967: 51) express it:

*I am no longer simply living within the flow. The experiences are apprehended, distinguished, brought into relief, marked out from one another; the experiences which are constituted as phases within a flow of duration now become objects of attention as constituted experiences.*

Schütz (2011: 24) states additionally that the completed action is open to an unlimited number of reflections, which ascribes meaning in the past tense. Schütz (2011) divides motives into two different categories, the “in-order-to motives” and the “because motives”. Basically, the “in-order-to motives” refer to the future and are identical to the goal or purpose of the action. The “because motives” refer to the past and require a special act of reflection. Consequently, in a study of future visions the research deals with “in-order-to-motives”, and in a study of a schoolyard and a school project the research deals with “because motives”. The third paper is a combination of both categories of motives (expectations and their fulfilment within a project). This is a simplistic way to describe different types of motives and reflections, varying in accordance with the temporal focus (past, present or future).
In order to understand other people’s motives one does not need to grasp the full ramification of other people’s lifeworld, instead other people’s acts can be reduced to typical motives, claims Schütz (2011: 36). As Cohen and Manion (1995: 30) claim, people organize their everyday world based on a process of typification that is on the other hand derived from our experiences of everyday life. The experiences of everyday life that the studies are able to touch upon are typifications made by informers in their social context. In Paper III, for example, teachers’ reflections concerning collegium, supervision and other relations within a school organization could be described as a process of typification.

5.1 The lifeworld approach

To clarify the phenomenological approach chosen for this thesis I need to emphasise the special character of the lifeworld approach, which distances itself from the phenomenological method called *epoché* (Husserl 1970). Epoché, the phenomenological reduction, means bracketing the questions of existence. Bracketing is an attempt to free ourselves from our usual ways of perceiving the world (Cohen & Manion 1995:30, Finlay 2014). This would require activity free from pre-understanding and previous experiences (Bäck-Wiklund 2007). The process of bracketing is problematized by asking, when bracketing should happen and to what extent (Shi, 2011)? Even Merleau-Ponty was influenced by Husserl’s latest writings though there was a clear difference in their philosophies. Husserl focused on the investigation of essences, whereas Merleau-Ponty was interested in human existence, his concrete way of living (Spurling 1977: 9). According to the phenomenology of the lifeworld approach there is no pure or unbiased essence to reach outside the lived and experienced reality (Bengtsson, 1999, 2001). The same is stated by Lilja (2013) who pose that it is impossible to step out of the lifeworld; people simultaneously influence the world around them and are influenced by the world around them.

Accordingly, this thesis is carried out by simply accepting the existence of the social world in accordance to Schütz (1967: 97)10. Being in a world is the same as being in a social world. Hence, researchers can interpret a phenomenon only through their own experiences (Shi 2011). Instead of bracketing experiences, they are, according to phenomenology of the lifeworld, structured as themes. Descriptive

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10 One way to divide phenomenological movement is to say that transcendental phenomenology of Husserl and existential phenomenology of Schütz are two different philosophical approaches (Cohen & Manion, 1995: 29).
methods strengthen a sense of what it means to be a child and to live as a child (Greene & Hogan 2005). Thematising in papers I and II explored what it means to be in a schoolyard as a child and how it is to reflect on the future as a child? Paper III illuminates the ways teachers constitute the meanings of a school project which they participated in as students and teachers.

As Schütz and Luckmann (1989) highlight, we are engaged in the lifeworld by acting in it. The lifeworld is captured by the particular encounters that depend on the respective present situation as well as subjective and socially stamped relevance-systems (Schütz & Luckmann 1989). In Paper I a schoolyard becomes a situation where people act. There is tension between being changed by the place and at the same time changing the place. This mutual and dynamic relationship between a human being and place is discussed mostly in Paper I. In an analogous way the future depends on what we do today and our visions of the future change the way we are. This interplay is discussed foremost in the Paper II. Teachers’ reflections in a school project are illuminated in the third paper. Teachers’ experiences of the project were characterized by social relations within the school organization, such as their relations with the colleagues, other project participants, school principals and supervisors of the project.

There is also a possibility to explore, how political-economic systems intrude into, or “colonize”, the lifeworld (Young 1990, Dallmayr 1991, Bohman 1999). The question of macro-level social order is of specific interest in a critical theory of education. In the framework of the critical theory, the concept of the lifeworld has little meaning outside the ranges of aspects of political power and economy. Following critical theorist Jürgen Habermas, the meanings are divided into two different regions, lifeworld and system (Månson 2004: 328). Lifeworld according to this duality means the entity of social life such as social relations. The system refers to anonymous relations such as economic relations. According to Habermas, the problem is that systems take more and more space from the lifeworld, i.e. social integration and reproduction (Månson 2004: 328, Bohman 1999:75). In other words, the concern in critical theory is that the lifeworld is becoming more and more rational and most of all governed by instrumental logic (also in social relations and education). Stevenson (2008) sees the concerns of critical thinking and problem solving skills as an essence of critical pedagogy, which often have a strong focus on discourses. Accordingly, the difference in research objects, discourse or lived experience, is the basic difference between the two theories[11] presented above.

However, according to the general criticism towards phenomenology Eichberg (2013) stresses that sometimes concepts, ideas and opinions are handled in a non-historical vacuum. In other words, the risk of phenomenology is analysing the phenomenon as being universal, not in their changing cultural-historical connection (Eichberg 2013: 278). To avoid this pitfall, I have engaged in describing the history and politics of ESD, especially in the Swedish context, which is the main framework for this study (see paragraph 4.2.).

Bengtsson (1999, 2005) describes the lifeworld by saying that human life consists of different regions, such as a classroom, leisure time and home. My attempt to regionalize time and place more specifically has been to focus on children’s visions of their future when they are adults and their positive experiences in the schoolyard. In the third paper, the region of the study was the teachers’ participation in ESD-projects. This region of the lifeworld is narrower than focusing for example on the teachers’ entire working situation. The lifeworld approach defined by the critical theory is acknowledged in this thesis. Although this thesis follows the tradition of the phenomenology of the lifeworld, I see the importance of aspects of the critical theory, such as power-relations and political discourses of sustainable development. Political aspects are part of ESD, not least when schools try to bring about changes on local issues of sustainable development. Even though, for example, a school project on energy issues and the construction of local wind farm had the potential to offer an interesting intersection of different regions of the lifeworld. As mentioned earlier, different regions of the lifeworld co-exist, but depending on the perspective, we see things from a certain position.

5.2 Research of being-in-the-world

In accordance to Duobliene (2013) phenomenology is a valuable approach for studying sustainable development in the context of formal education. As Duobline (2013) states, being-in-a-world, understood phenomenologically, indicates a moral relationship with the world. According to van Manen (1990) the point of phenomenological research is to “borrow” other people’s reflections on experiences, in order to better understand the deeper meaning of aspects of human life. Phenomenological research can be understood basically in two different ways, as research of consciousness or as research of being-in-the-world in a wider respect. The first approach is represented, for example, by Shi (2011) who formulates phenomenological research as being a study that may explore the relationship between the individual and the world and may examine how individuals understand
the world through consciousness. But, as Greene and Hogan (2005) proposed, phenomenology is a study of what it means to be a human being, not just a study of the consciousness or knowing. This is also the point of departure for the Gothenburg tradition (Bengtsson 2013) and consequently for this thesis.

The knowledge gained during the three studies contributes to a better understanding of how ESD is part of the lifeworld. In the line of the lifeworld approach, knowledge is constituted at the interface between world and mind, sensation and cognition (Ingold 2000). Ingold (2000: 55) describes how knowledge of the world is gained by moving about in it, exploring it, attending to it, ever alert to the signs by which it is revealed. Additionally, an important aspect to underline is that research following phenomenology of the lifeworld does not allow empirical generalisations, the production of law-like statements or the establishment of functional relationships (van Manen 1990: 22). Epistemological outlines will be discussed more systematically in the next main chapter, methodological orientation.

5.3 Embodiment and temporality

Additionally, one motive to rely on phenomenology of the lifeworld especially in studies of children’s lived experiences arose from the acknowledgment of the embodied nature of the lifeworld. As Nielsen (2009) points out, children use their bodies to communicate even before they develop a verbal language. Thereafter the importance of body and embodied experiences are central in our efforts in creating meaning and making sense of our experiences (Nielsen 2009). Additionally, according to Schütz (2002: 94) our orientation in the word as a place is bound to our body and physical existence in the world. The bodily character of the experiences is explored especially by Merleau-Ponty (1999). For Merleau-Ponty the body is not primarily a structure or even a form, it is something he refers to as “I can” (Merleau-Ponty 1999, Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1999). This means that embodiment is the intuition of acting in the world. More precisely, Merleau-Ponty (1999) defines the embodiment by saying that the body is not in the world in the same way as e.g. a table or a tree; instead the body inhabits the world. Thereafter a perception of the world happens in and through the body, which is a different ontological approach than seeing the perception as being purely cognitive. The body is a subject of perception and it is through our embodiment that we participate in the world in the first place (Ingold 2000: 169, Nielsen 2009: 81, Welsh 2007). Embodiment and inter-subjectivity are two aspects of the same essential being-in-the-world (Welsh 2007).
Temporality intertwines with embodiment and in Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) words, the body takes possession of time – it brings the past and future into the present. Schütz (2002: 94) argues that in the same way that we have a body to orient in the world, we have a “present now” to orient in time. In relation to our body we see categories such as right, left, behind and in front of something. In relation to our experience of the “now”, we have categories such as past, present and future simultaneously.

Merleau-Ponty (2002) explained how a body is inescapably linked with phenomenon that is perceptual from a person’s position in a world and a system of experiences. He puts the idea in words in the following way:

_Through my perceptual field, with its spatial horizons, I am present to my surroundings, I co-exist with all the other landscapes which stretch out beyond it, and all these perspectives together form a single temporal wave, one of the world’s instants. Through my perceptual field with its temporal horizons I am present to my present, to all the preceding past and to a future_ (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 386).

Accordingly, lived experiences in the empirical studies are viewed as moments in a temporal wave. For example, the same children experience the same place at a schoolyard differently at different times. Ingold (2000: 200) argues that everything is suspended in movement. We do not act upon it, or do things to it; rather we move along with it (Ingold 2000, Lilja 2013). He continues, that our actions do not transform the world instead they are a part of the world’s transformation itself (Ingold 2000: 200). Out of this philosophical worldview, studies in this thesis relate to embodiment and temporality as the basics of lived experiences. Nakagawa and Payne (2014) claim that without consideration of temporality, locally placed pedagogy tends to emphasize historical and even atheoretical qualities and characteristics of a site or location. They _ibid._ stress, in the line of phenomenology of the lifeworld, that learners’ bring their histories into ‘place’ which inescapably shapes their experience.
6 METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Methodological orientation in this thesis describes how to search for a better understanding and meaning in lived experiences. However, practicality in phenomenological studies is not a straightforward issue as van Manen (2007: 13) states:

*The practicality of a phenomenology of practice should not be sought in instrumental action, efficiency or technical efficacy. And yet, that does not mean that phenomenology cannot have practical value.*

I have illuminated children’s experiences through different methods such as written reflections, evaluative walks, and drawings, as well as oral and written comments in relation to these drawings. These multi-modal exercises were inspired by Nielsen’s (2009) study of children’s significant moments. Nielsen (2009) describes a phenomenological perspective on research as living meetings, which all the methods in this thesis attempted to be. Teacher’s experiences were explored in focus group interviews.

Bengtsson (1999) emphasises that phenomenological research is characterized by humbleness and openness. He claims that intentionality, which means that subjects are always directed to something other than themselves, is significant for this tradition *(ibid.)*. Intentionality is explained by Olsson and Sörensen (2011) as attention towards situation, both real (e.g. a schoolyard or a school project) and imagined (e.g. future). They continue to describe that intentionality reflects a person’s point of view about themselves and the world. Following this, studying people’s experiences illuminates how they view the world, but also how they view themselves.

To conduct research in a phenomenological sense is described as bringing something to speech (van Manen 1990). The mixture of different ways of getting closer to people’s experiences and the efforts to do justice to the complexity of reality is a bearing principle of the current thesis. Moreover, a principal guideline for the studies in this thesis was investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it (van Manen 1990: 30–31).

6.1 Research ethics

My intention was to apply methods that would suit the research questions in the most appropriate way. Respect for people’s voluntary participation and their freedom to express themselves as uniquely as possible were important in the empirical studies.
From the ethical perspective I pursued as minimal a form of interference as possible. I continually reviewed the question of whether it was possible to answer the research questions with the chosen methods (see Petersson 1994). ESD could be studied in many different contexts, both formal (school) and informal (home, leisure time activities etc.). However, I focused in this thesis primarily on formal education (pre-schools and elementary schools), and all the studies were conducted during school time. I had the opportunity to meet the participants to the studies several times at the schools. Information about the research process was given to the teachers, children and their parents both verbally and in writing. Information about the research process included information about how the data would be collected and how it would be used.

Informed consent was obtained, which is required by the Swedish ethical code of conduct (SFS 2008:192). According to this code of conduct, participation is voluntary and research is conducted confidentially, which means that unauthorised persons have no access to the empirical data and persons in studies are presented anonymously. Data is filed according to the Swedish municipalities’ routines for filing (SFS 1990:782). Participants to the studies were free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason why.

6.2 Role of the researcher and research situations

Adults are both close and far away from the children’s lifeworld, which is a reason why adults understanding of the children’s lifeworld will always be limited (Johansson 2004). The acknowledgement of this limitation, as well as the commitment to make the philosophical basis explicit are ethically important premises of this thesis. One feature of the studies conducted in line with phenomenology of the lifeworld is in seeing the researcher as a part of the social realm (Lilja 2013, Shi 2011, Johansson 2004, 2003). As Shi (2011) claims, researchers can interpret a phenomenon only through their own experiences. This is an important difference compared to the methodological idea of ‘epoche’, i.e. setting aside the researcher’s personal viewpoints in order to see the experience itself (Husserl 1970, Merriam 2009). My presence and personal pre-understanding have been part of the question formulation, data collection as well as analysis.

12 Information letters were sent home with the children. See Appendix 1 as an example of one of the letters. The information letters in all empirical studies included the similar information about the ethical principles and about the use of data.
The fact that I have studied in education for many years and I am a parent myself has generally affected my understanding of children and school education. Additionally, the fact that I am not a teacher, gives me some degree of perspective from the “outside” the teacher’s profession. I conducted the empirical studies in the role of a “visitor” to the school, which also has a significance. Trust in research situations is gained through various means, one of which is the time spent together with the informers. As a teacher studying their own class for example, the trust is based on totally different premises compared to my role as a visitor. Trust and asymmetric power relations are issues in all meetings, but it is especially ethically important in research with children (Lilja 2013). Another aspect of my involvement in the research situations with children is connected to the institutional context. Research situations are not neutral, rather they are embedded in social structures (Eliasson 1995). One more point of the social structures in research situations is gender. Only two of the teachers in Paper III were men. The gender did not direct the selection of the informers, instead both men and women were equally welcomed to participate. Studies among children included both girls and boys. Classes were not selected according to gender representation. Additionally, it was noted that the themes in the studies were common and shared by both girls and boys. In this study the thematic understanding of a schoolyard and future visions did not mark gender difference. However, this does not mean that gender differences do not exist as a part of the lifeworld.

My previous experiences in school projects have formed my pre-understanding concerning children’s interest in environmental issues. Previously, I have studied how children explore places and relate to their significant places (Villanen 2006a, 2006b). My own interests in environmental ethics and appreciation of nature have also been an important part of my motivation to study the field of ESD. Thus in accordance to the phenomenology of the lifeworld and in the acknowledgment of my pre-understanding, I aimed at listening and following the participants’ expression with respect and openness.

Participating schools were selected based on teachers’ or school principals’ interest in environmental issues. Although none of the schools had an outspoken profile on environmental issues or any certificate indicating this at the time of the empirical studies. One of the schools had a principal who expressed interest in participating in ESD studies. Another school had a teacher who had attended a university course on sustainable development and she expressed her interest in being part of the research. The third study consisted of a group of schools and pre-schools that voluntarily participated in a project on sustainable development. Nevertheless, I
am not pursuing schools with a special interest in environmental issues. I consider the selected schools as average schools in the region. The situation would have been different if the schools had had an organized profile on environmental education or ESD. That would have indicated more environmental focus and knowledge in ESD than in average schools. The interest expressed by the principal or teachers were though the key to entering the classrooms, e.g. a positive attitude towards participation in research. However, there is no reason to consider that the children in the empirical studies would have had considerably more environmental education or education for sustainable development than children in other schools in the municipalities. However, teachers in the ESD project were assumed to have more knowledge about ESD than average teachers, based on their participation on the university course.

6.3 Written reflections and evaluative walks (Paper I)

van Manen (1990/2007) argues that the aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experiences into a textual expression. According to Dysthe (1993), writing gives a writer an opportunity to reflect on the writing topic because writing is a much slower process than talking. In Paper I children conducted written and verbal reflections of significant experiences in a schoolyard. Although Paper I was meant to be a theoretical contribution to the field of educational research, the theory was exemplified by, and connected to, the children’s written reflections.

Altogether 28 children, in grade 6, participated in this study. The children were asked: *What is the best thing that happens in the schoolyard?* In accordance to the humbleness that characterizes phenomenological research, I encouraged the children to express their positive experiences from the schoolyard. The main idea with the question was to regionalize (see Bengtsson 2005) the topic of the study (experiences in a schoolyard), but leave the question open enough to allow the participants’ experiences to flourish. The research question was written on the white-board and all the children had the opportunity to write individual reflections, without needing to share their texts publicly. We collected the written reflections after the session and reviewed them confidentially later on. The children wrote on one A4 sheet of paper various lengths of text. Some children made a list of situations that they found positive and some children wrote more detailed descriptions about positive situations in the schoolyard.

Additionally, verbal reflections were collected during the evaluative walks in the schoolyard. This method is commonly used in the evaluation of residential areas and
buildings together with designers and users (de Laval 1998). Within ethnographic methods walking tours are seen as part of mobile methods which have been used to study children’s experiences at schools (Renold & Ivinson 2014: 365). Inspired by these methods, I had short walks, approximately 20 minutes in length in the schoolyard together with two groups of children. Smaller groups (half of the class at the time, 14 children) were preferred instead of walking with the whole class. During the evaluative walk the children were encouraged to express what places they found significant in the schoolyard and why. Open communication was pursued and I as a researcher aimed at following the children’s stories and asking questions that would do justice to their experiences. The children were keen to share their experiences and point out places, where they liked to play and spend time, as well as things that they didn’t like. The evaluative walk resulted in the children’s collective expression of the schoolyard, which I wrote down after the school visit. The method did justice to the socially shared lifeworld experiences and differed from the written reflections, which foremost aimed to explore subjective reflections. Additionally, during the evaluative walk more nuanced experiences came up, such as both positive and negative things about the schoolyard.

Concerning the notion that the expressions become collective, I want to point out the difference between the two methods of data collection applied in this study. The written reflections were individual reflections, whereas the evaluative walks were an outcome of reflections shared directly and socially in a peer group. The difference between these methods is the difference between two different types of social situations. However, as Schütz (1967, 2011) points out, there are no reflections free from the social world, we inhabit the social world together with our fellow man. The strength in this study was the combination of both individually and socially expressed experiences. Using just one of the methods would result in a narrower image of the topic. Somerville et al. (2011) highlight the possibilities of walking and writing as being useful methods of researching places. They claim that by walking and writing we slow down our sensing which opens up new ways of thinking about a place. From the phenomenological perspective, I want to point out how children’s experiences are bodily and socially formed and how important it is to slow down the process of reflection.

6.4 Drawings of the future (Paper II)

Bengtsson (1999) stresses that the only criterion for methodology in phenomenological study is that it is suitable for the reality that is being explored. 
Children at an earlier age usually express themselves first bodily (by playing, drawing, building etc.) and after that verbally and eventually by writing. All the forms of expression are equally valuable. According to Hertting and Karlefors (2013: 38) drawings combined with oral comments can capture the expressions of lived experiences, avoiding the adult construction of meanings. Consequently, children’s oral comments on drawings are vital for understanding the meaning of their expression. Asking children to reflect on their experiences, is an activity that demonstrates children’s competences as communicators and as people capable of reflecting on personally significant experiences (Einarsdottir et al. 2009).

Each artistic medium (painting, sculpture, dance, etc.) has its own language of expression. Objects of art are visual, tactile, auditory, kinetic texts – texts consisting of non-verbal language but a language nevertheless, a language with its own grammar (van Manen 1990). Alerby (1998) poses that drawing opens up the possibility to express associations more openly than in other forms of expression. Additionally, Einarsdottir (2007) claims that non-verbal expressions, such as drawings, allow children to be active and creative participants in research. As Alerby (1998, 2000, 2003) claims, drawings are comparable with any other form of communication, although a drawing as such needs to be completed with verbal descriptions.

The study of children’s visions of the future (see Paper II) was based on children’s drawings and their oral as well as written comments connected to the drawings. Almost all of the drawings were made in pencil, with a few in colour pen. This study included 22 children, in grade 6. The class had only 5 girls and a teacher who had participated earlier in an ESD course at university. The children were asked the question: *What will the future look like when you are a grown up?* In the same fashion as Jonsson et al. (2010) did in their study, the children were divided into smaller groups and spread out over the classroom in an attempt to avoid them influencing each other when making the drawings. Methodologically the question is not how artistically or skilfully the drawings are done. Instead, the full focus is on the meanings embedded in the drawings (van Manen 1990).

Several researchers such as Barraza (1999), Alerby (2000, 1998), Kalvaitis and Monhardt (2012), and Fleer (2002) have used drawings to study children’s thinking about the environment. Kalvaitis and Monhardt (2012) combined drawings and written narratives in their study, according to which children’s relationship with nature displays mostly the children’s age and development. Accordingly, younger ages focus more on the nearby nature and personal activities like picking flowers. Older children express more distant and solitary situations such as hiking or walking outside. Moreover, older children use moral reasoning to describe their relationships...
with nature (Kalvaitis & Monhardt 2012). Fleer (2002) used drawings to specifically study children’s thinking about their future environments. She asked children aged 5 to 12 years to think about how their environment would look when they were grandparents. That question focussed directly on intergenerational relations. Although intergenerational relations are an essential component of sustainable development, the research question in Paper II did not address this issue as directly. The question posed to children was meant to be as open as possible in order to find out how children reflect on their future based on their lifeworld.

6.5 Focus group interviews (Paper III)

Focus group study is an opportunity for exploring the ways in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meaning around it. In Paper III, I aimed to elucidate teachers’ experiences in a school project and more precisely find out how teachers constitute the meanings of ESD. Accordingly the work in school projects is often organized as team-work (as was the case in the project connected to this study). I decided to approach the topic utilising a collective method – a focus group interview. As mentioned in the summary of the paper, the school project involved teachers from pre-schools and elementary schools. The project included several project activities, such as a university course, classroom cases, participation at an energy exhibition and visiting wind farms. I choose to conduct focus group interviews, where a small group of people met to discuss issues given to them (see Wibeck 2010: 7, Bryman 2001). According to Bryman (2001) focus groups reflect the processes through which meaning is constructed in everyday life, which makes this method compatible with the phenomenological approach of this thesis. Openness and a holistic approach to meaning generating processes were once again pursued in the empirical study.

There were five groups of teachers in this study, which each had 3 to 6 participants. In total 24 teachers participated in the study. Two of the groups were pre-school teachers and other groups from elementary schools. Interviews took place after the first course occasion (one study-day at the university) and five months later, after the course was finished. All the teachers had heard the goals for the ESD project on several occasions before the first focus group interviews. Considering this, all teachers had equal background information about the project. At the time of the first interviews, the teachers were planning classroom activities for the children. The aim of the course was to find the point of departure for teaching about technology and
sustainable development to children at different ages. The selected classroom cases were called air, water and the history of technology, for example.

The advantage of using focus group interviews is the insight gained into people’s shared understanding of a topic. The main point of interest for this method is the interaction between the participants (Wibeck 2010: 40, Barbour 2007, Krueger 1997). In addition, focus group study may help participants to understand the experiences of others through sharing with them (Wibeck 2010: 41). This method is different from interviews between two parties, the interviewer and person interviewed. In one to one interviews the researcher defines and controls the situation (Kvale 2007). In a focus group study the central feature is communication between equal partners. As the word *focus* indicates the interview will deal with issues decided on beforehand (Wibeck 2010: 7). During the focus groups, the participants qualify and modify their views in relation to what other participants say (Bryman 2001: 338). This is a feature that suits well with the characteristics of phenomenology of the lifeworld and the theory of a social world (see Schütz & Luckmann 1989).

Each focus group interview took about 30 minutes. Two open ended questions were posed to the groups:

- What are your expectations of the project? (first interview occasions)
- How have these expectations been fulfilled? (second interview occasions five months later)

Before the interviews started, the participants got 5 minutes to discuss in groups about the topic. This was used as an introduction to the sessions. I asked the participants to talk with each other about the given topic and followed their conversations by asking questions about the issues they brought up. After this, the focus group interviews did not follow any schema or a ready-made formula. Consequently, the interviews were sensitive to the topics outside the research focus; a school project. One such topic discussed was a local debate about shutting down some school units in the municipality. The critical role of the researcher is to guide the discussions back to the topic of the interviews.

According to the phenomenological research tradition the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and processed. The transcripts were reviewed thoroughly and repeatedly to identify essential parts or phrases that captured the main significance of the conversation (see. Esaiasson 2002, van Manen 1990/1999). In order to illuminate the social interaction, participants were numbered in each group. Thereafter, it was

13 One interview was documented in handwriting according to a request from one participant in a group.
possible to follow dialogues and the dynamics of the discussions. Moreover, the interviews were marked with ES or PS according to whether teachers represented pre-schools (PS) or elementary schools (ES). This was done to provide the reader with the opportunity to place reflections on the right school level. Pre-schools and elementary schools follow different curriculums in Sweden, which makes it useful to indicate the context. Consequently, different age groups form different contexts.

In accordance with Merriam (2009: 199), the aim of phenomenological analysis is to arrive at structural descriptions of experiences. The analysis focused on the operation of social interaction, e.g. consensus or disagreement (Bryman 2001: 346). As Barbour (2007: 31) expresses, the importance of analysing group interaction lies in the examination of individual voices within discussions. In addition, she (ibid.) argues that all comments made during focus groups are highly dependent upon the context and group members’ responses to each other’s contributions. The same is true in teacher’s relations to projects at school in general – the meaning of a project is born in a social context and an institutional framework.

6.6 Analysis – discovering themes

Studies conducted in accordance with the phenomenology of the lifeworld endeavour to reflect issues which are taken for granted (Barbour 2007). Analysis in the empirical studies started with getting an overview by listening, reading and looking at the data (see Bénéker et al. 2010). Subsequently, general impressions, questions and interesting examples were noted (ibid.). Qualitative analysis in the studies of this thesis aimed at grouping, displaying and discussing the data thematically in order to make comparisons between conceptual contents (see Richie & Lewis 2003, Zur & Eisikovits 2011, Finlay 2014). In papers I, II and III data was collected and read, listened or viewed repeatedly and thoroughly in order to see what patterns could be found and eventually formed themes. As mentioned earlier, lifeworld phenomenological research focuses on regions of the lifeworld (Bengtsson 1999, 2005). The focus on regions, such as positive experiences, future visions or expectations of a project, attach analysis on this region. Moreover, specific to the lifeworld phenomenological approach is also the acknowledgement of embodied being-in-the-world (Merleau-Ponty 1999, Ingold 2000, Nielsen 2009), which directs attention to searching for the holistic descriptions of the lifeworld and keeping an open mind for embodied descriptions of lived experiences.

Studying a social world is inevitable dealing with typifications (Schütz 2011). This means, that all reflections are filled with typifications of social structures.
Thereafter, reflections following research questions illuminate a person’s typifications of the social world. This, however, does not lead to a situation, where analysis can produce empirical generalizations or describe functional relationships (see van Manen 1990). Themes that emerged out of the data are meanings which then participants choose to share in a specific research situation, and the school context had an important role to play in this process.

In order to keep the analysis process as transparent as possible I selected quotations and drawings in the papers. Often themes are described in detail, supported by quotations (Finlay 2014). Moreover, as Finlay (2014) claims themes are interlinked as parts of a holistic description. For this reason, a reader of the studies will be able to evaluate my interpretations compared to the authentic data. For example, I describe how children expressed visions of terror, war and overwhelming industrial pollution in Paper II. The following analysis was that children expressed pessimistic visions of future that reflected cultural images. According to the phenomenology of the lifeworld approach, themes are seen as part of the social world.

However, as the lifeworld is temporal, reflections rely on past experiences even if the question is about anticipation of the future (Schütz 2002). Studying lived experiences is complex, yet the themes which emerged out of the data are valuable for creating a better understanding of the given topics, e.g. children’s visions of the future or teachers shared understanding of a project. In accordance to Almers (2013: 118) life stories collected in lifeworld phenomenological studies are seen neither as constructions free from lived experiences, nor as representations of the past in a naïve realistic sense.

Themes overlap and connect with each other. Therefore, quotations and drawings from the original data were used to illuminate the analytic connections found between the themes. For instance in Paper II, the themes of ‘technology’ and ‘apocalypse’ have similarities in connecting future visions to the development of technology; people have a capacity to occupy or destroy the environment (see Figure 1).
Factories pollute and countries fight for oil. Månen = the moon. A peaceful human society is built on the moon.

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14 Factories pollute and countries fight for oil. Månen = the moon. A peaceful human society is built on the moon.
Furthermore, in the analysis of the drawings each drawing was viewed as a unit in which qualitative similarities and differences were noted in relation to the totality of the empirical data, i.e. as a part of holistic description (Finlay 2014). For example, the drawings of career and working life had in common that only one person was illustrated. Children explained that the person in a drawing was himself/herself. This can be interpreted as an individual vision of the future within the reach of person’s lifetime. In some other themes, the distance in time was more difficult to define or stretched far into the future, beyond the children’s lifetimes (see Paper II). The number of people in a drawing, or what time-perspective the drawing expressed, are examples of qualitative analysis and finding both similarities and differences between the themes. van Manen (1990) refers to themes as structures of experience. What makes all this challenging is that the object of analysis is a lived experience, which cannot be totally captured by conceptual abstractions. As van Manen (2007: 22) states, lived experience is simply experience-as-we-live-though-it in our actions, relations and situations. Besides, van Manen (1990) uses a metaphor according to which themes are described as knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun.

6.7 Validity and methodological limitations

How consistently are the studies presented and how suitable were the methods in accordance with the research questions? Validity in research is, according to Merriam (2009), a relative concept. She stresses that it has to be assessed in relation to the aim and circumstances of the research. Validity depends on the way questions are posed and the way interpretations are made (Kvale 1989). According to Järvenoja (2010: 48) it would be a violation of the basic assumption of the situational nature of the learning process to require control over background variables and repeatability of the research.

Papers I, II and III started out with the research questions and motivating these questions with previous studies, showing a gap in current knowledge as well as presenting the theoretical points of departure. Furthermore, I motivated the analysis by using quotations to show the connections of analyses and the original data. Hence, a reader of this thesis is hopefully able to see the consistency between the aim of the thesis, the theoretical foundation, methodological orientation and analytical interpretations of the empirical data. In other words, the results of the studies are bound to the research context, both theoretically and practically. Although this study is written in English it has been carried out in Swedish. Consequently, some concepts could be translated in several ways. For example, children talked about a game called
“sur” [sur = sour in English], which they explained was a kind of chasing game. Another example is the concept of a schoolyard, which could have been called also a schoolground. Associations connected to “outdoor areas in schools” vary between countries. In the Swedish context, schoolyards are usually rather open, easily and freely accessed and has both play equipment and green areas.

This thesis pursued to present the data collection and the analysis transparently, so that a reader can form a holistic view of the whole research processes. I have explained where and how the empirical studies were conducted. Transparency of the actual lived experiences is another question, since only a part of lived experiences are reflected and others are non-reflected. Bengtsson (1999) underlines that no one method alone has direct access to other people’s lived experiences. Therefore, this thesis favoured multiple methods – method pluralism. Even so, method pluralism could have been applied even to this study more extensively. Only Paper I included two methods utilised to illuminate the same question. Paper I combined evaluative walks with written reflections and allowed children to approach the same question from different perspectives. I would like to encourage looking further into methods that take children’s embodied experiences as a point of departure, such as evaluative walks and combine this with other types of data.

Evaluative walks followed children’s initiatives, and could therefore be described as a child-led method. Walking together, beside the children allowed the researcher to get closer to the children’s lived experiences than would otherwise happen if everyone stayed in the classroom. Children, who are experts in their schoolyard, have more opportunities outdoors for expression and showing significant places, than by reflecting on them from the distance. As Jokinen, Asikainen and Mäkinen (2010) and Renolds and Ivanson (2014) argue, walking methods invite a researcher to actively take part in the lived experiences of others. Walking as a research method is open to many senses. I would encourage researchers to focus on small groups and if possible, several walking occasions with one group, to attain even better understanding of the lived experiences.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, an essential character of the phenomenology of the lifeworld is the concept of embodiment, discussed in paragraph 5.3. Embodiment is essential for human existence in the world (Schütz 2002). According to Merleau-Ponty (1999) perception of the world happens in and through the body. But what consequences does this have for methodological orientation? Even though all our perceptions are embodied, some phenomena are more physical or concretely bodily structured. For instance a schoolyard, as a research topic, is highly permeated with bodily experiences, such as building snow caves, playing or jumping. According
to Paper I, children expressed how embodied experiences were also significant learning experiences, which makes this point of departure additionally relevant in the field of educational research.

Hence, attempts to illuminate the embodied nature of the lifeworld could have taken more nuanced expressions in this thesis, such as in Johansson’s (2003) observational studies with small children. Even if the evaluative walks resulted in research data consisting of discussions and children’s descriptions of embodied situations in the schoolyard, the study could have gained more information from observations of children in the schoolyard. The same is true in the study with the teachers (see Paper III), where classroom observations could have added valuable insights to the embodied nature of classroom situations. However, also in the study of future visions, the embodied nature of human existence appeared as a motive for the drawings. For example, a boy describes how he works at home. He makes a drawing of his room and describes how he is sitting in his room and holding a book in his hands, beside a computer and watching out of a window. This is how he envisions his working life. Embodiment in the teachers’ reflections (see Paper III) are visible in the descriptions of moments in the classroom where a teacher may for example use a zipper as an example to reflect on everyday technology with children. Teachers and children share the same physical context of the classroom, schoolyard, surrounding nature and all the other physical features of the environment. In other words, they all inhabit the same place. As Nielsen (2009) claims embodied awareness has a social significance and importance in educational systems, because such awareness affects children’s well-being, their relationships and quality of life. All in all, the embodied nature of the lifeworld and using scientific creativity needs to be taken seriously in research.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

I have been interested in how ESD can relate to the children’s lifeworld, which explains the title of this thesis: “our place, my future and their project”. These three perspectives emerged from papers I, II and III, and elucidate how place, time and a school project can appear from the children’s point of view. As it was noticed in the beginning of this thesis, ESD is a utopian ideal characterized by issues of globalization, individualization and intergenerational justice – issues that seem at the first glance be far away from the children’s lifeworld. Regardless of this, the perspective in the empirical studies was to illuminate how sustainable development could be approached from the lifeworld perspective, in relation to place, time and a school project. This final chapter of the thesis provides a discussion on the empirical studies in connection to each other and within the wider context of ESD. A final conclusion and recommendations for future research are also provided.

7.1 To find “Our place” together with children

Our relation to a place – a sense of place – has a growing importance in an era of the individualization of social identities as a result of globalization. Much of the previous research concerning children’s sense of place has illustrated how children navigate physically or emotionally in different environments (Lynch 1984, Chawla 2002, Broberg et al. 2003, Kyttä et al. 2009/2012, Thomson 2007). My conclusions from Paper I, state that there is a mutual interplay between human beings and places, which defines places as lived places. The study of children’s experiences in a schoolyard illuminated themes of learning, social relations and institutional boundaries. All these themes described lived experiences that ESD could rely on in a locally relevant manner, but most of all, with respect to the children’s lifeworld. As Broberg et al. (2013) states, more information should be gathered on the environment’s qualities defined by children themselves. But the question is not just about getting more information, the question is rather how to approach the issue and what the purpose is of gaining better understanding about children’s relation to the place.

As concluded in Paper I, the everyday experiences of children are a continuum, not isolated fragments. Therefore a sense of place, both local and global, should be understood as being integral parts of the children’s lifeworld. Lynch (1984) claimed that there is a mutual interplay between the notions of “I am here” and “I am”. Global belonging is a demanding issue for ESD making the question of local identity more
complex than before. Due to globalization: interaction, relations, communication and socio-ecological exchanges are now globally mediated (Nakagawa & Payne 2014, Gruenewald & Smith 2008). This has changed place-based identities; I am here holds global meanings nowadays as well. Regardless of the globalization tendencies, the importance of local and historical dimensions of a sense of place have not disappeared or become any less important. This is confirmed by the results from Paper I, where children’s individual and collective experiences of place elucidated, for example, traditional winter activities. Winter activities are a part of cultural and regional traditions, which highlights a historical dimension to a sense of place.

On the other hand, researchers looking at children’s relationships with their environment have increasingly begun to pay attention to the changing role of the environment in western societies and the use of communication technologies (Tani & Surma-aho 2012: 189). Following changes in human-environment relationships, Tani and Surma-aho (2012: 189) and Malone (2007) claim that urbanization and commercialization have changed not only physical, but also social environments too. Consequently, children’s opportunities for exploring their everyday environments have been restricted (Malone 2007). However, in the context of western societies, the Nordic countries are still exceptional, in having more opportunities for children to explore their neighbourhoods on their own (ibid).

In summary, experiences of places are constantly changing, but by illuminating them as particular moments we can grasp the diversity of meanings that places can have. Even though a schoolyard is an institutional place, governed by adults’ perceptions of appropriate behaviour (Thomson 2007), children challenge and negotiate the existing status quo. According to Paper I, children have a desire for greater freedom in deciding how to use and be in a schoolyard. In other words, children described their desire to make the place more of their “own”. This issue connects the results from Paper I to the theory of action competence and mental ownership (Carlsson & Sanders 2008, Breiting 2008). Children’s participation and their capacity to influence their own living conditions are issues of finding a forum for expressing their experiences and negotiating different interests. This means that children are not a passive group waiting to be activated; instead they have great potential to express their thoughts and find creative ideas concerning their places. Issues of participation and taking a stand on issues affecting the local environment seemed to be partly an institutional question, i.e. not a lack of ideas or interest from children. From the ESD perspective a way to increase our understanding about children’s places is needed. Consequently, exploring children’s ways of relating to a
place will increase an understanding of the children’s circumstances and provide a valuable insight into making places more child-friendly (together with children).

7.2 My future – reflection of distances and justice

This thesis has provided some theoretical insights into intergenerational justice and how children view their futures. Intergenerational justice needs a foothold in the children’s lifeworld, but it can be a challenge to combine these two elements. In accordance with the phenomenology of the lifeworld, we need to focus on exploring the “present now” as a point where people orient themselves in time (see Merleau-Ponty 1962, Schütz 2002:94). The expression “my future” will be understood here as being in the “present now” and envisioning the future from that point. Paper I suggests that school is one of the places where visions of the future are formed and challenged, but hopefully also combined with reflections on justice. The novelty of exploring children’s future visions with the understanding of the temporality of being-in-the-world and the importance of the “present now” gives ESD some insight into where to anchor the issues of intergenerational justice.

Visions of the future have often been discussed in connection with children’s trust in their own competences and abilities to make a difference (Gidley 1998, Lidstone & Stoltman 2007, Ojala 2007, Almers 2009, Persson, Lundegård & Wickman 2011, Tsevreni 2011). Intergenerational justice, on the other hand, is a more complex issue than individual visions of the future. Intergenerational justice is an ethical question of responsibility towards coming generations (Norton 1999, Barry 1999, Löfqvist 2008, Dobson 1998, Page 2008). Some issues of sustainable development, such as nuclear waste, are complex moral questions of responsibility reaching far away in time and overreaching a human lifetime. Acknowledging the temporal dimension of ESD is important but challenging. In accordance with a lifeworld approach, lived experiences of children are considered a basis for the anticipations that a child has for the future. For this reason, in this thesis it is claimed that children’s anticipations are of paramount importance and are a starting point for taking intergenerational justice into realm of ESD. Paper II presents one possible way of doing this in practice.

The children in this study were asked to make a drawing that would describe how the future will look like when they are adults? Four themes emerged from the children’s visions: 1) technology for the future, 2) making a career and envisioning a working life, 3) when the world goes under – apocalypse and 4) it will be good anyway – sameness. The future visions concerning technological solutions were
motivated by environmental arguments or claims that societies in the future need to expand their living space (to the moon for example). Some children expressed more individual or personal visions of the future. Those mostly concerned a career and working life. These visions described closeness between now and then in terms of place and time (short distance). Long distances were found in children’s visions expressing the apocalypse. These visions were situated far away both in place and time. Personal responsibility was not considered in connection to these visions; instead responsibility was placed on polluting industries and international conflicts. Hansson (2010), Béneker et al. (2010), and Håkansson (2010), among others, argue that myths of the apocalypse are part of western culture, which explains why these visions are quite common and emerge in the children’s lifeworld. Stevenson (2008) even claim that popular culture and mass media has contributed to transmitting cultural values more than schooling, which is something to discuss further within ESD and future oriented studies.

Some children shared visions of a future characterized by a sameness compared to present environment and lifestyle. This could indicate difficulty in envisioning or the children’s perception of the pace of changes, e.g. they may see changes happening after their lifetimes. Uncertainty or confusion concerning the future was obvious in some drawings. This could raise the question of emotional relationships with the future illuminating worries and hopes they had. As a conclusion of this paper, it was stated that no matter how far away someone’s visions of the future are in terms of moral, temporal or spatial distance, the other end lies in the lifeworld of that person. Nevertheless, moral, temporal and spatial distances seemed to clarify similarities and differences between different themes and therefore it is recommended to take this aspect into consideration in ESD.

Furthermore, the lifeworld in accordance to critical theory should be discussed in the field of ESD (as it was stated in the chapter 5). When children are asked to visualise their future, they do not do it in a vacuum, but rather in a changing social reality (Schoon 2012, Schütz & Luckmann 1989, Månson 2004, Bohman 1999). Additionally, Schoon (2012) claims that parent-child interaction and parental support is one of the crucial factors for young people’s ability to realize their ambitions or even to plan for the future. Institutional filters and family processes explain different premises for individual life planning which all play a part in studying future visions. Thus, ESD is embedded in social structures and children’s lifeworld reflect this. However, one side of the future visions contain ethical questions of intergenerational justice that reach beyond individual life-planning. Kronlid and Öhman (2013) describe the difference by separating intragenerational (people alive today) and
intergenerational (people alive today and future generations) anthropocentrism. Once again, I emphasise that sustainable development, according to the definition, refers to both people alive today but also coming generations, i.e. intergenerational relations (see Kemp 2005, Norton 1999, Dobson 1998). In the context of ESD “my future” turns eventually into a question of the future for the coming generations.

According to Paper II, children’s visions of the apocalypse expressed consequences of (industrial) human actions over a long period of time. However, these kinds of visions can be seen as a part of a narrative theory of a common human experience (Löfqvist 2008). However, ESD has to find alternatives to go beyond culturally permeated ideas of the end of the world (Strife 2012, Fien & Tilbury 2002). Risks that have become a part of the all-embracing worldview may create an atmosphere of powerlessness (Beck 2000, Strife 2012). Still, this does not mean that the risks are not real. The question is more about breaking the un-reflected ways of understanding the risks. ESD has a possibility to promote children’s hope for the future in connection to a feeling of agency (Ojala 2012) and action competence (Schnack 2008, Breiting 2008, Carlsson & Jensen 2008). Here, phenomenology of the lifeworld is an advantaged point of departure. Based on Paper II, I would like to study further how teachers take the next step – how they reflect together with children on moral values of distance and justice.

7.3 Their project – towards a mutual tune

It is claimed that ESD is a top-down model of education (e.g. Bengtsson & Östman 2013, Sauvé, Brunelle & Berryman 2005). It is even criticized as being part of maintaining the global status quo (Jickling 2013, Rizvi 2009) and producing doxic knowledge (Lozt-Sisitka 2008). Instead of approaching school education from a political or institutional point of departure, Paper III explored ESD as in terms of teachers’ experiences. Paper III discusses how teachers constitute meanings in an ESD-project. The ESD-project was externally financed and included project activities such as a university course, classroom cases and field trips. Among many studies of teachers’ institutional circumstances, Niikko and Ugaste (2012), state that teachers experience difficulties in teaching, because the child groups are too big and teachers have no time to meet children’s individual needs. However, in Paper III, teachers elucidated other organizational issues.

Previous studies have indicated that sustainable development affects teachers’ professional identities (Bursjöö 2011, Lundegård & Wickman 2009). Following findings in Paper III, teachers expected their environmental awareness to increase
during the project. Unfortunately though, it was not possible to analyse further the ways environmental awareness would affect their professional identity, based on these focus group interviews. In addition, teachers emphasized the importance of confirmation in their learning processes. Some of the teachers reflected a need to share outcomes from the project with colleagues, e.g. share professional knowledge and experiences. At the same time teachers expected to get support from the course supervisors but also from their colleagues. Most of the teachers seemed to have expectations concerning both receiving and giving support (see Paper III).

One of the themes to emerge from Paper III was collaboration concerning newly established contacts between and outside the schools. Teachers experienced that project activities provided an arena for establishing these contacts. Collaboration with partners outside the schools was initiated, but a dialog between the partners did not reach a mutual tune (at least from the children’s perspectives). According to the teachers, the children presented posters, miniature models, and drawings at an external exhibition but did not receive questions from the “audience” regarding their contributions. Additionally, controversial issues of wind power and questions relating to the construction of a wind farm nearby the schools did not gain an explicit focus in classroom cases during the project. The teachers’ initial and local idea for the ESD project – wind power and renewable energy – was replaced by other more general topics in the classroom cases. However the teachers did not specifically reflect on the contribution of the study-days (university course) which could have had more focus on controversial and complex issues in ESD. The horizons that were opened in the focus group interviews followed the teachers’ lived experiences and provided a better understanding of premises that might surround the ESD work at schools and preschools. Based on findings in Paper III, further research in ESD is needed to regionalize the question on how teachers connect local and controversial issues with children’s lifeworld.

### 7.4 Final conclusions

Phenomenology of the lifeworld was addressed in papers I, II and III. Consequently, this affected the design of the studies, formulation of questions, empirical studies and finally the analysis of the results. In accordance with Payne (2006) there are good reasons for teachers to take the potential of a phenomenological approach seriously in pedagogical development. Embodiment is one of the concepts that are central for the phenomenology of the lifeworld tradition. Embodiment understood as being an intuition for acting in the world (Merleau-Ponty 1999) forms the basis for visions of
the future as well as a sense of place. Most of all, the concept of embodiment completes the concept of temporality as a basic components of being-in-the-world (Ingold 2000, Lilja 2013, Schütz 2002).

All the studies included in this thesis are anchored in the phenomenology of the lifeworld and seek to answer the criticisms towards ESD; *how graspable and operationalized it is* (Wickenberg 2000) and *whether ESD is capable of renewing and criticizing itself* (Jickling & Wals 2012). As Spurling (1977) formulated, Merleau-Ponty’s existentialism is an attempt to bring Husserl’s phenomenology “down to earth”. Papers I and II showed how children’s experiences can provide a graspable and operationalized starting point in ESD, which can widen children’s temporal and spatial horizons. I mean that in exploring children’s visions of the future it is possible to connect the children’s lifeworld and reflections of intergenerational justice in an innovative way. Moreover, exploring children’s experiences of a sense of place provides a locally relevant pathway for democratic participation and creates situations where children are recognized as social and moral agents (Öhman 2008). There is no doubt that teachers will aim to create a means of teaching that is in the children’s best interest (see e.g. Lilja 2013, Niikko & Ugaste 2012, Björneloo 2007). The issue of whether or not to engage in a children’s lifeworld approach in ESD and especially with controversial local issues is most of all a question of school culture and organizational barriers, which need more attention and discussion from the phenomenology of the lifeworld perspective. However, it is important to realize that even though educational sciences are (and always have been) close to the philosophical and psychological research fields, education should not be reduced in other research fields (Siljander 2004: 234). There is a need to maintain a pedagogical focus even when educators seek philosophical ways to constitute meaning in their praxis.

ESD combined with pedagogical ideals of action competence and PBE has, according to this thesis, the potential to engage children with local issues and thereby strengthen children’s sense of place, both locally and globally. In short, action competence is ideal where participation and learning processes, instead of outcomes, are emphasised. PBE aims to make connections between schools and the community stronger and enhance processes where public issues gain personal meaning. I do not claim that these two educational ideals are the only “right” ways to practice ESD, instead I argue that they are important ways to strengthen the children’s perspectives in ESD. Additionally, the lifeworld approach gives teachers the opportunity to anchor ESD in children’s lived experiences. Hence, the lifeworld approach has the potential to help teachers in focusing on learning processes instead of outcomes. The
phenomenology of the lifeworld approach goes against instrumental and fragmented thinking about education (Bengtsson 2013, van Manen 2007). This is part of the bigger question of changing the current focus from instrumental education (Breiting & Wickenberg 2010, Beack 2012, Schnack 2008, Liedman 2011) to transformative learning about existentially relevant issues (Jickling & Wals 2008, Kemp 2005, Reid 2005). Additionally Laessoe and Lenglet (2012: 8) argue that educational policy strategies must be combined with “bottom up” efforts, i.e. global programmes and campaigns aimed directly at individual teachers and students.

However, as mentioned earlier, locality needs to be discussed in relation to globalization. But, this is not a question of a simple dichotomy. A distinction between the approaches of “globalization from above” and “globalization from below” is important to clarify. Gruenewald (2008) states that PBE takes seriously negative impacts of globalization in the same fashion as the alienation of school education from the immediate context of community life. Referring to PBE, a sense of place becomes one of the relevant starting points in ESD. Gruenewald (2008/ 2003) highlights the importance of local diversity in education. This means diversity within the place as well as between places.

Children are active users and experts of a schoolyard, for example, but not always acknowledged that way. Children are also experts in planning and envisioning their future, but a question for ESD is how to integrate the issue of intergenerational justice with children’s visions. As mentioned earlier, justice in relation to intergenerational relations is more complex than questions of what we want the future to be. Ethical dilemmas of reciprocity and the range of ethical duties follow the reflections of intergenerational justice (Dobson 1998, Barry 1999, Norton 1999, De-Shalit 1995, Löfqvist 2008). Even if justice and sustainability could be seen as two different agendas (Dobson 1998), there would still be a reason to reflect this relation further leaving the demand of reciprocity aside (see Page 2006). ESD is an arena for combining reflections of the future with ethical values. Moreover, ESD is situated between the need to strengthen simple humanitarian values (Beckerman, 1999) and avoiding false global consensus and unproblematic views of sustainable development (Jickling & Wals 2008).

Rizvi (2009) states that education has a major role to play in helping children to realize that global belonging is a dynamic process; politically and historically changing. Learning about others requires learning about ourselves as well, argues Rizvi (2009). As Reid (2005) claims democratic societies need a forum for thinking and negotiating differences, not with the sole aim of reaching agreement, but rather with a commitment to recognize that there are always other than our own ways of
viewing the world. Hence, Paper III reflected on how ESD could renew and criticize itself by focusing on local issues and children’s lifeworld. Moreover, children should be respected and listened to as “already” being citizens in the framework of ESD (Öhman 2008), both regarding issues of place and time. At the same time, teachers need to help children to achieve balance by acknowledging risks without pessimism or cynicism (see Strive 2012, Ojala 2012). Lozt-Sisitka (2008: 116) state that perhaps we are beginning to move towards a new global ethic which transcends all other systems of allegiance and belief, which is rooted in a consciousness of interrelatedness and the sanctity of life. However, from the children’s point of view, issues of sustainable development are not significant before they gain meaning as lived experiences. Taking this point of departure into account in education, the emphasis turns away from instrumental processes and political jargon and places the focus close to children, where they are and how they envision the future.
References


Skolgårdsprojektet i X, vår- och hösttermin 2010


Forskningen kring skolgårdsprojektet innebär att materialet som eleverna har producerat i skolan och möjligtvis intervjuer senare i är sammaställs och analyseras. Forskningen följer forskningsetiska regler som bland annat innebär informerat samtycke, rätt att när som helst avbryta medverkan utan att behöva ange orsak, samt att det insamlade materialet kommer att behandlas så att inte obehöriga kan ta del av det. Resultaten av forskningen kommer att presenteras i form av vetenskapliga artiklar. Ditt barns deltagande skulle vara ett värdefullt bidrag utveckling av liknande projekt och till forskningen.

Var snäll och svara genom att fylla i talongen nedan och lämna den till undertecknad till läsare. Om du har frågor kontakta mig gärna!

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Tack på förhand!
Piteå 2010-03-22
Heli Villanen
Doktorand
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Jag **godkänner inte** att mitt barn får ta del av forskningen och fotona av projektet får användas rapportering & information: ______

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