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# The meanings of *friluftsliv* in Physical Education Teacher Education

Karin Sjödin<sup>a</sup>, Mikael Quennerstedt <sup>b,c</sup> and Johan Öhman <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Health and Medical Sciences, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden; <sup>b</sup>The Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, GIH Stockholm, Sweden; <sup>c</sup>Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Elverum, Norway

## ABSTRACT

The aim with this article is to contribute knowledge about the meanings of *friluftsliv* in educational practice. This is done by investigating *what friluftsliv* becomes in the ongoing practices of PETE in Sweden and *how* these meanings are established in the studied activities. The empirical material consists of different kinds of material from *friluftsliv* activities in PETE programmes: study guides, field trip plans, students' vlogs from overnight stays outdoors, video recordings from two longer field trips, audio recordings from evening seminars during the field trips and students' written reflections after them. In order to identify meanings of *friluftsliv* and how these are established we used a transactional analysis based on Dewey. Five different ways of what *friluftsliv* becomes in PETE practice were identified in this study. The different meanings reflect the complex picture of contradictions and lack of common ground for the content and motives identified in the outdoor education field. Our study also confirms how the meaning of *friluftsliv* as skills is established by putting up tents, lighting fires, building wind shelters and so on, and how this contributes to a focus on the instrumental values in PETE. On the other hand, our study shows that other meanings of *friluftsliv* are established in the ongoing practice, where more intrinsic values are at stake even if they are often overshadowed in PETE practice. In conclusion the results also point to the potential of *friluftsliv* in terms of a suggested move away from an activity-based personal and social development discourse in favour of experiences of educating for environmentally sustainable human-nature relations. The challenge is how to make these experiences educational in PETE and how to guide students in transforming experiences in more exclusive *friluftsliv* into pedagogical competence as future teachers using *friluftsliv* for different purposes in school PE.

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## Introduction

*Friluftsliv* (outdoor life) is a unique Scandinavian outdoor tradition characterised by leading a simple life close to nature and is based on diverse and long-term use of the shared landscape (Sandell & Öhman, 2010). This outdoor tradition is a key learning area in Swedish physical education (PE), much as outdoor education is in several other countries. Physical Education Teacher Education

**CONTACT** Karin Sjödin  karin.sjodin@oru.se

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(PETE) therefore has an important part to play in preparing future teachers to educate in matters pertaining to *friluftsliv*.

*Friluftsliv* therefore is a highly valued part of the content of Swedish PETE, and according to Backman (2008) giving students experiences of nature is a central goal for educators in PETE in Sweden. However, several educational challenges are connected to *friluftsliv* in PE and PETE. One example highlighted by Backman (2008) is that the practice of *friluftsliv* involves a different logic and rationale than the competition-oriented values that characterise sport. A similar tension is emphasised by Sutherland and Legge (2016), who describe a shift from activity-based adventure education to a place-based approach. Further, Swedish teachers emphasise a distinct difference between the *friluftsliv* that is possible in schools and a more exclusive, 'real' *friluftsliv* (Backman, 2008). They also express concerns about how the *friluftsliv* practiced in PETE can be transformed by students into *friluftsliv* in an everyday school context.

In much the same way as in research on teacher education in general (e.g. Martin & Dismuke, 2018; Tatto, 2015) and PETE in particular (e.g. Macken et al., 2020; Tolgfors et al., 2022), knowledge about the transition from PETE to PE and what students learn in PETE practice is crucial in order to better understand what students bring to their future teaching practices in school. In our case, there is a lack of knowledge about the ongoing practice of *friluftsliv* in PETE, in terms of the meanings of *friluftsliv* that are established when it is practised by teacher educators and students in PETE. This knowledge is essential for enabling teacher educators to further develop the use of *friluftsliv* as an educational practice in PETE and by extension in PE. Hence, the purpose of this study is to contribute knowledge about the contents of *friluftsliv* that are created in PETE practice. This is done by investigating meanings in terms of content and how this content takes shape in transactions between teachers, participants, and the surrounding nature in the practices of PETE in Sweden. The study uses the concept of transaction, taken from pragmatic philosophy (Dewey & Bentley, 1949/1991), and a transactional methodology (Östman & Öhman, 2022) to conduct an analysis of how *friluftsliv* is established *in action in* ongoing practices.

## Background: outdoor education and *friluftsliv*

In this section we start by relating *friluftsliv* to an international context using 'outdoor education' as an umbrella term, and then we discuss the characteristics of *friluftsliv* and the specific challenges of incorporating this outdoor tradition into PE and PETE.

Using nature for educational purposes in school has a long tradition in the Nordic countries, as well as in Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and North America for example. Questions about the purpose of outdoor education and how it should be practised in schools, however, are the subject of an ongoing discussion that, according to Quay and Seaman (2013), is full of paradoxes. For example, in a review of the literature, Sutherland and Legge (2016) contend that blurred terminology is used to designate the provision of outdoor education internationally. This has led, they argue, to confusion about what constitutes outdoor education within PE. The question of what the term 'outdoor education' means is also discussed by Quay (2016), who advocates for a common understanding and vision for this area of the curriculum. Much in the same way, Sutherland and Legge (2016) argue for a clear alignment between the term outdoor education and the philosophical approach used in teaching outdoor activities.

Research also shows that there has been a shift toward placing outdoor education content within PE in many countries (Backman, 2016; Prince & Exeter, 2016). This has led to outdoor education in school becoming more focused on outdoor physical activities, rather than on educational experiences of nature. At the same time, a growing body of critical research in outdoor studies is questioning the educational content and motives behind outdoor education practice in school (e.g. Beames & Brown, 2014; Mikaelis, 2017). According to these scholars, there is an urgent need to move away from an activity-based personal and social development discourse and toward more critical awareness in outdoor education research and practice, for example by focusing on education for environmentally

sustainable human-nature relations (see Öhman & Sandell, 2016; Rickinson et al., 2004; Sandell & Öhman, 2010).

The call to focus on education for environmentally sustainable human-nature relations has brought increasing attention to the long-standing and deeply rooted Scandinavian outdoor tradition of *friluftsliv*. The term was coined by the Norwegian playwright Ibsen in 1859 and designates a cultural tradition of living outdoors with 'nature as home', conducted in an informal fashion together with family members in local natural environments (Sandell, 2001). The primary focus here is to encounter and have a meaningful relationship with nature in order to obtain a sense of spiritual wholeness with it (Beery, 2013; Sutherland & Legge, 2016). A central aspect is the way *friluftsliv*, according to Sandell and Öhman (2010), is characterised by closeness to nature, simplicity, and non-materialistic values, in contrast to a consumerist industrial-growth society.

Historically, the entire school system was responsible for introducing children to *friluftsliv* in Sweden. In 1980, changes to the curriculum transferred this responsibility exclusively to PE, much in line with shifts in other countries (Backman, 2016). This change decreased the use of *friluftsliv*, even though *friluftsliv* is named as one of three key learning areas in PE. Backman (2016) and Mikaelis (2017) further claim that in PE, the content of *friluftsliv* is often limited to instrumental skills, such as pitching a tent or lighting a fire. The shift in focus towards teaching physical activities outdoors also has implications for the role of nature. Here, Mikaelis (2017) argues that the actual encounter with nature is downplayed in favour of nature as a 'coulisse' or backdrop for different activities. It has even been asked whether PE teachers are the most suitable group to perform this educational task (Backman, 2008).

## The empirical material

The data used in this study consists of diverse materials from activities in *friluftsliv* courses in PETE programmes in Sweden: study guides, field trip plans, students' vlogs from overnight stays outdoors, video recordings from two longer field trips, audio recordings from evening seminars during one field trip, and students' written reflections afterwards (see Tables 1 and 2). All these educational practices are common activities in Swedish PETE (Backman, 2008; Mikaelis, 2017), apart from the vlogs, which were a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which group activities were cancelled. None of the authors work at the participating universities or have any connection to the students (see Table 1).

The study guides and field trip plans were provided by the teachers. The vlogs were made by students during a two-day *friluftsliv* field trip with one overnight stay. The task was to plan the trip themselves based on their own individual needs, learning and knowledge within the field, safety and prevailing circumstances. One of the longer trips to be undertaken was a four-day ski-tour. The students skied about 15 kilometres a day and slept in small cottages with no electricity or running water. According to the course instructions, the purpose of this activity was for the students to learn to discuss and problematise cross-country skiing as a movement culture and to experience

**Table 1.** Overview and description of the trips.

Trips	Dates	Universities	Participants
Skitrip, 4 days skiing around 15 km per day	Middle of March 2020	A course in <i>Friluftsliv</i> winter at university 1, placed in the middle of Sweden	12 students 2 teachers 1 of the authors
Fieldtrip with one overnight stay	Middle of May 2020	A course in <i>friluftsliv</i> summer at university 2, placed in the south of Sweden	42 students
Canoeing, 4 days around 8–16 km per day and several lifts.	Beginning of September 2020	A course in <i>friluftsliv</i> at university 1, in the middle of Sweden	8 students 1 teacher 1 of the authors

**Table 2.** Summary of empirical data.

Type of data	Descriptions of data	Amount of data
Study guides: one from each trip	The study guides for the courses includes for example, course objectives, literature, tasks, assessment.	3 study guides 11 pages
Field trip plans: One from each trip	Specific guidelines for the trips include for example, time schedules, groups, list of equipment.	3 trip plans 19 pages
Vlogs from the fieldtrip with one overnight stay.	Short videos made by the students during their overnight stay. Where they explain and report from the activities they have done.	42 vlogs from 20 students 1–3 min per vlog
Video recordings from the two field trips on ski and with canoe	One researcher was joining the two trips, all the time and recorded with a Go-pro cam. Examples of recorded activities are transportation through the landscape, food breaks, instructions from teachers and students in leading position and conversations between the participants, including the researcher communicating with the participants.	11 h and 21 min
Audio recordings from seminars during the skiing trip.	Evening seminars in the cottages during the skiing trip. Evaluating the day, the leadership and more directed questions connected to different educational tasks.	2 h and 20 min
Written reflections from each trip	Students' written reflections after the trips. They reflect upon given questions from the teachers connected to the objectives for the course	21 papers 90 pages

*friluftsliv* in the winter. In the written reflections, the students were expected to reflect on their experiences during the trip in conjunction with the course literature. The other trip was a four-day canoeing trip. According to the course instructions, the aims was to learn different techniques connected to *friluftsliv* in the summer; to test, analyse and evaluate *friluftsliv* as a movement culture from a norm-critical perspective; to plan, implement and evaluate *friluftsliv* connected to the policy documents in PE, to identify and evaluate aspects that characterised the outdoor environment; and to analyse and evaluate different educational approaches from a health and sustainability perspective. In their written reflections, the students were expected to use their experiences from the trip and the course literature (see Table 2).

## Methodological considerations and analysis

The study builds on John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy and concept of *transaction* (Dewey & Bentley, 1949/1991; see also Östman & Öhman, 2022; Quennerstedt et al., 2011). In this framework, meaning making is understood as a crucial part of human life and of how we make our 'reality' understandable and valuable. Meanings are created in action, in and through encounters between individuals and the environment, where the environment includes other individuals, institutional and cultural aspects, as well as the material world (Östman & Öhman, 2022). In these transactional processes, humans, objects, and their environment all obtain their meanings. Thus, in this sense meanings are relational. The basis of meaning making is our bodily experiences, and it is first when these primary experiences are elaborated in reflections and communication that meanings come into existence. Meanings therefore always include affective, practical, and cognitive aspects. According to Östman and Öhman (2022), meaning is neither to be treated as located in the human mind nor in objects in our environment but consists of relations that are created *in* action and thus are possible to observe and analyse.

There are various uses of transactional methodologies (see Östman & Öhman, 2022), and Garrison et al. (2022) emphasise specific combinations of analytical methods and theoretical models to transactionally grasp the complexity of educational processes. Transactional perspectives have also been used in the context of PE where, for example, Quennerstedt et al. (2011) highlight the importance of a methodology that takes spoken, written, and embodied actions into account, since PE, and in this case *friluftsliv* in PETE, to a large extent is practical and embodied.

Transactional analysis thus takes both the individual participants and the environment into consideration. This entails that meaning is inseparably connected to a specific activity and context. In our case, the analysis focuses on the meanings of *friluftsliv* and how these meanings take shape in the ongoing practices of PETE in transactions between teachers, students, and the surrounding nature. *Friluftsliv* in PETE is thus understood as being established *in action* through different activities *in* PETE, i.e. in what students and teachers do, say or write in the context of the educational practice and the physical environment. To investigate meanings of *friluftsliv* in PETE practice, and how these meanings are established, several different activities were investigated in relation to the contexts in which they took place. Hence, in this study we were analytically interested in both the content of *friluftsliv* in terms of meanings and *how* the meanings were created in PETE practice.

In order to explore the meanings of *friluftsliv*, we conducted analyses in three steps inspired by other types of transactional analyses (e.g. Goodyear & Quennerstedt, 2020). As a first step, we worked through the entire data set, repeatedly viewing the visual data and recorded seminars and reading the texts in order to identify significant activities and critical events in the educational practice (see Table 1). In this first sorting of the empirical material, we also paid attention to the context of the educational practice in PETE, for example the natural surroundings, weather, use of equipment, and social atmosphere of the group. Here we identified activities connected to *friluftsliv* in practice. The demarcation criteria were PETE activities in which the participants talked, wrote or acted in relation to *friluftsliv* and activities that are common and representative of the Scandinavian *friluftsliv* tradition (see Backman, 2008, 2016; Mikael, 2017). In this way, we made a preliminary categorisation of the different practices and frequently occurring activities that are relevant for the study, using the analytical question: Which activities and practices are related to *friluftsliv*?

In step two, we identified different meaning-bearing events in these frequently occurring activities. Here we searched for actions and critical moments when the content is put into play, for instance in physical actions, verbal utterances and emotional expressions that manifest knowledge and values of *friluftsliv*. In this step we used the analytical question: In which events is the content of *friluftsliv* at stake? An illustration of this comes from the common activity 'lunch break'. In this activity, potential meanings of *friluftsliv* are created in relation to students' knowledge about transportation, for example taking a break at the right time for proper rest, or in relation to values, such as choosing to take breaks in locations with appealing nature aesthetics.

In the third and final step of the analysis, we investigated the categories identified in step two using the analytical questions: *What* does *friluftsliv* mean in this specific event, and *how* are these different meanings established in the educational practice of PETE? The central aspects of the spoken, written, and embodied actions were transcribed in relation to their contexts. In this step we searched for utterances and bodily actions that conveyed meanings-in-context connected to *friluftsliv* in PETE. In accordance with Lundegård and Wickman (2007), we placed these utterances and expressions in relation to the events being explored. This entailed relating the participants' actions, communications, and expressions to how they were used and to the situation in which they were used. In line with our transactional approach, we focused on three aspects of the meaning-making process: encounters, relations, and meanings (see Östman & Öhman, 2022). Also, transactions related to the surrounding environment in terms of nature or materiality were included in this step. Again, the lunch break can be used as an illustrative example. Here we asked: *What encounters* occur during this activity, e.g. with the natural surroundings, other students, the eating of the food, bodily feelings, and the current time schedule? *How* are *relations* to the practice created, and *what meaning* does *friluftsliv* come to have? In one of the activities studied, the students expressed appreciation of nature and the value of relaxation both verbally and in embodied actions. In this case the appreciation is understood in terms of aesthetic and recreational values. Hence a meaning of *friluftsliv* as recreation is established.

To include the whole educational context in line with the transactional perspective, we went back and forth between the steps using a deliberative strategy inspired by Goodyear et al. (2019) to

provide as rigorous an analysis as possible. It is also important to note that there is no clear separation between the content of the meanings (*what*) and *how* the meanings take shape in the investigated practice. Instead, the transactional approach implies that meanings should be investigated in their use, as things that the participants do (Östman & Öhman, 2022). Consequently, the questions of what and how are interwoven in the same process in the ongoing *friluftsliv* practice. However, for analytical purposes we put one of the questions in the foreground.

## The meanings of *Friluftsliv* in PETE practice

In the study we identified five different meanings of *friluftsliv*, established in ongoing PETE practices. These are (i) *friluftsliv* as organisation, (ii) *friluftsliv* as embodied hardship, (iii) *friluftsliv* as skills, (iv) *friluftsliv* as recreation, and (v) *friluftsliv* as personal development. In the results section, under each heading we first briefly describe these meanings in terms of their content (*what*) and then describe and illustrate *how* these meanings of *friluftsliv* are established in the educational practice of PETE.

### *Friluftsliv* as organisation

One way that the meaning of *friluftsliv* as organisation is established is in the planning of the different types of outdoor activities. Preparing for educational activities, such as field trips and overnight stays, involves choosing equipment and food, dividing participants into groups, making time schedules and organising leadership tasks during the trips. *Friluftsliv* as organisation is further connected to risk minimisation, putting prevention of injuries and accidents in the foreground of the PETE practice. Risk minimisation is also closely connected to dealing with weather. Other central aspects of the *friluftsliv* trips were the organisation of activities such as cooking, food breaks, sleeping, packing and unpacking, as well as choosing the right locations for different activities and purposes.

*Friluftsliv* as organising occurs in the actions of preparing for the trips. A common way of preparing was to use a written plan for the trip, which often included detailed information about how to get to the destination, time schedules, the creation of groups, or financial matters. A detailed list of the equipment that each student needed to pack was also an important part of the planning. Educational purposes regarding the trips and the course objectives were minor aspects of the written plans. For the students, these preparations were important.

*I double-check my packing list one last time to be sure I've got everything. The bag I'll take along on the trip is stuffed to the point of bursting, but everything seems to be in the right place. (Written reflections after the ski trip)*

The meaning of organisation also takes the form of risk minimisation, through various preparations for dealing with any injuries that might occur during the *friluftsliv* trip, such as abrasions or wounds, as well as injuries caused by freezing temperatures like frostbite or hypothermia. A first-aid kit, bivouac sack and avalanche probe were often on the packing list. Other risks connected to *friluftsliv* were part of the content in the *friluftsliv* practice literature, with preparations connected to making shelters to provide protection from different kinds of weather or learning how to navigate to avoid getting lost. The canoe trip began with kayak and canoe rescue training, which is another example of establishing *friluftsliv* as organisation in terms of risk minimisation.

*The author [...] claims that peer rescue is the best thing students can learn before travel on water, which I also think is fundamental, because we spent a few days in kayaks/canoes, and this made me feel secure in case an accident would happen to me or my peers. (Written reflections after the canoe trip)*

*Friluftsliv* also required the organizing of activities *during* the trips and overnight stays. The way of organising daily routines during the trip was to designate a leader who took care of the group and made decisions for the entire day.

The importance of structuring the trip activities around keeping warm, dry, and well fed during the day seemed to be taken for granted by the students and the teachers. Having the correct clothing and equipment was necessary if one was to have a positive experience of *friluftsliv*.

*Being able to get new equipment driven to the place where we would camp for the night completely changed my experience compared to the previous night, when I froze and had aches in my body. I really got to feel the difference and how much it contributed to changing my view of sleeping in a tent, when I was dry, warm and got a good night's sleep. (Written reflections after the canoe trip)*

Although there were many discussions about equipment and food, both before and during the trips, food and equipment were treated as important in themselves, and not in relation to other purposes such as connectedness to nature or other outdoor experiences.

The meaning of *friluftsliv* in terms of organisation was also established in relation to questions of place. Deciding where to stop, eat, rest or put up a tent was a constant part of the activity of organisation, and took different forms, such as finding beautiful locations offering shelter for food breaks, the possibility to light a fire, and so on. It seemed to be taken for granted that the assigned leader was responsible for choosing the most appropriate places. The meaning of place was thus established by its use. However, discussions sometimes occurred when the students did not appreciate the choice of place or had different priorities than the leader. For example, when the leader of the day suggested a place for lunch because it was time to eat, some students complained because the place was not suitable for playing around on skis or was not scenic enough.

### ***Friluftsliv as embodied hardship***

The meaning of *friluftsliv* as embodied hardship takes the form of transport and moving through the landscape. The distance has a certain length, and the speed when moving is often uniform within the group. There is also a certain daily rhythm, with transport, coffee breaks, more transport, lunch breaks, etc. *Friluftsliv* is also something that you do regardless of the weather. It is also taken for granted that experiences of *friluftsliv* should be strenuous.

*Friluftsliv* as embodied hardship was established by continuous, repetitive movements in the form of hiking, kayaking/canoeing or skiing, where the route was often planned to take up the whole day. Within such constraints, the time for breaks was limited. Some students found this easy, while others experienced it as tough. Bad weather, such as strong winds, rain and snow, affected the students' efforts, but were also taken-for-granted parts of the practice. The rhythm of the day, alternating between transport and breaks, was maintained by the leader, who, as a task set in PETE, was often one of the students. The leader had to be careful to keep the group together at the same pace and keep to the time schedule. In the seminars that took place during the trips, the students described different challenges and difficulties regarding bad weather and fatigue, but without questioning the notion that *friluftsliv* should be embodied hardship in PETE.

An illustrative example of how the meaning of *friluftsliv* as embodied hardship was established is how it was taken for granted that long distances of transport were a central part of students having positive experiences and rising to the challenge of hardship.

*I'm proud of my body for managing the whole trip by a good margin! Of course, it was tough on the last slopes on the way home, but it was manageable. (Written reflections after the ski trip)*

*... like for example when it is hard to reach the top (of the mountain,) the reward is more euphoric. (Conversation during the canoe trip)*

The weather was also a central part of the embodied hardship, as a student explained on a day with nice weather during the ski trip.

*But you also want to test this other environment. Just like you want to feel storms or strong winds. Now it's just wonderful and nice. (Conversation during the ski trip)*



The meaning of embodied hardship was further explained by the leader, in this case a student.

*I've also gained some insight into what it's like to lead a group of students in the mountains, what I've learned from this is that it demands good communication with the group and planning in order to keep everyone together, but also so the students will know what's coming, for example where we will stop for a coffee break or lunch, and how far there is left to go. This is to keep their motivation up. (Written reflections after the ski trip)*

It seemed to be an important part of the leadership to motivate the participants to move forward, struggle and keep the right balance between moving and taking breaks.

### **Friluftsliv as skills**

The meaning of *friluftsliv* as skills is created in actions related to techniques of transport, such as skiing, hiking, or kayaking/canoeing. It is also related to activities connected to cooking and overnight stays during the trips, such as how to light a fire, assemble a storm kitchen, build bivouacs and wind shelters, and pitch a tent. In the observed practice, skills were also part of risk minimisation, in that the students were expected to know how to use bivouac sacks, avalanche probes, tools and navigation strategies. Other skills related to risks concerned how to deal with different kinds of injuries and various rescue techniques, for example connected to canoeing or skiing. Leadership skills were also important, especially when students were expected to lead the group, or part of it, at some stage of the trip.

The meaning of *friluftsliv* as skills is established in the different activities mentioned in PETE practice, and it was obvious that students had different levels of competence. We did not observe many reflections or conversations about skills, apart for the common intention to keep the group together, even when students had different abilities. Although a lot of time was spent on transportation, there was very little focus on technique or how to improve the ongoing practice, even though some students struggled due to a lack of skills in different situations. *Friluftsliv* was also associated with skills in preparations before trips, such as when advice was given to check out links with tips for different techniques.

Actions related to eating and sleeping were also included in *friluftsliv* as skills, such as cooking over an open fire, assembling a storm kitchen, or pitching the tent at least once during a trip. The students were expected to be familiar with the techniques and skills they were to use, but at the same time some students tried to avoid certain tasks if they were not compulsory. For example, tents were put up by students who were already used to doing it.

When students spent one night outdoors on a trip, the meaning of skills was established slightly differently than on longer trips. The meaning of skills was based on the task they had been given in relation to *friluftsliv* and safety. The skills also became their focus in the vlogs.

*It has been instructive, and I have had an opportunity to develop my knowledge about making fires, setting up wind-breaks, safely being alone in the boat and cooking. (Vlog during an overnight stay)*

Having skills became an important part of the *friluftsliv* practice, and students felt proud when they could manage on their own.

*I built a stretcher, it's fun to feel that you can do it on your own. (Vlog during the overnight stay)*

The meaning of skills was also established in relation to the leadership tasks during the trips, where leadership was regarded as a skill in practice. The leader gained experience in instructing the group about when to start in the morning and who was going to take responsibility for the shared equipment. The leader also tried to maintain the right pace for the group, checking that everyone was keeping up and deciding on good places to have lunch, a coffee break or a quick stop for water. *Friluftsliv* as skills was further established when the teachers and students reflected on the day's events. The leadership skills were evaluated by both the teacher and the group, and most viewpoints were related to organisational rather than possible pedagogical questions.

Karin: What do you think you will take with you into the teaching profession?

Lucas: *It's important to have the right clothes, well ... leadership, having the opportunity to lead a group. One develops by leading a group.* (Conversation during the ski trip)

Leadership as a skill during *friluftsliv* thus appeared to be something different than being a PE teacher.

### **Friluftsliv as recreation**

The meaning of *friluftsliv* as recreation lies somewhere between getting away from the stress of everyday life and, in some cases, having an opportunity to encounter nature. The natural surroundings appear to be something beautiful and appreciated. *Friluftsliv* is thus more recreational in 'nice' weather and less recreational and more risky when the weather is 'bad'.

The meaning of *friluftsliv* as recreation was created in encounters with the environment through students' and teachers' expressions and communications describing the natural surroundings as beautiful. Students sometimes expressed very strong views about their experiences of nature and having positive feelings about being outdoors seemed to be taken for granted. The aesthetic aspects of nature and place were therefore important experiences that were related to the appreciation of natural environments, with students and teachers commenting on the scenery, landscape, and silence of nature.

The weather also seemed to have a significant impact on the recreational meanings of *friluftsliv*. There were many conversations about the weather. Teachers and students readily commented on whether it was windy, or the sun was shining, and wondered about the forecast. *Friluftsliv* as recreation was mainly established in actions during the food breaks and in the students' written reflections. It also sometimes occurred while skiing and canoeing/kayaking, often at the beginning of the day when the participants were still alert.

*On this trip it was a fantastic bodily experience to be out in nature. This was mostly due to the weather being so nice, which I think enabled us to really enjoy the surroundings. Partly because the visibility was very good, but also because the group didn't have to worry about freezing temperatures and strong winds, in which case everyone's eyes would have been on their skis. The experience was also much better at the beginning of the day, because then you are alert and don't just want to get to the cabin, as is the case towards the end of the day.* (Written reflections after the ski trip)

*Friluftsliv* as recreation was also established in the students' talk about outdoor trips being less stressful than everyday life at home. There were many reflections about not having an internet connection or deciding to turn off their mobile phones. Many students described spending less time with their phones as positive and relaxing, although some mentioned that it was stressful not to know what was happening at home.

Sandra: *[...] It felt as though we were in our own little bubble and that we had no idea what was happening outside. It was so nice to be in that bubble where it was only us who had something in common, and no one else knew about it, because we didn't have phones, I think.* (Evening seminar during the ski trip)

Recreational meanings were also established in repetitive moves and a feeling of freedom.

Petra: *But now, when we didn't have to watch the time as much, but were able to proceed at a pace that suited us and more or less until sunset, with no access to a phone or similar, I really stopped and realised how lovely nature is and how much it actually gives me. The peacefulness that can be found in the mountains cannot be found anywhere else if you ask me.* (Written reflections after the ski trip)

The encounter with nature and its possible meanings were not a central part of the educational practice. It seemed to be taken for granted that the nature experiences would lead to positive outcomes. Students on the overnight stay were given the specific task of having an encounter with nature, and recreational meanings related to encounters with nature were established in two ways. Two girls who were kayaking described the following situation:

*We stopped for a while in the bay and floated with the sea. It was a peaceful and quiet meeting with nature where you could bob up and down with the waves and just relax. Then I thought that such an opportunity would have been perfect for creating a nature meeting for the students. They could spread out in the bay, which was fairly sheltered, and experience nature by themselves for a while. (Written reflections after the overnight stay)*

Here, recreational meanings in terms of encounters with nature were created in the activities that were already going on. In the illustration below, an encounter with nature became something more specific. This student explained in his vlog that he stopped doing an activity and said, *'I'm going to have some nature time now, and go out and simply enjoy nature'*. In this case, the encounter was established as something different from other outdoor activities. The possible values of these recreational encounters with nature were also described differently by the students, as in the following example.

*I woke up in the morning with the sun shining on me and warming me up in my sleeping bag. This was the first time I had slept in the open air, which was an awesome experience. [...] I woke up from the warm sunbeams and heard birds. I learned how close you can get to nature by replacing a tent with a windbreak, it became very intimate. I felt that I was really a part of nature and not just visiting it. An experience that is difficult to explain. The fact that the air felt fresh, the birds chirped, the sun warmed me up and I felt calm and not stressed made the experience very unique. (Written reflections after the overnight stay)*

In this extract, a feeling of peacefulness was established, which was expected to be something positive in this practice. Different feelings were expressed and an explanation of what *friluftsliv* means in recreational terms was provided. Although the positive outcomes of this encounter seemed to be taken for granted, there were still questions about what it might mean in PETE practice.

### ***Friluftsliv as personal development***

The meaning of *friluftsliv* as personal development is created around learning new things related to yourself and others in the group and facing new challenges. It is also related to a sense of responsibility, such as when leading the group, looking out for yourself in a new situation and avoiding different kinds of risks.

*Friluftsliv* as personal development was mostly established in the communications between the students during the trips and in their written reflections. Facing new challenges was a fundamental part of establishing *friluftsliv* as personal development. For many students, this was a new situation where they had to learn to deal with new things, which was perceived as crucial for their personal development.

Karl: *What is good about the experience is that somewhere along the way you learn ... somewhere it's ... this is more grown up, I think. First you have to pack your bag and all that stuff and dress properly and ... I think you learn quite a lot ... on a trip like this. (Conversation during the ski trip)*

*Friluftsliv* as personal development was also established by the physical demands of the trips. However, such conversations were not initiated by the teachers or included in the task related to *friluftsliv* practice in PETE. Although after a trip a common task for the students was to relate their new experiences to their future profession, no written connections were made to experiences of personal development.

*This is something that I will remember for a long time. Even just putting the phone aside and really appreciating this. The class, the teachers and the weather contributed enormously to this trip being so wonderful. I'm eternally grateful for that. This will be a memory for life! Thank you. (Written reflections after the ski trip)*

In this extract the student explained personal emotional experiences rather than educational aspects connected to the teaching profession.

## Discussion

The purpose of the study has been to contribute knowledge about the meanings of the Scandinavian outdoor tradition *friluftsliv* in the educational practice of PETE by investigating meanings in terms of content and how this content takes shape in the ongoing practices of PETE in Sweden. In this way, we have addressed a gap in the research regarding the unique *friluftsliv* tradition as an educational issue in PETE practice.

Our results reveal that *friluftsliv* is a highly valued content area, and the investigated programmes invest a great deal of resources in different kinds of outdoor trips and activities. Teachers and students also seem to appreciate this practice in PETE. Five different meanings of *friluftsliv* were identified in PETE practice: (i) *friluftsliv* as organisation, (ii) *friluftsliv* as embodied hardship, (iii) *friluftsliv* as skills, (iv) *friluftsliv* as recreation, and (v) *friluftsliv* as personal development. The different meanings together reflect the complexity and lack of common ground in the identified content and motives of the outdoor education field (Backman, 2016; Mikael, 2017; Prince & Exeter, 2016; Sutherland & Legge, 2016).

One clear example of this diversity concerns differences between *friluftsliv* as recreation and *friluftsliv* as embodied hardship in PETE practice. Here embodied hardship, understood in terms of competition-oriented values, easily comes into focus during the trips, even if recreational purposes involving more intrinsic values connected to the *friluftsliv* tradition are highlighted in the PETE course plans for the same trips.

In this way, our study confirms that placing the responsibility for outdoor education on PE leads to an emphasis on physical activities in PETE rather than experiences of nature. However, an exception to the rule is the overnight stays in PETE. Here, less physical activity and embodied hardship are identified and there is more time for students to reflect, such as in their encounters with nature.

Mikael (2017) and Backman (2016) claim that the shifting of schools' outdoor education to PE has led to a greater focus on instrumental values. Our study confirms this with regard to how the meaning of *friluftsliv* as skills is established by such activities as pitching tents, lighting fires, building wind shelters and so on. At the same time, our study indicates a greater complexity. It is worth noting here that one aspect of skills differs somewhat from this instrumental view. Several students who did the overnight stay alone reflect on the fact that they had enough skills to spend the night outdoors comfortably on their own. This seems to have had an impact on their self-esteem, which appears to ascribe more intrinsic value to *friluftsliv* as skills. This distinction between types of values is also made by Sandell and Öhman (2013), who argue that instrumental values separate the outcomes of *friluftsliv*, in both time and space, from the outdoor activities themselves. On the other hand, intrinsic values, such as affinity with nature or a sense of humility regarding non-human forces, are inseparably connected to the outdoor experiences themselves and '... cannot easily be found in the milieus and lifestyles of urbanised modern societies' (Sandell & Öhman, 2013, p. 43). However, our study shows that other meanings of *friluftsliv* are established in the ongoing practice, and more intrinsic values are at stake, even if they are often overshadowed in PETE practice. These values are more closely connected to the unique tradition of *friluftsliv*.

At the same time, a growing body of critical research within outdoor studies questions whether the educational content and motives for outdoor education in schools adequately takes into account environmental perspectives (e.g. Beames & Brown, 2014; Mikael, 2017). Previous research shows that outdoor education has an important potential to contribute to sustainable development (Öhman & Sandell, 2016; Rickinson et al., 2004; Sandell & Öhman, 2010). Such content is also emphasised in the course plans for PETE. In our study, we have identified several encounters with nature where students express emotional experiences and aesthetic values during the trips. However, these experiences are not at the forefront of the educational practice, and reflections and discussions around these issues are expected to be addressed by the students, rather than being made educational issues in PETE.

In relation to *how* the meanings of *friluftsliv* are established in the teacher education practice, our study shows that much time and effort is spent on organising the activities and minimising risks through careful planning. A consequence of this is that other educational purposes, such as encounters with nature, are sometimes overshadowed by a strong focus on organising and planning before and during the trips. This is in line with Mikael's (2017) argument that nature often becomes a 'cou-lisse' or backdrop of PETE, rather than a goal. A great deal of time is also spent on transport, e.g. skiing, hiking, or kayaking/canoeing during the trips. There are significant individual differences between students' experiences of transport as embodied hardship, but such differences are not addressed by the students or treated as an educational issue in PETE. The line between reasonable physical demands that may strengthen students and demands that are too tough seems to be very thin and often depends on the weather.

According to the course plans, encounters with nature are an important part of *friluftsliv* in PETE, and of course there were plenty of encounters with nature in the material we filmed. However, these experiences of appreciating nature, and especially natural beauty, are taken for granted in PETE practice, and there is little discussion about how these experiences might be transferred to PE in school. In contrast, the practice of *friluftsliv* is also related to personal development, although this is not expressed in the course plans or discussed with teachers during the trips. Instead, this meaning of *friluftsliv* in PETE is identified in the students' reflections and conversations with each other. Interestingly, neither the students nor the teacher educators connect students' personal development to their future professional activity as teachers.

Leadership as a skill is also something that stands out in how *friluftsliv* is established in PETE practice. At least in Swedish PETE, the topic of leadership is not commonly addressed. Instead, teaching and education are more often highlighted when discussing pedagogical issues. However, in the practice of *friluftsliv*, leadership becomes something different than being a teacher, a division of roles that nobody questions. The expectation that a good leader should take clear decisions that are in the best interests of the group is mostly connected to the organisational aspects of doing *friluftsliv*. In contrast to other practices in PETE, the leader in *friluftsliv* is not supposed to teach, make pedagogical decisions, or involve other students in decision making. Perhaps this is a consequence of the open-ended and informally organised cultural tradition of outdoor living in the local environment (Sandell, 2001), in contrast to PETE as an educational practice with instrumental goals and purposes including giving careful consideration to pedagogical aspects.

In conclusion, the ways in which the different meanings of *friluftsliv* are established in PETE indicate that there is a clear gap between exclusive ('real') *friluftsliv* and ordinary *friluftsliv*. Questions thus remain about how PETE students are supposed to transfer their different experiences of *friluftsliv* in PETE to a school PE context and create positive experiences of the outdoors for pupils. Backman's (2008) question regarding whether PE teachers are the most suitable group to be responsible for *friluftsliv* in schools remains unanswered. However, the results also point to the potential for *friluftsliv* to move away from an activity-based discourse of personal and social development and toward a focus on education for environmentally sustainable human-nature relations. The challenge is how to make nature experiences educational in PETE, and how to guide students in transforming their experiences of more exclusive *friluftsliv* into pedagogical competence as future teachers using *friluftsliv* for different purposes in school PE.

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## ORCID

Mikael Quennerstedt  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8748-8843>

Johan Öhman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1423-4233>

## Data availability statement

Due to the nature of this research, participants in this study did not agree to their data being shared publicly, so supporting data is not available.

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