

Ecocentric Friluftsliv in a Pedagogical Context: A Practical Approach to Ecophilosophy

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Introduction

In this age of the Anthropocene, where the human impact on Earth is causing dramatic consequences (IPBES 2019), practising and spreading the ideas from the deep ecology movement (Næss 1999) and ecophilosophy (Setreng 2015) is more important than ever. The distinctions between these two ecocentric ways of thinking will be discussed later in the paper, but our idea is that reading and writing about them is good, teaching in a classroom might be better, but perhaps a practical approach in nature, in a pedagogical context is best? All the above is cognizant of the potential ripple effect if one is able to inspire future teachers. Our aim is to investigate how an outdoor education project concerning working in a forest to make firewood, within an ecocentric friluftsliv perspective, can convey concepts from the Norwegian ecophilosopher Sigmund Kvaløy Setreng (2014, 2015) to friluftsliv teacher candidate students. During the firewood project, these students spend a few days in a forest making firewood using only traditional tools. One educational goal is that they learn lasting lessons through their experiences linked to Setreng's ecophilosophy (2014, 2015). We consider practical application of ecophilosophy germane to Setreng's position in ecophilosophy, and as an important part of a transformative teacher education (Biseth et al. 2022). Our ecocentric pedagogical friluftsliv perspective implies that nature is the centre of attention and humans are considered one species with equal worth as any other species (Washington et al. 2017). This requires that the pedagogical activity happens in mutual dependency with nature (Heggen 2015), and nature is considered to be a co-teacher, not just a scene in which an activity takes place (Tordsson 1993).

A qualitative exploratory case study approach (Yin 2009) will be applied to investigate whether an educational project has the potential to communicate ecophilosophical concepts. This involves an analysis of the firewood project based on a description from

the professor's perspective and selected concepts from mainly Setreng's ecophilosophy (Setreng 2014, 2015). The case study methodology makes it possible for a potential audience to understand abstract ideas and intentions in the complex didactical practice investigated (Yin 2003). The intuitive approach also provides the researchers with a high degree of flexibility and independence (Streb 2010). This exploratory case study will additionally serve the purpose as a preliminary step in the development of the authors' consecutive studies (Yin 2009).

Continuing this paper, the differences in thinking between Arne Næss and his student Sigmund Kvaløy Setreng are important to our investigation, focusing on their views on the development of environmental awareness. Furthermore, the Scandinavian tradition and cultural phenomenon of *friluftsliv* will be elaborated on but is generally translated to outdoor life, open-air life, or free air life (Beery 2013) and involves the centrality of joyful wellbeing of sustainable "simple in means-rich in ends" (Næss 2007) activities in nature. There is an understanding with *friluftsliv* that there is an inherent wisdom to be garnered in the open air (Reed and Rothenberg 1993). These considerations will be germane to approaching our analysis of the firewood project.

Næss's and Setreng's Ecophilosophy Discourse

Sigmund Kvaløy Setreng and his more well-known colleague Arne Næss did not agree about the terminology and understanding of ecophilosophy (Næss 1999; Setreng 2014). Næss saw ecophilosophy as more of an objective academic field without values and norms. He consequently began to develop the ideas for deep ecology in 1972 and ecosophy in 1970 as constructs, which include values and norms with room for individual views (Næss 1999). Setreng disagreed with this differentiation and feared it would lead the movement away from needed change in society (Setreng 2014). Setreng's ecophilosophy involved life's daily actions. His potato farming and move back to his family farm speaks to this, as does the practicality of a "life necessity" activity such as engaging with firewood. Setreng wanted to avoid what he called "off the ground" language and ideas and rather focus on "on the ground" work (Setreng 2015). For Setreng (2014), ecophilosophy inspired a subjective call for action that was all too easily lost in the intellectual exercise of developing a deep ecology framework. Ecophilosophy was to advance more assertively peaceful environmental activism. As a result, Setreng

continued to use the term ecophilosophy, and his view will be followed throughout the paper unless specifically addressing theory or matters related to Næss' deep ecology and ecosophy.

Setreng and Selected Ecophilosophy Concepts

Compared to Arne Næss, Sigmund Kvaløy Setreng is certainly not as well known internationally. However, in Norwegian academic friluftsliv circles, he could be considered as one of the four most influential Norwegian ecophilosophers along with Peter Wessel Zapffe, Nils Faarlund, and Arne Næss. We are aware of the task to introduce Sigmund Kvaløy Setreng to a wider audience.

Setreng grew up in the mountainous areas in central Norway and developed at an early age a close connection with nature, a connection that makes up the foundation of his ecophilosophical work and engagement in ecopolitics:

My origin can be found in nature in the mountains. Hiking all over the mountains in Jotunheimen together with my father, I did grow up in Lom: landscape and rivers! It almost became something religious, a feeling supported by a beauty that has inspired me to continue the political struggle, even in difficult situations. I get a strong intuition of what I do is right. It is like my deepest self tells me: it is obviously wrong to destroy this! (Setreng 1985, 128, author translation)

When Setreng attended the University in Oslo, he became a leading figure in establishing the Ecophilosophy Group in the late 1960s (Setreng 2014). He was a source of inspiration in political activism and is probably not given enough credit for inspiring Næss to take an interest in ecophilosophy (Anker 2020; Setreng 2014). The cooperation and friendship between Næss and Setreng lasted for life and played an important role in Næss's more internationally renowned publications related to ecophilosophy (Setreng 2014). Jickling (2015) expresses Setreng's importance well when writing: "Friluftsliv has been a crucible that has fostered the emergence of ecophilosophy. However Kvaløy Setreng's work sheds more light on the depth, breadth, nuance, and development of Nordic ecophilosophy" (12).

Setreng was also the driving force behind moving the Ecophilosophy Group into

ecopolitics and ecoactivism. This led to the establishment of “*Samarbeidsgruppene for Natur- og miljøvern*” (“Cooperation groups for Nature- and environmental protection,” author translation). A central part of this organization was the “Nonviolent direct-action group” (author translation), that soon after being formed, started preparing for their first protest (Setreng 2014). The Mardøla demonstration was a nonviolent, Gandhian inspired civil disobedience protest against taming the Mardal waterfall, at the time, one of Europe’s most beautiful and tallest, transforming it by tunnels into hydroelectric power. Although the demonstrators failed in their goal to preserve the waterfall, and the protesters were carried away by the police, the publicity from Norway’s first large-scale direct-action demonstration drew attention to the issue of environmental protection (Anker 2020). This direct-action approach could also be some of the inspiration to point eight in Næss’s (2002) platform for the deep ecology movement: “Those who accept the aforementioned points are responsible for trying to contribute directly or indirectly to the realization of the necessary changes” (109).

Later in life, Setreng embraced the belief system and philosophy of Buddhism which he incorporated in his ecophilosophy (“Ecophilosophy S”). He continued his ecopolitical work with this as his platform from the family farm until his death in 2014. Many ecophilosophical concepts originated from Setreng. Some of these concepts are possible to incorporate in practical educational activities and provide a link to deep ecology. A selected few will be expanded upon to get a better understanding of the intentions in the firewood project.

Complexity Versus Complication

Setreng (2015) uses the terms “complexity” and “complication” in several of his ecophilosophical texts and artistic illustrations, and “complexity versus complication” is regarded as one of Setreng’s primary ecophilosophical concepts. Jensen (2015) describes this concept as follows:

Complexity is a way to understand how nature and natural processes operate. Complication, on the other hand, is something “invented” by human beings and comes from the idea that reality can be divided into measurable parts – quanta – a very useful remedy for humans to try to describe the environment itself and to get an overview and dominion. (87)

Setreng utilizes the concept of “complexity versus complication” to address environmental problems in society at different levels, ranging from the biosphere down to the individual human being. Real “complexity” can be found in the free/self-willed nature where the dynamics in the ecological interaction can function unaffected by the human-made, economy-governed consumer society. Self-sufficient humans, or groups of humans, living in harmony with nature in what Setreng (2014) calls a “life necessity society” (LNS) are a part of the “complexity.” Farming, fishing, and gathering firewood are all part of this “LNS.” “Complication” on the other hand can be found in the modern western society where the connection with nature has been lost, or described more correctly, nature is seen as a resource that can be consumed for the benefit of increased living standards. Such a society run by technology, industry, and a continued rise in consumption (of nature) is labeled by Setreng (2000) as the “advanced competitive industrial dominion” (ACID) and increases the distance between humans and nature. A somewhat simplified example and concretization from a pedagogical friluftsliv perspective could be the necessity to use a mobile phone or GPS technology to navigate complex nature environments. This illustrates a “complication” as the technology is made by “ACID” and increases the distance between a person and nature, a natural environment where the individual might not have the skills and knowledge to be in should the technology fail. Navigating with the aid of simpler means like a map and a compass, and specifically, learning to read the landscape itself would be considered an example of “complexity.” Implementing “complexity” while working with friluftsliv in a pedagogical context would be advantageous as it creates a propinquity to nature and perhaps an emotional bond that could be a basis for developing eco-friendly values and attitudes (Nerland 2021).

Meaningful Work

Another interesting construct in Setreng’s ecophilosophy is the concept of “meaningful work.” This concept could be seen as the cornerstone in any “LNS” and a part of “complexity” (Jensen 2015). Setreng (1992) operates with five characteristics to define “meaningful work:”

1. It appears with clear necessity as a material basis for life.
2. The challenges are varied and interconnected, in such a way that humans’ ever-

present innate complexity of abilities is elicited, causing maturation and blossoming in personalities. The bodily challenges, caused by the varied interaction with the land and direct contact with nature and natural materials, develop skills to distinguish between different qualities in nature.

3. The challenges are such that the human capacity for solidarity, loyalty, and cooperation skills is developed.
4. The products (goods and services) promote life – in nature and society – and do not deteriorate, damage, or pollute.
5. The work promotes socially important areas where children can participate – not only as play, but in a way that both adults and children perceive as useful; the same goes for the elderly, and in principle for all groups within a society (282, author translation).

“Meaningful work” promotes active life in nature for nature and society. This is work with less direct “management” and certainly less damage to both. Some of the students participating in the firewood project will be working with pre-school education in their future. In this context, the inclusion of children is particularly interesting given the intention that “meaningful work” is important for developing identity, personality, and environmental awareness.

Organic Time

The concept of “organic time” is also related to, and part of, the characteristics of “complexity.” “Organic time” follows self-willed nature and human bodily rhythm. Setreng (2000) explains it as follows with his own poetic words:

Organic time is the group of modes of change related to the various subjects and actors and groups of such in nature, it expresses itself through rhythm, expands and contracts, is created as part of natural processes, does not extend into the future, nothing moves through it – it is movement itself. (6)

Its opposite would be the humanly created mechanical time, commonly called clock time, which is a part of the complication. Mechanical time hinders us from living in the present, enjoying the moment, as we are

always moving through it, towards something in the future. It keeps us in captivity since it's a fenced-in path for our steps. (7)

From a pedagogical friluftsliv perspective, time is an important aspect (Tordsson 2005). Living in close connection with nature also involves efforts to follow the rhythm in nature; "rhythmical living in approximation with the sun's rising and setting, tides in the sea, and various rhythmical body functions" (Setreng 2000, 6) is "organic time" in friluftsliv. It can also be thought of as a body time more in sync with natural rhythms. In these modern times, with all the technology related to mobile phones and social media which is found in our complicated "servoglobe" society (Setreng 2000), it can be somewhat of a challenge to encourage students to leave their complications and enter into the present in a readily available complex nature. When the complications of technology are placed between the students and nature, then it is hopeless for nature to engage in meaningful interaction. It takes time, interacting directly with nature, before the human-nature relationship works in depth, and the sensitivity to nature is developed to such a degree that it fills the mind (Næss 1999).

Friluftsliv's Link to Ecophilosophy in Depth

In general, the subjective experience of the human-nature interaction is a determining factor whether the activity in nature can be considered as friluftsliv or not. For some, walking the dog on the local trails is friluftsliv, while for others, more involved activities within remote wilderness areas is a must. It depends on individual preferences and context. Friluftsliv is thus a pluralistic activity but not when it comes to values and norms. Henrik Ibsen (1871) first used the word in written form in his poem "*Paa Vidderne*" ("On the Heights") in 1859. The context in which the word was used relates to the poem character's reflections around the quality of life obtained from a simple, self-sufficient lifestyle in close connection with nature (Gelter 2000). Moreover, it was meant as an alternative lifestyle and critique towards how the modern society was developing (Leirhaug 2009), a trait still present in friluftsliv's values and norms today. The often quoted Ibsen passage is as follows:

Well, then come!

In wind and rainstorm,

'Cross the highland's rolling

heather!

He who wants may take the

church road:

I will not, for I am free!

In the lonely seter-corner,

My abundant catch I take

There's a hearth, and a table,

And friluftsliv for my thoughts (Leirhaug 2009, 3)

Although friluftsliv has evolved with time, these same traits that rebel against human detachment from nature with complicated lives, can still be found in modern definitions. Setreng's "complexity" and "meaningful work" along with Næss's "simple in means, rich in ends" easily come to mind.

There are multiple categories of friluftsliv definitions, but of special interest in this paper are those that fit within an academic context, including both pedagogy and ecophilosophy. In Norway, Nils Faarlund and Bjørn Tordsson are among the most influential persons in the academic area of friluftsliv. They combine friluftsliv with ecocentric pedagogical and ecophilosophical perspectives and have written several definitions in order to promote values and norms they consider to be important aspects in friluftsliv. One example is the following: "Friluftsliv is travel and living in close contact with the free nature, while aiming for experiences and adventures" (Tordsson 1993, 32, author translation). Recently, advocates of "wild pedagogies" have used the term "self-willed" nature to capture this idea of free nature: a nature be it urban, rural, or wild, but less obstructed by human constructs (Jickling et al. 2018). Tordsson's definition could be considered both pedagogical and ecophilosophical as it underlines the importance of gaining experience as a foundation for self-development and learning, while the terms living, and free nature are used to give directions for values and norms. Another example is Faarlund's (1992): "Nature is the home of culture, friluftsliv is a way home" (16, author translation). The latter has been used by Faarlund several times, and, simplified, it points to the importance of nature as the origin of human culture and

friluftsliv as a way of living in keeping with nature. Similarities can also be found in literature aimed at an international audience. An example is Gelter's (2000) definition where friluftsliv is seen as a "philosophical lifestyle based on experiences of the freedom in nature and the spiritual connectedness with the landscape" (78). The pedagogical aspect is not included here but covered in the writings of Henderson (2001) who experiences friluftsliv to be a type of outdoor recreation "with its heart within the land and linked to a tradition of being and learning with the land" (32). Building on these contextual examples of definitions, one can see nature as a source for learning and understand friluftsliv as a phenomenon saturated with values and norms. A more comprehensive analysis of definitions from different categories reveals the directly engaged nature experience, quality of life, and environmental awareness as three important interacting dimensions in friluftsliv (Nerland 2021). Continuing today, there is an ongoing healthy scholarship in friluftsliv studies (see Cleng A. Eikje, Andre Horgen, and Kirsti Pedersen Gurholt to name a few).

Friluftsliv and Ecophilosophy

According to Næss, friluftsliv represents a critique of modern technological and complicated lifestyles and advocates a paradigm shift toward a simpler way of life in closer contact with nature (Reed and Rothenberg 1993). Næss supports Faarlund's approach to friluftsliv and sees this as an alternate way of life in self-willed nature that respects nature and seeks "to touch the earth lightly" (Reed and Rothenberg 1993, 8). The deep ecology movement could as such be viewed as a more radical elaboration of the values and norms already innate in friluftsliv. This can be seen in the modest, yet so deeply principled norm "*sporløs ferdsel*" ("traceless travel," author translation), better known in relation to the English "leave no trace" approach that friluftsliv practitioners are supposed to follow. Naturally, "leave no trace" is forever problematic in human relations with nature. Perhaps we should all be thinking of traceless travel as possible and leave as little trace as suited to a mutual benefit for the nature-human relation. In friluftsliv, both values and normative guidelines are found in this principle. In its simplest meaning, it could be related to tidying up the campsite properly. On the other hand, in a purely hypothetical deepest sense, it could have the potential to solve some of the environmental problems the world faces today. The "*sporløs ferdsel*" principle is a derivative and simplification of some of the content in the Outdoor Recreation Act,

which, since 1957, has secured the historic right of public access as a foundation for friluftsliv in Norway (Ministry of Climate and Environment 2020). This legislation does not only provide rights but also responsibilities related to environmental awareness. Friluftsliv activity must be executed in a considerate manner and with due diligence in order to avoid deterioration of nature (Ministry of Climate and Environment 2020).

Another example of friluftsliv's link to ecophilosophy and sustainable practices could be the friluftsliv slogan "a rich life with simple means" (author translation) used by The Norwegian Trekking Association, Norway's largest friluftsliv organization with more than 300,000 members. They have adopted Næss's mantra as an indication of what values and norms they deem important in the association. Comparing this slogan with the eight points in the deep ecology platform reveals that much of the essence in the platform is actually captured in the simple slogan.

1. All living beings have intrinsic value.
2. The diversity and richness of life has intrinsic value.
3. Except to satisfy vital needs, mankind does not have the right to reduce this diversity and this richness.
4. It would be better for human beings if there were fewer of them, and much better for other living creatures.
5. Today the extent and nature of human interference in the various ecosystems is not sustainable, and the lack of sustainability is rising.
6. Decisive improvement requires considerable changes: social, economic, technological, and ideological.
7. An ideological change would essentially entail seeking a better quality of life rather than a raised standard of living.
8. Those who accept the aforementioned points are responsible for trying to contribute directly or indirectly to the realization of necessary changes. (Næss 2002, 108-109)

In deep ecology, the importance of life and its intrinsic value should be understood in an extended sense. As such, life adheres to rivers, mountains, other species; all elements in nature that individuals can identify with through subjective nature experiences in

friluftsliv. Such personalization of values and norms brings deep ecology to a personal level and is what Næss refers to as an individual's ecosophy (Leirhaug 2003). Næss's own version, ecosophy T, is established from his philosophical foundation and inspired by the living conditions in the biosphere as experienced in his high mountain hut (Næss 1999). Næss considers that friluftsliv, when done correctly, could be one path to achieve the goals in deep ecology and his ecosophy T (Næss 1994, 1999; Reed and Rothenberg 1993).

Friluftsliv in a Pedagogical Context

Friluftsliv has a long-standing tradition in the Norwegian educational system, where interacting with and in nature has been a central part of educational activities for more than 100 years (Abelsen et al. 2019). An ecocentric ecophilosophical perspective is nothing new in pedagogical friluftsliv, and we can see ecophilosophy as the foundation for inherent values and norms. As one of the pioneers in Norwegian friluftsliv, Faarlund claims that Western culture has become detached from the home of humankind. He suggests that we belong to a culture that has failed to recreate a sense of free nature as our true home – archetypical nature, recognized by its rhythms and tides (Reed and Rothenberg 1993). In his writings about what friluftsliv is, why we should practice friluftsliv, and how we should practice it, he emphasizes that identification with free nature in accord with the Norwegian tradition of friluftsliv has intrinsic value. In addition, it is an approach which challenges cultural patterns of thought, values, and lifestyle imposed by modernity (Faarlund 2003). In order to apply this in a pedagogical context, he constructed the methodology of “*veg-gledning*,” which conveys ways to find actions and words “to share the many aspects of identification with nature” (Faarlund 2002, 19). The task of the “*veg-gleder*” (teacher/mentor) will be to facilitate authentic meetings with free/self-willed nature, creating opportunities for nature friendly experiences, and enabling learning and self-development among the students. There is an emphasis on dwelling well/being well in nature over a doing and having modality. The environmental dimension of friluftsliv suggests the highest level of environmental awareness would be the development of a personal ecosophy (Nerland 2021). Ecosophy allows for differences in individuals' values, norms, and deepest reasons for caring for nature (Næss 1999). It involves the ideology in the tradition of friluftsliv, for the joy of identification with nature as well as a path toward a way of life where nature is the

home of culture. Ecosophy, however, is more. It denotes accepting a role of activism for culture change but acknowledges people are not in the same place in this regard. Ecosophy is individual and a personal quest. It is not a demand placed on a person – something Næss feared would damage advancing deep ecology. People have their own starting points and tolerances to change. In a pedagogical context, the main intention is to create a friendship with nature and to have a joyful life in and with free/self-willed nature through active cooperation and shared responsibility (Tordson 2005). This becomes the guide's mandate.

Emerging international initiatives, like the approach suggested in “wild pedagogies” (Henderson 2020; Jickling et al. 2018), can serve to reinvigorate the ecophilosophical perspectives in friluftsliv pedagogy. The “wild pedagogies” movement could be understood as a pedagogical modernization of some of the aspects found in ecophilosophy, promoting six “touchstones” for emphasis in education: (1) Nature as Co-Teacher, (2) Complexity, the Unknown, and Spontaneity, (3) Locating the Wild, (4) Time and Practice, (5) Socio-Cultural Change, (6) Building Alliances and the Human Community (Henderson 2020, 6). These “touchstones” “articulate the actions of education reform needed to advance education in an era of climate change turmoil, ecological degradation and social inequalities” (Henderson 2020, 6). Utilizing “wild pedagogies” could put pedagogical friluftsliv in a better position in the future to be a driving force in a transformative teacher education when responding to the challenges of our time. There are many overlaps.

Making Firewood as an Ecophilosophical Learning Experience

Most practitioners of friluftsliv would understand the value of a campfire. The campfire is a traditional activity. Humans have gathered around campfires for millennia. The campfire is less part of conventional schooling but rather more part of centuries of where and how we learned from and with others. Perhaps there is nothing more traditional pedagogy than where you sit around a campfire and share stories and daily lessons. It can be said, there is a certain mysticism and wisdom to be had around the campfire. It's worth as a heating source, cooking food, and as a gathering point for stories, philosophizing, and reflecting over the joy of life in nature cannot be quantified. But during a year with friluftsliv, in northern environments, one certainly burns through

a lot of wood. The campfire's significance in friluftsliv was the original idea behind the project, based on the understanding that the process of providing firewood was poorly utilized compared to its pedagogical potential. Hence, the creation of the firewood project to make this process into a more obvious learning experience. With an ecocentric pedagogical friluftsliv perspective as a foundation, there was a goal to attempt to include relevant ecophilosophical concepts, mainly those selected from Setreng (1992, 2000, 2015) but also from the viewpoints of the deep ecology movement and ecosophy (Næss 1999).

The firewood project encompasses all the varied lessons involved with fire, with the students experiencing the values of a campfire even before the firewood project is mentioned. Campfires in the beginning of their education are used for cooking, heating, and as a social gathering point. After a couple of friluftsliv field trips, a change happens around the campfire in the evenings. Most of the students find an inner tranquility of enjoying life in nature, and they begin to share reflections as well as philosophies of living though they hardly know they are doing this. This moment is the right time for the professor to ask the students where they think the firewood comes from? The question usually causes silence for several minutes while the students contemplate. What the students do not know is that all the firewood is a product from the previous year's class and their "meaningful work" with the firewood project. After revealing this to the students, the evening around the campfire turns into a discussion providing the students with some knowledge about ecophilosophy and an outline of the firewood project.

The Preparation Phase

Preparation is necessary to ensure that the firewood project becomes a good learning experience for the students. The students have previously been introduced to the forest in earlier friluftsliv field trips and are now presented with topics of more depth such as the forest as an ecosystem, different types of forest biotopes and trees and their qualities, and questions especially related to the forest as a renewable resource. Central to the firewood project is the question: how can we interact with nature in such a way that our actions are in compliance with the characteristics of "meaningful work" (Setreng 1992)? The concrete answer lies partly in exercising the principle of "thinning."

In practice, this means selecting to fell trees that are damaged, sick, or in a cluster. By wisely exercising the principle of “thinning,” one could improve the living conditions for other trees without reducing biological diversity in the forest and strengthening the biotope as a whole. Firewood made according to this principle would be in line with point four in “meaningful work,” as the fruit of production does not damage but strengthens life (Setreng 1992).

Another perspective discussed is that of context. Ours is that of *friluftsliv*, which is saturated with values and norms such as environmental sustainability and “leave no trace.” This discussion also brings attention to the concept of “complexity versus complication” on a global scale with reflections, for instance, around all the things involved in producing a gas canister and material required for a camping stove. Alternative energy sources to the renewable resources in the forest would involve the use of fossil fuels produced by the “advanced competitive industrial dominion” (ACID) (Setreng 2000), which is an option less desirable considering environmental implications. The work related to making firewood could therefore be considered essential. A wide perspective is brought to bear on this topic of wood, fire, and resource use. Shifts in cultural values toward a “life necessity society” (Setreng 2014) can start in the classroom.

The reminder of the preparation, in addition to ecophilosophical topics, consists of making the students ready for the complexity involved in making firewood with traditional tools. Aspects related to safety when using axes and bow saws to fell a tree are prioritized. Some basics related to maintenance are also provided, but great care is taken throughout the whole period of preparation to not give any key solutions that would deprive the students of experiencing the complexity in the task ahead. Even though the axes and bow saws that will be used are not made by the students themselves, they are in stark contrast to a chainsaw or splitter machine, which could be seen as noisy, polluting examples of “complication,” and not promoting “complexity” at all (Setreng 2014).

Friluftsliv and Ecophilosophy in Practice

The main event in the project is not particularly complicated. It has in fact, with some adjustments, also been tried successfully with pre-school children. This has resulted in

several previous teacher candidate students incorporating this part of the project in the kindergartens where they work. This links the firewood project to the characteristics in point five of Setreng's (1992) "meaningful work" as all ages can participate side by side in this life necessity activity. Access to a forest and permission from the landowner to fell trees are the main ingredients needed. For a couple of days, the students go on a friluftsliv trip into a suitable forest and make firewood with the use of traditional tools, cooperation, and manual labor. The fresh green wood is naturally not ideal for immediate use and must be stacked into woodpiles to dry to be used by next year's class. In other words, apart from the first year the project was carried out, the students are dependent on the effort from previous classes and their solidarity to enjoy the benefits of campfires in their friluftsliv education. There is a certain life force in the cooperation and mutualism involved here compared to a culturally dominant competitiveness and individualism students usually experience.

Based on this short description, links to Setreng's (1992, 2015) "meaningful work" already appear evident. In a friluftsliv and deep ecology context, the need to make firewood could be seen as necessary work to get materials needed for survival, hence involving point one in Setreng's (1992) ecophilosophical concept of "meaningful work." The challenges involved in making firewood with the use of only traditional tools, cooperation, and manual labour is a new experience for most of the students. A new experience that could develop their skills, knowledge, personality, and put them in direct contact with nature. This corresponds with the characteristics of point two in "meaningful work" (Setreng 1992). Complexity in nature leads to complexity in practice. Certain rounds are left for burning given their twisted shapes, while others with straighter grain are selected for splitting: the simple lesson here being to work with nature not against nature. Since the firewood is meant for a future class, the work also involves a kind of solidarity that is found in point three (Setreng 1992). The work also requires cooperation among the students, which is another key component in the third point of "meaningful work" (Setreng 1992).

Once out in the woods, it has proved beneficial to spread out in small groups and pairs to start the search for trees fitting the criteria of the "thinning" principle. This is a complex task requiring knowledge, such as the ability to distinguish between locations for cutting, varying qualities of wood types, and readiness for burning. It can as such be linked to both the concept of "complexity" and point two of Setreng's "meaningful

work” since one must truly understand the forest as a living entity of great variety (Setreng 1992, 2000). The students need approval from a professor when a suitable tree is found. To get approval, the students need to argue their case as to why the tree matches the “thinning” standards. If the professor agrees, the planning for felling the tree starts. This is another complex task, where many variables require consideration. Safety and the complexity of the surrounding environment can cause problems and even damage nearby trees if the felled tree gets hung up. An important role of the professor at this stage is to act as “*veg-gleder*” (mentor), making sure the students become aware of potential problems and adjust their plan accordingly. The “*veg-gleder*” also needs to assess the potential learning outcome and differentiate according to the students’ resourcefulness. To truly experience the “complexity” in the “meaningful work,” it could be beneficial if the students struggle a bit. The practical work of felling the tree is a good example of something the students struggle with. Placing the different cuts necessary, calculating the angles and how gravity will operate under the current conditions is a complex problem-solving task, often requiring several attempts to get it right. This is a good time for the “*veg-gleder*” to revisit and discuss the concepts of “complexity and complication” and “meaningful work” with the students. Usually this leads to many good reflections from the students, revolving around how surprised they are about the complexity involved in the task of felling the tree and the connection they feel they have developed with the tree and surrounding nature. The connection that has been established is reflected when the tree eventually falls. After an immediate cheer, the students often react with a few moments of silence, followed by what could be interpreted as sadness, much like the reaction seen in hunters that have ended the life of a beautiful animal to get meat.

After having removed the branches, the hard work of sawing the tree into suitable logs starts. This is a new possibility to experience the challenges involved in the task of making firewood, experiences that contribute to developing their personality and maturing with an understanding of work as a thoughtful, purposeful (means to end) engaging activity. A common problem that occurs is that a combination of friction in the tree and gravity bite the blade of the saw, thus locking it in and making it impossible to move. Some of the students that appear tired at this time occasionally start to suggest the need for a chainsaw. Instead of confronting this suggestion, the “*veg-gleder*” takes the opportunity to discuss the concept of “organic time” (Setreng 2000). During the

discussion, it becomes apparent for the students that the natural rhythm of things calls for a break and food.

Lunch does of course include cooking tasty, nutritious foods on a campfire with the meat of a sheep they have slaughtered themselves in a previous project as the main ingredient. A reminder of the value of the fire, and a source for regaining the motivation to do the “meaningful work.” Experiences are shared among the students, and for those struggling, solutions are offered by others in the group in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation. Stories and lesson sharing builds camaraderie. Again, cooperation over competition.

The process of cleaving the logs with an axe is one of the more action-packed parts in the project. It is also one of the more interesting to observe from the professor’s perspective, since the development of the student’s complexity is so concrete. In the beginning, male students often approach the task with too much force, making them unable to coordinate the necessary movement, resulting in bad placement of the axe or not hitting the log at all. Occasionally, they even hit the log with the axe’s handle, causing it to splinter. The female students often have a more careful approach, letting the axe do the work in a controlled fashion, resulting in success. This constitutes the basis for another discussion about “complexity,” where the qualities of a splitting axe’s head and the complexity of the body in movement are addressed. Seeing the technique develop really is a study of the “dynamic systems approach” (Sigmundsson and Haga 2004) in practice, where nature as a co-teacher gives direct feedback. This attention to physical labour is connected to the actual grain in the wood. Certain rounds are best left unsplit given knots and twisted grain. Straight grain rounds are easily split and started as one learns chopping technique – all part of the “complexity.”

The last part of the project’s main event is clearing the area and stacking the firewood in wood piles in such a way that it dries properly, ready to be used by next year’s class. In the stacking process, participants are encouraged to experiment with different constructions and reflect on how these will affect the desired end result, which is dry wood. The wood piles need to withstand wind and rain and constructing them is another exercise in discovering the “complexity” in nature. When it comes to clearing twigs and branches, this is an appropriate opportunity to discuss the principle of “*sporløs ferdsel*” (“leave no trace”). Such a discussion can be about anything from a concrete understanding to the ecophilosophical significance of the principle. In practice,

the students place most of the twigs and branches in areas with wind-felled trees and other areas where nature itself has decided these things belong. Some of the twigs and leftover natural material are also used to cover the stumps, speeding up the process of decomposition and bringing the nutrients back to nature. Our goal is that our essential need for firewood "...do not deteriorate, damage, pollute" (Setreng 1992, 282).

Conclusion

The firewood project appears to be in accordance with the spirit of Setreng's ecophilosophy (2014), focusing on practical action rather than words (developing ideas and concepts). Interpreting the pedagogical content reveals inclusion or links to all the characteristics in Setreng's (1992, 2000) ecophilosophical concepts of "meaningful work," "complexity," and "organic time." Arne Næss's overarching principle in deep ecology of "simple in means, rich in ends" is also present throughout the firewood project teachings and lessons.

Several aspects in the firewood project touch upon the concept of "complexity versus complication" (Setreng 2000, 2014, 2015), although more on a local, individual level rather than in a global context. The way the group practice their friluftsliv and interact with nature in a harmonious manner does resemble the societies Setreng (2015) refers to as a "life necessity society" (LNS) and would as such make the group itself a part of the "complexity."

"Organic time" (Setreng 2000) could be interpreted to be a natural consequence of living in and interacting with the self-willed nature, practicing the "LNS" lifestyle and engaging in "meaningful work" and friluftsliv (Setreng 1992; Næss 1999). The students work when they are energized, the weather permits, and the daylight is there. They rest and eat when their body tells them to. They sleep when the daylight has faded, leaving them only with the amber glows from the campfire. There is no classroom bell signaling a shift of attention for all. There is also the learning that green wood requires a year to properly age and dry out for use. The tasks of the firewood project cannot be rushed. The students must adapt to "organic time," and one must listen to one's body when doing strenuous work. This in itself is a learning outcome.

With this in mind, it seems safe to say that the firewood project conveys important concepts from Setreng's ecophilosophy (Setreng 2014, 2015). Another matter is

whether the students receive what is conveyed and take this “to heart” in line with the idea of a transformative teacher education. The material presented cannot answer this question. Signs based on observations from the professor’s perspective indicate that students do appear affected by the experiences at the time. This suggests the need for further research into how the experiences gained through the project affect the students in a long-term perspective.

Setreng’s desire for practical applications and activism to consciously nudge culture along a more sustainable, ecologically sound path is reinforced with the firewood project. Similarly, Næss’s ecosophy to advance, at a learner's personal pace, a personal foundation for living more ecologically is applied in a way that students might “take it to heart.” Additionally, the deep ecology principle of asking deeper questions and taking a wider view of the ecological merits of ideas and actions is brought forward. The hope is that a practical approach like the one found in the firewood project can contribute to spreading the significant ideas of ecophilosophy and deep ecology, advancing our society with meaningful work in more sustainable directions for a better future.

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