

This is an Open Access document downloaded from ORCA, Cardiff University's institutional repository: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/117768/>

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted to / accepted for publication.

Citation for final published version:

Dunkley, Ria Ann and Smith, Thomas A. 2019. Geocoaching: memories and habits of learning in practices of ecopedagogy. *The Geographical Journal* 185 (3) , pp. 292-302. 10.1111/geoj.12295

Publishers page: <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12295>

Please note:

Changes made as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing, formatting and page numbers may not be reflected in this version. For the definitive version of this publication, please refer to the published source. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite this paper.

This version is being made available in accordance with publisher policies. See <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/policies.html> for usage policies. Copyright and moral rights for publications made available in ORCA are retained by the copyright holders.



# **Geocoaching: Memories and habits of learning in practices of ecopedagogy**

**Ria Ann Dunkley**, School of Education, Glasgow University

**Thomas Aneurin Smith**, School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University

## **1. Introduction**

Geographic learning and environmental education are typically regarded as a crucial part of children's early education, not least in terms of facilitating spatial awareness and other key life skills. Indeed, the development of environmental education owes much to geographers of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, who played a key role in conceptualising and developing the field (Payne, 2017), more recently these links have been renewed along with aspirations for new forms of interdisciplinarity.

The closely-related field of 'ecopedagogy' (Kahn, 2010) promotes environmental literacy and encourages environmental action as a means of tackling environmental crisis. Though a seemingly new field, Payne (2018, p. 75) argues for recognition of the longer history of ecopedagogy, particularly the more critical aspects of enquiry, such that the novelty of ecopedagogy is based within its aim of "making a rhetorical point". As within the cognate emergent field of 'land education' (Tuck et al., 2014), recent contributions, notably a special issue on ecopedagogy (Payne, 2018), have sought to reconceptualise the field beyond a one-dimensional emphasis upon place-based learning, which was previously considered a vital component of environmental education due to its capacity for developing connections to place, nature and nonhumans to stimulate future environmental stewardship. This recent reconceptualization draws upon studies of ecopedagogy in practice, emphasising the "conceptually eclectic, nomadically explored, and bundled together" (Payne, 2018: p. 72) nature of ecopedagogy.

The benefits of fieldtrips, for example, have long been acknowledged, in the fields of environmental education (Payne, 2014) and geography (Lorimer, 2003). More recently, an expansion of ecopedagogy as/in "scapes" (Dunkley, 2018; Stewart, 2018), pinpoints the significance of the assemblage of elements that compose environmental learning experiences, or

as Payne (2018, p. 71) puts it, the “fleeting glance of human, defiant stare of other-than-human, and the “silence” of the mountain [which] is one among many intercorporeal interactions between beings and things that bring to presence the idea of ecopedagogies as/in scape”. Payne (2018) calls for a “presencing” of previously absent scapes in environmental education. In doing so, he applies assemblage theory (Gibson, 1979) to the field, enabling a reappraisal of how the other-than-human is regarded within ecopedagogy.

Nevertheless, there are few studies that have critically examined pedagogic interventions within the educational landscape of a national park, particularly for those within early-years or primary-stage education. In this paper, we examine ecopedagogic practices through the concept of *geocoaching*, which we develop as an analytical tool, and as an applied, reflective approach. We do not offer geocoaching as a prescriptive approach to determine ‘good’ practices, but as an alternative to ecopedagogy that is not strictly directed towards ‘positive’ environmental stewardship outcomes. We argue that thinking about any kind of intervention in landscape interaction as geocoaching is a way to reflect on practices, and to guide future interventions. As an applied, reflective approach, we integrate the term ‘coaching’ to encourage reflection on how adults and young people themselves can guide or support others in interactions with landscapes, rather than to ‘direct’ or ‘teach’ them as ‘pedagogy’ implies. Thinking about landscape interactions as geocoaching, we will argue, encompasses the development of *embodied practices* and *habits* in landscapes as guided by others (and indeed, the self), but also the surfacing of personal and societal *memories* in representational practices, all of which contribute to the development of future ‘fields’ and future-selves, without being prescriptive about what the aim of this development is.

In this pursuit, we examine instances of ecopedagogy in the landscapes of a national park for a group of 14 four to 11-year-olds, taking part in a four-day ‘summer club’ organised by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA), during the summer of 2015. The summer club was arranged for the children of BBNPA workers, who lived within the National Park. The

paper explores the pedagogies employed by outdoor educators during the summer club, drawing upon data generated by the children themselves, and our observational data.

We begin this paper with a critical discussion of the contemporary origins of ecopedagogy and how it aligns with conceptual concerns such as ‘dwelling’, before developing a critique stemming from theorisations of habit and memory in ‘the field’. We then elaborate on three instances of ecopedagogy in BBNP, drawing out our conceptualisation of geocoaching as we go. Building upon the work of Stewart (2018), who suggests that it is possible to develop new realities through making novel, unexpected connections, we theorise geocoaching as moving beyond ecopedagogy’s moral geography, and the assumed relationships among educator interventions, ecological exposure, affective relationships and future stewardship. Instead, we define geocoaching as a process of bringing together the always-becoming of habitual embodied practices, and the personal, social and landscaped memories that contribute to, and are formed during, representational and emotional performances of ‘the self’ and ‘the field’. During geocoaching, self and field are co-produced by educators and learners and although relevant to future relations with landscapes, do not produce straightforward traceability to a future-self. In the conclusions, we explore the implications of reframing ecopedagogy as geocoaching for assumptions around affective, emotional connections to place and ecological stewardship.

## **2. Situated ecopedagogy, taskscapes, habit and memory**

Popularised literature, notably Louv (2008), has created a moral panic concerning the lack of access that children have to ‘wild places’. Declining ‘rights to roam’ of children have been highlighted as a source of physical and mental health issues (Witten et al., 2013), whilst the lack of opportunity to be within ‘natural’ surroundings is thought to lead to a lack of environmental awareness (Freeman et al, 2015). While not wishing to present a binary argument here, we argue that there are significant assumptions that underlie claims that simple proximity to so-called ‘nature’ leads to ‘goods’ such as ecological awareness. Part of the existing critique of this argument is that these

notions are underpinned by a rural idyll, an adult construct that misrepresents rural childhoods (Jones, 2005). These misrepresentations are now widely accepted, yet it remains important to explore how the offerings of rural landscapes, such as those that compose national parks, are harnessed in contemporary ecopedagogy. It has also been widely acknowledged that in postmodern, consumer-driven society, children (rural and urban) face a range of barriers in accessing rural places, including private land ownership, lack of public transport, and parental fears prohibiting free-roaming (Matthews et al., 2000; Skelton, 2009). Ecopedagogy appears to offer solutions to the presumed nature-culture disconnection underpinning the moral panic around contemporary childhoods, seeking to facilitate meaningful interactions with educational landscapes.

Situated environmental education, and the more recent practices of ecopedagogy, often involve repeated contact with rural landscapes, assuming that “children develop their awareness of places about them through repeated contact. By engaging their interests *via* their own everyday experiences, children’s true environmental capabilities are much more likely to be revealed and enhanced” (Matthews, 1985, p. 237). Matthews (1985) observed that environmental skills were highest amongst children who learnt about ecological issues locally, rather than through issues that were spatially detached or learnt in an abstract fashion. This suggests that regardless of the context within which children are living, their environmental learning should be grounded within their everyday lived-experiences.

Ecopedagogy, with its traditional focus on place-attachment and environmental skills (see: Kahn, 2010), conceptually echoes Ingold’s (1993; 2000) notions of ‘taskscape’ and ‘dwelling’. Though it is important to acknowledge that conceptualisations of ecopedagogy have moved beyond a place focus (Payne 2018), this nonetheless remains an important aspect of many practice-based manifestations of ecopedagogy. Ingold argues that taskscapes are constitutive of landscapes, and dwelling in-the-world, bringing together humans, non-human entities and objects, as well as interconnecting past, present and future through relational acts of doing. Dwelling, and the

taskscape that constitute it, interweaves nature and culture, and for humans it is the repeated encounters with places and the depths of association built up over time that enable place-based attachment, affection and memory. As Cloke and Jones (2001, p. 653) summarise “according to this kind of logic, such intimate understandings lead to appropriate stewardship.” Ecopedagogy might be understood, in this sense, to promote appropriate dwelling in landscape. Connections between dwelling, critical ecological consciousness and memory are also highlighted in writing associated with New Humanism. Drawing on the theories of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Lefebvre, Simonsen (2012) argues that “the phenomenal body” inhabits space. Simonsen (2012, p. 12) refers to “moving bodies”, which measure: “space in the construction of a meaningful world. In taking up or inhabiting space, bodies move through it and are affected by the ‘where’ of that movement. It is through this movement that space, as well as bodies, takes shape.” Ecopedagogy, dwelling, and the production of memories of place through inhabiting, all speak to the co-production of critical ecological consciousness through practices of being-in-the-world.

These conceptual frames that closely align with ecopedagogy may, however, seem dissatisfactory in ‘modern’ society. Ingold’s (1993; 2000) work on dwelling and taskscape seems rooted in a romantic rural realm, where connectedness to landscapes emphasises non-representational, embodied being, while, Lorimer (2003) argues, neglecting the representational, the cultural texts and the historical memories that are woven into human relations in landscape. Equally, dwelling, taskscape and, by association, ecopedagogy, in positing an authentic, embodied environmental stewardship, neglect the dynamics of social power relations in educational landscapes (Dunkley, 2009). To avoid claims of authenticity, and the romantic purism of ‘dwelling’ in analysis of ecopedagogy, we draw on two conceptual frameworks in our theorisation of *geocoaching*, namely Dewsbury’s (2015) concepts of habit and occupation, and Lorimer’s (2003) analysis of ‘the field’ as an active site of memory.

Dewsbury (2015, p. 30) discusses the role of ‘habit’ and how attention is occupied in an attempt to overcome distinctions between representation and non-representational forms of being

and interpretation in landscape, arguing: “we have our attention occupied by the milieu around us”. Having our attention occupied (by landscapes, and their inhabitants) is the mode of being called “habit”, and whilst these habits happen in-the-instance of their enactment, they are also formed through repetitions of past encounters, drawing on memory. Therefore, as we occupy place, place also occupies our attention and in turn, this occupation entrains “our bodies to be more or less affected by certain phenomena (sensations like sound, smell, touch and senses of space and time like distance, speed, duration)” (Dewsbury, 2015, p. 30). Through repetition of these occupations, behaviours become habitual. Dewsbury’s analysis of military training exercises in BBNP implies that this training of attention goes beyond being in place; it has a temporal dimension, including what individuals do when occupying landscape that enables them to form habits. Individuals are thus able to construct the self through “ongoing processes of individuation” (Dewsbury, 2015, p. 43), or work on the future-self. It is here that habit development has significant implications for ecopedagogy, which might, through this lens, be understood as deliberate attempts to have children’s attention “switched on” to ecological issues during landscape occupation.

Lorimer (2003), drawing from analysis of a geographical field course, conceptualises ‘the field’ as framed materially and epistemologically, through cultural texts that bring with them spatially and temporally diverse histories. Dissatisfied with Ingold’s notions of dwelling and taskscape that prioritise the non-discursive and non-representational, seemingly distancing themselves from histories of landscape production through text and cultural meaning, Lorimer (2003) explores two temporal contexts, the 1950s and the present day, drawing our attention to the dispersal of events and memories of the field trip. He discusses how, following experience, we present a representation that is “a distribution of experience across sites, surfacing in stories told and arising out of the rhythm of practice”. The field trip is therefore an “ongoing event” which leads to “reflexive conduct, based around an empathetic and collaborative ethic” (Lorimer, 2003, p. 302). While ecopedagogic practice, and Ingold’s (2000) concept of dwelling, focus on authentic,

place-based encounters to foster future-appropriate landscape stewardship, Lorimer's (2003) approach to 'the field' asks what histories and memories are contributing to, and formed in, the production of the self and 'field'.

Our conceptualisation of geocoaching, which we use in the analysis below as an analytical critique of traditional notions of ecopedagogy, pairs these theorisations of habit and memory in producing self and 'field'. We argue that geocoaching includes the immediacy and becoming of habit (Dewsbury, 2015) in the way that children's attention is occupied through explicit and implicit pedagogic apparatus that contributes to the always-becoming of habitual practices. Geocoaching also builds on Ingold's (2000) notion of taskscape, which, whilst recognising the importance of embodied dwelling, also explicitly acknowledges the personal and social memories that contribute to new acts of remembering (Lorimer, 2003), which in turn contribute to the representational and non-representational performances of "the self" and "the field". Geocoaching acknowledges that habit and memory, self and field, are co-produced by educators and learners, simultaneously weaving embodied habits with landscaped memories, and in turn producing them anew in acts of geocoaching. Situated ecopedagogy and critical ecological consciousness assume that a depth of connection to place, nature, and non-humans will instill a place-based ecological consciousness in children, strengthening their future ecological stewardship. In what follows, we highlight how certain ecopedagogic activities have a time-depth that are implicitly and explicitly communicated to children. Memory and habit play a central role in geocoaching precisely because they both produce self and field, and through affective connections to place are productive and are produced.

### **3. Exploring a summer-club ecopedagogy**

This study critically explored field-based enactments of ecopedagogy during a four-day summer club, organised by the BBNPA for 14 four to 11 year-olds. The parents of the children involved were national park staff. Park educators aimed to provide environmental learning experiences to



the children. We sought to examine the methods and means that enabled educators to exploit the offerings of the national park's educational landscapes, utilising observational field methods, acting as participant-observers in pedagogic activities, and having ongoing conversations with children about their experiences. We accompanied the group on every activity, assisting staff with tasks, in order to gain some credibility amongst staff and children. In addition to our field notes and photographs of daily activities, we devised two alternative activities as data collection methods: a "free-roaming" activity where children used cameras to video and photograph things that interested them, and a creative mapping exercise designed to explore the children's impressions of the wider landscape of the BBNP. We discuss these two methods, and insights from them, in detail elsewhere (Dunkley and Smith, 2018; Smith and Dunkley, 2018). Data analysis involved a thematic analysis of our observational notes, a visual analysis of the imagery taken, and thematic analysis of the video-material collected. The material is presented here within a narrative format to give a sense of each learning activity.

The summer club included a range of activities that could be regarded as ecopedagogy in terms of seeking to encourage affective connections to place, including photography; treasure hunts; memory walks; den-building with campfires and marshmallow toasting; walks to visit standing stones; as well as pond-dipping and bug-hunting activities. Within the next section, we will focus upon three activities that occurred during the summer club, developing our analysis through the frame of *geocoaching* to examine how habit and memory are brought to bear in ecopedagogic practices.

#### **4. Bug-hunting**

Common activities that children undertake when engaged with informal, situated environmental learning are the "bug-hunt" and "pond-dip". During the summer club, the children participated in both within Craig-Y-Nos Country Park. They first visited a nearby lake and a river's edge, where the pond-dipping activity was introduced by the BBNP educator, who explains, as she fishes-out

invertebrates and weeds from the lake, that the invertebrates are present because of the weeds, while the weed is present because of the sun. All the children took turns fishing out pondweed and invertebrates. They then dug out weeds and emptied bugs into a tray. They identified shrimps, leeches, water snails and water boatmen. The children then ordered the invertebrates into species, within a species tray. The educator explains to the children how to do this: "imagine you were making a buffet and you were putting a buffet together and you put the same foods in the same trays". They seemed to enjoy the process of getting close to the water and ordering species. The bug-hunt activity, which took place within a beech woodland, was introduced by the educator and children were given tips as to where they might most likely find insects, such as beetles, worms, slugs and spiders. Typical places noted included under logs and stones and on tree branches. Children were given identification tools, including magnifying glasses, species identification trays and identification information sheets that would enable detailed exploration of species' characteristics. They proceeded with the task independently, with adult educators on hand to assist. The children were notably most engaged with the process of collecting insects, enjoying exploring the woodland in pairs, giving far less time to classifying collected species (figure 1).



*Figure 1: Children explore bug-hunt findings and searching for bugs around rhododendrons*

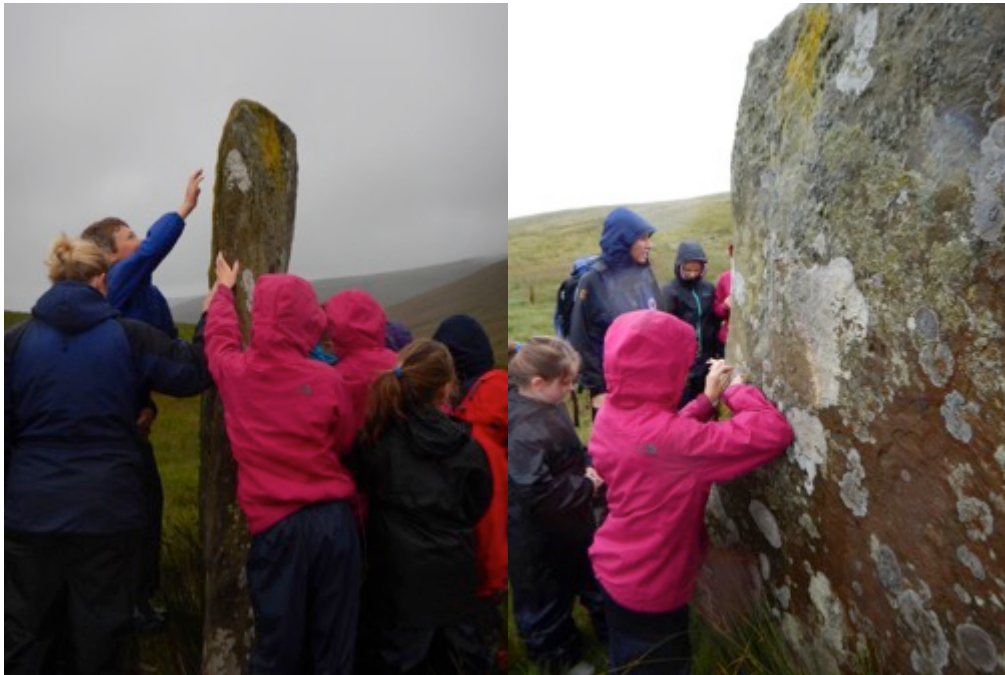
Bug-hunting and pond-dipping might be understood pedagogically as an introduction to citizen science (Irwin, 1995), enabling observations of non-humans at the infrequently-observed microscale, garnering an appreciation amongst the children for the species that inhabit the environment and their connections to wider environmental processes. Such employment of scientific methodology has been linked to “ecological conscientisation” (Dunkley, 2018). Yet these methodologies have time-depth (Cloke and Jones, 2001), with implications for memory and habit. In one respect, the taskscape of bug-hunting, established by educators with a spatial boundedness (the clearing, the lakeside) delimiting each time the physicality of “the field” through their instructional discourse, brings forth an epistemological field based, partly, on scientific methodologies. The establishment of the field of action and inquiry is rooted in the historical context of early scientific practices of animal specimen collecting, sorting, identification and classification, pioneered by early scientist-explorers such as von Humboldt and Darwin. Through this collecting and ordering, and deployment of scientific tools (magnifying glass, sorting tray) a particular representation of the natural world is produced through a social act of remembering (Lorimer, 2003), where the social memory of scientific world-orderings is re-membered through a pedagogic taskscape. Interestingly, the educator chooses to re-frame this scientific sorting into the more contemporary order of a food buffet to assist children’s understanding of scientific classification, thus interweaving potentially more immediate memories.

Yet the children’s preference for searching, clambering, unearthing and handling the bugs indicates that another form of geocoaching interweaves the overtly pedagogic. The movement around the environment, sometimes deliberately awkward, such as clambering around rhododendrons (figure 1), and the sociality of working together to find bugs, suggested that many of the children already had well-developed bodily-habits for negotiating such terrain, and that indeed their attention was occupied by the actioning and development of these habits (Dewsbury, 2015). Although the tasks of bug-hunting and bug-sorting were part of the pedagogic apparatus

established by educators, the different habits embodied in hunting and sorting were somewhat in tension. The sorting activity was overtly aimed to instil critical ecological consciousness, carrying with it a particular historical memory in order to build a representation (either buffet or species identification schema), whilst hunting relied on largely pre-established practices, leaning towards the non-representational and habitual. Rather than consider both instances of re-membering and habit-building as facets of situated ecopedagogy – which holds a moral imperative behind establishing ecological consciousness, we suggest that both instances might be better understood as different forms of *geocoaching*. We elaborate on our conceptualisation of geocoaching further in the examples that follow.

### 5. **Standing stones**

The children are taken on an organised walk to a standing stone. Set on a hillside a short drive away, they put on waterproof jackets, trousers and wellingtons and take a bus ride from Craig-Y-Nos Park through open moorland. From the roadside they walk uphill, it is raining, but they seem in good spirits. On reaching the standing stone, most children touch the stone, some trying to reach the top, others inspecting the stone's surface, covered in lichens (figure 2). The educators encourage them to do so. One educator illuminates the stone's possible purposes: "it could be a marker for farmers that helped them find their way in the dark; but no one knows why it's here". She draws attention to its shape, which, she says, appears to echo that of the surrounding hills. It also aligns with a track passing over the opposite hill.



*Figure 2: Children touch the standing stone. Educators speak about it.*

The standing stone is mysterious, connecting to geographies of past and present and to collective memories, which remain ambiguous, as the purpose of the standing stone is unknown. The educators draw on this wider social memory of landscape (farmers making their way across terrain), but also to the mysterious alignment between the stone's shape and the outline of visible hilltops, pivoting the children's attention towards the wider landscape around the stone as representation of social memory of landscape, not unlike Ingold's (2000, p. 198) analysis of Bruegel's Pear Tree in *"The Harvester"*, which "draws the entire landscape into unique focus". Compared to the bug-hunt, 'the field' here is established in landscape terms, an educational landscape seemingly encompassing all that can be seen of the park itself from this point. Unlike the bug-hunt, here educators harness the historic, social memories underpinning the pedagogic taskscape. The stone is at once a material artefact of interest (to be touched and inspected) and a representation. This makes explicit, to the children, the interweaving of nature and culture in past and present landscape practices, in a similar way to memorial trees, situated in other contexts (Cloke and Paweson, 2008).

More personal memories were also interwoven in this encounter. During the walk over the undulating, boggy hillside to the stone, two of the children talked about their outdoor play. Amy and Caroline, nine and 11-years-old, recall fondly “muddy Fridays” at nursery school, when they put on waterproofs and rolled down a bank in the mud. Amy added: "I can do that [roll down a muddy hill] anywhere, because I live on a farm”. Yet importantly, she follows this with “but I would have no one to do it with, except for maybe a cow, a cat or a dog". At this point in the conversation, Caroline adds: "both my mum and dad work at the national park, so I can do it [roll down a muddy hill] anywhere I like". The fact that both her parents work for BBNPA negates the need for land ownership for access, play and enjoyment. This conversation shows the value that children come to place upon raw interactions with the landscape, yet also highlights the social element of children’s ecological encounters, in that shared experiences can be more enjoyable and thus, perhaps more memorable. This also applied to the children’s recounting of their summer club experiences of previous years, where there was a collective memory of key enjoyable activities, such as campfire building.

While Dewsbury (2015) draws our attention to the immediacy and becoming of habit acquired whilst occupied by any activity, here on the hillside, as the children bodily negotiate the tough terrain and wet atmospheric conditions, these immediate encounters also conjure explicit reference to memories from different places and times. The children share memories of landscape features (farms, the national park, muddy hills) and acts of play (rolling down muddy hills), and perhaps even of rural loneliness (“I would have no one to do it with”), which have a formative role in their connection to place, evoked by and through their current movement over terrain towards the stone. If, as Jones (2005) states:

*"memories always will have a spatial frame... One way to think of emotional geography is to think of the connections between memory and our geographical imaginations. Memory must play a key, formative role in the construction of our ongoing emotional and imaginative geographies"*

(p. 210).

then, here in the interweaving of personal spatially-located memories, with social memories of past landscapes, and with the immediacy of habitual practices, which are shared in the social environment (Freeman et al., 2017), geographical imaginations of future-self may also be formed. This has been referred to as ecopedagogical practice, enabling learners to perceive themselves as future environmental stewards. In this instance, however, the term geocoaching might better capture this constellation more than simply pedagogic practices. Geocoaching practices are formative in the ongoing production of past, present and future self, through the interweaving of practices that are at once habit-forming (leaning to the non-representational), draw on societal and personal memory (often representational), and are orientated towards the writing of the future self, informed by others (educators, and other children) and through past and present performances and representations.

By Ingold's (2000, p. 194) definition, taskscapes "encompass a pattern of retentions from the past and protentions for the future", such that the present "gathers the past and future into itself" (2000, p. 196). However, geocoaching acknowledges the deliberate, explicit and sometimes implicit ways that interfolding pasts, presents and futures are harnessed in an educational landscape. This is inclusive of performative and habitual taskscapes (Dewsbury, 2015), but equally acknowledges and foregrounds social acts of remembering, such that the historical context of "the field" is explored beyond the immediacy of the present spatio-temporal environment (Lorimer, 2003). During the stone visit, ambiguous and mysterious socio-historic memories are foregrounded by the educators, allowing both social and personal memories (at home and landscape scale) to play a role in the acknowledgement of embodied-representational interweaving of nature-culture. Critical here, are the roles of both educators and learners in the co-production of this interweaving of past-present-future through geocoaching. Educators draw the children's attention to the landscape and representation, while the children also draw upon their own memories and habits during the encounter.

## 6. The jungle, bogs of grass, where the Lion King goes

The final activity we discuss here is a free-roaming, child-led photography and filming exercise, where the children were supervised at a distance. Unlike the previous examples, the researchers designed this activity as a counterpoint to the more adult-led exercises discussed thus far. The children, in pairs, were given a digital camera that could take pictures and film. The instructions were minimal, only that they had to remain within two meadows, situated inside Craig-Y-Nos Country Park. The adults stood in one corner of the field, within the children's sight. The activity typically lasted 45 minutes, ending when children were happy to finish. We were interested in what the children would do, and record, when left with only minimal adult supervision and little instruction.

The exercise was repeated twice on separate days, with the children taking hundreds of pictures and several videos. This video footage included flowing rivers, friends running through woodlands, stripping a grass strand, an elusive butterfly, and a walk through the meadow to focus upon a single cow-parsley sprig. We choose here to focus on one short video (1 minute and 20 seconds) taken by Ryan, where he appears to play the role of a television presenter for a nature or adventure programme. In this film, Ryan is walking alone through the meadow, making his way through a boggy patch of long grasses and reeds and towards a woodland area:

Ryan: *So here we are in the **depths** of the forest [1]*

*As you can see it's all [2] (pause),*

*All **wet***

*And I'm making my way (long pause)*

*To the **jungle** [3]*

*And **now**,*

*I'm going through the **bogs**,*

*Of **grass** [4]*





Figure 3: [1] Ryan turns the camera on himself; [2] Wet long grass immediately ahead; [3] Emphasis on Jungle with hand gesture; [4] Points camera to “bogs of grass”.

*It's so **hard** (pause),*

*Even **trees** can **drown** in it.*

*And there is the picture of the trees [5] (pause),*

*Hey look at me!*

*And now, I've **even wetter** [6].*

*And now I go to the depths where the **Lion** King goes*

*[7] **Oh God! Oh god!!***

*A lion, lion, lion, lion*



Figure 4: [5] Steady picture of the trees; [6] Wet trousers; [7] Frantic camera movement (lion attack).

Ryan constructs the landscape he journeys through as partly fantastical. Although he is walking through a wet meadow, as he describes it the “depths of the forest” become “the jungle”, and he traverses “bogs of grass” where trees drown, culminating in reaching “where the Lion King goes”. The tone is dramatic, the final rapid movement of the camera emulating a lion attack. Ryan uses the camera to emphasise his role as the presenter, chopping back and forth between himself and the environment he struggles through. Ryan’s performance is partly fantastical – reality and fiction readily blur – and the tone is playful. It is a performance for his own play, but also for others, not only in the act of filming but in Ryan’s attempts to get other children to notice him, shouting “Hey look at me!”

Whilst in our previous example the children’s memories surfaced as more realistic encounters, Ryan’s fantastical and dramatised play may be drawing on memories from sources such as television media (The Lion King film, adventure documentaries). The role of fantasy in children’s play is widely acknowledged (von Benzon, 2015), and here it is interwoven in Ryan’s performance in drawing from the past, enlivening the present, and expressing future desires, enabling Ryan to imagine himself exploring far-off lands. The camera acts as an important agent in storied play, drawing on pre-existing habits of camera use for recording the performative self, and for the drawing-out of (media-influenced) memories that produce particular ways of recording

the environment, such as the capturing of trees in a still shot, or rapid movement for a frenzied lion attack (figure 4).

As with our previous two examples of geocoaching, “the field” here is provisionally defined by educators, through delineating the boundaries of the field of action, and proscribing the tools through which field representations are produced. Yet unlike our previous encounters, the children had more freedom to define “the field” through their explorations and performances. Various pasts are those recalled by Ryan, imprinting new meanings on his playful representation of the educational landscape. As Jones (2005, p. 210) states, “strange geographies” that navigate both the imagined and memory “occupy us all”; and these memories have us hovering “between the then and the now, between our geographical imaginations and our geographical memories, to these hybrid ecologies of self and to the other element, their emotional register.” Here, Ryan’s production of “the field” uses representational media to express past, present and possible future selves. Whilst the deeper, possibly lifelong influences that the formation of these childhood memories will have are difficult to apprehend (Bondi et al, 2005), we catch a glimpse of them in this performance of a possible future self, the outdoor, jungle-exploring, lion-fighting adventurer.

Habitual practices are also expressed and developed in this encounter. Ryan’s embodied action of traversing wet grass, his awareness of other children, the camera work; all express the workings between his self and the affective environment. With his attention less directly governed by adult pedagogic input, he is instead occupied in the imagined and embodied traversing of wet, boggy landscape, recalled in the footage through the focus on the wet grass and consequently wet clothing (figures 3 and 4). His tone seems to revel in these discomforts. We see in this manifestation of geocoaching the interweaving of embodied, habitual acts, and the representational production of both the field and the self, in which memory, personal and social, plays a critical role, as does the co-production of “the field” by pedagogues and learners. It may be that the imaginative and storied elements that occupy Ryan’s activities are manifest precisely

because there are few learning-parameters, or learning goals established in the initial definition of “the field” by the educators.

### **7. Emotional registers of Geocoaching: What is traceable?**

Within this paper, we have explored three manifestations of geocoaching, providing insight into how feelings of joy, awe and wonder, of fun, amusement and play, but also more ambiguous feelings of discomfort and loneliness, emerge during geocoaching. These forms of geocoaching (inclusive of pedagogies, habits, memories and in-the-making selves and fields) arguably enable access to the “affective realm” of which Conradson (2005, p. 10) writes. In analysis of geocoaching, we still do not necessarily have answers to how these practices will impact on children’s longer-term orientation to landscape and the ecological. Simonsen (2012, p. 19) draws upon Heidegger (1962) to conceptualise orientation as a process of familiarity, as that which “refers to the spatiality of the lived”. Simonsen (2012) argues that orientation has a double-edge:

*“Familiarity is connected to the given from where the body gains the capacity to orientate itself in one way or another. The question of orientation, then, is not only about ‘finding our way’ but also about ‘feeling at home’.” (p. 19)*

Orientation is concerned with establishing an understanding of place, as well as a way of feeling connected to that place. Yet, like Ingold’s (2000) taskscape, there is a warm romanticism to “familiarity” and “home”. Situated ecopedagogy echoes Simonsen’s (2012) ideas of orientation in romanticising notions of “connection” to familiarity, home, and emotional affectiveness as always inspiring positively infused emotional encounters, likely to be extended into future-self and future-field.

Geocoaching, on the other hand, reveals how memories and habits may not always be comfortable, happy, meaningful or immediately relevant to critical ecological consciousness, but may afford, nevertheless, particular productions of self and field that are relevant to future relations with landscapes. Crucially, to assume that these outcomes are easily traceable to future orientations

is misleading. As we have seen in the examples above, memories and habits may not always surface in predictable ways. Lorimer (2003, p. 302) draws our attention to the dispersal of events, and memories of events of “the field”, and how following experience, we present a representation of events that is “a distribution of experience across sites, surfacing in stories told and arising out of the rhythm of practice”. He treats his field course as an “ongoing event” which leads to “reflexive conduct, based around an empathetic and collaborative ethic” (2003, p. 302). In acts of geocoaching, the implicit development of habitual practices may be as conducive to a more-than-human collaborative ethic as to explicit pedagogic acts. Affective experiences of landscape may equally arise through stories told not only by educators, but also by children themselves, drawing on personal and social memories that transcend the home and familiar. Geocoaching accounts for these co-productions of affective experience, without assuming immediate traceability.

#### **8. Conclusions: Extending understandings of ecopedagogy through geocoaching**

Much of traditional environmental education, and recent notions of ecopedagogy, have a moral geography, assuming that proximity to “nature”, exposure to “wild places” and place-based, ecological learning, will enhance connectedness to landscape resulting in appropriate environmental stewardship. Matthews et al. (2000, p. 143) point out that a “perceived benefit of a rural upbringing ... is that children can grow up and develop in settings that enable a close association with nature”. In the moral geography of ecopedagogy there is a danger of association with contemporary child panics, rural childhood idylls, and idealised notions of authentic dwelling. Such popular concerns and their theoretical counterparts risk alienating contemporary children and adults whose lives may never fit within these moral landscapes.

In this paper, we offer geocoaching as an alternative form of analysis of outdoor pedagogic practice, and, tentatively, an alternative way to conceptualise, and perform, educational activities across different scales. Through analysis of how geocoaching takes place, we have demonstrated in three examples that within the landscapes of a national park, where one might assume children

have the proximity to “nature” so desired by environmental educators, children and adults draw on a range of representational and non-representational memories and habits that transcend the rural idyll. Thinking about ecopedagogy as geocoaching has enabled us to explore three productions of “the field” and “the self” through habit and memory: science-methodologies that produce particular “natural” representations; social memories of landscape interwoven with personal memories of children; and performative, media-infused playful practices that produce a partly-fantastical “field” and future-self.

Like ecopedagogy, the “coaching” in geocoaching attempts to capture how learners are guided by others, and our emphasis here has been how the physical and epistemological field is defined (Lorimer, 2003). Following Lorimer (2003), geocoaching seeks to capture how past histories and geographies of landscape and how social and personal geographical imaginations, act to coach those currently acting in, and producing, “the field”. Unlike idealised notions sometimes present within the efforts of ecopedagogues, many of these memories come from sources such as modern media, and encounters and emotions outside of the rural idyll (the buffet, being alone, discomfort). This analysis of geocoaching may also be important for understanding the wider educational landscape of the national park, and indeed other places. Hand et al (2017) have argued that within city environments, most children rely upon gardens and yards for their encounters with “nature”. How geocoaching occurs in urban greenspaces may be instructive for developing a wider understanding of geocoaching practices and how they are traced between alternative scales of landscape encounter.

## References

Bondi, L., Davidson, J. & Smith, M. (2005). Introduction: Geography’s ‘Emotional Turn’, in J. Davidson, L. Bondi & M. Smith (Eds.), *Emotional Geographies* (pp. 1-16). London, Routledge.

Cloke, P. & Jones, O. (2001). Dwelling, place, and landscape: an orchard in Somerset. *Environment and Planning A*, 33, 649-666.

Conradson, D. (2005). Freedom, space and perspective: moving encounters with other ecologies. In L. Bondi, J. Davidson & M. Smith (Eds.). *Emotional Geographies* (pp. 103-116). London, Routledge.

Dewsbury, J. D. (2015). Non-representational landscapes and the performative affective forces of habit: from 'Live' to 'Blank'. *Cultural Geographies*, 22(1), 29-47.

Dunkley, C. M. (2009). A therapeutic taskscape: Theorising place-making, discipline and care at a camp for troubled youth. *Health and Place*, 15(1), 88-96.

Dunkley, R. A. (2018). Space-time scapes as ecopedagogy. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 49(2), 117-12.

Dunkley, R. A., and Smith, T. A. (2018). By-standing memories of curious observations: Children's storied landscapes of ecological encounter. *Cultural Geographies*, doi: 10.1177/1474474018792652

Freeman, C., van Heezik, Y., Hand, K. & Stein, A. (2015). Making Cities More Child- and Nature-Friendly: A Child-Focused Study of Nature Connectedness in New Zealand Cities. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 25 (2), 176-207.

Freeman, C., Stein, A., Hand, K. & van Heezik, Y. (2017). City children's nature knowledge and contact: It is not just about biodiversity provision. *Environment and Behaviour*, 1-27.

Gibson, J.J. (2014). *The ecological approach to visual perception: classic edition*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Hand, K. L., Freeman, C., Seddon, P. J., Recio, M. R., Stein, A. & van Heezik, Y. (2017). The Importance of urban gardens in supporting children's biophilia. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences PNAS*, 14(2), 274–279.

Ingold, T. (1993). The temporality of landscape. *World Archaeology*, 25, 152-174.

Ingold, T. (2000). *The Perception of the Environment*, London, Routledge.

Irwin, A. (1995). *Citizen science: A study of people, expertise and sustainable development*, Abingdon, Routledge.

Jones, O. (2005). An ecology of emotion, memory, self and landscape i *In* L. Bondi, J. Davidson & M. Smith (Eds.). *Emotional Geographies* (pp. 205-218), London, Routledge.

Kahn, R. (2010). *Critical pedagogy, ecoliteracy, & planetary crisis: The ecopedagogy movement*, New York, Peter Lang.

Lorimer, H. (2003). The geographical field course as active archive. *Cultural Geographies*, 10(3), 278-308.

Louv, R. (2008). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*, New York, Algonquin Books.



Matthews, M. H. (1985). Young children's representations of the environment: a comparison of techniques. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 5(3), 261-278.

Matthews, H., Taylor, M., Sherwood, K., Tucker, F. & Limb, M. (2000). Growing-up in the countryside: children and the rural idyll. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 16(2), 141-153.

Payne, P. G. (2014). Vagabonding slowly: Ecopedagogy, metaphors, figurations, and nomadic ethics. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education (CJEE)*, 19, 47-69.

Payne, P.G. (2017). Ecopedagogy and radical pedagogy: Post-critical transgressions in environmental and geography education. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 48(2), 130-138.

Payne, P.G. (2018). The framing of ecopedagogy as/in scapes: Methodology of the issue . *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 49(2), 71-87.

Simonsen, K. (2012). In quest of a new humanism: Embodiment, experience and phenomenology as critical geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, 37, 10-26.

Smith, T. A. and Dunkley, R. A. (2018). Technology-nonhuman-child assemblages: reconceptualising rural childhood roaming, *Children's Geographies* 16(3), 304-318.

Stewart, A.J. (2018). A Murray Cod assemblage: Re/considering riverScape pedagogy, *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 49(2), 130-141.

Skelton, T. (2009). Children's geographies/geographies of children: Work, mobilities and migration, *Geography Compass*, 3(4), 1430-1448.

Tuck, E., McKenzie, M., & McCoy, K. (Eds.) (2014). Special issue: Land education: Indigenous, post-colonial, and decolonizing perspectives on place and environmental education research. *Environmental Education Research*, 20(1), 1-143.

Von Benzon, N. (2015). 'I fell out of a tree and broke my neck': Acknowledging fantasy in children's research contributions. *Children's Geographies*, 13(3), 330-342.

Witten, K., Kearns, R., Carroll, P., Asiasiga, L. & Tava'e, N. (2013). New Zealand parents' understandings of the intergenerational decline in children's independent outdoor play and active travel. *Children's Geographies*, 11(2), 215-229.