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# **Becoming a Place-Responsive Practitioner: Exploration of an Alternative Conception of *Friluftsliv* in the Swedish Physical Education and Health Curriculum**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the educational potential of a place-responsive pedagogy to teaching and learning in *friluftsliv* within the Swedish physical education and health (PEH) curriculum. The study draws on qualitative empirical materials from a yearlong research project, together with a group of high school PEH teachers working in seventh through ninth grade. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), this study employed the concept of becoming-place as an analytical tool in exploring modes of thinking and doing school-based *friluftsliv*. The findings suggest that the current understanding of *friluftsliv* as curriculum, perceived as outdoor leisure and recreation, limits teachers' use of school-based *friluftsliv*. The key finding of this study is that a place-responsive pedagogy can enable teachers to work within school-based *friluftsliv* in new and innovative ways and to engage in cross-curricular teaching and learning initiatives more locally.

**KEYWORDS:** *friluftsliv*, place-responsive, curriculum, educational, Deleuze

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With the implementation of the current Swedish school curriculum in 2011, the role of friluftsliv (outdoor education) was enhanced when it became one of three key learning areas within the school subject of physical education and health (PEH; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). The 2011 curriculum highlights four overarching perspectives: historical, environmental, ethical, and international. These overarching perspectives were introduced with the intention that they should be addressed in all subjects, including PEH, in which friluftsliv is imbedded. Despite the emphasis on these overarching perspectives in the Swedish curriculum, the extent to which they have been addressed in educational practice of the school subject PEH in Sweden (Redelius, Quennerstedt, & Öhman, 2015; Swedish School Inspection, 2012), and particularly in friluftsliv, has proven to be limited (Backman, 2011; Lundvall, 2011; Sundberg & Öhman, 2008; Svenning, 2001). Several studies suggest that skill learning in various physical activities has been viewed and generally accepted as central and fundamental to PE practice internationally (Kirk, 2010) and PEH practice in Sweden (Nyberg & Larsson, 2014; Quennerstedt, Öhman & Eriksson, 2008; Redelius, et al., 2015).

Over the last two decades, there is a growing body of critical research in outdoor studies questioning the philosophical underpinnings of outdoor education practice (Beames & Brown, 2016; Brookes, 2002; Loynes, 2002; Nicol, 2002, 2014; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). According to these authors, there has been a move away from an activity-based personal and social development discourse, in favour of more critical awareness in outdoor education research, such as focusing on educating for environmentally sustainable human-nature relations. Internationally, there is a growing body of literature focusing on place in outdoor studies within schooling contexts (Baker, 2005; Beames & Ross, 2010; Brookes, 2002; Brown, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; Mannion, Fenwick & Lynch, 2013; Stewart, 2004; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). These scholars suggest educating for an environmentally sustainable future as the primary goal for outdoor education and propose a place-responsive practice that is responsive to the cultural, historical, and ecological conditions of the land.

However, despite the growing dialogue on place internationally, the educational potential of place has been largely overlooked in discussions of teaching and learning in Swedish school-based friluftsliv research (Schantz, 2011), as well as in higher physical education teacher education (Backman, 2008; Schantz & Silvander, 2004). In these contexts, the educational focus seems to be dominated by a practice based on personal and social development, in the form of acquiring skills and techniques for various outdoor activities, along with a focus on leadership skills and group dynamics. A potential risk with practices centered on personal and social skill development outcomes, is that they may in fact promote and reinforce anthropocentric worldviews, rather than challenge them.

Therefore, in response to the call for a renewal of philosophy and practice for outdoor education (Wattchow & Brown, 2011) and physical education (Kirk, 2010) as well as more practice-based research (Kirk & Haerens, 2014), this article explores possibilities for alternative ways of thinking and doing school-based friluftsliv and for addressing issues of environmentally sustainable human-nature relations. Drawing on qualitative empirical materials from a yearlong research project, this study explores the perspectives of a group of high school PEH teachers working in seventh thru ninth grades and their introduction to a place-responsive pedagogy as an alternative approach to teaching friluftsliv. I borrow the term *educational potential* from Sandell and Öhman (2010), who used it in reference to encounters with nature.

The aim of this study was to explore the educational potential of a place-responsive approach for teaching and learning in Swedish school-based friluftsliv in a seventh thru ninth grade context. The following research questions guided the research process: How is friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum conceptualized by the teachers coming into the research project? What modes of relating to friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH

curriculum may emerge from reconceptualizing friluftsliv based on place-responsive perspectives? Reconceptualizing in this context refers to thinking differently, thus changing the image of thought (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). For the article in hand, this means questioning taken-for-granted assumptions regarding what is considered to be “normal” and “true” concerning the educational philosophy underpinning friluftsliv in the Swedish PEH curriculum.

The article begins by providing an overview of the conceptual and theoretical framework used in this study. This is followed by a description of the research process. The remainder of the article focuses on the empirical analysis, discussion of the findings, and implications for practice.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Increasingly, interest is growing in the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his co-writer Felix Guattari in outdoor studies, especially concerning the roles of place (Clarke & McPhie, 2016; Gough, 2008, 2015; Mannion, Fenwich & Lynch, 2013; Stewart, 2008, 2015). Somerville (2010) suggested that place is a productive framework because it offers a contact zone of cultural contact, an “in-between” space in which it is possible to hold the multiplicity of different stories about place in productive tension. *Place-responsiveness*, a term Cameron (2003) coined, “carries with it the impetus to act, to respond” (p. 180). Following Stewart (2004), Wattchow and Brown (2011), and Mannion et al. (2013), this article focuses on a place-responsive approach that pays particular attention to the empathetic response to the cultural, historical, and ecological conditions of place, or how people perceive, enact, and embody place.

Working with DeleuzoGuattarian concepts in educational research is about changing the image of thought. Roy (2003) suggested that the use of DeleuzoGuattarian concepts “is to help pry open reified boundaries that exist not just in thought, but as affective investments that secure those territorialities” (p. 13). For the article in hand, I used DeleuzoGuattarian concepts to challenge dominant taken-for-granted ways of conceptualizing friluftsliv as a learning area in the Swedish PEH curriculum. Furthermore, Roy suggested that teachers make the effort to loosen boundaries to move beyond those confining spaces, which allows new modes of transformation to become available to enhance their affective capacities. This includes challenging and disrupting fundamental ideas of Western thought, such as the people-centered world view of anthropocentrism.

I bring together Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of becoming and the concept of place-responsiveness, to create *becoming-place* as an analytical tool. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), becoming involves questioning cultural hierarchies, power, and the majoritarian. MacCormack (2001) suggested that becoming is as much about becoming nondominant as it is becoming something else. In this case, becoming-place means taking on the role of the nondominant to bring place to the fore, which has been a previously marginalized discourse in Swedish friluftsliv research and educational practice.

Following Deleuze and Guattari, Stewart (2015) suggested that it is not about asking the essentialist question of what a concept *is*, in this case what is becoming-place? but rather asking, how does/could becoming-place work? and what does/might becoming-place allow me to do? For Deleuze and Guattari (1994), a concept exists in relation to the problem it addresses. Therefore, a concept cannot be looked at in isolation, because every concept exists in relation with other coexisting concepts. In other words, the concept of becoming cannot be looked at in isolation, because it exists in relationship with other coexisting concepts, such as *deterritorialization* and *rhizome*.

Roy (2003) referred to the DeleuzoGuattarian concept of deterritorialization as “a movement by which we leave the territory, or move away from spaces regulated by dominant systems of signification that keep us confined to old patterns, in order to make new connections” (p. 21). In the analysis of the empirical materials in this study, I use the concept of deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to help me notice moments when the teachers express new and previously unthought-of ways of imagining friluftsliv in the PEH curriculum.

For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the rhizome is a mode of thought that displaces binary logic for open pluralistic thinking. Colebrook (2002) described the rhizome as an alternative to the traditional arborescent (tree-like and hierarchal) model of structuring knowledge and thought. Like tubers and mosses, rhizomes grow laterally and are entangled on a plane of immanence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994), that is, together with everything else on the same level. Tree-like thought involves the logic of a distinct order and direction, whereas rhizomatic thought tend to make nonhierarchical, laterally proliferating, and decentered connections. Roy (2003) suggested that seeing the curriculum more as a rhizome, opens up possibilities of seeing the curriculum in terms of its “connectivities and relationalities, rather than as a preformed and pre-given structure” (p. 90).

When teachers imagine the curriculum more like a rhizome, that is, in terms of its connectivities and relationalities, the four overarching perspectives in the curriculum become available and allow for the creation of new directions of teaching and learning in friluftsliv. Therefore, this study explored the possibilities that a place-responsive approach might enable for teachers to address these overarching perspectives in school-based friluftsliv practice.

## Method

This study applied a qualitative longitudinal case study design (Bryman, 2015). One rationale for case study design is its usefulness for the generation of an in-depth and detailed examination of a case. Another advantage is the closeness to real-life situations, which offers possibilities for a deeper understanding of relations between context and process (Stake, 1995). Hence, the aim of this study was to explore the educational potential of a place-responsive approach for teaching and learning in Swedish school-based friluftsliv in seventh thru ninth grade contexts. Two research questions guided the research process: How is friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum conceptualized by the teachers coming into the research project? What modes of relating to friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum may emerge from reconceptualizing friluftsliv based on place-responsive perspectives?

## Participants

The teachers who participated in this yearlong research project attended the 2014 annual Physical Education and Health Convention in Stockholm, Sweden. Through purposive sampling (Bryman, 2015), a group of eight PEH teachers working in seventh thru ninth grade (students aged 13–15 years) were selected. Selection was dependent on their willingness and ability to take part in regularly occurring research activities. Seventh grade is the first year of high school in Sweden. Previous studies (Backman, 2010, Fägerstam, 2012), along with national evaluations of PEH (Quennerstedt et al., 2008; Swedish School Inspection, 2012), suggest that many high school PEH teachers experience difficulties in turning friluftsliv into actual teaching. Another reason for choosing seventh thru ninth grade is that during high school years the amount of time spent on friluftsliv, compared to other learning areas in PEH, begins to decline (Swedish Friluftsliv, 2016). Two members of the research group were

female, and six were male, with 5 to 25 years of teaching experience. They came from different parts of Sweden, including urban and rural, and north and south. Each participant was guaranteed anonymity; therefore, all names are pseudonyms. See Table 1 for a summary of research group members.

**Table 1**

*Summary of research group members*

<b>Name/ years teaching/ school setting</b>	<b>Phase 1: Preworkshop interview</b>	<b>Phase 2: Workshops 1, 2, 3</b>	<b>Phase 3: School project implementation</b>	<b>Phase 4: Follow-up interview</b>
Miriam/15/urban	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mitch/10/suburb	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jake/20/rural	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Joe/10/rural	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ellen/5/inner-city	Yes	Yes	No	No
James/5/inner-city	Yes	Yes	No	No
Simon/25/rural	Yes	Yes (1 & 2)	No	No
Andrew/10/urban	Yes	Yes (1 & 2)	No	No

## Research design

The empirical materials for this research project consisted of eight preworkshop interviews, four follow-up interviews, 11 individual workshop reflections, and researcher journal. The interviews were the primary empirical materials for analysis. The workshop reflections and researcher journal were regarded as supporting materials because their main contribution to the research process was to enrich the understanding of the teachers' different becomings. Furthermore, the workshop reflections and researcher journal were used to inform the process of planning the remaining workshops. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The selected excerpts were translated from Swedish into English.

The project was divided into four phases. The first phase focused on preworkshop interviews. Phase two was the workshop phase. Phase three involved the implementation of place-responsive school projects. The fourth phase consisted of follow-up interviews and evaluation. In the first phase of the project, I meet with each teacher in their home community (or home school) and conducted individual semistructured interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) that lasted between 50 to 80 minutes. Topics that were covered in the interviews conducted before the workshops included how the participants perceived the concept of *friluftsliv*, specific outdoor experiences and places of significance to the participants, participants' perceptions of *friluftsliv* as a learning area in the PEH curriculum, and constraints and possibilities for changing educational practice.

Visiting each group member and spending a day together was important for two reasons. First, I become familiar with each group member's local milieu and acquired some understanding regarding the places where they work. Second, I established a mutually respectful and trusting relationship with the teachers. The visits and interviews were conducted in February, 2015. In the second phase of the project, the research group met once a month for a full day in March, April, and May, 2015.

Workshop 1 (March) focused on analyzing some of the taken-for-granted assumptions that affect the group members' educational practice. To facilitate the willingness and ability

to imagine new approaches to teaching school-based friluftsliv, the group needed an entry point. One way I attempted to do this was presenting excerpts from the previous interviews, displayed on posters for everyone to see and read. From seeing and discussing some of their own quotes and collaboratively categorizing them into themes, the research group members started to think critically about some of the taken-for-granted assumptions affecting the way they think about school-based friluftsliv.

This workshop also worked as a form of respondent validation (Bryman, 2015). By providing the research group members with some initial findings from the first interviews that took place a month earlier, I was able to discuss my findings and impressions with them to determine if the findings were congruent with their views. An example of such taken-for-granted assumptions is viewing school-based friluftsliv as being the same as leisure and recreation. In other words, school-based friluftsliv was considered to be all about the experience, the tranquility of nature through outdoor activities in remote settings.

Workshop 2 (April) focused on introducing a place-responsive approach to teaching within school-based friluftsliv and putting theory into practice. Discussions were combined with practical outdoor sessions in the local landscape. Focus was on reading the land from engaging in what Gough (2008) referred to as the multifarious qualities of place, such as learning from its natural and cultural history and place stories.

In the third and final workshop (May), the research group members shared their project plans and gave each other feedback and ideas around the various projects they were about to implement in the upcoming fall semester.

In the third phase of the project, the teachers implemented their place-responsive projects at their schools. To assist the teachers in discovering new strategies and practices for mobilizing the friluftsliv curriculum in their everyday work lives as PEH teachers, I asked the teachers to each develop a place-responsive project based on the three workshops, where the notion of place-responsiveness was presented. They were to implement their projects during a coherent 5-week period.

Miriam's goal for her place-responsive friluftsliv project was to have the students in ninth grade engage in the natural and cultural history of three particular places close to the school. These students would then guide the students in seventh and eighth grade in the local landscape and learn about what makes these places unique. The project turned into a cross-curricular learning initiative involving the entire school. Cross-curricular refers to all the different school subjects in the curriculum working with one common theme, in this case, place. They named the project My City, and the students documented each place in focus using digital media and presented it in the form of a Web-based advent calendar. Behind each of the 24 "windows" in the calendar, a new place and part of the city was introduced.

Mitch's plan for a place-responsive friluftsliv project was to have his students engage in learning about the local history and ecology of a small lake close to the school. This lake attracts bird-watchers with its rich bird life. At the same time, the lake is also under significant pressure from the township, which wants to build apartments in the remaining "natural environment" surrounding the lake.

Once every year, Joe and his colleague take a group of 15 students on a 5-day hiking trip in the mountains. Joe's plan for a place-responsive friluftsliv project was to focus on learning about the ecology and history of the region in which they would journey and how climate change is affecting the arctic fox, the arctic char, the glaciers, and indigenous Sami culture.

Jake's plan for a place-responsive friluftsliv project was to focus on place history and the stories of those who lived and worked at one of the biggest ironworks in Sweden during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which was located near the school. The project grew bigger than Jake had

expected, and soon all of the students in seventh grade were engaged in the cross-curricular project about this local and historical place.

In the fourth and final phase of the research project, the follow-up interviews were conducted at each project group members' workplace. Topics that were covered included how the participants perceived the concept of place-responsiveness, reflections on place-responsive pedagogy within school-based friluftsliv, implications for educational practice in school-based friluftsliv, and challenges and plans for the future.

An important aspect of this final phase was also to allow for the teachers to meet again and share their thoughts and experiences from working with place-responsive approaches in school-based friluftsliv and from participating in this research project. For this purpose, I met with the four remaining members of the project group at the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences in Stockholm. In addition to sharing their personal experiences with each other, they gave an oral presentation at the Physical Education and Health Convention, the same convention they had attended the year before.

## Results

In the first phase of the analysis, I read the interview transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the empirical materials. This also involved reading my own research journal notes and the participant workshop reflections that participants had sent to me by e-mail after each workshop. In the second phase, the focus was on analyzing the interview transcripts looking for moments of deterritorialization. Inspired by Roy (2003), this included looking for qualities in which *lines of flight*, expressed as movements of deterritorialization, allowing the teachers to move away from spaces that kept them confined to old patterns, to make new connections or find alternative ways of imagining friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a line of flight is the liberating process of opening up to new connectivities and relationalities and the possibilities this offers.

First, the analysis focuses on the research question regarding how the teachers coming in to the research project conceptualize friluftsliv in the Swedish curriculum. Second, the analysis focuses on the research question regarding the modes of relating to friluftsliv as a curriculum learning area that may emerge from reconceptualizing friluftsliv based on place-responsive perspectives. Being mindful that I am presenting the interviews in the form of a "before and after" does not imply that I am creating a binary between "where the teachers are coming from" and "where they are now". Nor am I trying to create what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) called "a false conception of voyage" (p. 26), by seeking a beginning and end for each of their journeys. Rather, what I am trying to do is to explore movements of deterritorialization in which the teachers make small shifts in their daily routines, allowing them to move away from constraining habits to find new ways of imagining school-based friluftsliv.

## Questioning the Taken for Granted

The excerpts presented in the first part of the analysis are drawn from individual semistructured interviews with the teachers conducted before the three workshops. Based on the teachers' responses, three *discursive plateaus* were produced. I borrow the term *discursive plateau* from Honan (2004), who used it to describe the various discourses operating in educational policy texts. The first discursive plateau was how friluftsliv was conceptualized as leisure and recreation. The second discursive plateau was how school-based friluftsliv was perceived or conceptualized as being the same as outdoor recreation activities. The third discursive plateau was the teachers' perceived lack of curricular guid-

ance. I view these discursive plateaus as rhizomatic and, as such, having no clear boundaries but rather, per Colebrook (2002), as “moving in every direction, branching out to create new directions” (p. 77). However, I suggest these discursive plateaus not to pin down any one particular meaning, but rather to open the discussion regarding the taken-for-granted view of friluftsliv, as expressed by the teachers in the interviews prior to the introduction to a place-responsive pedagogy in the three workshops that followed.

**School-based friluftsliv the same as leisure and recreation.** One of the more immediate findings from the analysis of the preworkshop interviews was how coherent the picture seemed regarding the way these teachers conceptualized friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum. This resonates with Roy’s (2003) notion of seeing the curriculum as a preformed and pregiven structure. For example, all of the teachers talked about school-based friluftsliv as being the same as leisure and recreation. All of the participants also expressed an uncertainty regarding friluftsliv in relation to its educational purpose. For example, when asked about friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum, James said,

I feel a bit divided there. On the one hand, I think of just being out in the forest... I grew up picking berries and mushrooms... maybe more of this recreational... but then a bit becomes more this general idea that most people might think... travel from point A to point B, preferably with a backpack and a portable stove... a bit more of this practical experience. I think friluftsliv is the most difficult learning area to be working with... what is it they should actually learn from this?

James’ comment reflects the difficulties in turning something he conceptualizes as leisure and recreation into education. This was something all of the teachers expressed. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), it is not about asking the essentialist question of what school-based friluftsliv *is*, or its essence, but rather asking the question of how it works. In this case, it means asking the question what friluftsliv as a concept allows teachers to do and what kind of educational practice it produces.

This way of relating to friluftsliv as leisure and recreation restricts the teachers to existing patterns and practices centered on leisure and recreation as *the* way. In other words, to think of school-based friluftsliv as being something other than the majoritarian practice of recreation activities becomes almost impossible. Another example of friluftsliv in terms of being the same as leisure and recreation is revealed in a comment from Jake:

Friluftsliv as a concept can be interpreted in lots of different ways. For me, then I think of it in old terms, you are out walking, you are out canoeing, you are hiking, you know all those things... a bit old fashioned but well-established. At the same time I think a bit ahead... if we are outdoors, then maybe we can integrate other subjects into friluftsliv, but I have a tough time being more specific. Could it be history? Could it be something else? There are still a lot of undiscovered things to do in the outdoors.

Jake’s comment relates to friluftsliv as leisure and recreation, which he refers to as “a bit old fashioned but well-established”. However, he continues by saying something that opens up new ways of thinking and doing friluftsliv. From a becoming-place perspective, Jake is leaving the formerly well-known territory and confined space of old habits and attempting to make new connections, even though he is not sure of what this line of flight of new ideas and “undiscovered things” in school-based friluftsliv might become.



**School-based friluftsliv the same as outdoor recreational activities.** The second discursive plateau from the preworkshop interviews was the teachers identifying their practice as one based on outdoor recreation activities. Speaking about teaching and learning in school-based friluftsliv, Miriam commented, "In school, it is a lot about teaching the students a new activity. Making a fire, building a wind shelter, making soup on the portable stove, tying knots and things like that". Similarly, Ellen felt,

Friluftsliv is the possibility to be out in nature and do different activities out in nature. It can be anything from walking or canoeing. To see the environment that is around us and using it. There is great canoeing just nearby, tracks for walking, and so on.

Miriam's and Ellen's comments reflect an understanding that thinking of friluftsliv as leisure and recreation activities affects what they see as being possible to include in their teaching. A focus on outdoor skills, for example, how to make a fire or build a wind shelter, may seem like the right thing to do when school-based friluftsliv is understood to be the same as outdoor physical activity. However, a potential problem associated with an activity-centered approach is that teaching for the sake of the activity itself becomes the sole purpose of learning.

Several scholars in outdoor studies have critiqued such a form of teaching and learning for being decontextualized; the natural world is reduced to merely a backdrop for people-centered activities (e.g., Baker, 2005; Brookes, 2002; Nicol, 2014). For school-based friluftsliv, such a practice may lead to other possible aspects of learning becoming subjugated by the hegemonic position of what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) called the majoritarian. Another example of the difficulty of turning friluftsliv into education, when conceptualized as recreational outdoor experiences primarily in remote places, is reflected in Joe's thought:

When I think back on my teacher training, in one of the books it said that 'friluftsliv is the nature experience without any demands of performance or competition.' That definition has been following me ever since. But when out in school one has been forced to re-evaluate that a bit. When one comes out into the school, one realizes that this is not really how it works. In school it is about activities, the concept gets a bit blurred. What I think it stands for becomes a bit different when you come out into the schools.

Joe's example reveals some of the complexity of bringing societal understanding of the concepts of friluftsliv as leisure and recreation into the school context without conceptualizing friluftsliv as a learning area within the curriculum. Joe is also referring to the official Swedish definition of friluftsliv, presented in a statute on government financial aid for outdoor organizations (Svensk Författningssamling, 2003). In the past 14 years since that statute, scholars and educators in Swedish friluftsliv have widely adopted this definition. As such, the official Swedish definition has never been challenged regarding its usefulness for relating to friluftsliv within a schooling context.

Again, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) noted that it is not about what a concept is, or its essence, but rather about what the concept allows teachers to do or produce. Joe's comments reflects how his notion of friluftsliv, conceptualized as leisure and recreation, keeps him confined to old patterns and habits that limit the possibilities for thinking and doing school-based friluftsliv differently.

**A perceived lack of curriculum guidance.** The third discursive plateau from the preworkshop interviews was the teachers' perceived lack of curricular guidance regarding

friluftsliv as a learning area within PEH. This relates back to the uncertainty expressed by the teachers regarding friluftsliv in relation to its educational purpose. When asked about friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum, Simon said,

In friluftsliv, it is less clear regarding what you should do and how you should do it, compared to other learning areas in PEH. It feels as if we have been flying blind for quite some time now. But at the same time, what to assess is quite clear.

Simon's comment reflects something of an educational paradox. On the one hand, he does not seem to find much guidance in the curriculum regarding what to teach or how to teach friluftsliv. But on the other hand, he comments that the curriculum is "quite clear" regarding what to assess, for example, orienteering skills and the ability to navigate in unknown terrain; students' ability to plan and carry out outdoor activities adapted to various conditions, environments, and rules; swimming and safety close to water. These are all part of the subject matter of friluftsliv. Simon's comment reflects that he does not find much difference in the way these are presented as learning outcomes, or the way in which they are presented as knowledge requirements for friluftsliv in the PEH curriculum.

Andrew also pointed to the lack of curricular guidance:

There has always been a problem with what is it that you are actually supposed to be teaching in friluftsliv. However, I do believe that it has become better with the new curriculum. For one thing, friluftsliv has become a knowledge requirement and that always helps when talking to the principle about resources and practical stuff. But it's not like as a teacher, I feel really confident about what to teach after reading that.

Similar to Simon, Andrew suggests the statutory curriculum documents to be of little help when it comes to what teaching in friluftsliv should actually be about. Andrew's comment shows that despite more emphasis on assessment criteria in the revised Swedish compulsory school curriculum (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011), there is still a great deal of uncertainty regarding the educational purpose of friluftsliv as a learning area within PEH.

## **Opportunities provided by a place-responsive approach**

The following excerpts are drawn from individual semistructured follow-up interviews with the teachers toward the end of the 1-year research project, once they had completed their school-based project. The analysis in this section will be guided by the second research question regarding the modes of relating to friluftsliv as a curriculum learning area that may emerge from reconceptualizing friluftsliv based on place-responsive perspectives. I have selected excerpts where a rhizomatic analysis enabled me to notice moments of deterritorialization. I looked for moments in which the teachers found new and innovative ways of reconceptualizing friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum. In the analysis, these moments are referred to as deterritorialization or lines of flight. When asked if the introduction to place responsiveness has challenged how he thinks of school-based friluftsliv in any way, Mitch said,

Before this project, I hadn't been working with place at all. I have always thought of friluftsliv as how we have to do something more thrilling. But actually we can make the place we are at, just as exciting. I take a great deal

from this research project, because I haven't at all been working with friluftsliv this way before. Now I have a solid base to stand on and that I can take even further. I believe I have found a way that makes it possible to work with friluftsliv during a lesson as well.

Mitch provided an example in which it is possible to notice several moments of becoming when he leaves or moves away from old habits and patterns of thought to make new connections regarding friluftsliv as a curriculum. The findings from the preworkshop interviews showed that these teachers found it difficult to underpin friluftsliv experiences with a learning focus.

Mitch's comment reflects that a place-responsive pedagogy, and with it, an ontological shift away from a personal and social development discourse in favor of human-nature relations as the focal point for school-based friluftsliv, enabled him to find new and innovative teaching methods and topics to teach within friluftsliv in the curriculum. Mitch also found a way to work with friluftsliv within a 50-minute lesson. Previous research (e.g., Backman, 2011) suggests that broadening friluftsliv lessons beyond content like orienteering or outdoor skills (e.g., building a wind shelter or operating an outdoor stove) is something that most PEH teachers in Swedish schools struggle with. Mitch continued,

As a PE teacher, you often have the same way of thinking around friluftsliv. I often feel that I would like to have more friluftsliv skills, be more knowledgeable, but maybe that is not what you need. When I have been thinking about the place-responsive approach, I want to have the students working together with me. We can create knowledge and discover things together. I have begun thinking this way more and more, the longer I have been working as a PE teacher. I don't have to know everything perfectly, but rather I can bring the students into process. And the place-responsive approach has added to this way of thinking even more.

Mitch's comment reflects that often there is a common conception of how friluftsliv is perceived among fellow PEH teachers. This relates back to how friluftsliv was conceptualized as outdoor physical activity and underpinned by leisure and recreation, as these teachers expressed in the interviews before the workshops in this research project.

Mitch's comment also reflects that changing the way he thinks of school-based friluftsliv enables him to question the subject position of the teacher and move away from a role where he feels a need to be more skilled and more knowledgeable toward a more relational (i.e., non-hierarchical) teacher–student role in which the teacher and the students can discover and learn in and with place collectively.

Joe's insights from his involvement in this research are similar to Mitch's:

This approach opens up a whole new world. The place perspective has made me think more of what is around me, what has happened in these parts earlier. Charcoal production from coal pits is a major part of place history in this area. Hydropower may not be PEH, but it is friluftsliv. This is where I see the biggest benefit, getting more dimensions to something that used to be kind of shallow. It is great to see what happens in your head and how you start to see new possibilities, as you get new inputs.

Joe's comment reflects a change in the way he looks at his local environments. A new input, in this case in the form of a place-responsive approach, has enabled him to see new possi-

bilities and think of school-based friluftsliv in terms of its connectivities and relationalities. Joe's new becoming offers alternative lines of flight that allow Joe to move away from a way of thinking of school-based friluftsliv that keeps him confined to old patterns of thought. It enables him to follow his own particular line of flight, connecting one multiplicity with other multiplicities. In Joe's case, this includes connecting learning in friluftsliv to hydropower and place history. When asked if he thinks a place-responsive pedagogy has affected how the students view friluftsliv as a learning area in the curriculum, Joe explained,

The students with prior experience of backpacking got something out of it too, a bigger depth and new things to consider. Not simply doing something, an activity they had done before. Now they had to talk about sustainability and climate change. Previously it has been difficult to grasp friluftsliv, what is it? You are outdoors and expected to experience.... something.

Joe compared his experiences of the backpacking trip underpinned by a place-responsive approach to his experiences from traditional and more activity-based trips. Joe saw place responsiveness as vital to add new dimensions to the learning process, as opposed to a focus on the activity itself. The topics the students were discussing this time while backpacking, such as the ecology and history of the place, were the same topics they had studied and prepared in school before the journey. Joe's comment reflects that a place-responsive approach seemed to have enriched the learning experience for both teachers and students.

In a similar vein, Jake, who before the research project had ideas about other ways of teaching school-based friluftsliv but was not sure of what these "undiscovered things" might become, commented,

Working with learning about place in school-based friluftsliv makes it more concrete what it is the student is supposed to learn. That we experience the place, that we discover the place, that we look at the place through different eyes, so to speak. Place becomes more than just a location where we can be physically active.

Jake's comment reflects an understanding that a place-responsive approach offers alternative ways of thinking about school-based friluftsliv. Place history and place stories as the focal point for learning provided a subject matter that allowed school-based friluftsliv to become something besides outdoor recreation activities. From embodied learning in and with place, the seventh grade students involved in the ironworks project were not merely learning about the history of the place. As per Wattachow and Brown (2011), they were *doing* history while they experienced the interconnectedness of place and history in this cross-curricular multidisciplinary learning experience.

The last two excerpts from the follow-up interviews are from Miriam. In the interview before the research project and the introduction to the concept of place, Miriam's way of talking about school-based friluftsliv was instrumental. She talked about her own practice primarily in the form of teaching a new activity and of outdoor techniques such as how to make a fire and building a wind shelter. When asked if a place-responsive approach has affected the way she looks at her local area and school surroundings, Miriam stated,

It has become easier to work with friluftsliv closer to the school. When working with the My City project, I focused on the nearby environment instead of going to a lake 200 km away to do friluftsliv. Places where we previously have done endurance training are now interesting to get to know more closely. How long

have they been mining lime stone in the quarry? When did this begin? What is special about this little frog down in the quarry, and so on? Place responsiveness opens up for other perspectives, more than just physical activity, which makes it easier to plug-in other colleagues and subject areas. I look at the school surroundings differently now, and I think the students do too.

Similar to the other teachers in the research group, Miriam thought a place-responsive approach enabled her to find new ways of relating to friluftsliv as a curriculum learning area within PEH. By focusing on place rather than activity, Miriam moved away from the activity-based majoritarian discourse of school-based friluftsliv. Miriam's comment also reflects that a place-responsive approach enabled her to find ways to engage her colleagues and students in cross-curricular learning initiatives in friluftsliv close to the school. Miriam continued,

Learning about place in relation to the four overarching key perspectives in the curriculum, makes it more comprehensible for the students – why, that there is a meaning. One of my students said to me, “This way of thinking about place, you can bring when going travelling with your family.” Then I really think you have got the hang of it.

For Miriam, a place-responsive approach opened up the possibilities of what Roy (2003) referred to as seeing the curriculum more like a rhizome, in terms of how things connect and relate to one another. The four key perspectives that Miriam mentioned are the historical, environmental, international, and ethical perspectives that should be addressed in all learning areas. Miriam saw a place-responsive approach as helping her and her students to see how the overarching perspectives connect and relate to friluftsliv and to each other in new and meaningful ways.

## Discussion

The place-responsive approach explored in this article challenges the taken-for-granted way of relating to friluftsliv as a learning area in the Swedish PEH curriculum. This article proposes a place-responsive pedagogy as an alternative conception of school-based friluftsliv. However, it can be challenging for teachers to move away from the majoritarian friluftsliv as leisure and recreation activity discourse and to make a philosophical shift to do school-based friluftsliv differently. These case studies suggest that it is possible to reconceptualize school-based friluftsliv. From engaging in a place-responsive approach and seeing the curriculum in rhizomatic ways, the four teachers moved beyond the dominant friluftsliv discourse to find new and innovative approaches to teaching friluftsliv. These teachers' place-responsive projects are examples of innovative approaches. The analysis of the empirical materials using the concept of becoming-place, along with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concepts of deterritorialization and rhizome, enabled me to explore the different ways these teachers were able to move beyond those confining spaces that exist in thought. In relation to seeing the curriculum in more rhizomatic ways (Roy, 2003), new modes of transformation that enhanced their affective capacities became available. In turn, this opened up new and innovative ways of relating to school-based friluftsliv.

In addition, these findings indicate possible implications for friluftsliv teachers. The first implication relates to friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum. The teachers in this case study were able to become responsive to place once they had developed the following understanding: If we want a school-based friluftsliv to respond better to the overarching perspectives in the curriculum, we must first question the taken-for-granted

assumptions underpinning contemporary educational practice in school-based friluftsliv. This involves questioning the understanding of school-based friluftsliv as being the same as leisure and recreation activities. It also involves questioning what this way of thinking or conceptualizing friluftsliv allows teachers to do and not do.

Based on these findings, I suggest that a place-responsive approach and a focus on human-nature relations offer new ways of relating to school-based friluftsliv. As Miriam expressed, a place-responsive approach allows for a practice that is based on curiosity and getting to know places more closely. A curiosity towards places locally around the school, or more remotely, draws from embodied engagement in and with the cultural, historical, and ecological conditions of those places.

Similarly, Wattchow and Brown (2011) suggested that place-responsiveness is a reciprocal process. It is about becoming responsive to how we, as humans, affect and in turn are affected by those places. It is also about engaging in place stories that belong to these places and creating stories from embodied learning with and in places. An initial curiosity towards place may open further discussions and more critical questions to be asked by the teacher and students, depending on the age group. This resonates with Stewart (2008), who suggests that this includes asking questions such as whose place and history we are including when creating our own place stories.

The second implication is related to cross-curricular learning. From seeing the curriculum more like a rhizome (Roy, 2003) in terms of its connectivities and relationalities, the teachers worked in new and innovative ways and engaged more in cross-curricular learning initiatives in and with the local landscape, through the place-responsive approach. Findings from this study support previous research in which participants provided examples of how outdoor learning within a place-responsive approach can increase cross-curricular engagement and enhance connections between people and places (Brown, 2013; Fägerstam, 2014). As the teachers in this project expressed, a place-responsive approach allowed them to work with learning in friluftsliv close to the school. The perceived lack of guidance in the curriculum that they experienced before participating in this research project seemed to be replaced with educational potential after they were introduced to a place-responsive approach to teaching within school-based friluftsliv.

The third implication relates to the teachers' outlook on nature and their local surroundings. By moving away from the majoritarian practice of outdoor leisure activities in school-based friluftsliv, and by making the ontological and empirical turn toward an empathetic response to the cultural, historical, and ecological conditions of places, the teachers developed a different relationship with their local surroundings. In reference to Baker (2005), the local environment, which from an activity-based perspective used to be no more than a backdrop for people-centered activities, has instead become what Wattchow and Brown (2011) referred to as a place rich in local meaning and significance.

## Conclusion

The findings from this study suggest that a place-responsive pedagogy to teaching school-based friluftsliv has educational potential and has opened up new and previously unthought-of ways for these teachers to relate to friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum. Based on these findings, I suggest that if we are to come to terms with at least some of the concerns that these teachers expressed, an ontological and epistemological shift in how we relate to school-based friluftsliv is necessary. We live in a time when the effects of climate change and the increasing need to pursue a course of sustainable development loom large. I believe that school-based friluftsliv can make an important contribution in educating for an environmentally sustainable future.

As suggested in this article and elsewhere (e.g. Baker, 2005; Mannion, Fenwick & Lynch, 2013; Payne, 2002; Wattchow & Brown, 2011), friluftsliv and outdoor education pedagogy are in need of a reconceptualized educational philosophy. There is a need for a theoretical framework that recognizes and embraces “diverse approaches to education and meets the changing needs of individuals, communities, societies, ecosystems, and environments in the twenty-first century” (Hill, 2012, p. 46). This echoes the call for more place-responsive practices in outdoor education and school-based friluftsliv.

Simply taking a place-responsive approach to teaching friluftsliv may not be the solution to the problems facing school-based friluftsliv in the 21st century, including moving away from an activity-based personal and social development discourse in favor of more critical awareness, such as focusing on educating for an environmentally sustainable future, as the primary goal for friluftsliv as a learning area in the PEH curriculum. Stewart (2004) noted that a universal “one-size-fits-all” approach cannot be applied to developing place-responsive education. However, as shown by these teachers, questioning taken-for-granted ways of thinking and doing school-based friluftsliv is a productive way to enter this process.

As with all research, this study has limitations. Case study research is often associated with limited external validity and generalizability (Bryman, 2015; Stake, 1995). With the limited scale of this case study, there is a call for more practice-based research focusing on place responsiveness as a focal point for teaching and learning in school-based friluftsliv in Sweden and perhaps beyond. As a former high school PEH teacher who continues to teach friluftsliv at the tertiary level, I understand that I am a part of and a performative agent in these becomings. Therefore, no matter how decentered or relational I strive to be, my reading of the empirical materials will always be influenced by my understanding and interpretation of it. This study explored teachers’ perspectives in seventh thru ninth grade contexts. Researchers can further explore the educational potential of a place-responsive pedagogy from students’ perspectives, to gain an understanding of how students perceive such a teaching approach and what a place-responsive pedagogy might enable in terms of student learning within school-based friluftsliv.

Findings from this study suggest that place-responsive pedagogy may open up possibilities for teachers. By embracing what Wattchow and Brown (2011) refer to as “the mundane and everyday experience of particular outdoor places” (p. 88), teachers may be able to respond to the vision and address the four overarching perspectives stated in the curriculum. Collectively, the teachers in this study have taken the first steps toward a deeper understanding of the educational potential of a place-responsive pedagogy in school-based friluftsliv and in becoming place-responsive practitioners. The goal of this project was to explore the educational potential of a place-responsive pedagogy as a way to empower teachers with the skills and motivation to reconceptualize school-based friluftsliv in the Swedish PEH curriculum. The key finding in this study is that a place-responsive pedagogy may enable teachers to work within school-based friluftsliv in new and innovative ways and engage in cross-curricular teaching and learning initiatives more locally.

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