Bates, C. Rewilding education? Exploring an imagined and experienced outdoor learning space, *Children's Geographies*. Forthcoming 2020.

Acorn, adder, ash, beech, bluebell, buttercup, catkin, conker, cowslip, cygnet, dandelion, fern… As Macfarlane writes, these nature-words were recently deemed no longer relevant to modern-day childhood and deleted from a new edition of the Oxford Junior Dictionary. The entries that replaced them included *attachment, blog, broadband, bullet-point, celebrity,* and *chatroom*. According to the head of children's dictionaries at Oxford University Press, the substitutions made in the dictionary reflected the consensus of experience of modern-day childhood – a childhood in which the outdoor and the natural has been displaced by the indoor and the virtual (Macfarlane, 2015).

This paper considers some of the undercurrents of modern-day childhood that are portrayed by OUP's decision – of feelings about children's access to and engagement with nature, and the educational management of the relationship between children and nature – by following the progress of a small rural primary school in the UK as it goes about transforming its outdoor spaces. The paper does not seek to evaluate the benefits of outdoor learning, but explores the significance of these outdoor spaces as they are imagined, made, and experienced, from the first design stages to the first days of use. It is a whole school project, blending the voices of adults and children to document a process. Combining observations and insights gathered over two years, including four site visits, interviews with teachers, ethnographic observation in classes and at break times, observant participation at design workshops, and multimodal methods workshops conducted with the school's pupils, the paper tracks the ways in which outdoor spaces are created by adults and children, and considers the ways in which the creation of spaces can influence and shift school practices and cultures. As such, the paper is concerned with the creation of different possible futures.

The paper consists of four sections. The first section, 'School spaces and childhood places' reviews sociological and geographical work on childhood and space in order to consider what is at stake in the relationships between children and nature. Section two, 'Fieldwork' introduces the school project and expands on the multimodal methods that I used. The next two sections, 'Imagining a new future' and 'Experiencing a new outdoors' portray the hard work done by one primary school, and discuss how participation, imagination and risk shape and are shaped by the ambition to create a new future. In conclusion, I suggest that there is much to learn from

a small school project about educational landscapes and the spatiality of childhood today.

School spaces and childhood places

While, or perhaps because, nature-words are disappearing from childhood and children are leading increasingly indoor and sedentary lifestyles (Louv, 2010), the outdoor learning movement is rapidly growing and gaining support, and the mission to reconnect a generation of children with nature is being taken up by parents and schools, with a growth in forest nurseries and schools, 'wild time' and outdoor learning, play, and education across the UK. Organisations such as the National Trust have published reports documenting the educational and health benefits of being outdoors in which physical health problems including obesity, mental health problems, and children's growing inability to assess risks to themselves and others are attributed to our modern-day, indoor lifestyles. As Moss writes, '…children who learn outdoors know more, understand more, feel better, behave better, work more cooperatively and are physically healthier. Not a bad result from simply changing the location where they are being taught' (2012: 9). It is important to recognise that the 'rewild the child' movement is a social movement that is embedded in a particular ideology of childhood, nature, and modern life. It is also largely a middle-class movement, which says very little about feelings of entitlement and access to nature across class, race or ethnicity. Nonetheless, the argument – that children do not simply learn more when freed from their devices and desks, but that they learn differently, is significant. What is especially interesting is the emphasis on location.

According to Kraftl, many educators prioritise learning processes over learning spaces. In whatever setting, he writes, 'a 'good education' is most often underpinned by the attributes of the teacher, the willingness of the learners, the appropriateness of the curriculum and the quality of the relationship between teachers and learners' (2015: 1). The conviction that space matters is thus a new and perhaps marginal one in the field of education, and as such it is worth considering in what ways space might matter to children more broadly. Location has been the focus of a substantial body of work on children's geographies, with the spatial control of children emerging as an important matter. As Watson writes, 'over the twentieth century the public realm for children has evolved as a space of fear and risk, of exclusion and segregation, and of privatisation and commercialisation. From the beginning to the end of the twentieth century children became increasingly regulated, subject to surveillance and contained in spaces

specifically designed for their use, while spaces for spontaneous play and interaction, for rubbing along with unknown others, diminished' (2006: 156). This growing discourse of fear and risk means that children are increasingly losing their freedom, not only because we want to keep them safe from traffic and strangers, but also because of a growing fear of children, child crime and violence. As Valentine (1996) observes, children are considered to be at risk, but they are also considered risky in public space. The boundaries of children's lives are growing even tighter, and the 'roaming radius' – the maximum distance from home within which children are permitted to play or explore unsupervised – shrunk by 90 per cent between 1970 and 2010. Even those spaces designed for children, such as schools and public playgrounds, are conceived by adults and serve to contain children (Matthews and Limb, 1999). Research within schools and playgrounds, which have become key sites of enquiry over the last decade (Cook and Hemming, 2011), shows that schools are spaces of control, regulation and surveillance (Gagen 2000; Gallagher 2011; James et al, 1998). From school architecture to classroom seating, the dimensions and dynamics of school space have been shown to regulate children's bodies. Gallagher (2011) shows how the traditional school playground is a space of visual and auditory surveillance, and Matthews and Limb (1999) describe it as an unrewarding and sterile environment for children's outdoor activities.

One of the dangers of juxtaposing the contemporary spatial control of children with the mission to 'rewild the child' is that it risks romanticising childhoods past, in which children were free to roam, and childhood was a time of innocence in nature. But it is important to recognise that while childhood varies over space and time (Valentine, 1996), fear, avoidance and risk did not always define life as a child (Watson, 2006). Nor is the emphasis on nature a rosy nostalgia for rural life. As Ward (1988) writes, the popular romantic ideal of country childhood is a stereotype of the British imagination. The micro-geographies of rural childhood are also restricted, and places to play beyond those provided and watched over by adults can be hard to find in the countryside. As Matthews and his co-authors write, 'for many young people rural childhoods are not necessarily distinguished by a closer affinity to nature. Within our study areas, we found little evidence of young people running freely across fields and through woods and 'exploring distant forests and hills'' (2000: 144).

This paper draws on ideas from both sociology and geography to investigate the spatial sociology of childhood (Philo, 2000) through a small rural primary school. Recognising that the argument for outdoor learning entwines location and risk, the paper explores just how the

process of changing a school's grounds can influence and shift its practices and cultures. In the next section, I introduce the project and make some methodological notes on researching the spatial sociology of childhood in and with a school.

Fieldwork

I began working with the school in the spring of 2014. I arrived after long months of hard work had already passed and the process of envisioning a new future had begun. The design, which included beehives, a polytunnel and vegetable garden, an outdoor classroom and a pond, would transform the traditional school grounds, a hard playground and green field, into a rich resource for outdoor learning. The school is situated in an ex-mining and agricultural community. The catchment area also puts it in the most deprived 20% of schools nationally, and, as the headteacher told me, 'that deprivation brings with it things like processed food, tinned spaghetti, all of that type of thing where the children don't really see where things come from.' The school has high numbers of children on pupil premium (a government grant for disadvantaged pupils), as well as children with special needs and more vulnerable children. The project, it was hoped, would help to put these children back in touch with nature, and provide alternative spaces to take them out of the confinement of the classroom.

I had been introduced to the school by Mike Westley, a Landscape Architect who had been charged with the task of bringing the school's vision to life, and my initial access to the project was as his workshop assistant (this meant helping with scissors and tape, and getting messy with glue and paint). Following my first visit I returned three more times, twice with Mike and once on my own. Each time I observantly participated in school activities, conducted interviews with school staff and parents, and ran my own multimodal methods workshops with the school children. These workshops were designed to complement the original design workshops run by Mike and to fit in with everyday teaching activities, giving the children an opportunity to explore the project in a fun way and at the same time allowing me to gather data. The school was welcoming and open to these visits, but as Lyon and Carabelli (2015) note, when research is mediated by an institution and reliant on institutional educational practices, the researcher ultimately gives up control over the type and quality of data that can be produced. I fitted my workshops around what was going on at school each day, working with the children I was given and within the time that was made available to me, recognising that the project was 'inevitably driven by adult research agendas, time frames and priorities' (Lomax, 2012: 106).

While the school had granted me consent to research the project, I sought additional informed consent from the children and their parents for each of the two multimodal methods workshops. For the first workshop, which involved a small group of children making video tours of the school grounds, letters were sent home and signed permission slips returned. For the second workshop, which involved two classes of children taking photographs of the school grounds, letters were again sent home but permission slips were not included (instead the parents were asked to contact the school if they did not wish their child's work to be used in the research – this meant that children were not excluded from the activity). As Gallagher and his co-authors write (2010), working in schools raises particular ethical challenges and informed consent is more problematic than is generally admitted. My research activities were part of the school day, and the children I was given to make video tours with were often class representatives. Their agency and my own was mediated by the school, and while the children were excited to have been picked for a special activity, consenting to class activities and adult requests is part of their everyday lives. However, many of the consent slips that had been sent home were not returned to the school leaving me with largely unusable video footage. The photography workshop was conducted with two classes, and involved a larger group of children. As the children were not photographing themselves or each other, the supervising teacher and I together agreed that consent slips would not be necessary, but a letter was still sent home to ensure both the children and their parents were aware that they had participated in my research. This helped to reinforce the otherwise blurry boundary between school activities and research activities, and also reduced the risk of data being made unusable due to permission slips being lost or forgotten.

Creative and visual methods are commonly used in research with children, and there is an assumption that they provide an easy way into understanding children's experiences because they do not rely on verbal competency (Lomax, 2012). My reasons for choosing to work with multimodal methods were different, and in fact both of the workshops that I ran involved the verbal competencies of talking and writing as well as filming and photographing. My intention was to give the children playful opportunities to imagine and experience their school grounds at different stages of the design process. As Varvantakis and Nolas (2019) write, play can be a useful metaphor for research, both methodologically and epistemologically. For Varvantakis and Nolas, play 'did similar work as composing, meandering, plundering and time travel have

done for other scholars' (2019: 269). As an orienting metaphor, it opened up opportunities for understanding fieldwork and analysis.

The video tours were conducted just after the grounds had been landscaped and planted, but before they were put to use. The photography workshop was held several months later, when the garden had finally come to life and the children were more familiar with their new space. At each point, I tried to use multimodal and ethnographic methods that would let the children lead me into their landscapes, and allow me to explore their imaginations as they explored places. As Greenfield notes, 'The success of research with young children lies in the watching, listening, reflecting and engaging in conversation: seeking to enter the child's world in just a small way' (2004: 4). Taking an ethnographic approach meant that I could 'hang out' with the children, as well as engage them in activities and workshops. These 'child-friendly' methods 'were designed to make research 'fun' and 'relevant' to children' (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008: 501), blending school activities they were familiar with, with novel devices and out of the ordinary encounters. Most of the children had heard of a 'GoPro', but none had used one before. At the same time, the use of wearable cameras in research with children is limited (see Green, 2016 for a brief review). As such, the video tours were novel for all of us. Similarly, while using photography is common in research with children, and the children were all familiar with taking photographs on cameras and iPads, the use of disposable cameras made the activity more unusual and interesting for the children. I hoped that these methods would help me to hear children's multiple voices and unfold their everyday experiences at school.

I was especially interested in the possible futures of the site and the children, and one of the biggest challenges was in finding ways to research these futures, which became a little more tangible each time I visited. As Coleman writes, 'as a not-yet temporality, the future is slippery, ill defined, constantly moving and, hence, intangible' (2017: 525). Drawing on recent work on visual and sensory sociology, Coleman suggests that the methodological problem of researching the future can be answered by inventive methodologies, which 'provide some way of grasping, understanding, and attuning to the future' (2017: 525). Using cameras seemed like a good way of allowing the children to do this, as they provided tangible representations of the present and the future to work with.

Imagining a new future

My first visit to the school was part of a two-day design workshop with Mike Westley. The school's vision, their imagination of a new future, was already well underway before work on the ground began. Mike's role was to develop that vision and realize it. As an inclusive Landscape Architect, Mike has a particular way of working and designing, and he embraced the idea of a site that would work for different people and in different ways. Perhaps most importantly, he wanted the children to be involved in developing the design and to feel a sense of ownership of the project, and this was the main purpose of the design workshop.

Levels of excitement and anticipation about the project understandably peaked at key moments, one of which was the two-day design workshop. Co-design is growing in popularity in policy and design circles, and is now a well-established approach to creative practice, with roots in participatory design techniques. It is intended to reflect a fundamental change in the traditional designer-client relationship, enabling a wide range of people to make a creative contribution, but it is rarely used in schools. Woodcock (2008) points out that engaging children in the design of future schools should be of interest to educators, policy-makers, architects and designers, but that the question of their engagement, along with how to conduct meaningful participation in practice, is not asked enough. Involving children in the design process not only has the potential to improve the design, it is also educational, as Matthews and Limb write, 'Involving children in the design and management of their environments is a valued end in itself, as well as an important step to developing competent, participating citizens' (1999: 66). While it is increasingly recognised that co-design could and should be used in schools, the challenging dimensions of this design practice remain largely unquestioned and under-explored.

One of the first activities we engaged in with the children during the workshop was a site walk to find out how and where they play. The walk focused on seven school spaces: the boundary wall, the playing field, the far corner, the activity playground, the garden, the concrete quiet area, and the playground. These spaces reflect the traditional material elements of a primary school – a grass playing field, a concrete playground, a school pond. At each point, we considered the qualities of the spaces – the scent from the pine trees, the view to the coast, the exposure to wind and weather, and the ways the spaces were used. Resoundingly, it seemed that the spaces served to contain the children in certain parts of the site and to isolate them from other spaces, dictating the kinds of activities that the children engaged in during play time and the kind of teaching that took place outdoors. The spaces also reflected adult fears and concerns about safety and crime. For example, children were not allowed to play on the field near the

low boundary wall because of fears that they would escape or even be snatched, and the pond, which was behind a locked gate, was covered with a large metal grid. The site reflected both the existing school culture and the broader educational landscape.

In particular, the existing school site and culture resounded with a concern for surveillance. The children were not allowed to play in hidden or out of sight places, and they were kept in carefully managed groups and spaces. As Mike surmised, 'my perception of the site as a designer is that it is a presently largely unconnected set of possibilities which are poorly accessed and not very accessible, and not very easy to enjoy'. At the time of my first visit, there had already been some small shifts away from this risk averse culture, as a teacher told me:

> When I first got to the school there were lines painted around sheds, and it was only recently that the children have been told well no they're just lines round sheds, you can cross them, although some of the TAs and lunchtime supervisors still tell the children they can't go across those lines. In reality there's no reason why they shouldn't be going across them, there's no safety issues there surrounding it.

Still, the seven spaces selected were the ones where the school staff remained most challenged in terms of conceptions of where the children could and could not play.

The next co-design activities we engaged in with the children were largely messy practices of doing and making, from movement exercises with the youngest children to model making and painting. In reception class, Mike asked the children (aged 4 to 5) to move like animals in a pond, make a tree house with their bodies, and close their eyes and imagine their favourite places to play. As Watson writes, 'Most people remember nostalgically not structured spaces but the creative and secret spaces of their childhood which they could adapt and transform imaginatively for their play, and where they could gain some sense of control' (2006: 127), and this was true for the children too. Their favourite places were secretive spaces where they could engage in imaginative play, often in their gardens. With classes 1 and 2 (5 to 7 years) we did more movement exercises and painted, with class 3 (7 to 8 years), we made a 'river of play', painting and drawing on long sheets of paper, and making models of plants, ponds, and camps to stick on them, and with classes 4 and 5 (8 to 10 years) we focused on making models. The older children were tasked with designing the outdoor classroom (Figure 1), a key feature of the project.

Like catastrophe models, the children's paintings and models were practices of visualisation, narrativisation, and mobilisation, and during these activities and performances, making the future present became what Anderson describes as 'a question of creating affectively imbued representations that move and mobilize' (2010: 785). The workshops produced something tangible, enacting the future at the scale of a model and allowing the children to engage with the future before it had been made. They helped to move and mobilize the designs for the project, with Mike taking inspiration and ideas from the workshops and incorporating them into the final design, and they helped to build connections and a sense of ownership. The children's collective wishes, hope and plans were brought to life in the moment, as Lyon and Carabelli write, 'our orientations to the future matter a great deal for how we inhabit the present; how we make connections between the now and the non-yet through wishing, hoping, planning and so on' (2016: 431).

I want to suggest that these workshops provide a positive model for co-design with children, along the lines first set out by Hart (1992) in his study of children's participation in environmental design. But I also want to bear in mind that the children were, largely, reproducing what they had already been told to hope for. As Adam (2008) notes, the future is not open and indeterminate, and certain futures are set in train already. The future, she writes, 'is instead an extremely crowded territory, filled with the actualised desires, hopes and fears of previous generations' (2008: 115). Adam is writing here about nuclear power, but the message that past decisions and actions influence and delimit the future holds true at a smaller scale too. A design had to be proposed in order to win funding, and with that came a set of adult desires that reflect a particular adult imaginary of childhood and nature. The children worked with those desires that they knew about, even adopting Ofsted audit language in the design of their 'outstanding outdoor classroom' (Figure 1). According to Adam and Groves (2007), futures are told, tamed, traded, transformed, traversed, thought, tended and transcended. Each of these practices are reflected in co-design, highlighting what is problematic about it and showing its limitations. But the children also helped to shape these desires, and added their own. One recurring and improbable desire was for a zip wire. Remarkably, the headteacher supported this idea from the 'key stakeholders', and a zip wire was added to the list of features to be included in the design.

Months passed, in which Mike worked with the school's vision and the children's ideas to

develop a masterplan. I returned to the school with Mike in July, this time for a staff consultation. The aim of the meeting was to agree on the final details of the design, so that work on the site could begin. The elements of the masterplan (at this point) were: an outdoor classroom, a polytunnel garden, forest garden rooms, woodland play, a wildflower maze, an ampitheatre and fire pit, an orchard path, a zip wire, a beehive, an early years garden, a chicken run, a playwall, a kitchen garden, and a play yard. Mike highlighted how the new school grounds would be connected, so that in future the children would not be contained in specific areas, but would instead be able to make a journey around the entire site. It was an ambitious design, and one that challenged the school staff to reevaluate their attitudes to surveillance and risk.

Later, in an interview with the headteacher, I discussed how the school culture was being challenged by the project vision. She remarked:

> One of the biggest challenges for us here will be educating the staff about risk and about managing risk and seeing it in a positive light. You can't always be in those spaces with the children watching, you've got to let them do things.

Returning to the example of the sheds, she explained:

> In this culture, children aren't allowed behind the sheds, because you can't see them. Well isn't that the reason they go behind there, to hide – hide and seek, isn't that part of being a child? And I think we're at risk of losing all that. It's still making sure they're safe, that's of primary importance, but remembering that they need some sort of freedom, we can't have eyes on every child all of the time.

By shifting this culture of risk, the children would have more freedom to run, climb, and hide, to learn and test their own capabilities, and to develop their own 'risk thermostat' (Moss, 2012: 14). With hills, a large pond and a firepit on the masterplan, it seemed that the project vision was going to shift the school's culture of protection to a new culture of resilience, embracing risk and danger as essential ingredients of a rounded childhood (Gill, 2011).

Figure 1: Model of an 'outstanding outdoor classroom' by class 4. Image by author.

Experiencing a new outdoors

Several more months passed before I visited the school again. During the summer holidays, heavy machinery moved and modeled the ground, and the flat site began to take on a new, hillier shape. I returned in February, in time for the first planting workshops. Mike had been back at the school showing the children how to weave willow fences a few weeks before, and on this visit we were going to plant trees together. On the first day, the oldest children in the school worked with the youngest children in reception, showing them what to do and helping them to dig holes and fetch water. Over two days, each class came out to plant more trees, until the site was filled with young saplings. These workshops involved the children in the development of the site, making them a part of its making.

Now that the grounds were beginning to take shape, I wanted to begin working more directly with the children in order to understand how they experienced this new outdoors. The grounds were still being developed, and outdoor learning was only just beginning. But there was, finally, a tangible, and moderately cultivated, future outside to explore. With the children as my guides we made video tours of the new site, the children working in pairs with one child wearing a headcam in order to record the tour from a child's perspective. I wanted to explore how the children met the landscape, and how they used their bodies, senses and voices to

explore it. Video tours are often used to explore peoples' relationships with places, and are either conducted with the researcher holding the camera (Pink, 2007) or with the participant wearing it (Brown, 2015). Positioned on the forehead of a child, the wearable camera 'captures what children see, hear, say, and touch in their environments' (Green, 2016: 282), providing insight into how children interact with the world. As Pink (2007) writes, walking with video is an exercise in experiencing and imagining, and together we wound our way through the site, experiencing it with our bodies and imagining futures spent outside.

What was most remarkable about these tours was the way that the children walked the site differently, according to their age. The older children kept to the paths, speaking knowledgeably about the project, pointing out which trees they had planted, telling me the species and the fruits they would bear, while the youngest children ran up and down the hills, getting muddy and whirling the camera towards earth and sky with kinetic energy. They were less knowing and in some ways more imaginative. Each time, the main attractions were proudly shown to me – the outdoor classroom, the chickens, the pond, and the fruit that they would one day be able to pick and eat. The children spoke about what they could do in the new spaces – there were places for chatting and places for sitting, banks for rolling and running down, and spaces for performing. Despite some confusion about where they were and were not allowed to go, the children seemed free in the new space, which was a place of possibility. As one child remarked:

> It's more adventurous – we're allowed to explore, it's not just a big field anymore. My favourite bit is, it's really good for hide and seek, you can hide under the banks, it's really fun here. I can't wait for it to be the summer.

The children's imaginaries and meanderings challenged the site to perform in different ways and resonated with its inclusive design as a site that would work for different people in different ways. Some of the children also spoke about their own, more personal, connections to the garden – the way a certain song played in their head, or time spent at an allotment with a grandparent, illuminating how being outdoors can trigger memories and experiences that might allow the children to shape their own childhoods and relationships with nature.

It became clear on this visit that the new outdoor spaces were already being felt in the school. Perceptions of the weather, of wind, rain, and sun, had played a key role in the new design,

with landscaping, soft planting, and temporary shelters being used to make the site more inhabitable and provide protection from the elements. The children had more freedom to play outdoors and there were more possibilities to extend teaching across the site, bringing the school into a closer relationship with the environment.

I made my last trip to the school over a year later, this time in June. The willow has sprung up and there are now rabbits living with the chickens. The outdoor classroom is being used primarily by class 1, and a small summerhouse has also been constructed. The awnings were not tough enough and need replacing, and the circles face the sun, so have been difficult to use with the children squinting to see the teacher. The current school caterers refuse to use any food grown in the garden, but bags of sugar snap peas, provided by the government, are given out in class. Peas are also growing in the garden and at break time a teacher encourages a few boys to eat them while I am observing, they are delicious but it seems a novel experience for the boys (not a usual occurrence, but the school is hoping to change its catering contract next year so that they can begin to eat their own vegetables). Children come up and ask if they are really allowed to pick and eat. As a result of new building work breaks are now on the green areas, a marked difference to my last visit where playtime was still on the hard areas. Now the garden seems truly alive – and put to the test – with children running, jumping, and rolling down the banks. Balls fly into the garden area from the pitch, and children are engaging in many different kinds of play. Some take a walk or sit with a friend, some play group games, others simply run and roll or stroll, and generally the children seem relaxed and happy in the space. A teacher tells me that at first there had been lines of children at break-time with small injuries, but that this has decreased as the children have learnt to move their bodies in the new space and to assess risk for themselves. In fact, research on children's play has found that increased safety measures in playgrounds do not reduce accidents and may in fact increase them (Gill, 2007).

At lunch break a teacher runs 'nurture club' in the outdoor classroom and pond area. This is for some of the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) children who find it difficult to engage with other children and control themselves in the bigger group at break time. I observe for thirty minutes, the area feels sheltered and protective, and the children are learning to care for each other. After school, a Teaching Assistant runs another club where children can help look after the chickens and rabbits. They pick dandelion leaves for the animals, move them between hutches, and stroke the rabbits. I ask a teacher how she finds teaching outside

and if it is different. She is very positive, and tells me that the children are relaxed and alert when learning outside.

The main purpose of my trip is to run a photography workshop with the children, with the aim of using photographs to explore their favourite places in the new site (Figure 2). Disposable cameras have been commonly used in research with children, with children being asked to take photographs of their favourite neighbourhood places (Watson, 2006) or the places they like and dislike at school (Schratz and Steiner-Löffler, 1998), but film is now becoming obsolete. In the afternoon, I join classes 4 and 5 and all the children take photographs, working in pairs. When we introduce photography to the class the teacher explains that we are using old (real) film. The children do not seem to have encountered it before, and are used to taking digital photos that they can see instantly, take lots of, and edit. The cameras make the activity more novel for them, and several take their time in framing the shot. I move between the pairs asking them where they are going and checking they can work the cameras. They are very good at only taking one photo each, as per my instructions! At the end of the day, I drive away to get the film developed in time to bring the photographs back the next day. When we look at the prints the children instantly recognise their photos, explaining to each other when they photographed the same place that 'this one is mine, because I took it at this angle'. Several photos have especially good compositions, and there are lots of photos of the rabbits, which have been a big hit.

In the afternoon, almost all the classes are outside (it is sunny). One class is on the sports pitch, another is doing art outside, drawing the chickens and rabbits and studying their habitats, and class 3 is working with me to make a display as part of the photography workshop. We collect leaves, look at the different shapes, and draw them on coloured paper, cutting them out so that captions for the photographs can be written on. When they have finished making leaves for the display the teacher asks them to take a partner and lead them to their 'special place' in the garden. One boy tells us about a spot behind the summerhouse, where he goes to escape the other children. A girl tells us about a bank that she sits on with her friend. Then the children from classes 4 and 5 come over to see the photos and write their captions on the leaves we have made. I sit at a picnic bench with the photos spread in front of me, handing out the paper leaves and pencils and collecting them back. It is all a bit too ordered but because we are outside and there is a breeze I have to hang on to everything or it will be blown away. The captions on the

leaves speak of places to hide and play, places to feel warm and to feel calm, and animals to stroke and care for.

Figure 2: The new school pond and outdoor classroom. Image by school child.

Conclusion

In 2011, the government published a white paper proposing 'action to get more children learning outdoors, removing barriers and increasing schools' abilities to teach outdoors'. (Defra, 2011). But there has been little guidance, or funding, to support this to date. This paper shows how one small primary school took on the challenge for itself, winning its own funding and writing its own guidance along the way. Embracing risk and uncertainty with confidence, the school has challenged its own culture of protection and surveillance in order to give its pupils greater freedom outdoors. Following a project like this one points beyond the anodyne suggestion that having nature spaces in primary schools is a good thing to show how changing the school landscape can in turn shift institutional, cultural, structural, and more personal barriers to getting children outdoors. Shifting these barriers has happened slowly, in step with

the development and growth of the new site, illustrating how the 'spatialities' of education – the social and the spatial – are realised in one another (Kraftl, 2015).

As Macknight argues, 'schools work hard to present and build an ideal (future) society within their own grounds' (2016: 37). This hard work is visible in the school's new grounds, but it is also visible in the children's attitudes and behaviour. The school's decision to live and learn differently is a brave vision for a better education and childhood that is acted out in small, everyday activities, from helping a younger child plant a tree to caring for a rabbit. According to Ofsted, getting children out of the classroom raises 'standards, motivation, personal development and behaviour' (2008) – and the teachers at this school would agree. But perhaps what is most remarkable is the shift from breaks in the asphalt schoolyard to playing in the green school grounds. Several studies that compare green play spaces with schoolyards have shown that children play differently in green spaces – they play more creatively, in more egalitarian ways, and with a sense of wonder, inventing games that they continue from day to day (Louv, 2010). As a teacher told me in an interview, 'they're using the space now in a more imaginative way'. Observations like these suggest that the benefits to playing outdoors are not just physical – running, jumping, swinging and climbing, but also sensory and interpersonal – having freedom to explore, learning to cooperate with others, and experience other living things.

The school's vision was ambitious, and not all of it has (yet) been achieved. But this is an ongoing project, with an orientation to the future. It is contingent on use and will continue to change and develop over time as the children, their teachers, and the site live, learn and grow together. While the project was funded as a specific spatial-temporal intervention in the school, it has been taken up as a living venture that will continue to grow. The new spaces will be made and re-made, and the school will continue to cultivate more hopeful engagements with the future, challenging educational values and traditional ideas of schools as 'uniform' spaces (Kraftl, 2015), and re-conceptualising the look and feel of the landscape of childhood. At a time when many people feel they have no 'future' (Urry, 2016), the project is helping to imagine and create different possible futures for the children, the school, and society.

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