# Wilding Pedagogies

*Exploring More-than-Human Ecologies of Learning for Deep Environmental Care*



Reineke van Tol

**Propositions**

1. The ecological crisis persists as long as humans believe they are the ones solving it.
(this thesis)

2. Universities teach students how to make a living, but rarely how to live.
(this thesis)

3. Extractive research reproduces the same logic that drives ecological destruction.

4. The more uncertain the future becomes, the less useful scientific knowledge becomes.

5. Democracy ceases to be democratic when only humans are represented.

6. The concept of ‘nature’ is one of the greatest barriers to sustainable coexistence.

Propositions belonging to the thesis, entitled
*Wilding Pedagogies. Exploring More-than-Human Ecologies of Learning for Deep Environmental Care*

Reineke van Tol
Wageningen, 28 October 2026

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# Wilding Pedagogies

Exploring More-than-Human Ecologies of Learning for Deep Environmental Care

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*For Ravi and Melle,*
*and for all those born*
*or yet to come into the world,*
*human or other,*
*near or far.*

*May these pages serve*
*as a small act of care,*
*a gesture of hope*
*for a future in which all may flourish.*

# Preface

The writing of this dissertation, which now lies before you, began amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, a time that forced many of us to slow down, reflect, and reconnect. In some ways, it was a hopeful time. It revealed, painfully and unmistakably, how human arrogance and our failure to fully acknowledge our interconnectedness with, and dependence on, the more-than-human world ultimately threaten not only non-human life, but our own future as well.

At the time, I found hope in the possibility that this crisis might finally lead us to recognize that, as a species, we are not as central or as exceptional as we often imagine ourselves to be. I hoped that the pain, loss, and loneliness it brought would encourage us to reconsider who we are and who we aspire to become. To some extent, I saw this happening. Yet, as is often the case, once the immediate threat had subsided, many of us returned to our routines, and the broader lessons of our interconnectedness gradually faded into the background.

As this thesis goes to press, we find ourselves confronting a different but equally unsettling constellation of challenges. The rise of artificial intelligence, the spread of misinformation, increasing polarization, and political leaders who exploit and intensify these divisions all contribute to a growing sense of uncertainty. Alongside these developments, wars intensify, global temperatures continue to rise, biodiversity continues to decline, and natural disasters become more frequent and severe. At the same time, the realities of these crises are increasingly denied or dismissed, perhaps as a way of coping with their scale and complexity. Together, these developments illustrate the complexity of the converging crises that shape the world into which young people, and all young life, are growing.

It is for them that I hold on to hope and continue to believe that it is possible to contribute, however modestly, to more desirable futures. This hope is not a passive hope that waits for things to turn out well on their own. Rather, it is an active hope, one that calls us to work toward a world marked by greater

care, deeper belonging, and more love. It asks us to resist the loudest and most destructive voices and to stand up for a future in which all may flourish, human and non-human alike.

With this dissertation, I hope to contribute in a small way to that endeavor. May it offer hope, inspire reflection, and nurture a deeper love for the world and all who inhabit it. And may it inspire the courage to act rather than surrender to the fear of what might be lost.

*Wageningen, July 30th 2026*

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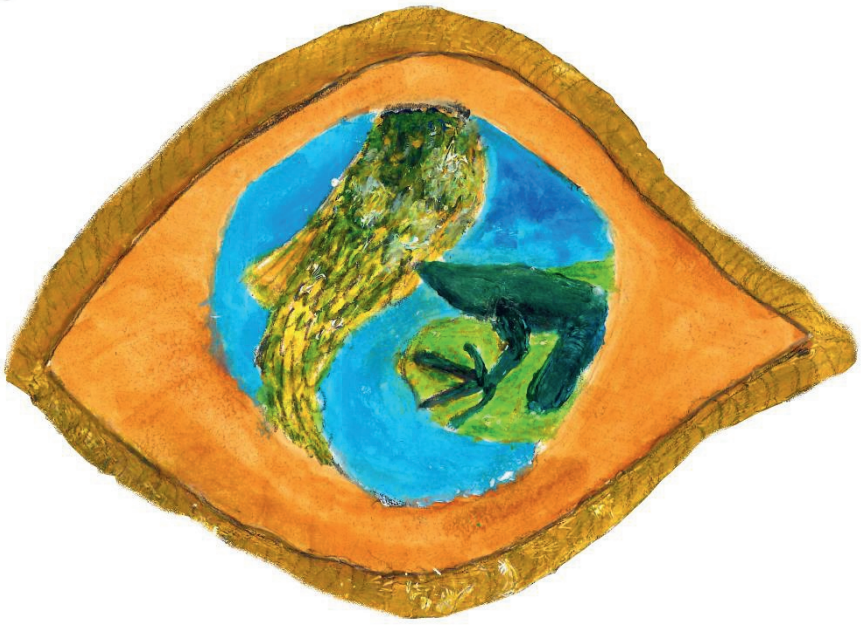
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# 1

# Wilding Pedagogies: toward More-than-Human Ecologies of Learning for Deep Environmental Care

*"If sustainability challenges (...) continue to be treated as purely external challenges, rather than human and relational crises with deep roots, solutions will continue to elude us."*

(Ives et al., 2023, p. 7)

## 1.1 On Relational Becoming with a World facing Converging Crises

Young adults today come of age in a world marked by converging socio-ecological crises. Climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, pollution, and widening socio-economic inequities increasingly threaten the conditions for both human and other-than-human life on Earth (Fletcher et al., 2024). Rather than isolated disruptions unfolding separately across social, ecological, political, or economic domains, these developments are interconnected manifestations of underlying structures and assumptions that have shaped dominant human–world relations (Mbembe, 2022; Plumwood, 1993, 2002). Increasingly, scholars argue that the converging crises of our time reflect deeper systemic patterns associated with modern Western capitalism, technological domination, and worldviews that position humans as separate from and superior to the other-than-human world (Braidotti, 2022; IPBES, 2024; Mbembe, 2022; Moore, 2017).

For many young people, living in times of converging crises generates uncertainty, anxiety, and existential unease (Clayton, 2020; Pihkala, 2020). Beyond interconnected socio-economic, ecological, and political consequences, these responses also signify psychological disorientation, and at times alienation, within a world that separates humans from the more-than-human relations they are part of (Hickman et al., 2021). In this sense, the crises of our time can also be approached as relational and existential crises that raise fundamental questions about who we are as human beings in a more-than-human world and how we might navigate conditions of profound uncertainty. Finding ways of responding to the complex crises of our time thus becomes not only a technological or political challenge, but also an onto-epistemological question concerning how humans come to know, understand, and become with the world (Braidotti, 2022).

Indigenous and post-human feminist relational theories offer a powerful ontological response in this regard. Rather than positioning humans as autonomous individuals operating upon an external world, these ontologies foreground relationality as the condition of existence (Braidotti, 2022; Haraway, 2016; Tynan, 2021). They argue how humans are not separate entities who subsequently enter into relationships; they are always already constituted through webs of more-than-human entanglement (Barad, 2007;

Bawaka Country et al., 2013). While in many indigenous cultures and literature this idea is as old as the people and the lands they belong to, in Western culture and science relational ontologies have been overruled by persistent modernist assumptions and believes of human separation and dominance over the rest of nature (Rosiek et al., 2020). From this perspective, the human–'nature' divide appears as an ultimately artificial Western historical construction with far-reaching destructive consequences.

As current crises are increasingly understood as rooted in relations of separation and domination, responding to them requires more than technological innovation or policy reform alone (Ives et al., 2023). It calls for a fundamental reorientation in how humans understand themselves as relational beings within a more-than-human world (Braidotti, 2022).

Within sustainability scholarship, such deep shifts are increasingly described as 'inner transformation', referring to transformations in values, worldviews, identities, and ways of relating that may support more sustainable futures (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021). While these approaches offer important insights into transformative change, the terminology of the 'inner' and the 'transformative' sits somewhat uneasily within relational ontologies. Although theories of inner transformative change increasingly recognize relationality and interdependence (Ives et al., 2023), distinguishing between an 'inner' and 'outer' sphere, and framing change as movement from one state to another, risks reproducing ontologies of separation rather than relational entanglement.

Building on indigenous and posthuman feminist thought, this dissertation therefore proposes *relational becoming* as an alternative conceptualization. Relational becoming emphasizes that change does not occur within isolated individuals, but unfolds through ongoing intra-action within more-than-human worlds (Barad, 2007; Bawaka Country et al., 2013). Becoming is therefore always becoming-with (Haraway, 2008): an iterative and entangled process through which awareness, identity, responsibility, and action co-emerge relationally.

Relational becoming thus reframes inner transformative change not as a linear shift from one internal state to another, but as a dynamic

reconfiguration of relational patterns – ontological, epistemological, ethical, and affective. Rather than locating change solely within individuals, relational becoming foregrounds the relational processes through which identities, responsibilities, and possibilities for action emerge. In doing so, it offers a conceptual bridge between indigenous and posthuman feminist ontologies and sustainability transformation research.

The question that follows is how such processes of relational becoming might be cultivated, particularly among young adults navigating a world under stress. Education becomes a crucial site in this regard. While questions of relational becoming are relevant across the lifespan, young adult education constitutes a particularly significant context in which to explore them. Young adulthood is widely recognized as a formative period in which identities, values, worldviews, and orientations toward the future are actively in formation (Arnett, 2000; Gutierrez & Park, 2015). At the same time, these emerging orientations increasingly take shape in relation to ecological uncertainty, environmental degradation, and concerns about the future (Clayton, 2020; Hickman et al., 2021; Pihkala, 2020).

Students, particularly within higher education, are frequently confronted with scientific accounts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and other socio-ecological crises, as well as with expectations that they will be the ones playing a central role in responding to them. Yet learning about ecological crises does not automatically provide ways of living with them. Knowledge of environmental disruption can inform understanding, but does not necessarily help students navigate the grief, uncertainty, responsibility, and ethical complexity that accompany awareness of a rapidly changing world (Verlie, 2019).

As Verlie (2019) argues, young people are increasingly challenged not simply to learn about climate change, but to learn how to live with and bear worlds transformed by it. This involves more than acquiring cognitive knowledge or technical competencies. It raises questions of how people come to relate to ecological loss, cultivate meaningful forms of care and responsibility, and find ways of inhabiting uncertain futures without turning away from them (Haraway, 2016). Higher education therefore becomes

particularly important as a space in which learners may explore what it means to live, learn, and become within a changing more-than-human world.

## 1.2 Wilding Pedagogies in Higher Education: toward More-than-Human Ecologies of Learning

Education is often described as a mirror of society. In anthropocentric and growth-oriented systems, education therefore tends to privilege individual achievement, cognitive mastery, and instrumental rationality (Biesta, 2010). Even sustainability education frequently remains framed within human-centered competence models, thereby reproducing the separations it seeks to overcome (Wals, 2025).

Yet education is also widely recognized as a potential leverage point for deep transformational processes (Abson et al., 2017; Taylor, 2017; Woiwode, 2020). Understanding the converging crises described above as relational in origin requires forms of learning that move beyond acquiring knowledge about environmental problems. It must engage learners existentially and relationally – inviting reflection on questions of being, belonging, and responsibility within a more-than-human world (Biesta, 2021; Taylor, 2017; Wals, 2025).

Such a shift not only concerns what is learned, but also how learning itself is understood. Rather than viewing learning as the transfer of knowledge between isolated individuals, it invites us to see learning as emerging within networks of relationships among people, places, practices, and environments (Ceder, 2019). From this perspective, education can be understood as an *ecology of learning* – a dynamic configuration of relationships through which learning unfolds (Germein & McGavock, 2024; Wals, 2019).

The concept of learning ecologies builds on systems thinking and relational perspectives on education that emphasize the interconnectedness of actors, environments, practices, and knowledge processes (Wals, 2019). Rather than treating learning as a linear transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, ecologies of learning understand learning as emerging through interactions unfolding both within and beyond formal learning systems. Learning therefore extends across multiple sites and contexts, including classrooms, communities, landscapes, and everyday practices.

This relational understanding resonates strongly with posthuman feminist and indigenous ontologies that argue how knowing and being emerge through embodied and situated entanglements rather than through detached observation or abstract cognition (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2022; Haraway, 1988; Rosiek et al., 2020; Tynan, 2021). From such an onto-epistemological perspective, learning cannot be reduced to processes occurring within individual minds or demarcated institutions. Instead, learning becomes a process of becoming-with the world, emerging through participation in the relational, material, and more-than-human dynamics of the environments in which learners are embedded.

Ecologies of learning can therefore be understood as relational assemblages that extend beyond human actors alone. Places, material conditions, and other-than-human presences participate in shaping how learning unfolds and what forms of knowledge become possible. Because such ecologies consist of evolving relations rather than fixed structures, learning processes remain inherently open and indeterminate (Wals, 2019). In this dissertation, ecologies of learning are therefore understood as relational assemblages of human and other-than-human actors through which learning, becoming, and responsibility emerge.

Within this broader reorientation, increasing attention has been given to the concept of *(re)wilding* education and learning (Bania, 2025; Green & Dyment, 2018; Snaza, 2013). Originally emerging in ecological restoration debates, rewilding refers to processes that allow ecosystems to regain autonomy, spontaneity, and self-organizing capacity (Lorimer et al., 2015). Rather than tightly managing ecological systems, rewilding seeks to create conditions in which ecological processes can unfold more freely.

More recently, scholars have begun extending and critically examining the concept beyond ecological restoration to cultural and educational domains (Prior & Ward, 2016). In these contexts, (re)wilding describes practices that challenge rigid systems of control and open space for uncertainty, creativity, and relational responsiveness within social and institutional environments.

Following amongst others Smallwood (2025) and Burlingame (2025), I intentionally use the term *wilding* rather than rewilding when referring to

educational practices. As *rewilding* implies a return to a previously existing wilder state, such a framing sits uneasily with the history of formal Western education, which has largely been structured around control, standardization, and the separation of humans from the more-than-human world (Biesta, 2021). Speaking of rewilding formal education could therefore suggest a restoration of something that historically never existed within these institutional systems.

By using the term wilding, I instead emphasize a forward-looking process of opening educational spaces to forms of relationality, uncertainty, and more-than-human participation that have been largely absent from dominant educational traditions (Smallwood, 2025). Wilding does not imply a nostalgic return to an imagined past. Rather, it refers to the cultivation of educational practices that allow learning ecologies to become more responsive, relational, and open to the dynamics of the living world.

Applied to education, wilding can therefore be understood as a process of loosening tightly controlled learning environments and enabling learning ecologies to engage more fully with relational complexity, spontaneity, and participation with the more-than-human world. Rather than structuring learning toward predetermined outcomes, wilding invites educational practices in which learning emerges through encounters with the unpredictable, the relational, and the more-than-human (Smallwood, 2025).

A particularly influential educational articulation of such a wilding orientation emerged through the development of *Wild Pedagogies*. The concept originated in a floating colloquium on the Yukon River, where Jickling and colleagues (2018) gathered to critically reconsider education in the context of accelerating ecological degradation and the limitations of dominant Western educational paradigms. Rather than offering a new pedagogical method, Wild Pedagogies emerged as an invitation to rethink the purposes, relations, and practices of education itself. Drawing attention to the ways formal education often reproduces assumptions of human exceptionalism, control, and mastery over the world, Jickling et al. (2018) proposed forms of learning grounded in curiosity, wonder, responsiveness, and participation within more-than-human worlds.

The ‘wild’ in Wild Pedagogies operates on several interconnected levels. It refers not only to places where other-than-human presences actively participate in learning, but also to forms of relationality that exceed human control and predictive planning. Wildness therefore signals a disruption of settled assumptions within educational institutions while simultaneously cultivating curiosity, attentiveness, openness, wonder, and responsiveness within learning itself (Morse et al., 2018).

In this dissertation, Wild Pedagogies are adopted as a conceptual lens for understanding how educational practices may move toward more relational, more-than-human, and less tightly controlled learning environments. Wilding in this context does not imply the absence of structure or intentional design. Rather, it involves creating conditions in which learning ecologies become more open to uncertainty, relational engagement, and participation with the living world.

Taken together, Wild Pedagogies can be understood as more-than-human ecologies of learning that open educational practice to relational complexity, more-than-human participation, and the unpredictable dynamics of the living world. Rather than seeking to manage or control learning toward predetermined ends, they create conditions for learners to engage ethically and responsively within the webs of relationships that constitute life on Earth. By decentering the human learner as sovereign knower and repositioning education as a relational practice of becoming-with human and other-than-human others, Wild Pedagogies create possibilities through which ecological responsibility, relational becoming, and deep environmental care may emerge.

## 1.3 A Relational Approach to Deep Environmental Care

Relational becoming is not merely an onto-epistemological engagement that reconfigures how humans understand themselves within more-than-human worlds; it simultaneously reconfigures how responsibility is understood. From a relational perspective, ethics cannot be separated from ontology and epistemology. If existence is understood as relational, responsibility emerges not as an external moral addition, but as an implication of being itself (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2022; Bawaka Country et al., 2013; Tynan, 2021).

Within such a relational frame, care cannot be approached as an optional individual choice. Rather, it arises from entanglement. As Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) argues, care is inherently relational: it emerges within the webs of relation that constitute existence. To be constituted through relations is already to be implicated in sustaining them. Care thus becomes an ongoing practice of attentiveness and responsiveness within more-than-human worlds.

This understanding unsettles dominant environmental discourses of stewardship and management, which often retain humans as external protectors of a passive nature (Buscher & Fletcher, 2020; Bawaka Country et al., 2013). A relational approach refuses this exterior positioning. Humans are not caretakers standing apart from the world; they are participants whose own flourishing depends upon the flourishing of the system. Care is therefore enacted from within entanglement, not extended outward from above (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Tynan, 2021).

Posthuman feminist scholarship further emphasizes that care is always situated and embodied (Haraway, 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Care does not arise as an abstract moral principle but unfolds through concrete relations in particular places, encounters, and material circumstances. To care is therefore not simply to hold a value or intention; it involves being attentively present within relationships that expose us to vulnerability, dependency, and difference. Care is enacted through embodied practices of noticing, responding, and remaining with the complexities of shared worlds (Haraway, 2016). Care thus emerges through lived encounters rather than through detached ethical reflection.

A relational understanding of care is inherently also a more-than-human understanding of care. Conceiving beings as constituted through entangled relations with the living world expands care beyond human interactions toward the more-than-human relations through which life unfolds. As Ressiore (2025) argues in her work on more-than-human care, care can be understood as a relational practice that unfolds within more-than-human assemblages, where responsibilities arise through shared vulnerabilities and dependencies rather than through human stewardship alone. A more-than-human approach to care therefore reframes ethical responsibility as

something enacted within entangled relations with places, species, and ecosystems, rather than something extended from humans toward an external nature.

A more-than-human approach to care comes with asymmetries. More-than-human relations are rarely balanced exchanges between equal actors; they are shaped by differences in power, dependency, exposure, and capacity (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Humans usually possess disproportionate abilities to transform environments and shape the conditions under which other species live. Such asymmetries do not render relational understandings of care unethical. Rather, they make attentiveness and accountability even more essential (Tronto, 2013). A more-than-human ethic of care does not seek to erase difference or dependency, but to engage them responsibly (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Care, in this sense, involves acknowledging uneven relations and responding to them with humility and attentiveness to the vulnerabilities and needs of other beings within shared worlds (Haraway, 2016).

This understanding also clarifies why I speak of *deep environmental care.* The term *deep* does not refer to intensity of feeling or strength of moral commitment. Rather, it refers to the ontological depth from which care emerges. When humans come to understand themselves as relational beings constituted through more-than-human entanglements, care is no longer experienced as an external obligation toward nature. Instead, it arises from the recognition that one's own existence is inseparable from the flourishing of the living systems that sustain it (Olausson, 2024; Tynan, 2021). Deep environmental care therefore refers to a mode of relating that grows from an embodied realization of relational interdependence. Care, in this sense, is not something humans decide to extend toward the environment; it becomes an implication of relational being within a shared world.

Wild pedagogies create conditions in which such orientations may take shape. By inviting embodied, more-than-human encounters, unsettling anthropocentric assumptions, and cultivating curiosity and deep wonder, they enable care to emerge from relational engagement rather than from abstract moral instruction (van Tol & Wals, 2025). In this sense, wilding

pedagogies contribute to educational ecologies in which relational becoming and more-than-human care can unfold together.

At the same time, more-than-human care cannot be romanticized or taken for granted. It unfolds within institutional constraints, historical power asymmetries, and socio-economic systems that often reproduce separation and exploitation (Tronto, 2013). A relational approach to deep environmental care must therefore remain attentive to tensions, exclusions, and inequalities within more-than-human relations. More-than-human care is not a harmonious endpoint but an ongoing, situated practice within complex worlds.

Taken together, wilding pedagogies, relational becoming, and deep environmental care form the conceptual backbone of this dissertation. By bringing indigenous and posthuman feminist theory into conversation with educational theory and sustainability transformation research, the dissertation develops a relational framework for understanding how learning can contribute to more caring human–earth relations. In doing so, it advances debates on transformative learning for sustainability by foregrounding the role of relational, more-than-human learning ecologies in shaping how humans come to understand and enact their participation in shared worlds.

## 1.4 Research Questions, Objectives and Outline

Situated within the ethico-onto-epistemological framing outlined above, this dissertation explores how practices of wild pedagogies in higher education may contribute to more meaningful ways of relating with the world in times of converging socio-ecological crises. Grounded in posthuman feminist thought, the study approaches learning, transformation, care, and research itself as relational and more-than-human processes emerging through embodied engagements within more-than-human worlds. Relationality therefore functions as the primary conceptual thread weaving together ontology, pedagogy, ethics, and methodology throughout the dissertation.

Wild pedagogies serve as both a heuristic and practical entry point for this exploration. As an emerging strand within sustainability education, wild pedagogies seek to unsettle anthropocentric educational assumptions by opening space for relational and more-than-human forms of learning. Yet

while wild pedagogies are increasingly discussed within educational scholarship, their ontological grounding, pedagogical implications, transformative potential, and methodological consequences remain only partially articulated. This dissertation therefore aims to deepen theoretical understanding of wild pedagogies while simultaneously exploring how they may inform educational practice, contribute to processes of relational becoming and deep environmental care among young adults, and invite more relational and place-responsive forms of qualitative inquiry.

The central question guiding this dissertation is:

**In what ways, if any, do wild pedagogies foster relational becoming with the world among students in higher education?**

This central question positions wild pedagogies as pedagogical openings through which more relational ways of learning, becoming, and caring with the world may emerge. Addressing this question requires engagement across conceptual, pedagogical, experiential, and methodological dimensions. The dissertation therefore unfolds through four interrelated research sub-questions:

1. How can wild pedagogies be conceptualized within more-than-human relational ontologies?

2. How can wild pedagogies be enacted as more-than-human ecologies of learning within higher education?

3. In what ways, if any, do processes of relational becoming emerge among higher education students engaged in wild pedagogies-inspired learning environments?

4. How can qualitative inquiry be reconfigured to align with relational and more-than-human understandings of learning and becoming?

These questions are explored across seven interconnected chapters that move from theoretical grounding to pedagogical practice, experiential inquiry, methodological reflection, and integrative discussion.

Following this introduction, **Chapter 2** outlines the methodological foundation of the dissertation. Drawing on indigenous and posthuman feminist theory and critical relational qualitative inquiry, the chapter elaborates how relational ontology informs the methodological orientation of the study. It introduces the collective case study of three higher education courses inspired by wild pedagogies and discusses the methods employed throughout the dissertation, including participatory immersion, walking interviews, reflective questionnaires, reflective essays, narrative literature review, and formative evaluation of educational design. The chapter further reflects on relational positionality and the ethical and epistemological implications of conducting research as an entangled and situated participant within the research field.

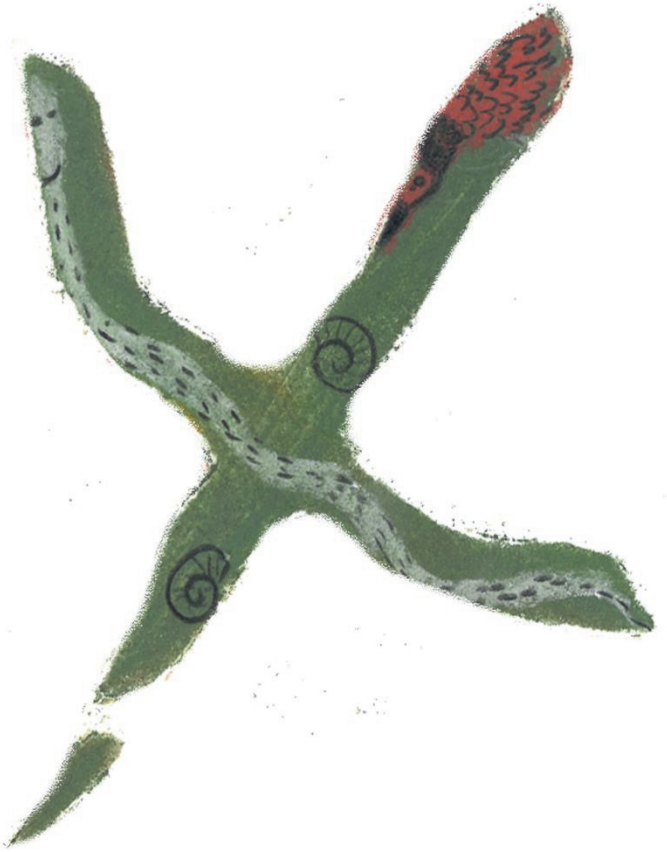
**Chapter 3** addresses the first research question by developing the theoretical foundation of the dissertation through the notion of a 'wild turn' in sustainability education. The chapter explores how wild pedagogies relate to, build upon, and diverge from approaches such as outdoor, embodied, relational, transformative, and transgressive learning. Drawing on indigenous and posthuman feminist scholarship, wild pedagogies are conceptualized as more-than-human ecologies of learning that engage the 'wild' not only as the other-than-human, but also as spontaneity, curiosity, wonder, and disruption within education and learning. In doing so, the chapter situates wild pedagogies within a relational ontology and explores how they challenge anthropocentric assumptions in sustainability education.

**Chapter 4** moves from conceptual grounding to pedagogical practice by addressing the second research question: how wild pedagogies may be enacted within higher education. Through iterative engagement between literature, participatory immersion, and formative evaluation of educational design, the chapter develops four interconnected explorative areas of wild pedagogies: (1) wild and caring learning spaces, (2) learning from curiosity and wonder, (3) relational learning with the world, and (4) disruptive learning for the world. These are explored through three elective courses at Wageningen University that align with wild pedagogical orientations. Rather than presenting prescriptive models, the chapter offers situated articulations of how relational and more-than-human pedagogies may take shape in higher education practice.

**Chapter 5** addresses the third research question by exploring how students experience processes of relational becoming within wild pedagogical learning environments. Drawing on walking interviews, reflective questionnaires, and reflective essays, the chapter examines how encounters within more-than-human worlds shape students' perceptions of self, world, and responsibility. Building on transformative change theory, the analysis identifies five interconnected dimensions of relational becoming – awareness, connection, insight, purpose, and agency – conceptualized as an undulatory and relational process rather than a linear form of transformation.

**Chapter 6** turns to the methodological dimension of the dissertation and addresses the fourth research question by exploring how relational and more-than-human qualitative inquiry may be enacted through practices of methodological wilding. Focusing particularly on walking interviews as a place-responsive and embodied research practice, the chapter examines how landscapes, movement, sensory engagement, and more-than-human participation shape research encounters and the knowledge emerging from them. In doing so, the chapter contributes to ongoing discussions on methodological frictions that arise once relational onto-epistemologies are embraced.

Finally, **Chapter 7** weaves together the conceptual, pedagogical, empirical, and methodological threads of the dissertation through the interconnected notions of weaving and futuring. The chapter revisits wild pedagogies, deep wonder, relational becoming, deep environmental care, methodological wilding, and constructive hope as relational and performative processes contributing to alternative ways of imagining and enacting human–world relations. It further reflects on the implications of the study for sustainability education, relational inquiry, and future research, before concluding with a broader reflection on weaving more caring, responsive, and hopeful futures with(in) more-than-human worlds.



# 2

# A Relational Approach to Methodology, Positionality and Methods

*“relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality”*

(Wilson, 2020, p. 7)

## 2.1 A Relational Approach to Methodology

This dissertation is grounded in a relational methodology informed by indigenous and posthuman feminist theory and critical relational qualitative inquiry. Relationality provides the ethico-onto-epistemological foundation that shapes how this research is conceptualized, conducted, and interpreted. Following Barad (2007)'s formulation of ethico-onto-epistemology, being, knowing, and acting responsibly cannot be separated. Epistemological practices are therefore always already ontological and ethical interventions: the ways we inquire into the world participate in shaping what comes to matter and how relations take form. Knowledge does not stand apart from the world it studies. Rather, the concepts, methods, and relations involved in research actively participate in configuring what becomes perceptible, how it is interpreted, and what responsibilities arise from those engagements. In this dissertation, this means that methodological choices are approached not merely as technical procedures but as relational practices that participate in shaping the realities being studied.

Barad (2007)'s concept of intra-action further informs the relational methodological approach of this dissertation by challenging the methodological assumption that entities exist first and only later enter into relation. In contrast to the notion of interaction, which assumes that separate entities precede their relations, intra-action suggests that entities emerge through their relations. If beings do not precede their relations but take shape within them, then research cannot simply treat 'researcher', 'participant', 'context', or 'phenomenon' as self-contained units that are subsequently connected through method. Instead, the distinctions that make research possible – who counts as a participant, what counts as relevant data, where a phenomenon begins and ends – are themselves part of the research process (Tynan, 2021). In this dissertation, participants, researcher, places, and learning environments are therefore understood not as separate elements that interact but as relationally constituted within the research encounter itself.

Research methods consequently operate by drawing temporary boundaries within an entangled reality, stabilizing certain aspects so they can be examined while leaving others aside. Barad (2007) refers to these necessary acts of distinction as *agential cuts*. Such cuts are unavoidable; without them,

inquiry would be impossible. Yet within an ethico-onto-epistemological framework they are never merely technical decisions. They are ethical interventions that shape what comes to matter and which relations are made visible or obscured (Tynan, 2021). In this study, methodological decisions are therefore approached as situated ways of configuring research encounters that foreground particular relational dynamics while inevitably leaving others aside. The methodological task is not to eliminate such boundary-drawing but to make it visible and to remain accountable for what it foregrounds, what it excludes, and what realities it helps to bring into being.

Haraway (1988)'s articulation of situated knowledges further reinforces the ethico-onto-epistemological perspective that grounds this dissertation. Against the 'God trick' of disembodied objectivity, Haraway argues that knowledge is always partial, embodied, and located. Instead of considering such situatedness as 'bias', relational methodology approaches situatedness as the very condition of responsible knowledge-making. What matters then is not distance but response-ability – the capacity to recognize and respond to the relations through which knowledge is produced.

These posthuman feminist commitments resonate with and extend critical developments in qualitative inquiry. Phenomenological traditions have long emphasized that meaning arises through interpretation and encounter rather than residing in subjects as extractable content (Ingold, 2011a). More recent post-qualitative scholarship pushes this insight further by questioning whether conventional notions of methodology remain adequate within a posthuman relational framework (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre, 2023). They emphasize that data are not realities to be 'discovered' but produced within specific research assemblages composed of researchers, participants, materials, and environments. Research methods therefore do not simply capture reality; they participate in configuring it. In the context of this dissertation, the empirical material is therefore understood as emerging from the relational dynamics of the research process rather than as pre-existing data waiting to be extracted.

Extending this relational understanding beyond the human, this dissertation engages with relational, more-than-human methodological approaches that argue how research unfolds within more-than-human assemblages in which

other-than-human entities and processes are not passive backdrops but active participants (Haraway, 2008; van Dooren & Rose, 2016). Other-than-human presences influence how attention is directed, what becomes perceptible, and what is considered meaningful within a research encounter (van Dooren & Rose, 2016). Recognizing these more-than-human entanglements also carries ethical implications. If research unfolds within shared worlds, inquiry becomes a practice of engaging responsibly with the relations that sustain those worlds (Haraway, 2016). In this dissertation, landscapes, weather, terrains, and more-than-human encounters are therefore not treated merely as contextual settings but as elements that actively shape how experiences and reflections emerge within research encounters.

Relational methodology consequently entails an explicit refusal of the ontology of separation that underpins much conventional social science, where the researcher is positioned as an external knower extracting information from autonomous subjects within a passive context. Such extractive assumptions sit uneasily with a relational ontology in which subjects, environments, concepts, and meanings emerge through entanglement (St. Pierre, 2023). Recognizing research as an intra-active and more-than-human practice foregrounds the constitutive and ethical force of methodological choices. From a relational methodological perspective, the challenge is not to purify inquiry from entanglement but to remain reflexively attentive to how research arrangements shape what can be known, which relations are sustained, and how these relations matter. This dissertation approaches that tension as an ongoing methodological condition. Instead of striving for methodological purity, it seeks alignment between relational theory and research practice through continuous reflexive articulation of how research encounters are configured within more-than-human worlds and the responsibilities that arise from those configurations.

## 2.2 A Relational Approach to Positionality

Understanding research as an intra-active and more-than-human practice in which meaning emerges through entanglement, foregrounds positionality as a central methodological concern. The agential cuts that make inquiry possible are not enacted from an abstract standpoint; they are drawn from within particular histories, bodies, institutional roles, material conditions,

and more-than-human relations (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1988). Positionality, therefore, concerns how research is situated within – and participates in shaping – the assemblages through which knowledge comes into being.

From a posthuman feminist perspective, positionality does not reside in an individual subject but emerges through entangled relations among environments, materialities, discourses, and human as well as other-than-human presences (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1988). Haraway (1988)'s notion of situated knowledges underscores that knowledge arises from embodied and located engagements rather than from a disembodied, neutral standpoint. At the same time, the 'self' that participates in research is not a stable container of attributes, but is continuously constituted through relations (Braidotti, 2022). Positionality is therefore not a fixed condition but a dynamic and co-constructed process that shifts across encounters, roles, and contexts through more-than-human intra-action (Lindskov, 2025).

Within this framing, positionality can be understood as the reciprocal shaping of more-than-human worlds (Asenbaum, 2026; Lindskov, 2025; Tynan, 2021). These configurations include not only researcher characteristics and social and institutional relations, but also material arrangements, spatial conditions, ecological dynamics, and multispecies presences that shape how encounters unfold. Building on Haraway (2016), Asenbaum (2026) conceptualizes such more-than-human performative positionality as *being with*. Rather than positioning the researcher as an observer of a pre-existing world, *being with* foregrounds co-presence, attentiveness, and embodied co-existence as the ground of knowing. It emphasizes that research begins not from analysis or categorization, but from shared presence – being there, together, within entangled more-than-human worlds. From this perspective, positionality emerges through practices of attunement in which the researcher is not only shaping the research encounter but is simultaneously being shaped by it.

Positionality thus arises through ongoing processes of co-being, in which human and other-than-human forces mutually configure perception, meaning, and response (Asenbaum, 2026). This includes a shift in emphasis from the researcher as active knower to the researcher as affectable and responsive – open to being moved, reoriented, and transformed through

encounter (Tynan, 2021). In this sense, positionality is not only about how one is situated, but also about how one *remains with* the relations that constitute the research process (Haraway, 2016). It involves cultivating forms of attentiveness, humility, and openness that allow the agencies of environments, materials, and other beings to participate in shaping what becomes perceptible and meaningful (Tynan, 2021).

Positionality, then, is not simply an attribute of the researcher but an emergent effect of being-with: a relational accomplishment continuously co-produced through embodied presence, more-than-human entanglements, and the unfolding dynamics of the research encounter.

From this perspective, positionality is not only relational but ecological. It is shaped through the ways bodies move through landscapes, the affordances and constraints of particular environments, and the rhythms and agencies within more-than-human worlds (Asenbaum, 2026; Tynan, 2021). Weather may invite or restrict engagement; terrain may open or close possibilities for conversation; nonhuman presences may draw attention, evoke affect, or redirect interaction. These elements participate in the research encounter, shaping not only how participants relate to each other and to the researcher, but also how the researcher is positioned within the field. Positionality thus emerges as a distributed and situated accomplishment, co-produced through human and more-than-human relations alike.

In this dissertation, positionality is therefore approached as fluid, performative, and relationally enacted within more-than-human contexts. Rather than a fixed or continuous influence, it is continuously negotiated and reconfigured through interaction, perception, and the unfolding dynamics of the research encounter. This includes not only interpersonal relations but also the material-discursive and ecological conditions through which research takes place. As such, positionality is inseparable from the pedagogical and environmental configurations within which research is embedded (Lindskov, 2025).

The relational and more-than-human dynamics of positionality also come to the fore in the multiplicity of roles enacted across the research process. A defining feature of this study is the shifting configuration of roles through

which the research unfolded. In one course, the researcher acted as designer, coordinator, and teacher, directly shaping the pedagogical environment under study. In the other courses, involvement took the form of participatory immersion with less direct influence on course design. Across all courses, roles shifted between educator, researcher, interviewer, and analyst. These enactments did not simply reflect different tasks, but actively configured the research assemblage: they influenced how participants related to the researcher, what could be expressed, how openly experiences were articulated, and how power circulated within the learning space.

Langley and Klag (2019) describe such situations as characterized by an 'involvement paradox': researchers are expected to be sufficiently close to generate deep insight while simultaneously remaining distant enough to preserve objectivity. Within a relational and posthuman methodological framework, this paradox cannot be resolved by increasing distance, since distance itself presumes an ontology of separation. Instead, it must be navigated through situated, reflexive, and accountable engagement. Proximity is therefore understood not as methodological weakness, but as constitutive of the research encounter itself – an inevitable condition of being entangled within the relations one seeks to understand.

Several strategies were adopted to engage this relational positioning. Reflexive journaling accompanied participatory immersion and teaching roles, enabling ongoing attention to how pedagogical and research practices became entangled. A reflective questionnaire was implemented across courses and years to reduce reliance on personal interaction and to provide a consistent structure for student reflection. In addition, a majority of interviews were conducted by a research assistant not directly involved in course teaching, which allowed for additional reflection on close versus more distant research involvement. These practices did not eliminate relational positionality – nor was that the aim – but rendered its effects more visible and accountable within the research process.

Recognizing positionality as fluid, relational, and more-than-human intensifies rather than diminishes responsibility (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Tynan, 2021). From a relational perspective, research does not stand outside the world it studies, but actively participates in shaping the realities through

which knowledge emerges. Positionality thus becomes an ethical matter: a commitment to attending to how roles, decisions, interpretations, embodied presences, and ecological engagements participate in shaping these entanglements. Reflexivity, in this sense, is not a retrospective disclosure of so-called 'bias', but an ongoing methodological orientation – remaining attentive to shifting relations, boundary-drawings, power asymmetries, and more-than-human conditions that configure the research encounter. Relational positionality is therefore not an addendum to relational methodology, but its lived, situated, and ethical enactment.

## 2.3 Empirical Grounding: Methods Underlying the Thesis

The relational methodological commitments outlined above are not merely theoretical positions; they shape how inquiry is enacted across this dissertation. The study is grounded in a collective case study of three relational outdoor higher education courses at Wageningen University (the Netherlands) over three years (2021-2023), which together form the empirical context within which all methods are situated (Table 1, Appendix 1). This case-based approach enables an in-depth exploration of how relational becoming unfolds across different yet connected educational settings, while attending to variation, continuity, and emergence over time.

*Table 1. Overview of the three WP-inspired courses at Wageningen University (The Netherlands) that were included in the study.*

| |
|---|
| ***Course 1. Wild Perspectives:*** *A relational outdoor learning course centered on cultivating other-than-human perspectives. Students engage in multisensory, contemplative, and embodied practices that invite reflection on self, place, and interdependence within the living world.* |
| ***Course 2. Anthropology of Basic Nature Skills:*** *A skills-based, experiential outdoor course in which students explore relational ways of being through hands-on practices such as foraging, fire-making, and shelter-building. Learning focuses on attentiveness, embodied experience, and more-than-human encounters.* |
| ***Course 3. Exploring Regenerative Cultures for Sustainability:*** *A reflective, place-responsive course that engages students with regenerative thinking and practices. Through guided outdoor activities, dialogue, and personal relational reflection, students consider alternative ways of living and acting responsibly within ecological systems.* |

The study unfolds through a combination of conceptual and empirical approaches: narrative literature review, formative evaluation of educational design, participatory immersion, walking interviews, reflective questionnaires, and reflective essays (Table 2). While these methods differ in form, they share a common orientation: attending to how relational becoming emerges within more-than-human educational contexts. The narrative literature review and formative evaluation of educational design support the empirical inquiry by mapping the conceptual terrain within which the case study is situated and providing concrete inspiration for higher education curricula. All empirical methods are thus enacted within, and

relationally shaped by, the collective case study, rather than operating as independent methodological components.

*Table 2. Overview of course participants and empirical data sources included in the study.*

| | **Anthropology of Basic Nature Skills** | **Exploring Regenerative Cultures for Sustainability** | **Wild Perspectives** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Course participants engaged with through participatory immersion (2021-2023)* | *138* | *46* | *47* | *231* |
| **Walking interviews** | 7 | 5 | 6 | 18 |
| **Reflective questionnaires** | 44 | 18 | 26 | 88 |
| **Reflective essays** | 35 | 6 | 35 | 76 |
| **Total research documents** | 86 | 29 | 67 | 182 |

To avoid repetition in the core chapters of this thesis, the empirical grounding for the whole study is outlined in the following subsections, which describe the methods and the landscapes enacted across the study.

### *2.3.1. Participating Landscapes*

The courses were situated within landscapes that formed an integral part of the learning experience and the research itself. From a relational perspective, these landscapes are not understood as passive settings in which learning

occurs, but as active participants in the educational and research encounters that unfolded. The landscapes bear traces of long entanglements between people, other-than-human life, soils, weather, and land-use practices, rendering any simple distinction between the natural and the human-made difficult to sustain.

Courses 2 and 3 took place in the forested landscapes East of Wageningen, situated on glacial push moraines formed during the penultimate ice age. Over centuries, these forests have been shaped through forestry, agriculture, recreation, conservation efforts, and ecological succession. Today, they are managed by a combination of private landowners and the Dutch State Forestry Service, balancing conservation, recreation, and production functions (de Rijk, 1994). Course 1 took place in the lower-lying landscape between the moraines, an area historically characterized by intensive agricultural use and, more recently, by community-led efforts to restore ecological processes and networks (Maijer, 2021). Across all three courses, students encountered landscapes in which human and more-than-human histories remain visibly intertwined.

Importantly, these were not remote wilderness areas but everyday landscapes located in the vicinity of the university campus. Many students were therefore likely to have encountered them previously through study, recreation, commuting, or other daily activities. Such prior encounters formed part of the histories, memories, and relationships through which new educational experiences emerged (Bawaka Country et al., 2016). The educational significance of these landscapes thus lies not in their presumed naturalness, but in their capacity to invite renewed attention to the complex human and more-than-human relations that constitute them.

### *2.3.2. Narrative Literature Review*

The conceptual foundation of the dissertation is developed through a narrative literature review that accompanies and supports the empirical inquiry. In line with relational methodology, this review is approached as a situated and reflexive practice of tracing connections, tensions, and resonances across bodies of scholarship (Sukhera, 2022). Narrative review is particularly suited to this study, as it enables engagement with conceptually

fluid and emerging fields, such as wild pedagogies, without foreclosing alternative meanings or delimiting their scope.

Rather than applying predefined inclusion criteria, characteristic of systematic reviews, the narrative approach allows the direction and boundaries of the review to remain responsive to the unfolding inquiry. Concepts, relations, and lines of thought are followed iteratively, enabling unexpected connections and theoretical openings to emerge (Sukhera, 2022). Rather than as a lack of rigor, this flexibility is seen as a methodological commitment aligned with the study's ontological orientation toward relationality, plurality, and becoming.

In particular, the narrative literature review in this dissertation traces connections between wild pedagogies, relational outdoor learning, posthuman feminist theory, and sustainability transitions, following conceptual overlaps, tensions, and points of resonance across these fields. This process of relational mapping informed the development of Chapter 3, where the meanings and orientations of wild pedagogies are explored through their connections to other critical learning approaches and explicitly situated within a posthuman feminist theoretical context. Rather than treating wild pedagogies as a bounded concept, the review enabled an understanding of the field as a constellation of ideas that take shape through their relations to broader theoretical movements and practices.

The narrative review further informed Chapter 4 by supporting the exploration of the theoretical dimensions of the four identified realms of wild pedagogies. Here, literature engagement contributed to articulating how these realms can be understood not as discrete categories, but as interrelated and evolving expressions of relational educational practice.

Less directly, the narrative literature review also underpins the theoretical grounding of Chapters 5 and 6, where it informs the interpretation of empirical findings by providing conceptual sensitivity to relational, embodied, and more-than-human dimensions of learning processes. Across the dissertation, the literature review thus functions as an ongoing, iterative practice that supports both conceptual development and empirical interpretation, without prematurely stabilizing the field into fixed categories.

### *2.3.3. Participatory Immersion*

At the core of the empirical work lies participatory immersion within the three relational outdoor higher education courses at Wageningen University introduced at the start of this section (Table 1, Appendix 1). This immersion forms the ground from which the other methods emerge, providing the shared conditions through which the collective case study takes shape.

The term ‘immersion’ is used deliberately instead of ‘observation’, as the latter implies distance and an external gaze. Following relational and posthuman methodological critiques (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013), immersion foregrounds co-presence, closeness, and entanglement: researcher and participants share environments, activities, and rhythms, and knowledge emerges within these shared conditions.

During the first year of the study (2021), full participation in course activities enabled engagement with the embodied, affective, and more-than-human dimensions of learning processes. Field journaling accompanied this immersion as a reflexive practice through which relational dynamics, atmospheres, tensions, and more-than-human influences could be attended to.

Across the three courses, involvement took different forms. In Course 1, the researcher was directly involved in course design, coordination, and teaching over all three years, shaping the pedagogical environment under study. In the other two courses, engagement took the form of participatory immersion in the first year, with less direct influence on course design. These differing roles enabled engagement with multiple perspectives on educational practice, while also highlighting tensions in relational research, which were addressed in the section on positionality (2.2).

Participatory immersion supports the study’s aim to explore relational becoming not only as narrated experience, but as a lived, embodied process unfolding within ecological and institutional entanglements.

Insights from participatory immersion have mainly informed the empirical dimension of Chapter 4.

### *2.3.4. Formative Evaluation of Educational Design*

Alongside experiential inquiry, the study engages in formative evaluation of educational design across the three courses and over the three-year period (Nieveen & Folmer, 2013). Course guides, teaching materials, and evolving design choices were treated as elements within ongoing pedagogical processes through which relational learning environments are continuously configured.

From a posthuman, relational perspective, educational design is not understood as a linear intervention implemented by human actors, but as an emergent and more-than-human practice that unfolds through the intra-action of educators, students, materials, environments, and institutional conditions (Barad, 2007). Design choices are therefore not external to the learning process but actively participate in shaping the conditions under which relational becoming can occur.

Formative evaluation, within this framing, becomes a practice of attending to how pedagogical configurations take shape, shift, and respond over time. Rather than evaluating effectiveness against predefined outcomes, it traces how relational dynamics, more-than-human encounters, and material arrangements enable or constrain particular ways of learning, sensing, and becoming. Importantly, this approach reframes evaluation as situated practice of inquiry rather than a retrospective judgment. It foregrounds responsiveness, adaptation, and ongoing attunement to the unfolding educational assemblage.

Rather than deriving universal design principles, formative evaluation in this study supports the articulation of situated, context-sensitive insights into how relational, more-than-human, and care-oriented learning can be cultivated in higher education. These are not prescriptive models, but invitations to think with practice in ways that remain open to variation and emergence.

Formative evaluation of educational design has primarily informed Chapter 4 of this dissertation, where it contributes to the exploration of how wild pedagogies can be enacted and adapted within higher education contexts.

### *2.3.5. Walking Interviews*

To explore how participants experienced relational learning processes and how these experiences may have influenced relational becoming, 18 semi-structured walking interviews were conducted with former students one to three years after participation in the courses (Appendix 4). These interviews were deliberately designed as place-responsive encounters through which experiences could be reactivated, re-sensed, and re-articulated within more-than-human environments (Lynch & Mannion, 2016).

Walking interviews are particularly aligned with relational and more-than-human methodologies, as they transform the interview from a static, face-to-face exchange into a mobile, embodied, and place-responsive practice (Holton & Riley, 2014; Lynch & Mannion, 2016). Rather than positioning knowledge as something elicited from participants, the interview becomes an emergent encounter in which meaning is co-produced through the intra-action of researcher, participant, and environment. Movement through landscapes invites attentiveness to sensory impressions, material surroundings, and other-than-human presences, allowing the conversation to unfold in response to what becomes perceptible along the way (Ingold, 2011a).

From a relational perspective, this shifts the interview from a human-centered exchange toward a more distributed and relational process of meaning-making. Landscape, weather, terrain, and other-than-human presences are not treated as background context, but as active participants that prompt, shape, and sometimes disrupt the flow of conversation (Haraway, 2016; van Dooren & Rose, 2016). The interview thus becomes a situated event in which knowledge emerges through embodied co-presence and ongoing attunement to more-than-human relations.

Conducting interviews in course-related environments enabled participants to re-encounter places implicated in earlier learning experiences. In this way, memory, reflection, and narrative were not simply recalled but reconfigured through renewed engagement with terrain, atmosphere, and multispecies surroundings (Lynch & Mannion, 2016). Walking, as a rhythmic and embodied practice, supported openness, spontaneity, and reflective

storytelling, while sensory engagement with the environment stimulated memory and imaginative re-articulation of experience (Heijnen et al., 2022; Hemel et al., 2025).

To further support attentiveness to embodied and more-than-human dimensions of experience, elements of micro-phenomenological and mindfulness-based approaches were integrated (Petitmengin, 2006). Interviews began with a brief guided meditation to cultivate presence, stabilize attention, and heighten sensitivity to bodily sensations and environmental cues (Kordes et al., 2019). Throughout the walk, participants were invited to reconnect with lived experiences through sensory prompts, affective responses, and encounters with the surrounding landscape.

Walking interviews extend the collective case study by situating meaning-making within the same more-than-human environments in which learning originally unfolded. They do not merely access participants' accounts of experience, but actively participate in reconfiguring those experiences through embodied, place-based engagement (Lynch & Mannion, 2016). In doing so, the method contributes to a relational methodological approach in which the landscape is recognized as an active participant in knowledge production and where meaning emerges through ongoing intra-action within more-than-human worlds (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008).

Walking interviews have particularly informed Chapter 5 on relational becoming for deep environmental care. Chapter 6 further develops walking interviews as relational, place-responsive method of inquiry within more-than-human worlds.

### *2.3.6. Reflective Questionnaires and Essays*

To complement immersive and interview-based methods, open-ended reflective questionnaires were integrated into course reflection processes across all three years (Appendix 2). These questionnaires were designed not as extractive instruments for data collection, but as reflective tool that supported participants in engaging with their own learning process as it unfolded.

From a relational methodological perspective, reflection is primarily understood as a situated practice through which experience is articulated, reconfigured, and made meaningful (Holdo, 2023). The questionnaires therefore function as prompts for engaging with experience-in-relation – inviting attention to connections, shifts, tensions, and more-than-human encounters that shaped participants' learning trajectories and relational engagement with the world.

Their integration within pedagogical practice intentionally blurs the boundary between learning and research. Rather than positioning research as external to education, reflective engagement becomes part of the ongoing intra-action through which learning environments are constituted. In this way, the questionnaires contribute not only to documenting experience, but also to shaping how participants come to notice, interpret, and relate to those experiences.

With informed consent, reflective essays written as part of the courses were also included as research material. These essays are approached as situated meaning-making practices, through which students narrate their experiences within specific institutional, discursive, and ecological contexts.

From a relational perspective, these written reflections can be seen as sites where relational becoming is momentarily stabilized in language, while remaining shaped by more-than-human conditions (Barad, 2007). Writing itself becomes a material-discursive practice through which experiences are not simply reported but reconfigured. What is expressed is therefore inseparable from how it is expressed, and from the conditions under which the expression emerges. In this study, this means that reflective texts are not approached as transparent representations of students' experiences, but as situated articulations shaped by pedagogical prompts, institutional contexts, language, and more-than-human encounters.

In combination with participatory immersion and walking interviews, these reflective materials contribute to a layered and temporally diverse understanding of relational becoming. They capture how experiences are articulated within the immediacy of learning processes, while also revealing

how meaning continues to evolve as participants revisit and reinterpret their experiences over time.

Reflective questionnaires and essays have particularly informed Chapter 5 of this dissertation, where they support the exploration of relational becoming in relation to deep environmental care.

### *2.3.7. A Relational Approach to Qualitative Analysis*

In line with the relational ethico-onto-epistemological framework of this dissertation, analysis is not understood as a process of uncovering pre-existing meanings, but as a situated practice that participates in shaping how relational becoming is articulated. Across methods, analysis was conducted iteratively, combining sensitizing concepts with inductive thematic development using Atlas.ti (version 24.1.1). Predefined elements of relational becoming functioned as orienting lenses rather than fixed categories.

Attention was given not only to the presence of themes, but to their intersections, co-occurrences, and relational dynamics, recognizing that relational processes do not unfold linearly or discretely.

Consistent with the overall methodological framework, analysis was not treated as a final stage of distillation, but as a continuation of intra-action: an interpretive engagement through which meanings are temporarily stabilized and articulated (Barad, 2007).

### *2.3.8. Methodological Coherence Across Chapters*

The methods described above form the overarching methodological architecture of this dissertation, grounded in the collective case study of three relational outdoor courses. Taken together, this methodological approach contributes to relational and more-than-human qualitative inquiry by demonstrating how multiple methods can be configured as complementary practices for engaging with and articulating processes of relational becoming within more-than-human educational contexts. Instead of a variable to be measured, relational becoming was treated throughout this

dissertation as a process to be engaged with, traced, and articulated through multiple, complementary methodological practices.

Subsequent chapters do not repeat this full methodological account. Instead, they refer back to this section while elaborating on method-specific applications, adaptations, and reflections relevant to each chapter. This structure avoids redundancy while maintaining conceptual and methodological coherence across the dissertation as a whole.



# 3

# The Wild Turn in Sustainability Education – Cultivating Relational Becoming in a More-than-Human World

*“Natuur is te-veel mens”*

(Roncken, 2026)

Abstract

Young adults today come of age in the context of converging socio-ecological crises that challenge dominant human-centered assumptions about progress, agency, and development. Responding to these crises requires more than technological innovation or behavioral adjustment; it calls for a fundamental reorientation in how humans understand and enact their relations within more-than-human worlds. Education is frequently positioned as a key site for such transformation.

This chapter explores wild pedagogies as a distinctive strand within a broader 'wild turn' in sustainability education. Through a narrative literature review, wild pedagogies are situated in relation to outdoor, embodied, relational, transgressive, and transformative learning traditions. Extending these debates, the chapter grounds wild pedagogies in indigenous and posthuman feminist theories, articulating learning as a process of relational becoming within a more-than-human world. From this perspective, wild pedagogies are understood as open-ended learning orientations that cultivate more-than-human care and pluralized ways of knowing.

Engaging sustainability transitions scholarship, the chapter reframes the concept of inner transformation as relational becoming, arguing that transformative change unfolds through reconfigurations of relational orientations across personal, institutional, and systemic scales. Wild pedagogies are thus positioned as educational practices that engage deep leverage points for change by reshaping paradigms, values, and relational sensibilities. By holding together transformative, embodied, relational, and more-than-human dimensions of learning, wild pedagogies offer a conceptual and pedagogical response to the ethical and ontological demands of education in times of socio-ecological crisis.

**Keywords:** wild pedagogies; relational becoming; sustainability transitions; posthuman feminism; more-than-human approaches

***This chapter is based on:***

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The chapter was adapted from the original publication to enhance its integration within the dissertation and improve coherence across chapters. In particular, the methodology and methods section was condensed, as the overarching methodological framework, positionality, and methods underpinning the dissertation are presented in Chapter 2. The introduction was revised to reduce overlap with the general introduction of the dissertation, and some terminology was adjusted to ensure conceptual consistency throughout the text.

A shorter and adapted version of the original publication was published as:

Van Tol, R.S. (2024). The Wild Turn in Sustainability Education: Wild Pedagogies as a Way of Becoming With the World. *The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*, 37 (1), 4-7.

Another shortened and adapted version of this article is in press for the 2026 Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Environmental Education under the title *"The Wild Turn in Environmental Education – Learning to Become with the World"*

## 3.1 Introduction

Young adults today come of age in a world profoundly shaped by the cumulative and uneven impacts of modern human societies on planetary systems and Earthly life of all forms (Fletcher et al., 2024). Climate change, accelerating biodiversity loss, land degradation, and the depletion of natural resources increasingly threaten the conditions for life on Earth, rendering the future uncertain and fragile. These converging socio-ecological crises are deeply entangled with historical processes of globalization, individualization, and technological dominance that characterize the current era of human influence (Moore, 2017). For many young people, living with these conditions generates a pervasive sense of uncertainty and unease about the future, reflected in the growing prevalence of eco-anxiety and climate-related distress among youth (Clayton, 2020; Hickman, 2020; Pihkala, 2020; Tsevreni et al., 2023; Usher et al., 2019).

A growing body of scholarship suggests that at the heart of contemporary socio-ecological crises lies the dominant Euro-Western ontology of separation and domination, historically consolidated through modernity, which positions humans as distinct from, and superior to, the other-than-human world (Braidotti, 2013; Latour, 1993; Mbembe, 2022; Moore, 2017; Plumwood, 1993). This ontological framing contrasts with relational and more-than-human ontologies found in many Indigenous and non-Western knowledge traditions (de la Cadena, 2015; Escobar, 2018; Mbembe, 2022). Within the dominant, Euro-Western framework, nature is rendered as a passive backdrop or resource to be managed, controlled, and exploited (Merchant, 1980; Plumwood, 1993). This ontological orientation is reinforced by the accelerating loss of direct, embodied experiences with non-human nature, particularly in highly urbanized and technologized societies (Soga & Gaston, 2016). As relational ties to the more-than-human world weaken, so too do the ethical and affective grounds for care and responsibility (Ives et al., 2018). Disconnection thus not only reflects but actively reproduces patterns of environmental degradation, facilitating purposive control over and destruction of non-human life (Moore, 2017; Zylstra et al., 2014).

Responding to these intertwined ecological, existential, and relational crises requires more than technological fixes or behavioral adjustments. It calls for a fundamental reorientation in how humans understand themselves in relation to the world – ontologically, ethically, and affectively (Braidotti, 2013; O'Brien, 2018; Tynan, 2021). Scholars increasingly argue that such shifts in worldviews and relational orientations function as deep leverage points for sustainability transformations, shaping how societies define value, agency, and care (Abson et al., 2017; Ives et al., 2018; Woiwode et al., 2021). Yet these transformations are neither quick nor easily achieved; they involve processes of learning that are embodied, relational, and often unsettling (Mezirow, 2000; O'Brien & Sygna, 2013; Pedersen et al., 2022; Wals, 2025).

Education is frequently identified as a key site where such transformative learning processes might be nurtured (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1991; Sterling, 2011; Wals, 2019). However, within Euro-Western higher education contexts, sustainability education remains largely constrained by anthropocentric frameworks that privilege human cognition, mastery, and control, while marginalizing relational, embodied, and more-than-human ways of knowing (Taylor, 2017; Tynan, 2021; Wals, 2025; Wamsler, 2020). Even pedagogies that seek to foster sustainability-oriented competencies often remain focused on human agency alone, reproducing the very separations they aim to overcome (Jickling, 2016; Pedersen, 2010). To function as a deep leverage point for sustainability transitions, education must therefore engage students not only cognitively but existentially – inviting reflection on questions of being and becoming, cultivating relational sensibilities, and opening space for re-imagining shared futures with the wider living world (Abson et al., 2017; Biesta, 2021; Felski, 2020; Wals, 2025).

Building on these insights, recent decades have seen the emergence of critical pedagogical approaches within sustainability education that foreground transformation, relationality, embodiment, and learning in and with place (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011; Fenton et al., 2020; Gray & Birrell, 2015; Pedersen et al., 2022; Stewart, 2004; Stolz, 2015; Wals, 2019). Collectively, these approaches mark a significant shift away from purely cognitive and instrumental models of learning and toward more holistic,

experiential, and relational engagements with socio-ecological issues. At the same time, these pedagogical developments have largely evolved across distinct theoretical lineages and educational practices, often foregrounding particular dimensions – such as transformation, embodiment, place, or relationality – rather than explicitly articulating how these dimensions might be held together within a coherent educational orientation. As a result, questions concerning how learning might simultaneously engage with existential transformation, embodied and relational ways of knowing, and more-than-human participation remain only partially addressed. In response, several scholars have called for a 'bewilderment' of education – not as an additional pedagogical strand, but as an opening of educational spaces toward uncertainty, vulnerability, and other-than-human perspectives that unsettles human exceptionalism and invites alternative modes of knowing and relating (Felski, 2020; Gough, 2013; Green & Dyment, 2018; Jukes & Reeves, 2023; Lynch & Mannion, 2021; Quay & Jensen, 2018; Snaza, 2013; Taylor, 2017). As a pedagogical orientation, bewilderment invites learning to remain open, situated, and relational, thereby creating space for transformative, embodied, place-based, and more-than-human dimensions of learning to co-emerge without being reduced to discrete outcomes or competencies (Snaza, 2013).

Within this broader movement – introduced here as a 'wild turn' in sustainability education – Jickling et al. (2018, 2023, 2024) articulate *wild pedagogies* (WP) as a living pedagogical strand that responds directly to calls for the bewilderment of education and builds on the critical pedagogical developments of recent decades. Rather than proposing prescriptive methods or predefined learning outcomes, wild pedagogies can be understood as enacting bewilderment as a pedagogical orientation: deliberately unsettling dominant educational logics of control, predictability, and instrumentalization. In practice, wild pedagogies foreground curiosity, wonder, and self-will, and invite learning to unfold in more-than-human, 'wild' contexts where humans are decentered as sovereign knowing subjects and encouraged to learn *with* the other-than-human world (Morse et al., 2018). Through this orientation, wild pedagogies bring together transformative, embodied, relational, and place-based dimensions of learning. In doing so, they open educational spaces for attending to relationality, contingency, and more-than-human agency as constitutive

aspects of learning. While wild pedagogies have inspired growing scholarly and pedagogical engagement, the field remains emergent and calls for further theoretical grounding and empirical exploration.

Responding to this need for further conceptual articulation, this chapter revisits wild pedagogies as part of the suggested broader 'wild turn' in sustainability education introduced above. Building on a narrative literature review, it first situates wild pedagogies in relation to embodied, relational, transgressive, and transformative learning traditions, highlighting both their points of convergence and their distinctive pedagogical orientation. It then extends existing educational debates by explicitly grounding wild pedagogies in posthuman feminist and indigenous theory, foregrounding a relational ontology that challenges human exceptionalism and understands learning as a process of *becoming-with* the world. By broadening the theoretical horizon in this way, the chapter seeks to deepen understanding of wild pedagogies as pedagogical practices capable of holding together transformative, embodied, relational, and more-than-human dimensions of learning in response to the ethical, ontological, and relational demands of education in times of socio-ecological crisis.

## 3.2 Methodology and Method

This chapter builds on the relational methodological approach outlined in Chapter 2, where inquiry is understood as an ethico-onto-epistemological practice through which knowledge emerges within entangled relations (Barad, 2007). A narrative literature review, as introduced in Chapter 2, forms the primary method supporting this chapter. Following the earlier introduction, the narrative literature review is approached as a situated and relational practice: tracing connections, tensions, and resonances across bodies of scholarship through iterative and reflexive engagement (Sukhera, 2022).

A narrative literature review is particularly suited to the explorative and relational aims of this chapter. Whereas systematic reviews rely on predefined inclusion criteria and deductive structuring, they tend to delimit the scope of inquiry and stabilize conceptual boundaries early in the process. In contrast, a narrative approach allows for a more open, flexible, and inductive engagement with literature, enabling the exploration of emerging,

conceptually fluid fields such as wild pedagogies (Sukhera, 2022). Rather than seeking exhaustiveness, the review remains responsive to unfolding insights, allowing new directions, questions, and relations to emerge.

Consistent with indigenous and posthuman feminist perspectives, the review is understood as a relational and situated practice of knowledge-making (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1988; Tynan, 2021). Literature, researcher, and emerging concepts are not treated as separate entities, but as mutually implicated within the process of inquiry. The boundaries of the review are therefore not fixed in advance but shift as the inquiry develops, reflecting the chapter's ontological commitment to relationality, plurality, and becoming. This openness is methodological choice that resists premature closure, hierarchy, and epistemic control.

The review was initiated through an exploration of peer-reviewed literature on wild pedagogies using Google Scholar, with the initial aim of deepening understanding of their theoretical foundations and educational orientations. As the review unfolded, recurrent conceptual linkages emerged with scholarship on outdoor learning, embodied learning, relational pedagogy, transgressive education, and transformative learning. Rather than treating these as discrete or competing traditions, the review followed points of overlap, tension, and resonance, allowing the meanings and contours of wild pedagogies to take shape relationally through their connections with adjacent pedagogical debates.

Through this iterative engagement, wild pedagogies emerged as distinctive in their explicit orientation toward more-than-human relationality and the decentering of the human subject within educational processes. This insight prompted a further expansion of the review into indigenous and posthuman feminist scholarship on relational ontology, care, and ontological plurality. Engaging with these bodies of work enabled a deeper conceptual grounding of wild pedagogies beyond educational theory alone, situating them within broader philosophical and ethical discussions on human–world relations in critical times.

In attending to the explicitly transformative ambitions of wild pedagogies, the review was further extended toward literature on inner transformative

change and sustainability transitions. In particular, scholarship exploring how shifts in values, identities, and relational orientations function as leverage points for socio-ecological change informed the analysis. Bringing these literatures into conversation enabled a more nuanced understanding of the transformative potential of wild pedagogies as practices that invite ongoing relational, ethical, and existential learning and reflecting.

Across this chapter, the narrative literature review functions as a relational mapping practice through which the meanings, orientations, and theoretical grounding of wild pedagogies are articulated. Rather than stabilizing the field into fixed definitions, it traces how wild pedagogies take shape through their relations to broader pedagogical, philosophical, and socio-ecological discourses.

## 3.3 Wild Pedagogies: Relational, Transgressive and potentially Transformative Practices in Wild Learning Environments

Pedagogy has historically been understood as a human-centered project: a practice oriented toward the formation, cultivation, and development of human subjects (Biesta, 2010). While educational thought has long emphasized relationality and situatedness, these have typically been framed as social relations among humans, rather than as relations within the more-than-human world (Biesta, 2010; Dewey, 1938; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In response to the socio-ecological crises of our time, critical pedagogical approaches are increasingly challenging these anthropocentric assumptions, calling for educational practices that move beyond dominant human-centered narratives toward more inclusive, relational, and ecologically attuned ways of learning (Felski, 2020; Jukes & Reeves, 2023; Kondo & Baars, 2025; Lynch & Mannion, 2021; Taylor, 2017). It is within this broader shift that a ‘wild turn’ in sustainability education can be discerned.

Wild pedagogies (WP) form a key pedagogical expression within this suggested wild turn (Jickling et al., 2018, 2023, 2024). They reframe learning as a relational, more-than-human practice, thereby unsettling the assumption of the human as the sole subject of learning. The notion of the ‘wild’ in wild pedagogies is deliberately multifaceted. First, it refers to learning in more-than-human environments – places in which human

learners encounter the other-than-human world as an active presence rather than a passive backdrop (Morse et al., 2018). Importantly, ‘wild’ here does not denote distant wilderness or pristine nature, nor does it evoke romanticized or colonial imaginaries of the wild. Instead, wild learning places are understood as dynamic, spontaneous, and relational environments – urban or rural, near or far – in which learning unfolds through situated engagement with the living world.

Beyond place, ‘wild’ also refers to an inner dimension of learning: a willingness to learn from curiosity, wonder, play, and spontaneity, rather than from predefined outcomes or instrumental goals. Finally, wild pedagogies invoke wildness as a disruptive force in education, deliberately unsettling dominant educational logics of control, predictability, and efficiency in order to open space for alternative ways of knowing and relating (Morse et al., 2018). Taken together, these dimensions position wildness not as a characteristic of a particular location, but as a relational and pedagogical quality that shapes how learning unfolds.

Wild pedagogies resonate with several established pedagogical traditions, particularly outdoor, embodied, relational, transgressive, and transformative learning. Outdoor learning knows a long history, both as practical skills and citizen training as well as environmental education practice. Miles and Priest (1990, p. 113) describe outdoor education as an experiential method of learning with the use of all senses, taking place primarily, but not exclusively, through exposure to the natural environment and focusing on the human-environmental relationship. As a reaction to the climate and biodiversity crises and their psychological consequences, there is a renewed interest in outdoor learning and a search for approaches that fit the needs of our time (Paulsen, 2023; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Practices such as embodied and relational learning provide a relevant basis to respond to these needs, offering the opportunity to address complex challenges that affect both ourselves and the wider environment.

Embodied learning foregrounds the role of the body in knowing, understanding learning as emerging through lived, sensory engagement with the world (Stolz, 2015). Relational approaches to learning build on this insight by emphasizing that knowing and being are inherently relational,

arising through entangled connections between humans, non-humans, and environments (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008; Ingold, 2011a). Together, these approaches inform what I describe here as *relational outdoor learning*: educational practices that seek to learn *in, with, through, and for* the more-than-human world while acknowledging humans as relational beings embedded in wider ecological networks.

While wild pedagogies can be situated within this lineage of relational outdoor learning, the outdoor and relational dimensions alone do not fully capture their ambition for educational change. As Morse et al. (2018) argue, wild pedagogies explicitly challenge institutional authority and control in education, which often suppress self-will, uncertainty, and wonder. In this sense, they align with transgressive learning, understood as educational practices that disrupt normalized, hegemonic structures and open space for alternative possibilities (Wals, 2019). Such transgression is not pursued for its own sake, but as a means of confronting and unsettling educational practices that reproduce unsustainable human–world relations.

It is at this intersection that wild pedagogies also engage with transformative learning. Transformative learning involves becoming critically aware of the assumptions that shape how we perceive, understand, and feel about the world, and how these assumptions guide our actions within it (Mezirow, 1991). By creating spaces for learning that are relational, embodied, and open to disruption, wild pedagogies invite learners to reflect on and potentially transform their own ways of being in relation to the human and other-than-human world. Such learning processes may be uncomfortable or unsettling, as they can evoke dissonance and challenge deeply held beliefs. Yet it is precisely this stretching beyond familiar comfort zones that enables learning to become transformative (Wals, 2019).

Taken together, wild pedagogies share characteristics with several critical pedagogical approaches, yet they distinguish themselves through their explicit and sustained engagement with wildness as a relational, pedagogical, and ontological condition. In this sense, wild pedagogies can be understood as transgressive and potentially transformative relational outdoor learning practices that actively invite wild(er)(ness) – of places, bodies, relations, and ways of knowing – into educational journeys.

## 3.4 Learning as Relational Becoming within a More-than-Human World

Building on the foregoing conceptualization of wild pedagogies as relational, transgressive, and potentially transformative practices, turning to indigenous and posthuman feminist scholarship enables a deeper ontological grounding of their relational ambitions. Rather than treating relationality as merely a pedagogical method or social orientation, these theoretical strands invite a rethinking of learning itself as a more-than-human, relational process.

Approaching wild pedagogies from a relational ontology entails a deliberate decentering of the human subject. Rather than positioning humans as autonomous agents standing apart from 'nature', relational ontologies understand who we are and how we come to be as relationally constituted within more-than-human worlds (Braidotti, 2022; Haraway, 2008; Tynan, 2021). Barad (2007)'s concept of *intra-action* sharpens this understanding by challenging the assumption that entities pre-exist their relations. Instead, beings emerge through entangled relations of bodies, environments, and meaning. From this vantage point, the image of the human as an autonomous agent becomes untenable. Human existence is made possible through the very relations upon which it depends. Being is therefore not an isolated attribute but an ongoing process of becoming-with the world (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Haraway, 2008).

Understanding the world as relationally constituted also carries epistemological consequences. What and how we come to know cannot be separated from the relations through which knowledge emerges. Knowing unfolds through embodied engagement within more-than-human worlds, (Haraway, 2008; Ingold, 2011a; Tynan, 2021). Knowledge, from this perspective, cannot be understood as detached or neutral, but is always situated and partially constituted through relational intra-action (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1988). Learning, accordingly, can be understood as a relational process emerging within more-than-human learning environments. Wilding pedagogies toward such an understanding does not merely invite reflection on relations; it calls for their enactment in ways that reconfigure how humans participate in the more-than-human world.

## 3.5 Wild Pedagogies as Practices of More-than-Human Care

Understanding learning as relational becoming within a more-than-human world, as argued above, carries implications for ethical responsibility within such a shared world. Care, in this context, emerges as an ontological consequence of entanglement. Within indigenous and posthuman feminist scholarship, care is not merely an interpersonal virtue but a relational practice that arises from being constituted through others (Braidotti, 2022; Bawaka Country et al., 2013; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). To exist within webs of interdependence is thus already to be implicated in relations of responsibility.

Wild pedagogies implicitly resonate with such more-than-human ethics of care. Their ambition to foster deep attentiveness to the more-than-human world suggests not only concern for nature but an invitation to cultivate forms of care that extend beyond the human species. Yet, while care is present as an underlying aspiration in wild pedagogical thought, it is rarely articulated explicitly as a relational and more-than-human ethical framework.

Care, as Malone and Young (2023) suggest, exceeds passive concern. While concern involves being affected by vulnerability, care entails active engagement – the joining of affective responsiveness with practices that sustain and repair relations. From a more-than-human perspective, this implies attending not only to human others but to the material, ecological, and more-than-human conditions that make life possible (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Ressiore, 2025). Care thus becomes a mode of participating responsibly within relational worlds.

In educational contexts, engaging care in this sense involves creating spaces where vulnerability, grief, and uncertainty are acknowledged (Newstead, 2009). Young people today often experience eco-anxiety, grief, and disorientation in response to socio-ecological crises (Pihkala, 2020; Tsevreni et al., 2023). A pedagogy of care seeks to hold these emotions collectively and transform them into shared responsibility and agency (Bozalek et al., 2020). Care here is both affective and practical: it involves reflection,

embodied engagement, and the cultivation of capacities to act differently in relation to the human and more-than-human world.

Explicitly foregrounding care within wild pedagogies would therefore deepen their transformative ambition. It would align their relational ontology with an equally relational ethics, strengthening their capacity to foster not only awareness of entanglement, but committed participation in sustaining more-than-human worlds.

## 3.6 Pluralizing Knowledge and Knowing

Moving beyond human-centered models of learning requires more than conceptual shifts; it demands changes in how classrooms are organized, how knowledge is valued, and how participation is understood. One practical implication is the necessity of unlearning habitual ways of seeing and knowing. As Taylor (2017) suggests, this involves loosening assumptions that frame learning as the acquisition of abstract knowledge by autonomous individuals. Instead, educational practices must invite attentiveness, humility, and openness toward other-than-human presences. This can take the form of slowing down, engaging in careful observation, and creating time for sustained immersion in particular places (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2010). Learning then shifts from mastering content to cultivating responsiveness. ‘Knowledge’ is therewith extended beyond rational-cognitive dimensions toward an engaged relational process of more-than-human intra-action.

Such pedagogical reorientation also requires critically reflecting on whose knowledge is legitimized within educational institutions. Pluralization involves creating space for diverse epistemic traditions, including Indigenous and other marginalized knowledge systems, while approaching them with humility and responsibility (Todd, 2016). This entails resisting extractive engagement and instead fostering dialogue grounded in respect for the living communities and territories from which such knowledge arises.

Drawing on First Nations perspectives, Blenkinsop and Beeman (2010) describe how the other-than-human world (Othuw) can function as a co-teacher. Practically, this means designing learning environments in which students are not positioned as detached observers but as participants in

reciprocal relations. Time spent with(in) landscapes, attention to seasonal changes, and responsiveness to unexpected encounters become integral to learning. In this sense, pluralizing knowledge and knowing within wild pedagogies involves reconfiguring the classroom as a more-than-human learning community in which humans learn *with*, rather than *about*, the world.

## 3.7 From Relational Learning to Sustainability Transitions

Reconfiguring the classroom as a more-than-human learning community does not only alter pedagogical practice; it reshapes how learners understand themselves and their participation in the world. When learning shifts from mastering knowledge to cultivating responsiveness, from human-centered cognition to relational engagement, it transforms orientations toward agency, responsibility, and belonging. The question that follows is how such shifts in relational orientation relate to broader processes of sustainability transition.

In recent sustainability scholarship, the concept of *inner transformation* has gained prominence as a way of naming the profound shifts in values, worldviews, and identities considered necessary for socio-ecological change (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021). Inner transformation refers to changes in how individuals perceive themselves in relation to the world and how these reorientations shape patterns of thought and action. Rather than focusing solely on technological innovation or institutional reform, this body of work highlights transformation at the level of consciousness, meaning-making, and intent.

Within leverage point theory, such shifts are understood as interventions at the deepest layers of systems. Abson et al. (2017) argue that changes in paradigms, goals, and underlying values hold greater transformative potential than policy adjustments or technological fixes alone. Similarly, Ives et al. (2018) suggest that sustainability transitions depend upon reorientations in how humans relate to each other and to the more-than-human world. Transformative learning environments – particularly those fostering reflection, relational awareness, and embodied engagement – are consequently described as enabling conditions for systemic change (Wamsler et al., 2021).

While the language of inner transformation usefully foregrounds depth, it can inadvertently suggest that change occurs primarily 'within' individuals. Building on the relational ontology developed in this chapter, I propose reframing inner transformation as *relational becoming*. From this perspective, transformation does not unfold in isolation but through shifts in relational configurations. Changes in values, identities, and intentions are not private mental events; they emerge within and reshape networks of social, ecological, and institutional relations.

Relational becoming thus extends the notion of inner transformation by situating it within more-than-human entanglements. Sustainability transitions are not only structural reforms or technological innovations, nor solely psychological awakenings, but reconfigurations of relational patterns across multiple entangled scales. Wild pedagogies contribute to such processes by cultivating the relational sensibilities through which alternative ways of participating in shared worlds can emerge.

## 3.8 Concluding

This chapter has explored wild pedagogies as a distinctive strand within a broader wild turn in sustainability education. Building on outdoor, embodied, relational, transformative, and transgressive learning traditions, wild pedagogies bring these dimensions into conversation through a sustained engagement with wildness as a relational, pedagogical, and ontological orientation. In doing so, they unsettle hegemonic educational logics of control, instrumentalization, and human exceptionalism, and invite learning to unfold as more-than-human participation rather than human mastery.

By grounding wild pedagogies in indigenous and posthuman feminist theory, this chapter has argued that their significance lies not merely in methodological innovation, but in their ontological implications. Learning, from this perspective, is not the acquisition of knowledge by autonomous individuals, but a process of relational becoming within a more-than-human world. Such becoming carries ethical implications in the form of more-than-human care and epistemological implications in the pluralization of knowledge and knowing. Wild pedagogies can thus be understood as

educational practices that seek to hold together relational ontology, situated knowing, and ethical responsibility in response to socio-ecological crises.

Reframing inner transformation as relational becoming further situates wild pedagogies within debates on sustainability transitions. Rather than interpreting transformation as an exclusively internal shift, this chapter has suggested that sustainability transitions involve reconfigurations of relational orientations across personal, institutional, and systemic scales. Wild pedagogies contribute to such processes by cultivating the relational sensibilities and practices through which alternative ways of participating in shared worlds may emerge. In this sense, they engage the deep leverage points of paradigms, values, and intents that shape social–ecological systems.

At the same time, wild pedagogies remain an emergent field. Their theoretical articulation requires continued deepening, particularly in relation to ethics of care, epistemic pluralization, and decolonial responsibilities. Moreover, empirical research is needed to explore how relational becoming unfolds in concrete educational contexts and how such processes resonate within broader sustainability transitions. Future studies might investigate how young adults experience more-than-human learning environments, how relational orientations shift over time, and how such shifts interact with institutional and societal dynamics.

In an era marked by accelerating socio-ecological crises, the question is not only what we need to learn, but how learning itself is understood and enacted. Wild pedagogies offer one possible response: approaching education as a practice of becoming-with the world – cultivating relational, ethical, and epistemic orientations that may enable more sustainable forms of co-existence.



# 4

# Enacting Wild Pedagogies in Higher Education: Relational Configurations and Situated Articulations for Practice

*"times like these (...) require thinking-doings that are abundantly* wild*."*

(Geerts & Carstens, 2021, pp. I-II)

Abstract

Wild pedagogies are emerging as critical and relational alternatives to dominant, often unsustainable educational practices. They invite learning in, with, through, and for the more-than-human world, challenging human-centered, outcome-driven approaches to education. While wild pedagogies have so far been explored mainly at a theoretical level, concrete articulations of how they may take shape in formal higher education remain limited. This chapter addresses that gap by exploring three relational outdoor education courses at Wageningen University (the Netherlands) that align with wild pedagogical orientations. Methodologically, the study combines a narrative literature review with participatory immersion and formative evaluation of educational design in a collective case study conducted over three years. Through iterative engagement with literature and practice, four interconnected explorative areas were developed: (1) wild and caring learning spaces, (2) learning from curiosity and wonder, (3) relational learning with the world, and (4) disruptive learning for the world. These areas are not approached as fixed categories, but as relational configurations that emerge through situated pedagogical practices. The chapter shows how practices such as sensory engagement, attentive observation, embodiment of more-than-human perspectives, extended time with nature, and shared practices of care contribute across these configurations. In doing so, it offers situated articulations of how wild pedagogies may take shape in higher education and contributes to a growing understanding of relational, more-than-human, and transformative educational practice.

**Key words:** wild pedagogies; relational outdoor learning; transformative learning; more-than-human approaches in education;

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The chapter was adapted from the original publication to enhance its integration within the dissertation and improve coherence across chapters. In particular, the methodology and methods section was condensed, as the overarching methodological framework, positionality, and methods underpinning the dissertation are presented in Chapter 2. The introduction was revised to reduce overlap with the general introduction of the dissertation, and some terminology was adjusted to ensure conceptual consistency throughout the text. Figures 1-6 were revised with the help of ChatGPT's images function to make them more visually attractive.

## 4.1 Introduction

As argued in the preceding chapters, contemporary socio-ecological crises are deeply entangled with dominant ontologies that position humans as separate from and superior to the more-than-human world (Braidotti, 2022). Moving toward more sustainable forms of co-existence therefore requires not only adjustments in governance structures or technological systems, but more fundamental shifts in how humans understand and enact their relational participation in the world. Education plays a pivotal role in such processes, as it shapes the ontological, epistemological, and ethical orientations through which societies reproduce or transform human–world relations (Taylor, 2017).

From indigenous and posthuman feminist perspectives, education is understood as a world-making practice: not merely transmitting knowledge about the world, but actively participating in the configuration of relations, values, and possibilities for becoming (Barad, 2007; Biesta, 2021; Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Haraway, 2016). Pedagogical practices do not simply represent reality; they help enact particular ways of knowing, sensing, and relating. This positions education as a key site where more sustainable, relational, and more-than-human ways of being might be cultivated.

In response to these challenges, a range of critical pedagogical approaches have emerged that seek to foster more relational, embodied, and transformative forms of learning (van Tol, 2025). As introduced in the previous chapter, wild pedagogies represent one such strand. Rather than centering learning on the acquisition of knowledge about the world, wild pedagogies invite learning *in, with, through, and for* the more-than-human world. They reframe education as a more-than-human, relational practice in which the other-than-human world is not a passive backdrop, but an active participant in learning processes.

While theoretical explorations of wild pedagogies have articulated key touchstones and guiding questions (Jickling et al., 2018, 2023, 2024), less attention has been given to how these orientations take shape in concrete educational practice. This gap is particularly pronounced in higher education, where pedagogical practices are often shaped by institutional

logics of efficiency, standardization, and assessment that constrain relational, embodied, and more-than-human forms of learning (Biesta, 2010).

This chapter addresses this gap by exploring how wild pedagogies can be engaged within higher education practice. Building on Jickling et al. (2024)'s touchstones and informed by a narrative literature review, four interconnected explorative areas are formulated to guide both conceptual clarification and empirical inquiry: (1) wild and caring learning spaces, (2) learning from curiosity and wonder, (3) relational learning with the world, and (4) disruptive learning for the world. These areas are approached not as fixed categories, but as relational configurations that emerge through situated pedagogical practices and continuously shape one another in practice.

Drawing on participatory immersion in and formative evaluation of educational design across the three relational outdoor courses introduced in Chapter 2, the chapter offers situated articulations of how wild pedagogies may take shape in practice. Rather than proposing prescriptive models, these insights function as practice-based invitations for engaging wild pedagogies in higher education. In doing so, the chapter contributes to an emerging understanding of how relational, more-than-human, and care-oriented pedagogies can be cultivated within – and potentially transform – the institutional conditions of higher education.

## 4.2 Methodology and Methods

This chapter builds on the relational methodological approach outlined in Chapter 2, in which research is understood as an ethico-onto-epistemological practice emerging through entangled relations (Barad, 2007; Tynan, 2021). Within the collective case study of the three relational outdoor higher education courses (Chapter 2, Table 1), this chapter focuses specifically on how wild pedagogies may take shape in the design and practice of higher education.

Consistent with this relational approach, the study does not position the researcher as an external evaluator of pedagogical practice. Instead, it adopts an engaged and reflexive orientation in which knowledge emerges through participation in the design, enactment, and interpretation of educational

processes (Finlay, 2009). Inquiry is therefore understood as situated, embodied, and shaped by the relations through which it unfolds, including interactions between educators, students, materials, places, and institutional contexts (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1988; Tynan, 2021).

Methodologically, this chapter brings together conceptual exploration and empirical engagement. A narrative literature review informs the restructuring of wild pedagogies touchstones into four interconnected explorative areas. These areas then guide participatory immersion and formative evaluation of educational design within the three courses, through which situated articulations are derived. In this way, the chapter operationalizes relational theory within pedagogical practice.

### *4.2.1. Conceptual Exploration and Clustering of Touchstones*

To guide the formative evaluation process, the wild pedagogies touchstones proposed by Jickling et al. (2024) served as an initial point of departure. While these eight touchstones offer important orientation, they remain relatively abstract. To support both theoretical clarification and empirical exploration, they were further developed through an iterative process of literature engagement and conceptual clustering.

Building on the narrative literature review approach outlined in Chapter 2, literature was explored through snowball sampling and targeted searches in Google Scholar. Rather than applying fixed search boundaries, concepts associated with the touchstones were followed across related fields, including outdoor learning, relational pedagogy, transformative learning, and embodied education.

Through this iterative and relational process, the eight touchstones were clustered into four interconnected explorative areas that provide a more accessible and analytically useful framework for engaging with wild pedagogies in practice: (1) Wild and caring learning spaces, (2) Learning from self-will and wonder, (3) Relational learning with the world, and (4) Disruptive learning for the world (Figure 1).

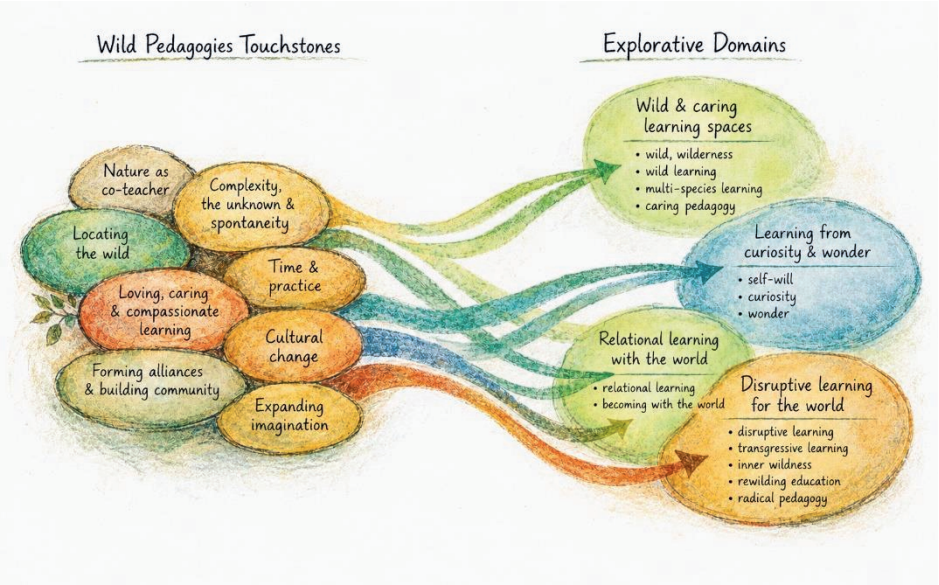



*Figure 1. The eight touchstones by Jickling et al. (2024), clustered, merged and adapted into four explorative domains, listing searched concepts per area.*

These explorative areas do not represent fixed categories, but function as heuristic lenses that support both theoretical development and empirical analysis. They enable a more nuanced understanding of how wild pedagogical orientations manifest across different dimensions of educational design and practice. This conceptual work provides the orienting framework through which empirical material is engaged and interpreted in the remainder of the chapter.

### *4.2.2. Participatory Immersion*

Empirical engagement within this chapter is situated within the broader collective case study of three relational outdoor higher education courses at Wageningen University over three years (2021–2023) (Chapter 2, Table 1) (Appendix 1). All three courses share a strong alignment with wild pedagogical orientations, although not always explicitly framed as such. They are designed as relational outdoor learning environments in which interactions within more-than-human worlds are actively engaged as part of the learning process. The courses draw on embodied, relational,

transformative, and transgressive learning, and are grounded in an ethic of care in response to socio-ecological challenges.

Participatory immersion, as elaborated in Chapter 2, provides the experiential grounding for engaging with how these pedagogical orientations are lived in practice. Immersion enabled direct, embodied participation in course activities, providing experiential insight into how pedagogical designs are enacted within situated educational contexts. Rather than observing from a distance, the researcher became part of the learning processes, allowing attention to the affective, relational, and more-than-human dimensions of educational practice.

### *4.2.3. Formative Evaluation of Educational Design*

Complementing participatory immersion, this chapter was further informed by formative evaluation of educational design across the three courses over the years of study (2021–2023), as introduced in Chapter 2 (Nieveen & Folmer, 2013). In line with the relational methodological framework, educational design was approached as an emergent and responsive process that evolves through ongoing interactions between participants, educators, materials, and environments (Barad, 2007).

Formative evaluation was therefore approached not as a retrospective assessment of effectiveness, but as a situated practice of tracing how pedagogical configurations take shape over time. Course guides, teaching materials, and evolving design choices were analyzed to understand how wild pedagogies are enacted, negotiated, and adapted in practice. Attention was given not only to intended design, but also to how designs shift in response to experience, dialogue, and changing conditions.

Together with participatory immersion, formative evaluation enables attention to both the lived experience and the designed conditions of relational learning environments, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how pedagogical orientations are both enacted and configured.

Rather than aiming to derive generalizable design principles, this approach supported the identification of situated, context-sensitive insights into how

relational, more-than-human, and care-oriented learning can be cultivated within higher education.

#### *4.2.4. Analysis*

Analysis in this chapter builds on the relational analytical approach outlined in Chapter 2. Course materials and field notes from participatory immersion were analyzed through a combination of deductive and inductive thematic coding using Atlas.ti (version 24.1.1).

The four explorative areas derived from the touchstones functioned as sensitizing concepts that guided initial coding, rather than as fixed analytical categories. Within these areas, patterns, tensions, and variations were explored, allowing sub-themes to emerge through iterative engagement with the material.

Consistent with a relational approach to analysis, the aim was not to extract stable findings, but to articulate how wild pedagogical orientations may take shape within educational practice. Emerging from the interplay of theory, practice, and embodied engagement, the resulting situated articulations of relational educational design are meant to serve as practical inspiration.

## 4.3 Relational Configurations of Wild Pedagogies: Engaging Literature and Practice

The following section engages with the four explorative areas through a relational process of thinking with both literature and practice. Rather than presenting literature and empirical material as separate sources of insight, they are approached as mutually constitutive within an ongoing process of knowledge-making. From a relational perspective, understanding does not emerge from the application of theory to practice, but through their intra-action: concepts are reshaped through empirical encounters, while lived practices become intelligible through theoretical engagement (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016).

The four explorative areas are therefore not treated as fixed analytical categories, but as dynamic and relational configurations that have taken shape through iterative engagement with wild pedagogies scholarship,

adjacent theoretical fields, and the situated practices of the three courses. They function as heuristic openings that invite attention to different, yet entangled, dimensions of relational becoming within educational contexts.

For each explorative area, theoretical engagements are brought into conversation with empirical and evaluative insights. Rather than aiming for conceptual closure or definitive definitions, the section traces how particular orientations – such as care, wonder, relationality, and disruption – take form across both scholarly discourse and lived educational practice. In doing so, literature is not mobilized to stabilize meaning, but to deepen, complicate, and expand the possibilities that emerge through practice.

The empirical and evaluative materials are approached as sites where wild pedagogical orientations are not only enacted but also reconfigured. Through participatory immersion and formative evaluation, the study attends to how pedagogical intentions, material conditions, more-than-human encounters, and institutional constraints intra-act to shape what becomes possible in practice. The resulting articulations are therefore not prescriptive models, but situated accounts of how relational and more-than-human pedagogies may be cultivated within specific educational assemblages.

While the four explorative areas are presented separately for analytical clarity, they are deeply interconnected and continuously co-constitutive. Their boundaries remain porous, and their meanings shift across contexts and encounters. The aim of this section is therefore not to isolate discrete dimensions of wild pedagogies, but to render visible a field of relations through which these pedagogical orientations come into being, take shape, and remain open to further transformation.

### *4.3.1. Wild and Caring Learning Spaces as Relational Configurations*

Within wild pedagogies, learning spaces are not neutral settings in which education takes place, but active participants in the configuration of learning itself (Morse et al., 2018). Drawing on indigenous and posthuman feminist perspectives, spaces can be understood as relational assemblages, emerging through the intra-action of bodies, materials, histories, atmospheres, and more-than-human presences (Barad, 2007; Bawaka Country et al., 2016;

Massey, 2005). From this perspective, a 'wild learning space' is not simply a location, but a way in which relations are configured and experienced.

Wild pedagogies situate learning within what Morse et al. (2018) describe as *self-willed spaces*: environments that are not fully controlled or determined by human intention. These spaces – ranging from urban edges to more remote landscapes – invite forms of engagement characterized by openness, uncertainty, and responsiveness. At the same time, 'wildness' not only applies to external environments, but also to an inner dimension: a willingness to follow curiosity, spontaneity, and self-will in the learning process. Wild learning thus unsettles both spatial and pedagogical control, opening space for what cannot be fully planned or predicted.

From a relational perspective, such learning spaces are not simply contexts for learning, but more-than-human pedagogical configurations through which learning becomes possible (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015). Rather than emerging from the transmission of knowledge between human actors, learning takes shape through ongoing relational engagement – through listening, sensing, and responding to the world. This requires an attitude of humility and receptivity, in which both students and educators attune to the histories, rhythms, and presences of a place (Stewart, 2004).

Building on indigenous and posthuman feminist understandings of relationality, learning in such spaces can be understood as emerging through intra-action (Barad, 2007): not as something that occurs within bounded individuals, but as something that takes shape through entangled relations between human and other-than-human beings (Tynan, 2021). In this sense, wild learning spaces can be approached as more-than-human relational fields, in which meaning is co-produced through both intra- and interspecies encounters. Learning unfolds here as a process of becoming-with (Haraway, 2008), in which participants are continuously shaped through their relations with others – human and other-than-human alike.

Understood in this way, wild learning spaces become inextricable from ethical considerations. If learning emerges through shared, more-than-human worlds, it necessarily involves questions of how to relate, respond, and care within those worlds (Bozalek et al., 2020). Learning, in this sense, becomes

an ethical practice of being-with, requiring openness to vulnerability, emotional engagement, and relational responsibility within more-than-human worlds (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Ressiore, 2025).

Beyond its more-than-human dimensions, care is equally foundational to the human dimensions of learning. As hooks (1994) suggests, meaningful learning requires spaces in which students feel held, seen, and supported. From a relational perspective, human and more-than-human dimensions of care cannot be separated. Wilding learning spaces therefore cannot be enacted without simultaneously cultivating care within them.

### *Situated Enactments: Configuring Wild and Caring Learning Spaces in Practice*

Within the three courses, these relational configurations of wild and caring learning spaces take shape through specific pedagogical practices and material arrangements. All courses situate learning outdoors, with two courses based in forest environments and one in a community garden. These locations function not merely as settings, but as active participants in the learning process, shaping attention, interaction, and experience.

Across the courses, learning unfolds through ongoing engagement with the surrounding environment – through movement, observation, sensory attunement, and embodied interaction. Importantly, holding a more-than-human learning space involves more than being outdoors; it requires intentional practices of relational grounding, through which students come to know a place and their position within it.

This grounding is particularly visible at the beginning of the courses, where initial activities focus on attuning to the environment. Students are invited to engage with the history of the place, to observe and listen deeply, and to explore with their whole bodies and senses (Box 1). These practices do not simply introduce the setting; they begin to configure the learning space as relational, inviting students into a field of more-than-human relations.

*Box 1. Example practices for relational grounding with place*

***Attuning intentions:*** *In course 1, the first morning begins with a slow walk through the landscape, where students are invited to attend to their surroundings as if encountering them for the first time – grass, trees, leaves, and other presences. When something draws their attention, they are encouraged to linger with that being or element and attune an intention for the course through this encounter. If possible, they may bring something back from this meeting. Returning in silence, students gather and, one by one, step forward to share who or what they encountered, and, if they wish, the intention that emerged from this relation. What is brought back is placed in a shared space that remains present throughout the course, offering a place to return to – both as a reminder of intentions and as an ongoing point of connection with the place and its more-than-human presences.*
*(Notes course 1, 2021).*

***Sit spot:*** *Alongside other relational grounding practices – such as engaging with the histories and stories of the place, and formulating and sharing intentions emerging from these encounters – course 3 invites students into a daily sit spot practice. Students are invited to choose a place in the nearby forest that calls their attention. Returning to this place daily, they spend 15–30 minutes sitting with it, gradually attuning to its rhythms, presences, and subtle changes. Through repeated encounters, the sit spot becomes a site of ongoing relation, where attention is deepened through sensing, noticing, and being with the place in a more-than-human way.*
*(Notes course 3, 2021).*

Across the courses, more-than-human relational learning is not only cultivated through attuning to place, but also through practices that invite participants to move beyond a solely human perspective. One way this takes shape is through embodying other-than-human perspectives.

Students engage in exercises such as visualization, theatre, and embodied practices that invite them to step into the life worlds of other beings. In course 1 and 3, these practices come together in the *council of all beings*[1], where students collectively embody and give voice to other-than-human presences (Box 2).

Through these activities, students are encouraged to sense, feel, and respond from within these perspectives – not to represent them accurately, but to explore what it might mean to relate differently.

What often begins as a playful exploration gradually opens into more affective and reflective experiences, in which students become aware of how their own ways of seeing and relating are shaped. In doing so, space is created to momentarily decenter the human perspective and to engage more attentively with the more-than-human world.

[1] The council of all beings was originally designed by Joanna Macy and John Seed as a performative practice of the deep ecology movement (Naess, 1973). They designed it as a 're-earthing ritual' that touches upon the alienation from the living world that is experienced by so many and aims for a reconnection to that world (Strobel, 2001). It is part of The Work that Reconnects, the work by Joanna Macy with which she aims to offer practices of deep care for and connection with the Earth. The facilitators of course 3 have been inspired by and are trained in this work and have adopted several practices in their course.

*Box 2. Embodying other-than-human perspectives: the council of all beings*

***Council of all beings:*** *Students are introduced to the practice of the council of all beings and invited to move into the surrounding landscape to encounter an other-than-human being they feel drawn to represent. Spending time with this being, they are encouraged to attune to its lifeworld – what it might need, what affects it, and how it lives within current ecological conditions.*

*Returning in silence, they gather in a shared space where materials are offered to craft masks. In focused attention, students begin shaping these masks, gradually shifting from representing to embodying the beings they have encountered.*

*Once complete, the council is convened. The space fills with a multiplicity of presences – soil, ocean, mosses, coral reefs, oak, woodpecker, humus, bees, water, fire, ferns – each carrying their own voices, concerns, and ways of knowing. One by one, beings introduce themselves and speak of their conditions. As they share experiences of ecological degradation and climate disruption, the atmosphere becomes heavy with grief and concern. In response, others softly murmur, "we hear you", creating a shared field of acknowledgement and care.*

*At a certain moment, participants are invited to step out of their roles and return as human beings, taking a place within the council as listeners. From this position, the experience shifts: what was previously enacted becomes something to be received. The voices of the other-than-human are no longer spoken through, but listened to. Feelings of discomfort, responsibility, and connection emerge – alongside gratitude for the ways these beings sustain and support life.*

*To close, the council turns toward possibility. The facilitator invites each being to share its wisdom for navigating the crises at hand – offering guidance for restoring relations, rethinking human positioning, and cultivating more response-able ways of living together. (Notes course 3, 2021)*

Alongside these embodied shifts in perspective, relational learning also unfolds through more direct relational engagement with the landscape. Here, the emphasis is not on taking the perspective of other beings, but on being with and learning from the environment through situated, sensory, and practical interaction.

In course 2 in particular, students relationally engage with the landscape through practices such as tracking, fire-making, and the use of natural materials (Box 3). These activities require careful attention to the environment – reading signs, noticing patterns, and responding to conditions as they arise. Learning emerges through doing, through working with the materials and rhythms of the place rather than applying predefined steps.

Through these engagements, the landscape becomes an active participant in the learning process. Students learn to move with greater attentiveness and care, developing sensitivity to how their actions affect and are shaped by the environment. Rather than observing from a distance, they come to know the landscape through ongoing interaction and experience.

*Box 3. Relational engagement with the landscape through tracking and fire-making.*

***Tracking:*** *Tracking is introduced not simply as a skill, but as a way of engaging with the landscape. Moving through the forest together, the teacher invites students to slow down and attend closely to what the environment reveals. When traces appear – subtle disturbances, marks, or patterns – they are approached as signs of presence and movement. Rather than providing fixed answers, the teacher shares possible interpretations, opening space for collective sense-making. Tracking here involves shifting attention toward how other beings move through and relate to the forest. Students are encouraged to consider the landscape from within these movements – how it might be used, inhabited, and responded to by deer, squirrels, foxes, or other animals.*
*Students then move out in small groups, exploring the forest through this lens. Returning together, they revisit selected traces, sharing observations and interpretations while remaining open to uncertainty and multiple possibilities. (Notes course 2, 2021)*
***Fire-making:*** *Fire becomes a central element through which multiple relations come together. Early in the course, students are introduced to fire not only as a technique, but as a phenomenon with ecological, cultural, and historical significance – shaping human ways of living while also carrying risks and responsibilities. Engagement with fire unfolds through practice. Students take responsibility for gathering materials, moving through the landscape to find suitable tinder and wood. This requires careful attention to the environment: what can be respectfully taken, in what condition materials are found, and how they respond to weather, moisture, and place. In this process, the landscape is an active participant that both enables and constrains what becomes possible.*
*Students are introduced to traditional ways of making fire, such as friction with a fire bow and the use of flint and steel. Through practice, they experience the effort, patience, and sensitivity required to bring fire into being. Moments of success are collective – students support one another, and when a flame emerges, it is met with shared excitement and care. Once lit, the fire becomes a gathering point. It offers warmth, but also a space for storytelling, reflection, and connection. At the same time, students take on the role of fire keepers, learning to remain attentive to changing conditions and to the potential risks of fire. Decisions about whether a fire can be made at all depend on the state of the environment – dryness, wind, and surrounding materials – requiring ongoing responsiveness and restraint. Through this engagement, fire-making becomes more than a skill: it becomes a practice of relating – working with materials, attending to conditions, and taking responsibility within a more-than-human world. (Notes course 2, 2021)*

In all courses, students are invited into more extended engagements with the other-than-human world through overnight stays and solo explorations. These experiences create time and space to move beyond brief encounters and to stay with a place for longer periods.

Solo practices take different forms across the courses. In course 1, students engage in shorter moments of individual exploration through forest bathing, silent walks, and meditation with the surrounding environment. In course 2 and 3, these engagements deepen through sit spots (Box 1) and a solo vision quest[2],where students spend several hours alone in nature (Box 4). During these periods, students are invited to be with the environment without a fixed task, allowing attention to shift toward sensing, noticing, and relating in more open ways.

The overnight stays, that are part of all courses, further deepen this extended engagement. Sleeping in the forest – often under simple tarps – introduces students to the landscape beyond daylight hours. Being with the forest through the night reconfigures how the environment is perceived and related to.

Together, these extended engagements allow relations with the other-than-human world to deepen over time, as students move from initial encounters toward more sustained forms of being with and within the landscape.

[2] Vision quests in nature are in many parts of the world part of a rite de passage, from childhood to adulthood, or other transitions in life, offering a challenging experience that evokes deep inner reflection, adaptation and relation to the wider world (Foster, 1998). The idea of the vision quest in nature has been embraced and further developed by Plotkin (2003), shifting its emphasis more toward nature connection rather than personal development.

*Box 4. Extended engagement with the more-than-human world through a solo vision quest in nature*

***Solo vision quest in nature:*** *In course 3, the program gradually builds toward a solo vision quest in the forest. In the preceding days, students are prepared through smaller encounters with the environment, mindfulness practices, and moments of reflection. On the evening before the quest, the group shares a simple meal and rests early. At dawn, students are sent out one by one into the surrounding landscape, where they spend several hours alone. With no specific task and minimal provisions, the focus shifts toward simply being with the place – attending, sensing, and relating without distraction. During this time, students move, sit, or remain with a place of their choosing, engaging with the environment in their own way. The absence of food and drink further intensifies the experience, drawing attention to bodily sensations and to the immediate surroundings. At the end of the day, the group gathers around the fire to share their experiences. One by one, students speak while others listen attentively, creating a space of collective reflection and support. (Notes course 3, 2021)*

Across all courses, attention is given to cultivating a relationally safe and supportive environment in which students feel able to engage openly and vulnerably. This is fostered through shared practices of care, which become a necessary condition for engaging with the self as part of a more-than-human world.

Participatory immersion in the courses learns how the cultivation of such an environment begins with social grounding practices, where students share intentions, motivations, and experiences, gradually building trust and mutual support. As the courses unfold, care is further enacted through shared responsibilities in daily practices – such as making and tending the fire, preparing meals, and supporting one another. These collective activities contribute not only to group cohesion, but also shape how students relate to the surrounding environment.

Material arrangements support this process. Each course establishes a home base – a warm, communal space, often centered around a fire – where students gather, reflect, and reconnect. This space functions as an anchor

within the broader learning environment, holding both individual reflection and collective experience.

Care also takes shape through practices of listening and sharing. As students begin to express a range of emotions – joy, discomfort, fear, or grief – these are received and held collectively. In this way, care is not predefined, but continuously enacted through the relations that develop within the group.

Notes from course 3 (2021) illustrate how care becomes tangible in practice: *"It is so wonderful to see how supporting and caring our 'tribe' is. There are so many tears every day, but even more hugs. People are seen and heard, carried by the group."*

Bringing these conceptual engagements and situated enactments together, wild and caring learning spaces can be understood as relational configurations characterized by practices of deep relational engagement with the landscape, embodiment of other-than-human perspectives and shared practices of care (Figure 2). These are not prescriptive elements, but situated articulations of how such spaces may be cultivated. They point toward ways in which educational environments can be reconfigured as relational, more-than-human, and care-full – inviting learning as an ongoing process of becoming-with the world.




*Figure 2. Enacting Wild and Caring Learning Spaces in Higher Education*

### *4.3.2. Learning from Curiosity and Wonder*

Within wild pedagogies, learning is not only shaped through relations with place and others, but also through how attention, curiosity, and openness unfold within those relations (Jickling, 2015). Wild pedagogies aim for self-willed learning, which refers to a shift away from externally directed, outcome-driven learning toward forms of engagement that emerge through curiosity, imagination, responsiveness, and openness to the unexpected (Morse et al., 2018). Self-will, in this context, does not refer to individual autonomy alone, but to a relational openness to what calls for attention – whether arising from the learner, the environment, or their encounter (Morse et al., 2018). As Jickling (2015, p. 158) notes, such learning "*is unaccountable in the language of learning outcomes and measurable achievements. It just announces itself. And, that is the joy.*"

Approached as such, self-willed learning closely relates to what Schinkel (2017) describes as *active wonder* in education. This active dimension of

wonder refers to curiosity-driven engagement: an openness to explore, inquire, and follow emerging interests. It is closely aligned with intrinsic motivation in learning and refers to a search for knowledge, an eagerness to learn something new, to discover. It has, in that sense, a restless character: when something new is discovered, one moves to the next to keep learning and discovering. Curiosity may move too fast to actually wonder, to be struck by awe, to be touched, to care (Di Paolantonio, 2019).

Moving beyond active wonder, Schinkel (2017) describes *deep wonder* as a fundamentally different experience in learning that is rarely given space in our highly efficient educational systems. Deep wonder refers to moments of being struck – experiences of awe, mystery, or profound connection that interrupt habitual ways of perceiving. It is a form of wonder that unfolds slowly, requiring space, time, imagination, reflection and an openness to the world to be touched by it. Rather than seeking new knowledge, deep wonder shifts one's relation to the world. As Schinkel (2017, p. 543) writes, deep wonder *"does not seek new ground, it changes the ground under one's feet."*

We could thus say that active wonder captures wild pedagogies' aim for learning from curiosity and self-will and being open to the unexpected, while deep wonder goes beyond this and relates to its aim for inner transformation through deep experiences with nature and, eventually, a deepened care for the world.

From a relational perspective, both forms of wonder can be understood as ways in which learning emerges through openness to the world. Whereas active wonder moves with the world through exploration, deep wonder interrupts and reconfigures one's way of being-with it. Together, they form a continuum through which learning becomes both exploratory and transformative. This two-layered understanding of wonder guides the following section, which explores how curiosity and deep wonder are enacted within the courses.

### *Situated Enactments: Cultivating Wonder in Wild Learning Practices*

Across the three courses, learning from self-will and wonder takes shape through pedagogical configurations that create space for both curiosity-driven engagement and more open, transformative encounters to emerge.

Curiosity is actively engaged through experiential and open-ended forms of learning. Across all courses, students are invited to explore their surroundings, follow their interests, and engage with the environment through their senses. Rather than prescribing fixed learning trajectories, course designs offer guiding structures within which students can shape their own paths.

This becomes visible, for example, in the way assignments are framed. While themes and directions are offered, students are free to choose their own focus, allowing them to follow what draws their attention. They are also encouraged to experiment with different forms of expression – such as storytelling, art, or poetry – enabling them to relate to their learning in ways that resonate with them.

Throughout the courses, reflective moments support students in becoming aware of how their interests evolve and how they engage with their learning processes. In this way, curiosity is not only stimulated, but sustained as an ongoing relation with what emerges in the encounter between self and world.

Alongside this active engagement, the courses create conditions in which deeper forms of wonder may emerge. Rather than directing experience, these practices invite students into moments of openness, where attention can shift from seeking toward receiving.

Whereas active wonder, or curiosity, can be relatively concretely stimulated through course design and pedagogical approaches, deep wonder can only be facilitated in more subtle ways. It requires the creation of time, space, and particular forms of experience that invite openness to the world – the possibility to be touched, to see with new eyes, and to encounter awe, mystery, or what might be called ‘wonder’. Creating such conditions is the primary way educators can support these experiences. Whether deep wonder then ‘announces itself’, as Jickling (2015, p. 158) describes, remains beyond control – and that is precisely its value.

Across the courses, both smaller and more extended moments of such openness are intentionally created and, at times, do give rise to experiences of deep wonder – whether brief or more profound. In all courses, mindfulness practices in and with nature are used to support attentive

observation, relational engagement with the environment, and reflection within a wider relational field, often inspired by and adapted from Jon Young's work (2010). The sit spots (Box 1) practiced in courses 2 and 3 offer concrete examples of such moments. They are spaces of stillness in which students observe with openness and allow curiosity to deepen into more attentive forms of engagement.

The solo explorations offered in these courses (Box 4) extend these experiences further by creating more sustained time and space for unexpected encounters to arise. In these moments, students are invited to engage with the environment with their whole being. When such conditions are present, experiences of deep wonder do frequently emerge, and students can be deeply touched by them. Upon the short vision quest in course 2 (2021), a student shares:

*"I ended up at a completely different spot than I was aiming for. It was like watching tv; so much life to see around me. I had this pressure that I wanted to meditate, but I just sat down with closed eyes and experienced the wisdom and connection of the tree I was sitting next to."*

This experience illustrates how openness and a letting go of expectations can give rise to unexpected encounters. Similarly, when sharing experiences from the longer solo quest in course 3 (2021), several students describe how they approached the world 'as a child' – encountering their surroundings as if for the first time, with sustained curiosity and excitement. Observation notes read:

*"They approached the natural world like children, with endless curiosity and wonder. They started to notice so many things they never paid attention to. The softness of moss while sleeping on it naked, the beauty of dead trees, the daily life of ants and other insects..."*

Deep wonder thus tends to arise in moments where direction is loosened and students are able to simply be with the world – to observe with openness, to attend without preconception, and to explore their relational being within the more-than-human world. In such moments, wonder can become a transformative experience.

Bringing these practices together, learning from curiosity and deep wonder can be understood as emerging through a relational interplay between structured openness and undirected experience. While curiosity can be actively cultivated through pedagogical design, deep wonder arises in moments where control recedes and students are able to remain with what unfolds. The courses illustrate how both dimensions are not separate, but intertwined: curiosity opens the way for engagement, while moments of stillness and openness allow that engagement to deepen into transformative encounters. Together, they point toward a form of learning that is not fully designed, but carefully invited – through the creation of conditions in which learners can become attentive, responsive, and open to being affected by the world (Figure 3).




*Figure 3. Cultivating Wonder in Wild Learning*

### *4.3.3. Relational Learning with the World: Nature as a Co-Teacher*

As Pestalozzi (1898) stated already centuries ago, *"from the moment in which our minds receive impressions from nature, nature teaches us"* [3]. This observation points to a form of learning that emerges through direct, sensory, and relational engagement with the world. Yet, from the moment formal schooling begins, this way of learning is often no longer recognized as such (Abram, 1996; Dewey, 1938; Orr, 1994).

Wild pedagogies can be understood, in part, as a re-engagement with this relational mode of learning. At their core lies the idea of learning not only in nature, but with and from it (Jickling et al., 2018). Learning is understood as emerging through more-than-human relations, in which the other-than-human world actively participates as a teacher (Morse et al., 2018). This shifts the focus from learning about nature toward learning through relational engagement with it – toward understanding the self as part of, and in relation to, the world (Ford & Blenkinsop, 2018).

From this perspective, learning can be approached as a process of *becoming with* the world (Haraway, 2008; Taylor, 2017), in which knowledge does not reside within individuals, but emerges through encounters between human and other-than-human beings. Such learning requires an openness to the world – a willingness to listen, to be affected, and to respond (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2010). It asks for an attitude of vulnerability toward place, through which a more intimate relation with the environment can develop (Ford & Blenkinsop, 2018). In this sense, the classroom can be understood as a relational ecosystem, in which self and place co-create meaning (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2010).

Learning with nature as a co-teacher therefore does not follow from simply being outdoors. It depends on how students engage with the environment – through attentiveness, receptivity, and interaction – so that the other-than-human world can actively shape the learning process.

[3] The original quote was slightly adapted to make it more inclusive. The original quote reads: "from the moment in which his mind can receive impressions from Nature, Nature teaches him".

### *Situated Enactments: Relational Learning with Nature as a Co-Teacher*

Across the three courses, nature is actively engaged as a co-teacher through practices that invite students into attentive, embodied, and relational ways of being with the environment. In the courses, such learning with nature begins with cultivating attentiveness and receptivity toward the surroundings. Students are invited to approach the environment with openness – observing as if encountering it for the first time, and engaging through multiple senses. Practices such as mindfulness and meditation in and with the more-than-human world support this shift in attention, allowing students to slow down and become more responsive to what is present. Course 1 for example uses the practice of forest bathing to cultivate such presence[4]:

*Box 5. Cultivating attentiveness and receptivity towards other-than-human worlds through forest bathing*

***Forest bathing:*** *In course 1, on the first day, students dive into the practice of forest bathing in order to slow down and tune in with the natural world. Through a series of mindfulness exercises in and with the forest, students learn to closely observe, to listen deeply, to feel the pace of the forest, to smell it and to relate to it. (Course guide course 1, 2023)*

In this way, the environment is not approached as an object of study, but as a world to relate with. Learning emerges through noticing, sensing, and responding, as students begin to attune to the rhythms, presences, and expressions of other-than-human worlds.

[4] Forest bathing, or shinrin-yoku, is a practice that involves immersion in forest environments to improve health and well-being, associated with stress reduction, immune system strengthening and mood enhancement (Denche-Zamorano et al., 2024). The practice originated in Japan in the 1980's as a response to increased urbanization and consequential detachment from nature (Brown, 2024). Japan's Forestry Agency introduced the practice as a public health strategy – addressing both mental and physical health problems associated with modern times. While the practice originated from Japanese culture and spirituality, finding its ground in Buddhism and Shinto, over the last decades forest bathing has been adopted by many Western countries as a way of nature (re)connection and mental health practice (Paletto et al., 2024).

Beyond attentive observation, the courses invite students to engage with the environment through embodied and more-than-human perspectives. As described in earlier sections, practices such as the council of all beings (Box 2) and tracking (Box 3) support students in moving beyond a solely human-centered way of perceiving. In course 3 in particular, students engage in activities that invite them to relate physically and sensorially to the environment in different ways. Observations describe how students begin to experience the forest not only as something they move through, but as something they are part of:

*“Barefoot we ran and played in and with the forest. Using the fox walk we sensed the environment with our toes. We seemed to become really part of the forest. Not only seeing it, but smelling, feeling, hearing and tasting it as well.”* (Notes course 3, 2021)

Such practices do not aim to represent other-than-human beings accurately, but to shift how students perceive and relate. By engaging the body and senses, students open themselves to being affected by the environment in new ways.

Extended engagements with the environment further deepen this relational learning. Solo explorations and vision quests create conditions in which students spend prolonged time with the natural world, often without guidance or specific tasks. Reflecting on these experiences, students describe how they feel to become part of nature:

*"Students share experiences of slowing down, of carefully listening, of sensing, of hearing, of connection, of being part of nature. Most students went barefoot and off the tracks with a slow fox walk pace. Some even felt the urge to go naked (and did so). In almost all the stories I could hear how slowing down, being all alone and having nothing else to think about than just being in nature for seven hours, allowed participants to come very close to nature. For most closer than they’d ever been."* (Notes course 3, 2021)

Students also describe how such experiences shift their sense of separation:

*"Many stories [of students sharing their experiences of the solo vision quest in nature] show how being so close to nature makes the students feel*

*accompanied by so many other beings and thus not alone at all. Stories show how by surrendering to nature, the natural world accepted them as being part of it. They noticed the birds coming closer and the deer and wild boar not being scared by their presence."* (Notes course 3, 2021)

In these moments, learning is not directed or explained, but emerges through sustained presence and engagement. The other-than-human world participates in shaping experience, perception, and meaning in ways that cannot be predetermined. Learning with nature as a co-teacher thus cannot be prescribed or controlled. Educators can create opportunities for students to listen, to attend, and to engage, but what is learned, and how, emerges through the specific relations that take shape in each encounter. Across the courses, practices that cultivate attentive receptivity and that invite engagement beyond the human perspective appear particularly important in this regard. Together, they open space for a mode of learning in which students become responsive to the world and, in doing so, allow themselves to be taught by it (Figure 4).

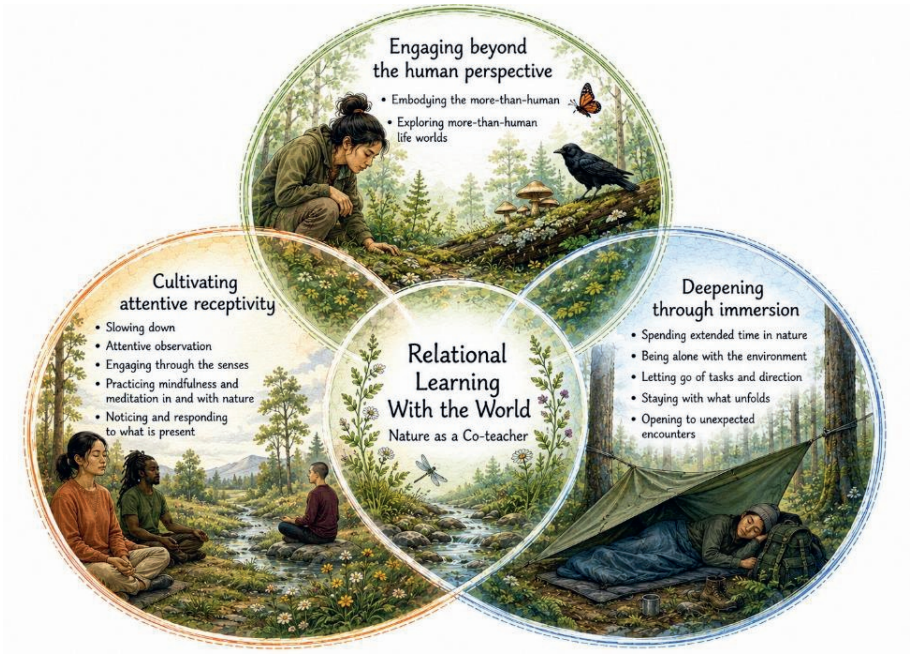



*Figure 4. Situated Enactment of Relational Learning with the World: Nature as a Co-Teacher*

### *4.3.4. Disruptive Learning for the World*

Within wild pedagogies, learning is understood not only as relational and transformative, but also as inherently disruptive. As Morse et al. (2018) argue, wild pedagogies seek to unsettle dominant assumptions in education by questioning established structures of authority, control, and predictability. In this sense, they resonate with what Wals (2019) describes as *transgressive learning*: forms of learning that challenge and interrupt normalized patterns of unsustainability.

This disruption operates at multiple, interconnected levels. At an institutional level, it involves rethinking the organization and purpose of education itself – moving beyond standardized, outcome-driven models toward more open, relational, and care-full approaches. As Geerts and Carstens (2021) suggest, such shifts can also be understood as attempts to break with the capitalist logics that shape contemporary education, opening space for alternative ways of relating to knowledge, learning, and the world.

At the same time, disruption is not only structural, but also experiential. Students may encounter moments that unsettle habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and relating. Such experiences often involve a degree of discomfort, as they invite students to move beyond familiar frameworks and to engage with uncertainty, vulnerability, and the unknown. It is precisely in this space – just beyond what feels comfortable yet still held within supportive conditions – that possibilities for change can emerge, opening a reconsideration of one's place in the world and one's relations with others – human and other-than-human alike (Wals, 2019). In this sense, learning becomes an existentially transformative practice.

Wild pedagogies thus offer not only alternative educational practices, but also a reorientation of how learning itself is understood. By loosening control, embracing uncertainty, and allowing space for spontaneity and the unexpected, they create conditions in which different ways of knowing and being can emerge, including other-than-human perspectives and a shift away from human-centered understandings of the world. In this sense, the 'wild' in wild pedagogies can be understood as a commitment to doing education differently – reworking dominant practices toward more relational, inclusive,

and care-full forms of learning. This involves not only reconfiguring educational structures, but also disrupting how we understand ourselves as learners and as beings in the world, opening possibilities to reconnect with the world in ways that foster a sense of belonging, responsibility, and care.

### *Situated Enactments: Disruptive Learning for the World*

Across the three courses, disruption becomes visible both in how learning is organized and in how students are invited to engage with themselves and the world. All courses depart from what is commonly recognized as academic education by moving learning outside the classroom and into direct, embodied engagement with the natural environment. Rather than focusing on learning *about* the world, students are invited to learn *in, with, through,* and *for* it – through sensory experience, relational engagement, and reflection on their own place within it. In doing so, the courses challenge normalized assumptions about what counts as knowledge, where learning takes place, and how it unfolds.

At the same time, disruption is enacted on a personal level through experiences that invite students into processes of transformation. This intention is reflected in the learning aims formulated in the course guides, which emphasize shifts in how students understand nature, themselves, and their relations with the world:

*We aim to provide students with new perspectives on nature and on themselves in the world, and reflect together on the role of humans in nature.* (Course guide course 1, 2023)

*The relational learning approach in which theory and practice are combined, may lead to a suite of theoretical and practical gains for participating students in their further studies and careers, including: […] a 'wholesome', more holistic and de-romanticized understanding of nature; a deconstruction of the basic human-nature divide that often underpins the destruction of nature; an increased ability to accommodate multiple ontologies; […]* (Course guide course 2, 2023)

*The course takes an experiential, place-based, relational approach to learning, where students are invited to explore their own place in nature as*

*part of a community of life and how this embodied experience may benefit sustainability and personal leadership. Students will develop their own perspective on what relationality can mean in the light of environmental and societal challenges. The course also explores cultural practices that help to sustain a felt emphatic connection in the face of insecurities and losses related to unsustainability.* (Course guide course 3, 2022)

Across the courses, learning is approached as a process that may unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions, including the human–nature divide, and open space for more relational and plural ways of knowing and being.

Such transformation is often facilitated through experiences that involve a degree of discomfort. Many of the practices invite students to move beyond familiar routines and certainties, asking them to engage with uncertainty, vulnerability, and unfamiliar situations. The solo vision quest (Box 4), for example, places students alone in an unfamiliar natural environment for an extended period without food or water. Initial experiences of restlessness, fear, or discomfort gradually give way to a different mode of being, in which students begin to slow down, let go of expectations, and relate more openly to their surroundings. From my notes (course 3, 2021) I read:

*"...stories show how slowing down and having true attention for the surroundings, letting the senses do the work and not worry about time, food or anything else, allows the students to truly connect to the natural world"*

Here, discomfort does not function as an end in itself, but as a threshold through which habitual patterns can be loosened, allowing different ways of relating to emerge.

Alongside such immersive experiences, the courses also include practices that invite critical reflection on dominant ways of understanding the world. Activities such as the deep time walk[5], practiced in courses 1 and 3, situate human existence within the vast timescale of Earth's history, prompting students to reflect on the relatively recent yet profound impact of human

[5] The deep time walk was originally designed by Stephan Harding in co-ordination with geologist Sergio Maraschin at Schumacher College (Devon) and has been embraced and adapted by practitioners such as Joanna Macy.

activity on the planet (Box 6). These experiences challenge anthropocentric perspectives and invite reconsideration of human responsibility within a more-than-human world.

*Box 6. Challenging anthropocentric perspectives through the deep time walk.*

***Deep time walk:*** *[…] we went on a deep time walk. 4,7 km through 4,7 billion years of time the Earth's existence. Every step traveling a million years through time. Only about half way, the first life forms started emerging. Only in the last centimeters of the last step, human beings came into existence. We sat down next to a tree branch of about a meter we laid down on the path, representing the time that all our human history happened. It made us reflect on the insignificance of human beings in the world, though their persuasive presence. We talked about the arrogance we have as human beings to think we can own and rule this world that is carrying us and that has been here so much longer than we do. That we dare to destroy so much of its being and all life that it is carrying in just that split second of our existence. It made us feel small, humble, but also angry, sad and desperate. (Notes course 3, 2021)*

Reflection is further deepened through a range of practices that engage students emotionally as well as cognitively. Across all courses, students are invited to reflect on their own relations with the world through writing, dialogue, and contemplative practices. In course 3 in particular, this includes engaging with emotions such as grief, fear, and anger in relation to ecological crises, inspired by practices such as Joanna Macy's Work That Reconnects[6]. These experiences create space for students to not only understand but also feel their connection to the world and the challenges it faces. My reflective notes (course 3, 2021) of such a session read:

*"We had a very emotional, moving but beautiful session today on 'honoring the pain'. […] we expressed and embodied all the despair, the fear, the sadness and the anger toward all that is happening in the world. All the*

[6] The Work that Reconnects refers all work by Joanna Macy, originating in the 1970's until present day. Most cursory inspiration originates from her books *Coming back to Life* (Macy & Brown, 2014) and *Active Hope* (Macy & Johnstone, 2012).

*tears that came were acknowledged and carried by the group. It became so clear how much all that is going on in the world touches us, how it makes us feel so angry, desperate, scared and deeply sad and how that is affecting our lives. And that this is so clearly a shared feeling, a shared experience that we feel so lonely in nonetheless. A loneliness that feeds hopelessness. The sharing circle helped us not to reason from fear, despair, anger and sadness, but to turn it around into courage, longing, passion and love. It was amazing to experience how empowering and connecting it can be to turn despair into active hope."*

In these moments, disruption becomes not only a process of unsettling, but also of reorienting. Experiences of discomfort, uncertainty, and emotional exposure are held within collective and supportive contexts, allowing them to transform into shared understanding, connection, and a sense of agency. Macy and Johnstone (2012) describe such a movement as cultivating *active hope*, where engaging with difficult emotions in relation to the state of the world is understood as a necessary step toward reconnecting with what matters. Rather than leading to paralysis, this process becomes a grounded and relational form of hope that emerges through acknowledging pain, staying present with it, and moving toward meaningful response.

Across the courses, disruptive learning thus takes shape as a relational process of unsettling and reconfiguring how students understand themselves and their place in the world. It involves moving beyond familiar ways of thinking, engaging with the world in more open and vulnerable ways, and allowing these encounters to reshape one's perspectives and commitments. In this sense, disruption is not only about breaking with what is, but also about opening space for new ways of relating, grounded in connection, responsibility, and care. As such, disruptive learning becomes a pathway through which students are invited to engage with the challenges of the world not from a place of detachment, but from a felt sense of involvement and active hope (Figure 5).

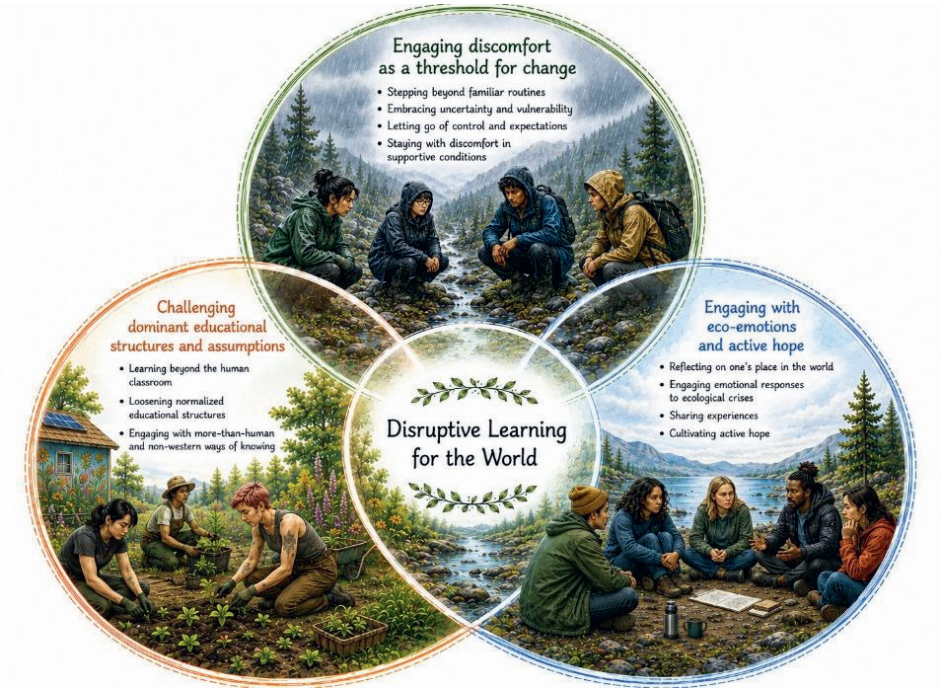



*Figure 5. Enacting Disruptive Learning for the World*

### *Integrating Dimensions as Relational Configurations*

Bringing these explorative areas together, wild pedagogies in higher education can be understood as emerging through a set of ongoing, interrelated practices rather than as separate pedagogical dimensions. Across the courses, practices such as engaging the senses, attentive observation, embodying other-than-human perspectives, spending extended time with the natural world, and creating shared practices of care continuously shape how learning unfolds. These practices do not belong to a single dimension, but contribute simultaneously to multiple relational configurations.

Through sensory engagement and attentive observation, students begin to attune to the more-than-human world, contributing both to the formation of wild learning spaces and to learning with nature as a co-teacher. Practices that invite embodiment of other-than-human perspectives not only deepen relational engagement with the world, but also open space for moments of wonder and for disrupting human-centered ways of knowing. Similarly,

extended time in and with nature – through solo experiences or overnight stays – allows curiosity to deepen into wonder, while also creating conditions for transformative and, at times, disruptive experiences to emerge. Throughout these processes, shared practices of care form the relational ground that makes such openness, vulnerability, and transformation possible.

In this sense, the four explorative areas are not separate domains, but relational effects that emerge through the ongoing enactment of these practices. Together, they form a dynamic and continuous field of becoming, in which learning arises through the interplay of attention, relation, and transformation. Wild pedagogies can thus be understood as a practice-based configuration of learning, where meaning is not transmitted or predetermined, but continuously shaped through situated, embodied, and more-than-human engagement (Figure 6).




*Figure 6. Enacting Wild Pedagogies in Higher Education contexts*

## 4.4 Discussion

Analysis of literature and observations of practice have yielded a range of situated articulations of how wild pedagogies may take shape in higher education. These articulations do not stand alone, but gather into different, yet inevitably interconnected relational configurations that together speak to four explorative areas: wild and caring learning spaces; learning from curiosity and wonder; relational learning with the world; and disruptive learning for the world. Rather than functioning as criteria, prescriptions, or fixed guidelines, these configurations can be understood as sensitizing orientations and practice-based invitations that may support educators in rethinking and reconfiguring educational practice. In this sense, they offer a more grounded sense of how theoretical understandings of wild pedagogies might unfold in lived educational contexts.

Importantly, these articulations also point to the role of the educator. While wild pedagogies emphasize learning in, with, through and for the more-than-human world, the human educator remains an essential participant in shaping the conditions under which such learning can emerge. Creating learning environments in which curiosity, deep wonder, relationality, and disruption can take shape requires specific eco-pedagogical sensitivities and capacities – such as attentiveness, responsiveness, and the ability to hold space for uncertainty and vulnerability. These are not qualities that are typically foregrounded in conventional teacher education. Further research is therefore needed to better understand what such capacities entail, how they develop in practice, and how they might be nurtured within educational contexts.

The question of what constitutes a ‘wild’ learning space also invites further exploration. In this chapter, wild learning spaces are primarily engaged as outdoor environments. However, it remains an open and important question to what extent and in what ways wild pedagogies might also be enacted in indoor or hybrid learning environments. This is particularly relevant in light of critiques that associate ‘wildness’ with remote or pristine nature, often accessible only to privileged groups (Rose & Paisley, 2012). As this study suggests, ‘wild’ need not refer to untouched wilderness, but can instead be understood as a quality of openness, spontaneity, relational engagement, and a loosening of control. From this perspective, it becomes possible to imagine

how wild pedagogical practices might also emerge within more accessible, everyday, or even indoor environments, as previously suggested by Weston (2004).

In a time marked by profound socio-ecological challenges, wild pedagogies offer one pathway among many for rethinking education – inviting more relational, responsive, and care-full ways of learning and being in the world. As such, they can be understood not only as an educational approach, but as a call to engage differently with the world: to remain attentive, to stay with uncertainty, and to cultivate forms of learning that contribute to more caring and sustainable ways of living together on Earth.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has developed four interconnected explorative areas of wild pedagogies – wild and caring learning spaces, learning from curiosity and wonder, relational learning with the world, and disruptive learning for the world – through an iterative engagement with literature. Building on this conceptual work, it has explored how these orientations come to take shape in higher education practice. Rather than functioning as predefined categories, these areas became visible as relational configurations that emerge through situated pedagogical practices.

Across both theoretical engagement and situated practice, wild learning appears to unfold through processes that invite students into deeper forms of attentiveness, receptivity, and relational engagement with the more-than-human world. Practices that cultivate sensory awareness, attentive observation, and openness to the unexpected create conditions in which curiosity may deepen into wonder, and where learning can become personally and relationally transformative. Such processes often involve moments of discomfort, vulnerability, and uncertainty, which – when held within supportive and care-full environments – can open space for shifts in how students understand themselves and their place in the world.

At the same time, these processes cannot be reduced to specific methods or outcomes. What becomes possible depends on how pedagogical, material, and relational conditions come together in practice. This highlights the importance of educational environments that are not only open and

experiential, but also grounded in shared practices of care that make engagement, vulnerability, and transformation possible.

Taken together, the findings suggest that wild pedagogies are a way of rethinking education as a relational, more-than-human, and transformative practice. They point toward forms of learning that are less about control and transmission, and more about creating conditions in which learners can become attentive, responsive, and open to being affected by the world.

In the context of ongoing socio-ecological challenges, such reconfigurations of education are not merely desirable, but necessary. Wild pedagogies offer one pathway for engaging this challenge – inviting educators and learners to participate in more relational, care-full, and responsive ways of being and becoming with the world.



# 5

# Becoming-with the World: Wilding Pedagogies for Relational Becoming and Deep Environmental Care

*"human and more-than-human beings never* are *(...) but only* become *as they constantly emerge together"*

(Bawaka Country et al., 2013)

Abstract

This chapter examines how learning environments inspired by wild pedagogies may nourish relational becoming with the world and deep environmental care among students in higher education. Drawing on indigenous and posthuman feminist theories and scholarship on inner transformative change, it introduces relational becoming as a sensitizing concept for understanding how learners come to know, sense, and position themselves differently in relation to the world. Building on Wamsler et al. (2021)'s dimensions of inner transformative change, relational becoming is explored across five interconnected areas – awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency – reframed not as internal capacities, but as relationally constituted processes. Empirically, the chapter draws on the broader case study of three university courses inspired by wild pedagogies over three years, including walking interviews, reflective questionnaires and student essays. The findings show how wild pedagogical practices can foster heightened attentiveness to the more-than-human world, broaden perspectives on human–world relations, nurture affective and embodied forms of connection, invite reconsiderations of meaning and responsibility, and support more responsive forms of action. These dimensions emerge as interwoven and undulatory movements rather than as linear stages. Within these processes, deep environmental care appears not as a predefined outcome, but as a potentially emergent quality of becoming-with the world.

**Keywords:** wild pedagogies, relational becoming, inner transformative change, relational outdoor learning, deep environmental care

***This chapter is based on the following manuscripts under review**:*

Van Tol, R.S., Arts, K.A.J., Buijs, A.E., Vredenbregt, J. & Wals, A.E.J. (2026). Becoming with the World: Wilding Pedagogies for Relational Becoming and Deep Environmental Care. Manuscript under review at *Environmental Education Research*.

A translated and adapted version of this manuscript is in press as:

Van Tol (2026). Relationeel Worden met de Wereld via Wilde Pedagogiek: op weg naar Diepe Zorg voor de Aarde. In press with *Beleid & Maatschappij*.

The chapter was adapted from the submitted manuscripts to enhance its integration within the dissertation and improve coherence across chapters. In particular, the methodology and methods section was condensed, as the overarching methodological framework, positionality, and methods underpinning the dissertation are presented in Chapter 2. The introduction was revised to reduce overlap with the general introduction and previous chapters of the dissertation.

## 5.1 Introduction

Building on the previous chapters, which have explored how education participates in shaping human–world relations, this chapter turns more explicitly to the question of how such relations are experienced and transformed in practice. In particular, it considers how educational experiences may contribute to shifts in how learners perceive and enact their relationships with the world, opening possibilities for more attentive, responsive, and care-full ways of being with the more-than-human world.

In sustainability research, such shifts are frequently described as processes of *inner transformation*, referring to changes in values, worldviews, and identities that may support more sustainable ways of living and, in turn, more caring relations with the world (Bristow et al., 2024; Wamsler et al., 2021). Increasingly, such shifts are approached not as purely internal, but as emerging through dynamic interactions between individuals, societies, and ecological systems, often conceptualized as integrated inner–outer changes (Goldstein et al., 2025; Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021).

However, while relational dynamics are increasingly acknowledged in current research on transformation, terminology often remains situated within dualistic ontologies of inner versus outer change. Such distinctions sit uneasily with relational ontologies, which emphasize that humans are always already entangled within webs of relations that include other species, landscapes, and material processes (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008; Tynan, 2021). Rather than understanding transformation as changes within individuals situated in an external world, a relational ontology invites a perspective of transformation as an ongoing process of *becoming-with* the world, in which ways of knowing, sensing, and being take shape through encounters within the more-than-human world that is relationally constituted (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Haraway, 2008, 2016). Care for the world, in turn, emerges as deeply entangled with how we come to know, sense, and be in the world (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Tynan, 2021).

Understanding transformation as becoming-with the world shifts attention to the experiences and encounters through which people come to relate differently to the world. These processes are lived, embodied, and situated

within particular contexts (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015). Educational environments, as spaces where such encounters are intentionally organized, thus become important sites for engaging and shaping these processes of becoming (Taylor, 2017). In response, scholars in environmental and sustainability education increasingly call for pedagogies that move beyond individualistic and cognitive models of learning, and instead foster situated, embodied, and relational engagements within the more-than-human world (Biesta, 2021; Malone & Young, 2023; Wals, 2025).

Within this emerging field, wild pedagogies offer a particularly relevant approach. Rather than focusing primarily on learning *about* nature, wild pedagogies emphasize learning *in, with, through, and for* the more-than-human world through embodied, place-responsive, and experiential practices (Jickling et al., 2018). Such approaches invite learners to engage with both the 'wild' beyond the human and the intertwined 'wild' within – referring to a learning from curiosity, slowness and deep wonder that goes against normalized structures of efficiency in education (Morse et al., 2018). These qualities resonate with insights from literature on inner transformative change, which suggests that shifts in values, worldviews, and identities often emerge through embodied, affective, and sometimes unsettling experiences that challenge habitual ways of relating to the world (Wamsler et al., 2021; Woiwode et al., 2021). Seen from this perspective, the 'wild' in wild pedagogies can be understood as opening space for such experiences. By doing so, wild pedagogies create conditions in which processes of relational becoming and deep environmental care may unfold.

Although wild pedagogies are receiving growing attention in higher education research (Arts et al., 2025; Krigstin et al., 2023; van Tol & Wals, 2025), empirical studies examining how such approaches shape students' lived experiences and processes of becoming and care are still limited. This study addresses this gap by examining three university courses inspired by wild pedagogies at Wageningen University (the Netherlands) over a three-year period (2021–2023).

Drawing on the collective case study design that was explained in Chapter 2, the study combines participatory immersion, walking interviews, reflective questionnaires, and student essays to explore how students experience

learning and becoming in these contexts. To engage these experiences analytically, the study employs *relational becoming* as a sensitizing concept, foregrounding how learning unfolds through evolving relationships between learners, peers, and the more-than-human world. Building on Wamsler et al. (2021)'s work on inner transformation, relational becoming is approached as unfolding across five interconnected dimensions of awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency in relation to the more-than-human world. Rather than residing within individuals, these dimensions are understood as relationally constituted and continuously emerging through encounters within entangled human and other-than-human worlds.

To explore processes of relational becoming among higher education students engaged in wild learning approaches, the guiding research question for this chapter is: *Whether and how do wild pedagogies-inspired learning environments shape processes of relational becoming among higher education students?*

Engaging with this question, the remainder of the chapter unfolds through a relational engagement with both theory and empirical material. Conceptual reflections on inner transformation and relational becoming are brought into conversation with methodological considerations and students' lived experiences. Through this iterative process, patterns of relational becoming emerge across interconnected dimensions, which are then further reflected upon in relation to wild pedagogies and the cultivation of deep environmental care in higher education.

## 5.2 On Relational Becoming and Deep Environmental Care

Building on the relational orientation of wild pedagogies outlined in previous chapters, and the relational approach to inner transformative change presented in the introduction of this chapter, the concept of relational becoming is brought forward as a sensitizing lens for understanding how wild learning experiences may contribute to shifts in how students relate to and care for the more-than-human world. As such, relational becoming refers to the ongoing and situated process through which people come to know, sense, and position themselves in relation to the more-than-human world. In this view, transformation is not located within individuals, but unfolds through the relations that constitute them (Barad, 2007).

From this perspective, shifts in how learners come to relate to the world are inseparable from shifts in how they come to care. Rather than emerging as an external outcome, care is understood as taking shape within these evolving relations, as ways of knowing, sensing, and being with the world are reconfigured through experience (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Tynan, 2021). Relational becoming thus offers a way to reinterpret existing insights on transformative change and environmental care through a relational lens, allowing attention to how such shifts unfold in practice.

To explore these dynamics, five interrelated dimensions, derived from theory on inner transformative change (Wamsler et al., 2021), are engaged as sensitizing orientations of relational becoming: awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency. However, rather than treating these dimensions as internal transformative capacities within individuals, they are approached as relationally constituted processes that emerge through situated encounters within more-than-human worlds. As such, they offer a way of attending to how shifts in perception, meaning-making, and action unfold across experiences with wild learning.

Loosely structuring the analysis along these dimensions makes it possible to trace movements in perception (awareness), engagement with diverse ways of knowing (insight), affective and embodied relations with the world (connection), reflections on values and responsibilities (purpose), and enacted responses within these relations (agency). As sensitizing orientations, they do not function as fixed categories or linear stages, but as heuristic entry points that render visible the multidimensional and evolving nature of relational becoming in practice.

Within this framing, deep environmental care is approached as a potentially emergent quality of relational becoming, taking shape through how students come to perceive, relate, and respond within more-than-human worlds through moving encounters in wild learning environments. As these relational processes unfold, care may begin to manifest in how learners attend to their surroundings, engage with other beings, and respond to the conditions of shared existence (Malone & Young, 2023).

Rather than an individual moral choice, deep environmental care is thus understood as a situated and internally motivated practice of attending and responding to the needs, vulnerabilities, and interdependencies that constitute the shared existence of which humans are part (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Tynan, 2021). From this perspective, care is not external to knowledge or action, but entangled with how beings come to know, sense, and relate within the world. In this sense, care becomes *deep* not through intensification, but through its inseparability from relational ways of knowing, sensing, and being with the world.

The following sections build on this conceptual framing to explore how processes of relational becoming – and the ways in which care may emerge within them – can be traced empirically in higher education contexts inspired by wild pedagogies.

## 5.3 Methodology and Methods

This chapter builds on the relational methodological and positional framework outlined in Chapter 2. Within that broader framework, the present chapter focuses specifically on how students experience processes of relational becoming and how deep environmental care may emerge through engagement with wild pedagogies in higher education.

In line with this chapter's interest in lived experiences of becoming, the most central methods are walking interviews, reflective questionnaires, reflective essays, and participatory immersion. Together, these methods make it possible to engage both the immediacy of embodied learning encounters and the ways in which students later articulate, interpret, and reconfigure those experiences. Walking interviews were particularly important for this chapter, as they enabled participants to revisit course locations and reflect on their experiences through place-responsive, embodied conversation. Reflective questionnaires and essays provided additional insight into how students made sense of shifts in awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency over time, while participatory immersion offered contextual and experiential grounding for interpreting these processes.

Analysis in this chapter was guided by the five dimensions of relational becoming – awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency – as

sensitizing orientations. These dimensions, introduced earlier in this chapter, did not function as fixed categories, but as heuristic entry points for tracing how students described shifts in how they perceived, related to, and responded within more-than-human worlds. Through an iterative engagement with interview material, reflective writings, and field notes, the analysis attends to how relational becoming unfolded across these dimensions, and how deep environmental care may be understood as potentially emerging within such processes.

## 5.4 Relational Becoming in Practice: Emerging Pathways of Deep Environmental Care



*Figure 7. Student drawing included in a reflection essay, illustrating an experience of relational engagement with the more-than-human world during one of the studied courses.*

Figure 7 shows a student's drawing as part of her reflective essay, depicting herself tending a fire while surrounded by other-than-human elements. The image illustrates how moments of learning in wild pedagogies can invite students to attune to the more-than-human world and to experience themselves as part of it. Similar reflections were shared by many students and point toward processes of relational becoming through which more attentive, responsive, and care-full ways of relating to the world may begin to emerge.

The following sections explore these experiences through the five sensitizing dimensions of relational becoming that were introduced before – awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency – which served as an initial analytical orientation. While presented separately for analytical clarity, students' reflections suggest that these dimensions unfold as an ongoing and non-linear process in which they frequently overlap, reinforce one another, and together create conditions in which deep environmental care may take shape.

### *(1) Awareness*

Many students describe relational becoming as beginning with becoming aware of what they stand in relation to. Through attentive observation, wonder, and relational self-reflection, students describe entering a more open and receptive state of being that enables further encounters with wild pedagogies.

The courses invite students to spend time in natural environments and observe their surroundings closely. Students frequently describe how engaging with wild pedagogies heightened their environmental attentiveness. By slowing down and engaging their senses, they began noticing aspects of their surroundings that previously went unnoticed, often accompanied by feelings of curiosity, fascination, and wonder toward the more-than-human world:

*"I already notice how different I look, feel, and hear around me when, for example, cycling from one place to another (…) I notice things <now that I did not notice in the past> and much more intense than before this week."* (Resp. 1, RQ WP 2023)

In several cases, such heightened attentiveness also prompted deep relational self-reflection on one's place within the living world:

*"During the summer course I have truly embodied wild perspectives for the first time in my life. I was quite surprised by this discovery, since I always thought I already had a close connection to so-called "nature". Only during the workshops (…) I realized that, while I do have a close connection with nature compared to my family and most of my friends, I never tried to see the world from different, non-human, perspectives. I feel this experience will be very meaningful in my further studies and in my life."* (RE 2, WP 2023)

Although awareness does not necessarily form the starting point of relational becoming, increased attentiveness often appears to facilitate subsequent shifts in perspectives, relationships, and reflections on values and behavior that underly deep environmental care.

### *(2) Insight*

Apart from changes in awareness, receptivity and sensitivity towards the more-than-human world, relational becoming involves broadening perspectives and gaining new insights into human–other-than-human relations and the self as a relational being. Students describe how encounters with different epistemological approaches and embodied experiences in nature challenge familiar ways of thinking and invite alternative understandings of knowledge and human–nature relations.

Across the courses, students engage with diverse forms of knowledge and knowing, including indigenous perspectives and embodied learning practices. Such encounters often prompted students to reconsider the dominance of Western scientific perspectives within their education:

*"A lot of the viewpoints held by modern researchers were challenged, and also made me rethink some concepts. (…) I used to think that there is an empirical truth. (…) I increasingly feel that ontological pluralism is a more appropriate way of describing the world."* (Resp. 4 , RQ AoBNS 2022)

Embodied learning experiences in and with nature further deepened students' understanding of theoretical concepts. Activities such as shelter building and weaving enabled students to embody theory and engage with it more deeply:

*"I experienced a different type of learning when involved in outdoor experiences, especially when involved in making a shelter and in weaving, where the readings took a completely new meaning and I could really experience what it means to dwell, what it means to co-create with other-than-human entities for myself. (…) I think I went deeper than ever before in learning, through practical and relational learning in a community of people, outside."* (Resp. 16, RQ AoBNS 2023)

Through these encounters, students describe gaining new perspectives on human–nature relations. While many were already familiar with the idea that humans are part of nature, experiential learning often transformed this from an abstract concept into a lived realization:

*"At first, I didn't see why it would be beneficial to embody a tree or a river, but since I am open for new things, I tried. (…) In the session on nature images, different perspectives on the human-nature relationship were discussed. I had heard the story before, but because of the outdoor setting and the meditation exercise we did afterwards, it came to me differently. (…) We experienced how it feels to be in the image of humans and nature as one (…). I wouldn't say this changed me completely, but it did make me think about it differently than before."* (RE 4, WP 2021)

Finally, some experiences also prompted deeper insights into the self as relational being:

*" 'The solo nature quest' changed my perception of myself as a social being in relation to nature. (…) During the nature quest, it suddenly crossed my mind that my personality was not at all important in this moment. The trees and plants would not be interested in that, nor judge me in any way. It felt like my constructed self was insignificant at that moment, and I could allow myself to just be a 'being'."* (Resp. 7, RCFS 2021)

These shifts in understanding suggest that insight is not only cognitive, but relational: students come to see themselves and the world differently, thereby creating important conditions for the emergence of deep environmental care.

### *(3) Connection*

*"For me, the week has been transformative because I feel more connected on three levels: to the Earth, to the rest of us people and to myself."* (RE 1, RCFS 2023)

Students frequently described experiences of connection emerging through engagement with wild pedagogies. As illustrated above, these experiences often unfolded across three interconnected dimensions: connection to the self, to other people, and to the more-than-human world.

Several students described how time spent in natural environments and reflective course activities strengthened their connection to themselves, including their intuition from deep within:

*"The experiences in the forest enabled me to connect to my own wisdom again. I literally could hear my own thoughts, wishes and intuition better. Those things I knew already when I was a child, but kind of seemed to have forgotten throughout my education. I could listen to that voice again."* (RE 1, RCFS 2023)

Students also described how shared outdoor experiences and collective reflection fostered a sense of connection with others in the group, often through a shared attentiveness to the more-than-human world:

*"The essence for me, I think, was that it felt deeply connecting, also to the people. Yes, to nature, but also, and especially, to the people. It made me realize that engaging with these kinds of things is actually fundamental to so many people."* (WI 2, WP 2022)

At the same time, students described a deepened sense of connection beyond the human world, often experienced through moments of quiet presence within that world:

*"In the 'Sit spot', I really connected with nature since a very long time. (...) As if the forest welcomed me like an old friend. We were not up to date about the precise things going on within the other, but there was a connection that made us feel peaceful."* (Resp. 10, RQ AoBNS 2023)

Such experiences of connection were frequently accompanied by strong emotions. Alongside feelings of care and belonging, some students also

encountered eco-emotions such as grief or despair in relation to ecological destruction. Students emphasized that these emotions became more manageable when shared collectively within the learning community:

*"I experienced that grief is a group emotion and it flows way better when it is shared amongst many bodies instead of one."* (Resp. 2, RCFS 2023)

Together, these experiences illustrate how relational learning in wild pedagogies can cultivate multiple forms of connection – to oneself, to others, and to the more-than-human world – while also opening space for emotional engagement with ecological realities. In this way, connection appears as a particularly important dimension through which deep environmental care may begin to emerge: not as abstract concern, but as a felt and embodied way of being with the world.

### *(4) Purpose*

Relational awareness, new insights, and strengthened connections often prompted students to reconsider their values, sense of meaning, and future orientation. Many described a renewed desire for deeper relationships with both human and more-than-human worlds, and expressed intentions to integrate nature more meaningfully into their lives:

*"This course has awoken a fire in my heart again (...) As a kid, I used to be outside a lot. Since I live on my own, I don't have a garden anymore and don't spend much time outside. However, with this course, I have come to appreciate the space that I do have and enjoy it in a similar way that I used to as a kid. (...) through this course, I came to appreciate and value nature more."* (Resp. 3, RQ AoBNS 2021)

Students' reflections also reveal engagement with broader existential questions about living in a world facing ecological crises. Encounters with eco-emotions and relational reflection sometimes led to a renewed sense of responsibility toward the more-than-human world:

*"The 'Deep Time Walk' really showed me that we will go extinct anyways, whether it is with this climate crisis or later. (...) All we can do is hold each other in all of it. But we do have a responsibility to the more-than-human*

*world to leave the best world possible for every being living with us and coming after us."* (Resp. 6, RQ WP 2023)

These reflections suggest that purpose is not only about personal meaning or direction, but about how learners begin to situate themselves ethically within shared worlds. In this sense, deep environmental care becomes visible in how students reconsider what matters, what they are responsible to, and how they wish to live in relation to the more-than-human world.

### *(5) Agency*

Agency represents how relational awareness, broadened insights, strengthened connections and renewed purposes translate into changes in attitudes, choices, and actions towards the self, other humans and the more-than-human world. While not all students described behavioral change, many reflected on how the courses influenced their everyday practices and future aspirations.

Some students described incorporating relational awareness into their daily lives, for example by spending more time in natural environments or engaging with nature more attentively:

*"Over the weeks, I have noticed how I have personally changed. I spend more time in my own garden and in the forest, carefully listening to the sounds I hear, enjoying my child-like curiosity. After this year, I will take a break from university in which my plan is to be as much outdoors as possible."* (RE 3, WP 2023)

For others, the experiences shaped broader life choices, including future study or career directions:

*"All the experiences during the week, that I have cultivated through my internship and now also in my thesis, have made it very clear for me that I want to pursue a career that relates to what I have experienced here."* (WI 5, RCFS 2022)

Several students also described gaining confidence and competence in engaging with the natural world through practical skills learned in the courses:

*"Through practicing survival skills, like building shelter, foraging and making fire, I feel more confident to be outside and go for a wild camping trip for instance. I know (more than before) about how to make use of the natural environment. I received more trust in the resilience and power of nature, which is automatically reflected on myself as a human being."* (Resp. 5, RQ AoBNS 2021)

Finally, some students described how shared experiences in the courses fostered a renewed sense of hope and collective empowerment in the face of ecological crises:

*"This course helped me gaining hope toward human kind. Seeing how everyone was helpful and open just melted my heart. The moments we spent around the fire, building it together and helping each other while telling stories made me feel part of a big community. I finally stopped feeling lonely."* (Resp. 5, RQ WP 2023)

Together, these reflections illustrate how relational learning experiences can translate into shifts in everyday practices, life orientations, and feelings of agency in responding to environmental challenges. Here, deep environmental care becomes visible not only in what students feel or value, but in how they begin to act, choose, and orient themselves differently within more-than-human worlds.

### *Undulatory Fields of Relational Becoming and Emerging Environmental Care*

Rather than appearing as separate or sequential dimensions, awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency emerged in the analysis as deeply entangled movements within processes of relational becoming (Figure 8). Approached as sensitizing orientations, these dimensions did not function as discrete analytical categories, but as interwoven expressions of how students come to perceive, relate, and respond within more-than-human worlds. Echoing this interwoven nature, students' reflections further suggest that relational becoming unfolds not as a linear progression towards a stable state, but as an ongoing and fluctuating process. Participants describe becoming-with the world as moving in waves – an undulatory movement that intensifies or recedes depending on context, experience, and the relations in which they are immersed.

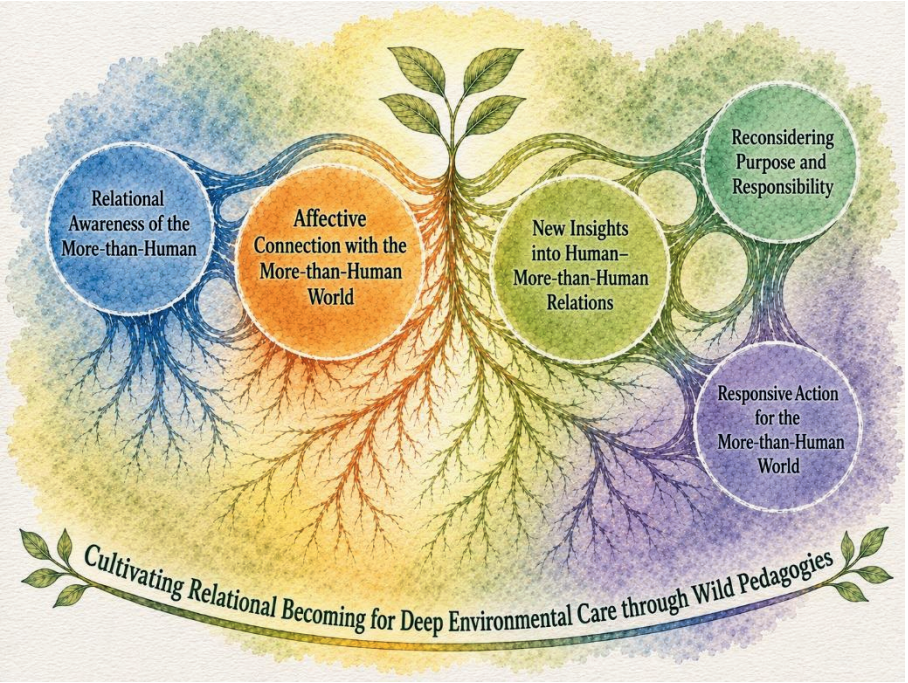



*Figure 8. Interwoven and undulatory movements of relational becoming across five dimensions, illustrating their co-occurrence, interconnectedness and relative abundance in the dataset. Circle size represents the relative abundance of each dimension, while connecting lines indicate co-occurrences and interconnectedness. The spatial configuration reflects the strength of their associations. The connected root system represents how deep environmental care emerges from all dimensions of relational becoming together.*

Within this movement, different dimensions come to the foreground at different moments, while remaining continuously connected. Engagement with wild pedagogies often amplified moments of awareness, connection, and reflection, yet students rarely described these shifts as definitive transformations. Rather, they appeared as part of a broader, continuing process:

*"The course cultivated even more of what I already had inside me."* (Resp. 7, RQ WP 2023)

As the analysis progressed, the initial sensitizing orientations were further specified in relation to the empirical material. Rather than remaining abstract descriptors, they were articulated in ways that more closely reflect how students themselves described their experiences. This resulted in a shift

toward more relational and situated formulations (Figure 8), making explicit how each dimension is lived and expressed in relation to more-than-human worlds. These refinements do not indicate a change in the underlying dimensions, but a deepening of their meaning.

A code co-occurrence analysis in Atlas.ti (version 24.1.1) further illustrates this interrelatedness, showing that the dimensions frequently appear together in students' reflections (Figure 8). In terms of relative coding abundance, insight and connection appear most prominent, suggesting that students most often articulated their experiences in terms of shifting perspectives and deepening relationships. These dimensions also showed the strongest interrelations with the others, indicating that changes in how students understand the world are closely tied to how they feel connected within it.

At the same time, students emphasized how these relational capacities are strongly influenced by context. Many described finding it easier to remain attentive, connected, and responsive when immersed in natural environments or within supportive learning communities, while sustaining these ways of being within dominant societal structures proved more challenging:

*"I noticed that I find it very hard to integrate the way of living that we experienced during the week, in the system we live in... It is just so different and that makes it hard."* (Resp. 1, RQ RCFS 2023)

These reflections suggest that relational becoming is not a permanent achievement, but a process that requires ongoing cultivation. The capacity to remain open, attentive, and relational appears to depend on continued engagement with environments and practices that support such ways of being:

*"I feel most at peace and most true to my essence when I choose to let go and just let myself be a natural being (...) At the same time, I need reminders to feel that this is okay and not let other societies constructions take me over."* (Resp. 3, RQ RCFS 2021)

Taken together, these patterns suggest that relational becoming unfolds as a dynamic, context-dependent, and undulatory process rather than a linear progression through discrete stages. From this perspective, deep environmental care cannot be located in any single dimension. Instead, it

may be understood as emerging through the shifting interplay of becoming more attentive to the world, engaging with new ways of knowing, experiencing affective and embodied connections, reconsidering one's place and responsibilities, and responding more consciously within these relations (Figure 8).

In this sense, deep environmental care appears not as a fixed outcome, but as a relational quality that moves with these processes of becoming – intensifying in moments where these dimensions come into closer alignment, and receding when such relations are disrupted or harder to sustain. The relative prominence and configuration of these dimensions thus vary across contexts, pointing to the situated and evolving nature of both relational becoming and the forms of care that may arise through it.

## 5.5 Discussion

This chapter set out to explore how higher education inspired by wild pedagogies can shape students' relational becoming with the more-than-human world to nourish deep environmental care. Building on Wamsler et al. (2021)'s dimensions of inner transformative change – awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency – but reframing them through a relational lens, relational becoming was conceptualized as an undulatory movement across these five dimensions. Rather than approaching them as personal transformative capacities, they were understood as relationally constituted and interwoven processes of becoming with the world.

As the analysis progressed, these dimensions were further specified and deepened to more closely reflect students' lived experiences. As such, they make visible how shifts in perception, meaning-making, and action unfold through embodied and affective encounters within the more-than-human world (Figure 8). This reframing not only grounds the analytical framework more firmly in empirical experience and relational ontology, but also highlights how these interwoven movements may give rise to more caring and responsive ways of being with the world, opening a conceptual pathway to understanding the emergence of deep environmental care.

### *Relational Becoming as Undulatory and Interwoven Movement of Transformation*

Students' experiences point to fundamental shifts in how they perceive, relate to, and act within the world through engagement with wild pedagogies. They describe heightened attentiveness to the more-than-human world, expanded perspectives through embodied and plural ways of knowing, strengthened relationships with self, others, and more-than-human nature, renewed reflections on values and meaning, and, in some cases, shifts in everyday practices or future aspirations. Rather than unfolding as linear or accumulative stages, these shifts emerge as mutually reinforcing movements of becoming-with the world. In this sense, the findings resonate with Ingold (2011a)'s notion of learning as correspondence, where knowing arises through ongoing engagement with the world rather than through the accumulation of abstract knowledge.

Extending existing work on inner transformative change, the findings suggest that such processes are not only relationally constituted but also temporally fluid. Relational becoming appears as an undulatory movement that intensifies or recedes depending on the contexts and relations in which learners are embedded. While wild pedagogical environments often amplify moments of attentiveness, connection, and reflection, students frequently describe how these orientations become more difficult to sustain within dominant societal structures. Relational becoming, then, does not settle into a stable state, but remains an ongoing process that requires continued cultivation and supportive relational conditions. This has important implications for how transformative learning is understood: not as a lasting internal shift, but as something that is continuously enacted, supported, and at times constrained by the environments in which learners move.

### *Deep Environmental Care as Emergent within Relational Becoming*

Within this framework, environmental care can be understood as an emergent quality of relational becoming, nourished through the interplay of its multiple dimensions. The findings suggest that care does not reside in any single dimension, but takes shape through becoming more attentive to the world, engaging with diverse ways of knowing, experiencing affective and embodied connections, reconsidering one's place and responsibilities, and

responding within these relations. Care, in this sense, is not something that follows from transformation as a subsequent step, but something that unfolds within the very process of becoming-with the world.

Importantly, environmental care in this context appears as dynamic rather than stable. Moving with relational becoming, it intensifies in moments where relational dimensions come into closer alignment and may recede when such relations are disrupted or less supported. This aligns with Puig de la Bellacasa (2017)'s understanding of care as a situated and ongoing practice of attending and responding to the interdependencies that sustain shared worlds. At the same time, the findings point toward a further conceptual refinement. Care emerges here not primarily as an individual moral choice or attitudinal stance, but as a way of being with the world that is inseparable from how individuals come to know, sense, and relate within it. When relational entanglement is not only recognized but lived, care becomes embedded in the very conditions of being. Building on this insight, this chapter introduces the notion of *deep environmental care* to describe forms of care that are not externally motivated or add-on ethical commitments, but arise from, and remain inseparable from, relational ways of knowing, sensing, and being with the more-than-human world.

Wild pedagogies appear to create educational conditions in which such forms of deep care can emerge. By inviting embodied, affective, and more-than-human engagements, they enable learners to experience care not as an abstract ethical principle, but as a lived and relational orientation.

### *Relational Becoming within Broader Transformations for Sustainability*

At the same time, these findings raise questions about the broader conditions under which such relational transformations for deep environmental care can be sustained. While wild pedagogies can open spaces for alternative ways of relating, students' reflections suggest that maintaining these orientations beyond such contexts remains challenging. Dominant societal structures – often shaped by logics of separation, efficiency, and instrumentalization – can constrain the continuation of relational ways of being.

This points to a broader tension within transformative sustainability research. While increasing attention is given to inner and relational

dimensions of change, such transformations do not occur in isolation but are entangled with institutional, cultural, and socio-economic systems (Abson et al., 2017; Ives et al., 2023). From this perspective, relational becoming is both shaped by and shaping wider systems of practice. Educational interventions alone cannot sustain such shifts; they require alignment with broader transformations in how societies organize knowledge, value relations, and structure everyday life.

Wild pedagogies may therefore be understood as catalytic practices: they create embodied and experiential openings in which alternative relational configurations can be sensed, practiced, and temporarily inhabited. These experiences can nurture deep environmental care, yet their persistence depends on whether wider societal conditions allow such relational orientations to take root and endure. These findings resonate with current theories on transformative change for sustainability that state such shifts require not only changes in individual or relational experience, but also structural transformations that sustain and amplify these ways of being with the world (Ives et al., 2023).

### *Navigating Onto-Epistemological Tensions in Relational Research Encounters*

Conducting research through a relational lens raises important methodological questions. Relational and posthuman approaches challenge conventional social science assumptions that position the researcher as a detached observer extracting knowledge from independent subjects. Instead, they emphasize that knowledge emerges through situated encounters between researchers, participants, and environments (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1988). Embracing such relational ontologies in empirical research creates tensions between these theoretical commitments and established expectations regarding objectivity, distance, and methodological control.

One example of such tension in this study concerns the close involvement of the first author in the educational contexts studied. As course designer in one course and participant observer in the others, the researcher was embedded within the learning environments being studied. Within conventional research paradigms, such proximity may raise concerns about researcher

influence or confirmation bias (Langley & Klag, 2019). From a relational perspective, however, this involvement reflects the situated nature of knowledge production rather than a deviation from it (Haraway, 1988). The researcher's participation enabled close immersion in relational learning processes as they unfolded in practice. Rather than increasing the risk of 'bias', such proximity created conditions for trust and openness that allowed participants to articulate more nuanced, critical and sometimes vulnerable reflections on their experiences (Finlay, 2009). The researcher's embedded presence supported such conditions, enabling conversations that often moved beyond evaluative responses toward more reflective, ambivalent, and critical accounts of students' experiences. At the same time, reflexive practices – including transparent documentation of the researcher's roles, careful interpretation of participants' accounts, and triangulation across multiple data sources – were used to remain attentive to how these relational dynamics shaped the research process.

More broadly, engaging relational ontologies within empirical research creates ongoing methodological tensions. Traditional qualitative approaches often rely on extractive logics rooted in ontologies of separation, treating researchers, participants, and environments as distinct entities rather than recognizing their entanglement in ongoing relational processes (Gorman, 2024). Scholars working with posthuman and post-qualitative approaches have therefore called for methodological reconfigurations that better align with relational ontologies (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre, 2023).

In this study, walking interviews were used as a place-responsive and embodied research method that allowed participants to reflect on their experiences while moving through landscapes. Such methods invite attention to sensory and more-than-human dimensions of experience, enabling participants to articulate how learning unfolds through encounters with specific environments. At the same time, these methods remain oriented toward understanding human experiences. While landscapes shape the direction and atmosphere of research encounters, they do not participate in defining the aims or outcomes of the research. As such, even relational research practices may retain subtle extractive dynamics (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014).

Recognizing this asymmetry shifts the methodological conversation from questions of neutrality toward questions of care and responsibility. Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) reminds us that care is inherently asymmetrical – relations are formed between differently situated bodies, each exposed in distinct ways. Approaching the landscape as a participant rather than a backdrop can cultivate forms of attentiveness and responsibility that gradually deepen this relation, even if extractive dynamics persist in the short term. What matters, then, is not the elimination of asymmetry – which is neither possible nor necessarily desirable – but how researchers remain accountable within it. This tension reveals an unresolved ethical challenge within relational and more-than-human methodologies, pointing toward the need for continued inquiry into how research encounters can enact care without presuming symmetry or purity.

Future research may continue exploring methodological approaches that better align with relational ontologies while maintaining empirical rigor. Place-responsive and embodied methods such as walking interviews offer promising starting points for investigating how learning unfolds through encounters with more-than-human worlds. At the same time, continued exploration is needed to better understand how relational practices can support deep care within socio-ecological systems.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined how wild pedagogies in higher education may shape students' relational becoming with and deep care for the more-than-human world. Students' experiences and reflections suggest that such pedagogies can cultivate fundamental shifts in how they perceive, relate to, and act within the world. These shifts were traced through five interwoven dimensions of relational becoming – awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and agency – which, rather than functioning as discrete stages or internal capacities, emerged as relationally constituted and mutually reinforcing movements of becoming-with the world.

Conceptually, the chapter contributes to ongoing discussions on 'inner' transformative change by reframing such processes through a relational lens.

By introducing relational becoming as a sensitizing concept, and further specifying its dimensions in relation to students' lived experiences, the chapter shows how transformation may be understood not as an internal change within individuals, but as a situated and embodied process unfolding through entangled encounters beyond the human. In doing so, it offers an empirically grounded and relationally attuned vocabulary for understanding transformative change in a more-than-human world.

The findings further suggest that deep environmental care is inextricably related to relational becoming as an emergent quality from within. Rather than as a moral choice, deep environmental care lies at the heart of relational being with the world. Instead of something located in one single dimension, it emerged as taking shape through the interplay of heightened attentiveness, shifting perspectives, affective and embodied connections, renewed senses of responsibility, and more responsive forms of action. In this sense, care becomes 'deep' through its inseparability from relational ways of knowing, sensing, and being with the world.

At the same time, relational becoming and deep environmental care do not necessarily represent stable or lasting achievements. Rather, they unfold as ongoing, undulatory, and context-dependent processes that intensify or recede depending on the relations and conditions in which students find themselves. While wild pedagogical experiences often strengthened relational capacities and opened space for deep environmental care, students also described the difficulty of sustaining such ways of being within wider societal structures shaped by separation, efficiency, and instrumental logics. Wild pedagogies may therefore be understood as catalytic practices that create embodied and experiential openings for alternative relational orientations, while the persistence of such orientations depends on broader institutional, cultural, and socio-economic conditions.

Together, these insights highlight the potential of higher education to cultivate relational forms of learning in which students may come to experience themselves as part of a shared and more-than-human world. In

times of socio-ecological crisis, creating educational spaces that support such processes of becoming-with may contribute to the emergence of more attentive, responsive, and deep forms of environmental care.



# 6

# Conversations with the Landscape: Wilding Qualitative Inquiry through Walking Interviews

*“Science can give us knowing, but caring comes from someplace else.”*

(Kimmerer, 2013, p. 345)

Abstract

This chapter explores walking interviews as a place-responsive, more-than-human, and relational form of qualitative inquiry. Building on the methodological tensions raised in the previous chapter, it develops the concept of methodological wilding to describe a way of reworking qualitative research from within: by loosening control and cultivating openness, attunement, and responsiveness to the more-than-human relations through which knowledge emerges.

Drawing on relational ethico-onto-epistemologies, the chapter argues that knowledge is produced through situated, embodied, and multisensory encounters in which researchers, participants, landscapes, movement, and material conditions intra-act. Empirically, the chapter draws on the eighteen walking interviews with higher-education students engaged in wild pedagogies that formed part of the broader empirical grounding of the dissertation. The empirical section unfolds along three dimensions of methodological wilding: engaging place to elicit embodied memory, cultivating sensory and more-than-human attunement, and moving with the landscape. Together, these dimensions illustrate how landscapes participate in research encounters: place-based engagement evokes embodied memories, sensory attunement expands what becomes perceptible and sayable, and movement through the landscape co-shapes conversational trajectories.

The chapter shows that methodological wilding does not resolve the asymmetries and extractive tensions inherent in research, but renders them more visible and ethically consequential. Approached through care as situated response-ability, walking interviews offer a concrete pathway for enacting qualitative inquiry as embodied, place-responsive, and more-than-human research practice.

**Keywords:** walking interviews, more-than-human methodologies, relational ontology, posthuman feminist theory, qualitative inquiry, methodological wilding

***This chapter is based on the submitted and reviewed manuscripts:***

Van Tol (2026). Conversations with the Landscape: Wilding Qualitative Inquiry through Walking Interviews. Under review at *Qualitative Research*.

An adapted version of this manuscript is in press for the forthcoming handbook on *Researching Vulnerabilities in the Social Sciences: Moral, Ethical, Methodological and Practical Challenges* by Edward Elgar Publishing*,* in the section *Relational research methods in researching with vulnerable people.* Publication expected in 2026.

The chapter was adapted from the submitted manuscripts to enhance its integration within the dissertation and improve coherence across chapters. In particular, the methodology and methods section was condensed, as the overarching methodological framework, positionality, and methods underpinning the dissertation are presented in Chapter 2. The introduction was revised to reduce overlap with the general introduction and previous chapters of the dissertation.

## 6.1 Introduction

Building on the previous chapter, which engaged with the methodological tensions that arise when conducting research within relational and more-than-human ontologies, this chapter turns more explicitly to how such tensions can be engaged in methodological practice. In Chapter 5, these tensions emerged in relation to questions of proximity, entanglement, and the partial, situated nature of knowledge production. Here, these considerations are further deepened by exploring how qualitative research methods themselves may be reconfigured to better align with relational ways of knowing and being.

These tensions are not unique to this study, but reflect broader challenges within qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research approaches have long sought to engage with the complexity of lived experience. At the same time, they face ongoing challenges in attending to the embodied, situated, and more-than-human dimensions through which such experiences unfold (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). While qualitative inquiry aims to capture the depth and nuance of people's life worlds, it often relies on conversational formats that detach experience from the environments and material relations in which it takes shape. This tension is not only methodological, but also ethico-onto-epistemological, raising questions about how qualitative research can remain responsive to increasingly relational understandings of the world (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016; Tynan, 2021).

In response, critical relational and more-than-human methodological approaches are emerging that seek to better account for the entanglements through which knowledge is produced (e.g. Finlay, 2009; Ingold, 2011a; van Dooren & Rose, 2016; Whatmore, 2006). These approaches foreground embodiment, attunement, and relational engagement, and in doing so, call for forms of inquiry characterized by openness, responsiveness, and attentiveness to the more-than-human worlds in which research is always already entangled (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008; Tynan, 2021).

This shift toward more open, responsive, and relational modes of inquiry resonates with the concept of (re)wilding as developed in ecological and pedagogical contexts. (Re)wilding foregrounds spontaneity, relationality, and responsiveness within socio-ecological systems (Bania, 2025; Ferraro & Whitehead, 2025; Jickling et al., 2018; Lorimer et al., 2015). While the ecological notion of rewilding generally refers to restoration, the orientation developed in this chapter is more accurately understood as a practice of *wilding*. Rather than returning to prior states, wilding foregrounds the ongoing, situated processes through which relations take shape and knowledge emerges (Burlingame, 2025; Smallwood, 2025). It emphasizes a forward-oriented engagement with more-than-human worlds, in which inquiry is enacted as open, responsive, and relational. In this sense, wilding does not introduce a new methodological technique, but articulates a way of doing qualitative research that remains attentive to emergence, attunement, and the more-than-human conditions of knowing.

Enacting such a wilding orientation requires methodological approaches that treat relations, environments, and movement as integral to how research unfolds. Relational, more-than-human, and mobile methodologies provide important entry points in this regard. Whereas relational methodologies foreground co-constitutive engagement between researcher and participants (Allen et al., 2022; Finlay, 2009); more-than-human approaches extend attentiveness beyond the human to include landscapes, materials, and other-than-human actors (Asenbaum, 2026; Lien & Pálsson, 2019; Panelli, 2010; van Dooren & Rose, 2016; Whatmore, 2006); and mobile methodologies emphasize movement and situated encounter as central to knowledge production (Hein et al., 2008; Ingold, 2011a; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Taken together, these strands open up possibilities for engaging inquiry as an embodied, place-responsive, and relational process – shifting from conversations *in* landscapes toward conversations *with* landscapes (Benediktsson & Lund, 2010).

Within this constellation, walking interviews offer a particularly promising integrative approach. By engaging participants in conversation while moving

through landscapes, they allow place, movement, and sensory experience to actively shape the research encounter (Evans & Jones, 2011; Heijnen et al., 2022; Hemel et al., 2025; Jones et al., 2008; Lynch & Mannion, 2016). While early research on walking interviews primarily highlights their capacity to foster openness, support reflection, and generate rich, situated accounts (Evans & Jones, 2011; Hein et al., 2008), more recent work increasingly foregrounds the active role of landscapes in shaping how meaning emerges, thereby making visible the participation of more-than-human relations in the enactment of knowledge (Heijnen et al., 2022; Holton & Riley, 2014; Lynch & Mannion, 2016).

Building on these developments, this chapter explores walking interviews as an enactment of methodological wilding, in which meaning emerges through situated engagement within more-than-human worlds. First, it outlines a relational ethico-onto-epistemological grounding and further develops wilding as a conceptual orientation for qualitative inquiry. Second, it examines how walking interviews bring together relational, more-than-human, and mobile methodological orientations, and how these can be enacted through practices of relational attunement. Third, drawing on eighteen walking interviews with higher-education students engaged in wild pedagogies, the chapter illustrates how such encounters may unfold in practice.

In doing so, this chapter contributes to ongoing methodological discussions on working within relational ontologies by bridging conceptual commitments with empirical practice, offering a practice-oriented account of how relational and more-than-human approaches can be enacted in qualitative inquiry.

## 6.2 Relational Ethico-Onto-Epistemologies

Western thought has long been structured by a dualistic separation between humans and ‘nature,’ often accompanied by assumptions of human exceptionalism and superiority (Descola, 2012; Plumwood, 2002). Within this framework, humans are positioned as rational and agentic subjects,

while ‘nature’ is cast as passive object available for use (Plumwood, 1993). Such distinctions have not only shaped philosophical thought, but have also become embedded in social, economic, and political practices that prioritize human interests over ecological relations. As a result, the more-than-human world is frequently approached as a resource to be managed, controlled, or exploited, rather than as a relational field of which humans are part (Moore, 2015).

These ontological assumptions have far-reaching consequences. Scholars increasingly argue that human-centered ontologies are a primary driving force of ecological degradation and thereby form the origin of the planetary crisis the Earth is entangled in (Fletcher et al., 2024; Moore, 2017). The separation between humans and nature thus operates not only as an abstract conceptual distinction, but as a structuring logic that legitimizes particular forms of intervention, control, and appropriation.

Indigenous and ecofeminist scholars have long critiqued these dualisms by demonstrating how they are intertwined with other hierarchical oppositions, such as man/woman, culture/nature, and mind/body (d´Eaubonne, 1974; Griffin, 1978; Merchant, 1980; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Plumwood, 1993; Tynan, 2021; Warren, 1994). By exposing these interconnected hierarchies, these scholarly traditions have played a crucial role in challenging human exceptionalism and opening space for more relational ways of thinking (Braidotti, 2022; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Plumwood, 1993; Rosiek et al., 2020; Warren, 1994).

Yet, despite decades of critique, relational alternatives to human-centered ontologies have struggled to gain sustained traction in mainstream discourse, where dualistic and anthropocentric assumptions continue to shape both everyday practices and dominant forms of knowledge-making (Braidotti, 2022).

Posthuman feminist theory has emerged as a critical, relational extension of these debates, bringing particular attention to how power, ethics, and knowledge are constituted within more-than-human relations (Barad, 2007;

Braidotti, 2022; Haraway, 2008). At the same time, it extends analyses of oppression and marginalization beyond exclusively human concerns, examining how hierarchical distinctions are produced and maintained within relational ontologies (Braidotti, 2017, 2022). From this perspective, humans are not separate from, nor inherently superior to, the more-than-human world, but are instead situated participants in dynamic, co-constitutive assemblages (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2022; Haraway, 2008; Tynan, 2021). Relational ontologies thereby withdraw the human from the center of knowledge and existence and instead foregrounds relationality, interdependence, and ethical response-ability – understood as an ongoing situated capacity to notice, attend, and respond ethically to the more-than-human world in which we are entangled (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2022; Haraway, 2008; Law, 2019). Relational ontologies thus conceive entities not as self-contained, but as constituted through the networks of relationships and practices in which they participate (Law, 2019; Mol, 2010; Tynan, 2021).

Relational ontology cannot be separated from epistemology, because how we relate necessarily shapes how we come to know (Barad, 2007; Tynan, 2021). Consequently, a relational approach considers knowledge as situated and partial, emerging not only from human intersubjectivity but from the more-than-human entanglements that constitute the relational assemblage (Haraway, 1988; Lien & Pálsson, 2019; Tynan, 2021; van Dooren & Rose, 2016; Whatmore, 2006). It is thus not the individual entities that are the subject of knowledge-making, but their innate interrelatedness (Barad, 2007; Pols, 2014). From this perspective, knowledge is always emergent, fluid, situated, and thus partial – it becomes relationally constituted rather than individually possessed (Haraway, 1988; Pols, 2014). Such an understanding challenges not only what counts as knowledge, but also how knowledge is produced, encountered, and made meaningful within research practices.

Over recent decades, these relational and more-than-human commitments have increasingly informed methodological developments across the social sciences. Approaches such as non-representational methodologies (Thrift,

2007; Vannini, 2015), including sensory and mobile methods (Ingold, 2011a; Pink, 2015), phenomenological traditions (Petitmengin, 2006), and emerging more-than-human methodologies (Lien & Pálsson, 2019; Whatmore, 2006) have sought to move beyond disembodied, human-centered forms of inquiry toward embodied and place-responsive alternatives. Collectively, these approaches foreground embodiment, movement, affect, and the agency of environments, materials, and other-than-human beings in the emergence of knowledge. They demonstrate that knowing is not confined to cognitive human representation, but unfolds through situated, relational encounters (Ingold, 2011a; Thrift, 2007).

At the same time, bringing these ethico-onto-epistemological commitments fully into methodological practice proves deeply challenging, if not inherently partial in their realization (St. Pierre, 2023). While relational and more-than-human approaches call for openness, responsiveness, and co-constitutive engagement, research practices remain shaped by conventions that rely on structure, direction, and forms of control. Interviews are guided, questions are posed, data are selected and interpreted, and findings are articulated through language that tends to stabilize and represent what is, in practice, fluid and emergent (Law, 2004). In this sense, there is an ongoing tension between the aspiration to engage relationally with the world and the methodological conditions through which research is conducted, which inevitably reintroduce forms of human-centered framing and organization.

This tension points to a structural limitation in qualitative research: knowledge practices cannot fully step outside the conditions through which they are produced (Haraway, 1988). As a result, relational and more-than-human commitments can rarely be realized in a pure or complete sense, but instead emerge as situated, partial, and continuously negotiated enactments within specific research encounters (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1988; Mol, 2002).

It is within and alongside these ongoing methodological developments and tensions that I introduce (*re)wilding* as a conceptual lens for rethinking

qualitative inquiry in the light of relational understandings of being with the world. Rather than attempting to resolve or overcome the above outlined methodological tensions, wilding approaches them as a condition to work with. It shifts attention from the possibility of fully achieving relationality toward the practical question of how research encounters can be opened, loosened, and made more responsive to the more-than-human relations through which knowledge emerges. In doing so, wilding foregrounds situated practices of attentiveness, responsiveness, and engagement within inherently constrained research settings.

## 6.3 Methodological Wilding

Rewilding, as developed in ecological scholarship, refers to approaches that seek to restore or enable self-willed ecological processes by reducing intensive human management and allowing ecosystems to develop according to their own dynamics (Lorimer et al., 2015). Rather than aiming to recreate fixed historical states, rewilding emphasizes openness, unpredictability, and the capacity of ecological systems to reorganize themselves in response to changing conditions. Increasingly, rewilding is also understood as a relational approach, concerned not only with ecological processes but with how humans position themselves within dynamic socio-ecological systems (Ferraro & Whitehead, 2025). From this perspective, rewilding involves reconfiguring relationships between humans and other-than-human worlds, foregrounding interdependence, responsiveness, and the co-evolution of ecological and social processes. Central to this perspective is a shift from control toward facilitation: humans do not withdraw entirely, but reposition themselves in ways that support the autonomy and agency of other-than-human processes, while remaining entangled in and responsible for the relations they help shape (Jørgensen, 2015).

While the term *rewilding* suggests *restoring* processes to ‘natural’ dynamics, its contemporary use increasingly departs from a backward-looking logic and instead foregrounds the ongoing, situated processes through which ecological relations reorganize and co-evolve (Ferraro & Whitehead, 2025).

In this sense, the orientation developed here can rather be understood as a practice of *wilding*: not a return to what once was, but an opening towards emergent, self-willed processes of becoming (Bonthoux & Chollet, 2024; Burlingame, 2025; Turnbull et al., 2025). This shift is methodologically important, as it reframes rewilding not as the recovery of a lost mode of knowing, but as a forward-oriented engagement with the dynamic, more-than-human relations through which knowledge-making continuously takes shape.

This forward-oriented understanding resonates with the notion of the 'wild' in wild pedagogies, where 'wild' does not simply refer to ecological conditions, but to forms of learning that resist institutional domestication and emerge through situated, relational engagement within more-than-human environments (Jickling et al., 2018). Here, the wild denotes a quality of learning that is self-willed, open-ended, and responsive to the contingencies of place, often unfolding through curiosity, wonder, and affective engagement with the more-than-human world, rather than predetermined by curricular structures (Morse et al., 2018). Learning, in this sense, emerges through encounters that cannot be fully scripted, inviting participants to attune to and engage with the relational dynamics of the environments in which they are embedded.

Building on these ecological and pedagogical understandings of (re)wilding and more-than-human, relational approaches to methodology, methodological wilding can be understood as a reorientation that brings these lines of thought together. In resonance with posthuman feminist and indigenous relational ontologies and the broader movement of relational and more-than-human methodological approaches, methodological wilding recognizes that knowledge emerges through situated, more-than-human intra-actions, and therefore cannot be fully predetermined, contained, or governed by human-centered designs. The multifaceted understanding of (re)wild(ing) adds a commitment to nonconformity, spontaneity, and responsiveness to the more-than-human world. 'Wilding' thus becomes a methodological quality, characterized by attentiveness to the unexpected, the

sensory, and the more-than-human, in which knowledge takes shape through ongoing, situated intra-action with the more-than-human world.

## 6.4 Walking Interviews as a Practice of Methodological Wilding

Enacting methodological wilding involves a reorientation of how research encounters are approached, foregrounding openness, attentiveness, and responsiveness to the more-than-human relations through which knowledge emerges (van Dooren & Rose, 2016). This reorientation calls for cultivating forms of presence that allow inquiry to remain receptive to what emerges, rather than directing it toward predetermined outcomes (Finlay, 2009). Relational, more-than-human, and mobile methods offer concrete ways of putting this orientation into practice.

Relational approaches to qualitative inquiry provide an important starting point for methodological wilding in practice. Finlay (2009), for example, explores a relational approach grounded in open and empathetic presence – an orientation characterized by wonder, vulnerable engagement, receptive attentiveness, and a willingness to listen, see, and understand. Here, knowledge does not arise from detached observation, but through situated encounters in which researcher and participant are mutually implicated. These encounters bring multiple entangled selves, each embedded in overlapping and asymmetrical relations, into co-constitutive engagement, with meaning taking shape in the intersubjective – and often partially unconscious – spaces between participants. Cultivating such presence is central to a wilding orientation, as it resists the domestication of inquiry into predefined scripts and instead sustains openness to relational emergence.

Building on these relational foundations, scholars have extended such orientations toward more-than-human engagements. van Dooren and Rose (2016), for instance, describe a more-than-human relational awareness as a purposeful attentiveness and responsiveness toward the world, enabling immersion into the life worlds of both human and non-human others. From this perspective, inquiry becomes an encounter across species, materials, and environments, in which the boundaries between observer and observed are

continually reconfigured (Haraway, 2008). Such attentiveness expands relational inquiry beyond human intersubjectivity, foregrounding the ways in which knowledge emerges through entanglements with landscapes and other-than-human presences. As such, methodological wilding involves not only relational openness between humans, but an attunement to the wider more-than-human field in which research encounters are embedded.

These relational and more-than-human orientations gain further depth when considered through movement. Ingold (2011a) emphasizes that knowledge emerges through 'going around' in an environment. Movement through and with the landscape gives rise to ongoing relational encounters in which meaning is not merely articulated but co-constituted through situated engagement, sensory attentiveness, and responsiveness to unfolding conditions. From this perspective, movement is not simply a means of accessing pre-existing experiences, but an epistemic process through which relations, perceptions, and understandings take shape in the spontaneous moment of encounter.

Walking can be understood as a particularly generative mode of such spontaneous movement. As a slow, embodied, and rhythmical way of moving through the world, walking foregrounds attentiveness to place, bodily sensation, and relational dynamics, making it especially conducive to situated forms of knowing (Lynch & Mannion, 2016). Rather than abstracting the knower from the environment, walking sustains ongoing contact between body, landscape, and attention, allowing knowledge to emerge through continued relational engagement in both time and space (Hemel et al., 2025).

It is therefore not coincidental that walking has long served as a practice of reflection and meaning-making, enabling thinkers to explore both the world and their relations within it (Harteloh, 2021). While philosophers have often intuitively turned to walking in support of thinking, contemporary research confirms that walking facilitates contemplation (Keinänen, 2016), creativity (Atchley et al., 2012; Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014), and spontaneous

conversation (Evans & Jones, 2011). These reflective and dialogic qualities resonate with a relational epistemologies in which thinking unfolds alongside movement, rather than prior to or separate from it (Ingold, 2011a).

Yet, as Hemel et al. (2025) note, walking has become a marginalized mode of moving and encountering in contemporary life. In contrast to dominant fast-paced, consumption-driven mobilities, walking slows both body and mind, stimulating attentive observation, reflection, and relational awareness. In this sense, walking can be understood as a subtle political act that resists instrumentalized modes of living and knowing, reclaiming time and space for more attentive engagement with the world. Consequently, Hemel et al. (2025) call for the rediscovery of walking, not only in everyday life, but also within academic practice.

Within the social sciences, this rediscovery is reflected in the growing uptake of walking as a methodological practice. Sheller and Urry (2006) describe this development as part of a broader 'mobility turn', which foregrounds movement, place, and relational engagement as central to processes of inquiry. *Walking interviews* emerge within this context as an integrative methodological practice in which relational, more-than-human, and mobile orientations come together (Evans & Jones, 2011; Hein et al., 2008; Holton & Riley, 2014; Jones et al., 2008). From the perspective of methodological wilding, they support a reorientation of inquiry toward situated, embodied, and relational engagement through spontaneous encounter and movement within more-than-human worlds.

Empirical studies indicate that walking interviews, particularly in natural environments, often put participants at ease, facilitate rapport, and soften hierarchical power dynamics between researcher and participant (Hein et al., 2008). These conditions can support deeper, more open, and reflective conversations (Heijnen et al., 2022). Of particular relevance in the context of methodological wilding, however, walking interviews also offer a way of moving beyond the human as the sole focus of inquiry by engaging the

landscape as an active participant in the research encounter (Lynch & Mannion, 2016).

As Lynch and Mannion (2016) emphasize, lived experiences are always embodied and place-based. Walking through landscapes in which experiences originally unfolded enables embodied re-engagement with these experiences, allowing memories, affects, and narratives to emerge through sensory and spatial encounter. While landscapes can evoke memories and conversations more generally, places tied to prior experiences are especially powerful in prompting embodied recall and narrative reconstruction (Holton & Riley, 2014). In this way, the landscape participates in shaping both the direction and content of the interview (Heijnen et al., 2022; Holton & Riley, 2014; Lynch & Mannion, 2016). Knowledge-making thus emerges as a reciprocal and responsive process within the entangled interactions among interviewer, interviewee, and landscape – an enactment of the wilding orientation in which more-than-human relations actively participate in shaping what becomes knowable.

Yet such reciprocity does not arise automatically; it requires more than simply walking and talking. A more-than-human walking interview depends on sustained attentiveness and responsiveness to both human and other-than-human elements, on the part of both interviewer and interviewee (Lynch & Mannion, 2016). Only through such attunement can the landscape meaningfully participate in the unfolding encounter. Methodological wilding, therefore, is not a spontaneous outcome of walking in more-than-human environments, but a deliberate orientation that calls for cultivating the conditions under which relational attunement can emerge.

## 6.5 Relational Attunement within Methodological Wilding

Approaching walking interviews as an integrative practice of methodological wilding raises the practical question of how such attunement can be enacted within research encounters. Walking interviews generally aim to address lived experiences, which are always embodied and place-based (Lynch & Mannion, 2016). To access these experiences in a relational and place-

responsive way, researchers must actively engage with body, senses, and environment within the interview setting (Ingold, 2011a; Pink, 2015). This requires more than walking in nature alone; it involves cultivating practices that sustain sensory awareness, embodied attention, and openness to more-than-human relations. Literature on micro-phenomenology (Petitmengin, 2006; Vermersch, 2009) and mindfulness (Lemon, 2017; Purser, 2021; Varutti, 2025) offers useful methodological entry points for developing such practices, while also requiring critical extension to avoid reproducing human-centered assumptions.

Micro-phenomenological approaches to interviewing offer a set of techniques designed to access the pre-reflective dimensions of lived experience (Petitmengin, 2006; Petitmengin et al., 2019). Rather than eliciting generalized accounts or retrospective interpretations, these approaches guide participants to return to specific moments of experience and to describe them in terms of sensory, bodily, affective, and temporal unfolding. Through careful prompting – such as directing attention to body, senses, or shifts in awareness – micro-phenomenological interviews aim to move beyond abstract narration toward the experiential contexts through which meaning is constituted (Petitmengin, 2006; Vermersch, 2009).

While this work has primarily focused on individual consciousness and first-person experience, it offers valuable methodological resources for relational and more-than-human inquiry. When situated within the landscapes in which experiences originally unfolded, micro-phenomenological techniques can be extended beyond inward reflection toward relational attunement with place. Rather than treating experience as internally contained, such an approach enables the reactivation of embodied memory in place, where perception, sensation, and environment become entangled in the unfolding of recall (Casey, 2000). In this way, micro-phenomenological interviewing can be reoriented from a focus on internal experience toward a more distributed understanding of experience as emerging through ongoing engagement between body, environment, and attention (Ingold, 2011a, 2021).

Mindfulness-based practices further contribute to this orientation by cultivating focused, non-judgmental attention to present-moment experience (Lemon, 2017). Attention to breath, body, and sensory perception enhances embodied presence and opens awareness to the surrounding environment (Gibson, 2019). From this grounded state, awareness can extend outward, enabling participants to become present not only with themselves, but with the more-than-human world they inhabit (Varutti, 2025). This relational dimension of mindfulness – often marginalized in more individualistic applications (Purser, 2021) – holds particular relevance for methodological wilding, as it supports an expanded field of attention in which human and more-than-human elements co-constitute experience.

Extending awareness in this way nurtures the forms of presence and responsiveness that underpin inquiry shaped by methodological wilding. Sustaining such presence throughout the interview requires a continuous redirection of attention beyond the human mind toward the more-than-human relations shaping the encounter (Rose, 2011). This ongoing practice can be understood as *relational attunement* in which researchers and participants continuously attune to the dynamic interplay of body, place, and environment (Ingold, 2021). In this sense, methodological wilding is enacted through practices that redistribute attention and, with it, the conditions under which knowledge emerges.

## 6.6 Empirical Enactment of Methodological Wilding through Walking Interviews

Translating the suggested wilding orientation into actual research practice requires careful design of research encounters that are open to spontaneous relational emergence while providing sufficient structure to sustain engagement. To illustrate this process, the following section draws on the broader study of eighteen walking interviews with higher-education students engaged in wild pedagogies that formed one of the primary methods underlying this dissertation (Chapter 2; Appendix 4).

Participants were recruited from three courses informed by wild pedagogies at Wageningen University (The Netherlands) (Chapter 2, Box 1; Appendix 1). Interviews were conducted one to three years after course participation to create distance from immediate experience, allowing memories to re-emerge through reflection and relational encounter rather than remaining tied to short-term cognitive impressions (Linde, 1993; Riessman, 2008; Rubin, 1999). The interviews intentionally took place in the landscapes where the courses had originally unfolded, enabling embodied and place-based re-engagement with lived experience (Casey, 2000; Lynch & Mannion, 2016).

Building on the theoretical orientation outlined above, the interviews were deliberately designed as place-responsive, embodied, and relational encounters. Rather than following a fixed interview guide or route, participants were invited to let the direction and pacing of the walk spontaneously emerge in response to what drew their attention. Open prompts were used to support reflection on their experiences, while leaving space for the landscape, sensory encounters, and movement to shape the unfolding conversation.

Because the interviews were designed as open, place-responsive encounters, my role as researcher was neither neutral nor distant, nor was that the intention. Rather, my involvement formed part of the relational field through which the interviews unfolded (Finlay, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this study, such involvement was not only acknowledged but intentionally cultivated as a methodological practice of relational attunement.

I introduced grounding exercises, invited attention toward sensory and environmental cues, and offered broad prompts to support reflection, while also attempting to leave space for participants and landscapes guide the encounter. In doing so, I actively invited bodily and experiential dimensions of memory, as well as the landscape itself, into the conversation (Casey, 2000; Lynch & Mannion, 2016). Such involvement required continuous situated judgement: when to ask, when to wait, when to follow a

participant's movement, and when to allow silence or sensory attention to shape the encounter.

This form of engaged presence resonates with approaches that understand interviewing as an embodied, sensory, and relational practice requiring ongoing attentiveness and responsiveness (Finlay, 2009; Pink, 2015). What wilding adds to this understanding, is a different mode of structuring – one that seeks to remain responsive to what emerges in the spontaneity of encounter and that enables relational engagement between researcher, participant, and landscape.

Each interview lasted approximately 1,5 hours, and was audio-recorded using Tascam DR-10L devices to allow for high-quality outdoor recording. Conversations were transcribed clean verbatim using Trint (2022) and subsequently reviewed and refined manually. Data were analyzed in Atlas.ti (version 24.1.1) through an iterative, interpretive, open coding process. Particular attention was given to moments in which landscapes appeared to prompt memory, redirect attention, or co-shape the trajectory of the interview.

## 6.7 Empirical Illustrations of Methodological Wilding

The following section turns to the empirical material to illustrate how methodological wilding was enacted in practice through walking interviews. Rather than presenting findings as discrete themes, the analysis is organized around three interconnected phases that emerged as a guiding structure for understanding how these encounters unfolded: engaging place as a prompt for embodied memory, cultivating sensory and more-than-human attunement, and allowing movement through the landscape to co-shape the trajectory of the interview.

1. *Engaging place to elicit embodied memory*

Following Lynch and Mannion (2016), the location of a walking interview is not neutral; it shapes and enlivens place-based, embodied memories. In the

landscapes where experiences originally unfolded, sensory encounters with elements of the environment can evoke these memories vividly (Pearce, 2023). Such place-related recollections guide the unfolding of the interview, allowing participants' experiences to emerge in dialogue with the landscape itself, demonstrating more-than-human co-constitution of memory (Clark, 2025).

The interviews were conducted in the very locations where the courses took place. This decision consistently fostered place-based memory elicitation. For example in my conversation with Noa:

*Noa: (…) Wow, what a beautiful place.*

*Me: Yes, beautiful indeed. Let us hold for a little while.*

*Noa: We visited this place during the course. We sat here, at the foot of the tree and I it was still alive back then. And last year it was cut like this because it has died. But still, beautiful (…)*

This interaction illustrates how memory is activated through a situated encounter in which the changed material presence of the tree becomes part of what is remembered and how it is remembered. The tree is not incidental to the account: its altered state helps organize the narrative, linking past experience, present observation, and affective response. What emerges is therefore not only a recollection of a prior event, but a relationally produced moment in which place, material change, and participant reflection become intertwined.

Methodologically, this illustrates an important dimension of wilding. The interview does not proceed by extracting a pre-formed memory from Noa through a sequence of predetermined prompts. Instead, the landscape helps set the terms of the encounter. The pause before speaking, the visual encounter with the tree, and the participant's spontaneous response together create the conditions under which memory can surface. This does not mean that the place speaks in any simple or equivalent sense, but it does indicate

that the interview becomes responsive to what the landscape affords. In this way, place becomes a co-composer of recall, guiding attention toward what matters in the moment.

Across the interviews more broadly, such place-based elicitation occurred repeatedly upon encounter of particular trees, paths, clearings, fire sites, or shelter places – often triggering meaningful embodied memories that hadn't been surfaced yet.

2. *Cultivating sensory and more-than-human attunement*

To focus attention, engage the body and senses and expand the awareness towards the more-than-human, the interviews engaged with various techniques inspired by mindfulness and micro-phenomenology (Lemon, 2017; Petitmengin, 2006). Each interview began with a guided meditation at the site of the experiences. Students were invited to select a location in the forest that attracted them, to sit down and close their eyes and through focused breathing shifting attention from mind to body (Gibson, 2019). Through sequential attention to sensory perception, participants were guided in extending their awareness toward the more-than-human world, connecting body, place, and memory (Varutti, 2025). As such they could foster relational awareness towards the wider world (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008).

My conversation with Sam illustrates how the meditation exercise helped her to focus attention and to engage the body and senses:

*"When we did the meditation, I was brought back to the nights we spent in the forest. The sounds of the forest, the whisper of the leaves in particular, suddenly came to me as familiar again. I slept in a hammock back then for three nights and I could feel again the sensation of swaying in the forest. That was so calming."*

Alex shares how the exercise extends her awareness towards the more-than-human:

*"before the meditation I was not even aware of all the bird sounds and now suddenly that whole dimension is added again"*

These reflections indicate that attentional practices do more than prepare participants for an interview; they actively reshape the field of what becomes perceptible and sayable. In Sam's account, sound and bodily sensation do not simply accompany recollection, but become the very medium through which past experience is re-entered. The "whisper of the leaves" and the remembered sensation of swaying in the hammock show how memory is reactivated through embodied and sensory resonance. Likewise, Alex's realization that "that whole dimension is added again" suggests that the exercise does not merely recover existing content, but expands the range of relations that become available for experience and narration.

This is methodologically significant because it demonstrates that what participants can articulate depends in part on how attention has first been oriented. A wilding approach to interviewing therefore does not begin with questions, but with the cultivation of receptivity. By slowing down, grounding, and widening sensory awareness, conditions are created under which more-than-human relations become experientially and narratively significant. The guided meditation thus functions as a reorientating practice: it shifts the encounter from a primarily discursive mode of recall toward one in which bodies, sounds, atmospheres, and surroundings participate in how knowledge emerges.

Across the interviews, preparatory practices to engage the senses and the body and to extend awareness, appeared to enhance detailed, affectively textured, and environmentally embedded accounts of course experiences instead of purely cognitive accounts. This suggests that relational attunement is not merely an ethical disposition but also a practical condition for more place-responsive forms of knowing.

### *3. Moving with the landscape*

As can be seen from the above, much of the relational work in walking interviews occurs before actual walking and talking, through preparatory practices that synchronize body, mind, and landscape. Once relational awareness and empathetic presence is established, walking commences, with participants following the paths that attract them, allowing the landscape to co-shape both spatial and conversational trajectories (Heijnen et al., 2022; Ingold, 2011a). In this way, both geographic direction and conversation content emerge from the interplay between participant agency and the affordances of the landscape (Lynch & Mannion, 2016; Rietveld & Kiverstein, 2014).

For example, my conversation with Alex started as follows:

*Me: Where would you like to go?*

*Alex: Then I choose this direction*

*Me: Have you been to this part of the forest during the course as well?*

*Alex: Yes, I think it was here that we collected wood for the hut we built. But, let me see, maybe a bit more that direction. It feels a bit more sheltered.*

*Me: Yes sure, whatever you feel like.*

This fragment illustrates how movement redistributes agency within the interview. Although I initiated the encounter and offered broad prompts, the route itself was not pre-scripted. Alex's felt sense that one direction was "more sheltered" became part of the decision-making process, just as the remembered activity of collecting wood emerged in relation to that directional choice. What unfolds here is not a neutral walk attached to an interview, but an interview whose narrative trajectory is inseparable from spatial movement and environmental affordance.

Methodologically, this is one of the clearest enactments of wilding in the study. Walking introduces a degree of indeterminacy that is not random, but relationally structured: paths attract, spaces invite, and atmospheres orient movement. The interview is therefore shaped not only by what the participant remembers, but by where the encounter goes and by what the landscape makes available along the way. This does not remove the researcher's role, but it does loosen the extent to which the researcher alone governs sequence, emphasis, and direction of a conversation. In this sense, walking becomes more than a setting for conversation; it is a practical mode of sharing inquiry with the material and more-than-human world.

Across the interviews, this relational unfolding often produced conversations that moved in unexpected directions. Participants frequently paused or redirected attention toward features of the environment that then became central to the interview. Such moments indicate that walking generates a research encounter in which place does not merely support narration, but actively participates in organizing what becomes knowable.

## 6.8 Discussion

The walking interview experiences illustrated above invite reflection not only on how qualitative inquiry is enacted, but on how it might be reconfigured through a practice of methodological wilding. While relational and more-than-human approaches have already emphasized embodiment, situatedness, and co-constitutive engagement (Finlay, 2009; Ingold, 2011a; van Dooren & Rose, 2016), the empirical material presented here shows how working through movement with landscapes brings these commitments into practice in ways that reshape the research encounter itself. Embodiment, movement, and place-responsiveness do not merely enrich qualitative inquiry, but actively reconfigure how attention is directed, how encounters unfold, and how knowledge comes into being.

Across the interviews, three interrelated dynamics became visible. First, landscapes repeatedly acted as prompts for memory, evoking embodied, affective, and place-specific recollections that might not have surfaced in

more conventional interview settings. Second, practices of grounding and sensory attunement expanded participants' awareness, enabling other-than-human elements to become experientially and narratively significant. Third, walking itself redistributed agency within the interview, as routes, spatial affordances, and environmental cues co-shaped both the direction and content of conversation. These dynamics suggest that methodological wilding does not reside in a single technique, but in a reconfiguration of how attention, movement, and relational engagement together shape the emergence of knowledge.

Building on these empirical insights, methodological wilding can be understood as extending existing relational, more-than-human, and mobile approaches by more explicitly engaging with the openness and indeterminacy of research encounters. While relational methodologies emphasize co-constitution and responsiveness, they are often still enacted within research designs that retain a degree of direction and control (Finlay, 2009). A wilding orientation does not resolve this tension, but pushes it further by foregrounding a heightened openness to spontaneous emergence, in which the direction and content of inquiry unfold through situated intra-action with the more-than-human world. In doing so, it more explicitly redistributes methodological authority, allowing landscape, movement, and sensory encounter to take on a more active and shaping role in the research process.

In this sense, wilding introduces a distinct methodological sensibility characterized by responsiveness to the unexpected, a willingness to dwell with indeterminacy, and an attentiveness to how inquiry is continuously reconfigured in relation to its surroundings. By doing so, methodological wilding extends relational methodologies beyond an acknowledgment of entanglement toward an active enactment of spontaneity, in which research becomes a practice of engaging with, rather than organizing, the more-than-human conditions through which knowing emerges.

Positioned in this way, walking interviews – as an enactment of methodological wilding – respond to longstanding critiques of qualitative inquiry that point to its entanglement with human-centered, representational, and extractive logics (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre, 2023). Rather than abandoning methodology altogether – as some critiques suggest (St. Pierre, 2023) – the findings presented here indicate that relational, place-responsive, and mobile methods offer ways of reworking qualitative practice from within.

However, while methodological wilding opens qualitative inquiry toward more-than-human relational emergence, it does not resolve the tensions inherent in such an orientation. Rather, it renders them more explicit, particularly in relation to questions of agency, participation, and responsibility within research encounters.

### *Rethinking Agency, Participation and Responsibility in More-than-Human Research Encounters*

Reworking qualitative inquiry along relational and place-responsive lines brings into sharper focus a set of intertwined onto-epistemological and ethical questions concerning agency, participation, and responsibility. In particular, approaching the landscape as an actor – or as a conversational partner – in walking interviews raises questions about how more-than-human participation is enacted, how asymmetrical relations are configured, and what forms of care and accountability such research encounters require (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

Latour (1996)'s Actor Network Theory (ANT) has been influential in reframing agency beyond the human by conceptualizing actors as all entities that make a difference within relational networks. From this perspective, agency is not an intrinsic property or intentional capacity, but an effect of mediation: actors are understood to have agency insofar as they modify states of affairs within a network of relations. This move decouples agency from human intentionality and opens conceptual space for recognizing the

participation of landscapes, materials, and other-than-human entities in shaping research encounters.

However, as Sayes (2014) and others argue, ANT's symmetrical treatment of actors introduces important limitations. By defining agency primarily as 'making a difference', it flattens distinctions between actors and obscures differences in capacity, vulnerability, responsibility, and power. While ANT successfully demonstrates that nonhumans participate in shaping outcomes, it offers fewer resources for accounting for how agency is unevenly distributed and relationally constituted within specific encounters.

Posthuman feminist scholars emphasize that agency emerges through intra-action within relations that are always situated, embodied, and asymmetrical (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Acknowledging more-than-human agency, therefore, does not imply equivalence between human and other-than-human actors, but calls for careful attention to how agency is enacted within unequal relational fields and with what ethical implications.

Approaching the landscape as an active participant in walking interviews thus shifts the analytical focus from whether it participates to how this participation is configured and with what effects. The empirical examples presented in this chapter illustrate how landscapes shape the unfolding of interviews by evoking memories, directing movement, and influencing affective and sensory engagement. Knowledge emerges here not as something extracted from participants, but as something that takes shape through human–other-than-human intra-action.

At the same time, these encounters remain oriented toward human research purposes. Even when the landscape is foregrounded, it is mobilized to illuminate human experiences, without having a say in the aims, boundaries, or uses of the research (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). In this sense, walking interviews retain an unavoidable extractive dimension, rooted in asymmetries of intention, articulation, and institutional positioning.

Methodological wilding does not eliminate this extractive dimension, but makes it more visible, and therefore more open to critical reflection.

Because these asymmetries cannot, and need not, be resolved through methodological refinement alone, they call for an explicitly ethical orientation that moves beyond questions of agency toward questions of care, responsibility, and response-ability. Care theory offers a productive lens here by foregrounding that relations are always uneven in terms of dependence, vulnerability, and power (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Importantly, such asymmetry does not in itself render relations extractive or problematic; rather, it calls for attentiveness to how relations are enacted and sustained.

Within this perspective, response-ability (Haraway, 2016) becomes central: the situated capacity to notice, be affected by, and respond responsibly within specific relational configurations. In the context of walking interviews, practices such as grounding, sensory attunement, pausing, and allowing the landscape to guide movement can be understood as methodological gestures of response-ability. These practices do not resolve asymmetry, but they reorient the researcher's position from one of control toward one of attentiveness and accountability within more-than-human relations.

In this sense, wilding is not simply a methodological adjustment, but an ethico-onto-epistemological commitment. It repositions qualitative inquiry as a practice of accompanying, attuning, and responding within more-than-human worlds, while remaining accountable to the asymmetries and consequences of such engagement. Walking interviews, when enacted in this way, offer a concrete and situated example of how qualitative research can be extended toward more embodied, place-responsive, and relational forms of knowing.

### *Implications of Methodological Wilding for Qualitative Research*

The insights provided in this chapter suggest that reworking qualitative inquiry along relational and more-than-human lines does not necessarily

require entirely new methods, but rather a reorientation of how existing methods are enacted. This resonates with wider methodological debates that emphasize the need to rethink not only methods themselves, but the conditions under which they are practiced (Law, 2004; Mol, 2002; St. Pierre, 2023). From this perspective, methodological innovation does not lie in inventing new techniques, but in reconfiguring how attention, presence, and relational engagement are cultivated within research encounters (Finlay, 2009).

Practices of slowing down, engaging the body and senses, attending to place, and allowing for emergent direction can be incorporated across a range of qualitative approaches, including interviews, ethnography, and participatory research. Such practices echo developments in sensory ethnography (Pink, 2015), non-representational methodologies (Vannini, 2015), and more-than-human research (Lien & Pálsson, 2019), which similarly seek to move beyond disembodied, human-centered modes of inquiry. Methodological wilding contributes to these conversations by emphasizing not only relationality and embodiment, but also a more explicit openness to spontaneity, indeterminacy, and the co-shaping of inquiry through situated encounters with the more-than-human world.

For qualitative researchers working in contexts of ecological crisis and social transformation, such reorientations are particularly significant. They offer ways of engaging with the more-than-human world that move beyond representation toward forms of relational participation, while remaining attentive to the ethical complexities and asymmetries such engagements entail. While methodological wilding does not offer a concrete ‘solution’ to such tensions, it aligns with a broader shift in how inquiry is approached: as a situated, responsive, and ethically engaged practice of knowing with the world in conditions of uncertainty and change.

## 6.9 Conclusion

While qualitative inquiry has long been central to social science research, it has become increasingly evident that conventional approaches often struggle

to attend to the more-than-human complexity of lived experience. Human experience is inherently relational, embodied, and place-based, unfolding through ongoing entanglements with landscapes, materialities, and other-than-human beings. This chapter has argued that walking interviews offer a way of engaging these entanglements more directly by enacting qualitative research as a place-responsive and embodied encounter in which landscape participates in the research process rather than serving merely as backdrop. In doing so, the article has developed *methodological wilding* as a conceptual and methodological orientation for reworking qualitative inquiry in more relational, responsive, and more-than-human ways.

Walking through landscapes that hold memories of lived experience enables forms of engagement in which bodily movement, sensory attunement, and environmental encounter shape how experiences are recalled, articulated, and made meaningful. Practices of grounding, expanded awareness, and sensory attentiveness help cultivate a relational space in which knowledge can emerge through situated human–other-than-human intra-action. At the same time, this chapter has emphasized that such approaches do not resolve the asymmetries and extractive tensions inherent in research. Rather, they render these tensions more visible and ethically significant. Wilding, in this sense, does not promise methodological innocence or a pure realization of relationality; instead, it offers a way of working with these tensions through practices of openness, attunement, and situated responsiveness.

Approached through an orientation of care, walking interviews offer a way of engaging these tensions responsibly. Care, understood as situated response-ability, foregrounds attentiveness, accountability, and ethical obligation within asymmetrical research relations. The contribution of walking interviews therefore lies not in their capacity to overcome human-centered research practices altogether, but in their potential to extend qualitative inquiry from within by cultivating more careful, responsive, and ethically attuned ways of knowing with the world. As an integrative practice of methodological wilding, walking interviews show how qualitative research can be enacted as embodied, place-responsive, and more-than-

human inquiry. In this way, they do not merely diversify qualitative methods, but offer a concrete pathway for wilding qualitative research as a relational and ethically committed practice in conditions of ecological uncertainty and change.



# 7

# Weaving Wilder Futures

*"If grief can be a doorway to love, then let us all weep for the world we are breaking apart so we can love it back to wholeness again."*

(Kimmerer, 2013, p. 359)

## 7.1 On Weaving and Futuring

This dissertation set out to explore in what ways, if any, practices of wild pedagogies in higher education may contribute to relational becoming with the world among students in times of ongoing ecological crisis. Four guiding questions structured this journey: how wild pedagogies can be understood within a more-than-human relational ontology; how they can be enacted as more-than-human ecologies of learning in higher education; how processes of relational becoming may emerge among students engaged in such learning environments; and how these processes can be researched in ways that align with relational and more-than-human understandings of learning and becoming. Together, these questions have functioned as interwoven threads throughout the dissertation, connecting conceptual, pedagogical, empirical, and methodological explorations. This final chapter returns to these threads, weaving together their insights while turning toward questions of hope, care, and the weaving of mor-than-human futures yet to come.

The chapter builds on Ingold (2011b)'s understanding of *weaving* as a world-making practice, which allows to think of the individual chapters, approaches, and lines of thought as interwoven threads that come together as the continuous intertwining fibers of a woven basket. Ingold refers to weaving as a process of making-in-motion, in which materials, practice and skill are brought into relation through ongoing movement. Each thread contributes to the emergence of something that is never fully predetermined. In this sense, weaving exemplifies a relational ontology in which form arises through process, and where knowing and making are inseparable (Barad, 2007).

At the same time, weaving is inherently future-oriented. Every movement of the thread not only responds to relations already present, but also shapes the possibilities of what may emerge next. The patterns woven in the present become conditions for future patterns to unfold. Weaving therefore offers a way of understanding how futures are continuously brought into being through present practices and relations.

This future-oriented dimension of weaving resonates with the concept of futuring as developed by Oomen et al. (2022). Futuring refers to the ways in which imagined futures are not merely projections or distant horizons, but actively shape present practices, decisions, and possibilities. Rather than treating the future as something that unfolds independently of the present, futuring emphasizes its performative character: futures are continuously enacted through narratives, imaginaries, relationships, and actions. Viewed through this lens, weaving and futuring can be understood as complementary expressions of the same relational process: the ongoing making of worlds in which present practices and future possibilities continuously co-constitute one another.

Within this perspective, the practices of wild pedagogies explored throughout this dissertation can be understood simultaneously as practices of weaving and futuring. Through embodied, relational, and more-than-human forms of learning, students are invited to participate in the ongoing weaving of relationships that shape both present experience and future possibilities. The significance of these practices lies not primarily in producing explicit visions of desirable futures, but in creating opportunities to inhabit and experiment with alternative ways of being with the world in the here and now.

Viewed as forms of futuring, such practices enact possibilities for different human–world relations through present engagements with attention, curiosity, care, responsibility, and response-ability. The futures they bring into being are therefore not distant end points, but are already partially present in the relational patterns that learners cultivate and inhabit. Relational becoming, in this sense, is inherently future-oriented: as relationships, perceptions, and responsibilities are continuously reconfigured, new possibilities for inhabiting and co-creating more livable futures begin to emerge. Through weaving different ways of knowing, sensing, and being with the world, wild pedagogies open spaces in which alternative futures can be enacted in the present.

The remainder of this chapter unfolds along these interwoven lines of weaving and futuring. First, it revisits the conceptual threads that have guided this dissertation by bringing into relation the central concepts of wild pedagogies, relational becoming, and deep environmental care. In doing so, it returns primarily to the first three research questions, reflecting on how wild pedagogies can be understood within a more-than-human relational ontology, how they may be enacted as more-than-human ecologies of learning, and how processes of relational becoming emerge within such learning environments. Approached as relational and performative constellations within educational practice, these concepts are further elaborated in relation to existing theories of transformative change, highlighting the significance of relationality, embodiment, affect, disruption, and more-than-human participation. Within this conceptual weaving, particular attention is given to deep wonder as a performative and transformative force that may open spaces for relational becoming and the emergence of deep environmental care.

Building on this conceptual weaving, the chapter then turns toward questions of futuring through an exploration of constructive hope. Rather than being understood as naïve optimism, hope is approached as a relational and performative force that emerges through experiences of wonder, care, and becoming, helping to sustain engagement with uncertain futures. In this way, the discussion extends the dissertation's engagement with the future-oriented implications of wild pedagogies and deep environmental care.

Subsequently, the chapter revisits the methodological threads woven throughout the dissertation by returning to the fourth research question concerning how relational becoming can be researched in ways that align with relational and more-than-human understandings of learning and becoming. Here, methodological wilding is reconsidered through questions of knowledge, meaning-making, participation, and situatedness. Particular attention is given to how meanings emerge through relational encounters among researchers, participants, places, and more-than-human worlds, and to the implications this carries for understanding qualitative inquiry as a practice of relational meaning-making.

Finally, the chapter concludes by drawing together the conceptual, pedagogical, empirical, and methodological insights developed throughout the dissertation. Through the lenses of weaving and futuring, it reflects on the broader significance of wild pedagogies for education in times of socio-ecological crises and considers how relational and more-than-human practices of learning, care, hope, and inquiry may contribute to the ongoing formation of more livable futures.

## 7.2 Navigating Tensions in More-than-Human Ecologies of Learning

The first thread revisited here concerns the conceptualization of wild pedagogies within a more-than-human relational ontology. Chapter 3 argued that wild pedagogies resonate with a wide range of critical educational traditions that challenge anthropocentrism, purely cognitive understandings of learning, hierarchical teacher–student relations, and colonial assumptions embedded in education. What distinguishes wild pedagogies is the way these strands converge within a single educational orientation grounded in relationality. Wild pedagogies start from the premise that learning emerges through ongoing entanglements among humans, other-than-human beings, materials, and places. As such, they can be understood as one thread within a broader weaving of educational practices that cultivate attentiveness, connection, and care, opening possibilities for more responsive ways of being with the world.

As argued throughout this dissertation, the ‘wild’ refers to more than learning in and with nature alone. Rather, it denotes a quality of openness and responsiveness to what announces itself within the learning process. Wilding implies a loosening of control over learning trajectories and intended outcomes in order to create space for unexpected encounters, emergent directions, and alternative ways of knowing and relating. At the same time, wildness also carries an inward dimension, expressed through curiosity, attentiveness, wonder, and receptivity toward the more-than-human world. To learn in this way requires moving against dominant educational norms of efficiency, predictability, and control. It is precisely

this counter-normative quality that gives wild pedagogies their disruptive potential.

Approaching learning in this way carries significant implications for how education itself is understood. Most fundamentally, it challenges assumptions about the extent to which learning can be intentionally designed, directed, and evaluated. If learning emerges through dynamic relations among human and other-than-human participants, educational processes inevitably exceed the intentions of educators, curricula, and institutions. This resonates with broader relational perspectives that understand learning as participation in unfolding processes that cannot be known in advance (Ingold, 2011a, 2021). Learning, from such a perspective, involves entering into relations that may alter both the learner and the educational trajectory itself.

Yet relinquishing all forms of direction is neither possible nor necessarily desirable. This tension resonates strongly with Biesta (2015)'s notion of the 'beautiful risk of education'. For Biesta, the impossibility of guaranteeing educational outcomes is precisely what defines education as site of learning. While educators inevitably enter educational situations with particular intentions, values, and hopes, meaningful learning always involves encounters that exceed what can be planned in advance. Similarly, building on Mezirow (1991)'s idea of the disorienting dilemma as education site of transformation, several authors (Ellsworth, 2005; Wals, 2019) argue that learning emerges precisely through moments of disorientation, uncertainty, and encounter with difference – moments that cannot be fully orchestrated beforehand but nevertheless possess profound educational and transformative significance.

Wild pedagogies engage this tension explicitly. Rather than abandoning structure altogether, they seek to loosen educational control sufficiently for unexpected encounters, disruptions, and alternative ways of knowing and relating to become possible. In doing so, they move toward what Biesta (2021) describes as a world-centered orientation to education, in which

learning is organized around encounters with a world that exceeds human intentions, rather than around the learner alone.

At the same time, finding a balance between educational intentionality and relational emergence remains a complex field to navigate. How much uncertainty can and should educational institutions accommodate? How much openness remains possible within systems increasingly organized around predefined learning outcomes, accountability, assessment, and efficiency? These are questions that need continuous attention in research exploring more-than-human ecologies of learning and the implications thereof.

A second tension concerns participation and agency. Conceptualizing learning as more-than-human ecologies extends participation beyond human actors toward the wider world. Taking such a position seriously raises important questions about how participation, agency, and power are understood within educational processes. Not all participants shape learning in the same ways, nor do all relations become mutually beneficial. As argued throughout previous chapters, relations are never neutral or symmetrical; they are always structured through uneven capacities to affect and be affected (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). The question therefore becomes how participation, agency and power are distributed within more-than-human ecologies of learning and with what consequences.

Posthuman feminist scholars have given considerable thought to such questions of participation in unequal relations fields. While rejecting human superiority within more-than-human entanglements, most scholars do acknowledge that some actors possess greater capacities to shape conditions, define possibilities, and influence outcomes than others (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2022; Haraway, 2008; Sundberg, 2014; Tsing, 2015). Relationality therefore does not eliminate power; it reconfigures how power is understood and enacted. Participation in more-than-human relations thus primarily becomes a question of how to act responsibly within unequal power fields. Haraway (2016)’s notion of response-ability and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017)

understanding of more-than-human care both emphasize that participation entails obligations. To become attentive to relations is simultaneously to become accountable for how those relations are enacted and sustained.

From this perspective, the educational significance of more-than-human ecologies may not lie in dissolving asymmetries, but in learning to engage them more carefully. Educational encounters with forests, rivers, animals, or landscapes do not automatically become reciprocal simply because they are relational. While such encounters may cultivate attentiveness, wonder, and care, they may simultaneously involve forms of appropriation in which the more-than-human world continuous to represent a resource for human learning. The challenge is therefore not to create perfectly reciprocal relations – which may be impossible – but to cultivate forms of attentiveness, humility, and responsibility that acknowledge the unevenness of participation while remaining responsive to the worlds with which learning unfolds.

Questions of agency thus become questions of educational judgement and care. How can educators invite learning with the more-than-human world without instrumentalizing it? How can educational practices remain open to more-than-human participation while recognizing that humans continue to shape the aims, structures, and conditions of learning? Such questions shift attention from participation as an educational goal toward response-ability as an educational practice. More fundamentally, they raise the unresolved question of how far the human can be decentered within educational practice itself. Even within more-than-human ecologies of learning, humans continue to define many of the purposes, boundaries, and institutional conditions of education. The challenge therefore becomes not the elimination of human influence, but the cultivation of more reflexive, responsive, and accountable ways of inhabiting it.

While posthuman feminist scholars have given considerable theoretical attention to these questions, their practical implications for educational design and enactment remain comparatively underexplored. The tensions

discussed above are not easily resolved. Rather, they point to the ongoing challenge of navigating educational processes that are simultaneously intentional and emergent, relational and asymmetrical, open and accountable. How educators engage with these tensions matters, because it shapes the conditions under which more-than-human forms of learning may become possible.

## 7.3 Cultivating Conditions for More-than-Human Learning: Deep Wonder as Performative Educational Force

The tensions discussed above do not only raise theoretical questions; they also invite reflection on how more-than-human forms of learning can be enacted in educational practice. Chapter 4 explored this challenge through the lens of wild pedagogies, examining how relational commitments may be woven into the realities of higher education. The chapter introduced four interconnected relational configurations for wilding pedagogies in higher education, captured as: (1) wild and caring learning spaces, (2) learning from curiosity and wonder, (3) relational learning with the world, and (4) disruptive learning for the world. While articulated separately as heuristic entry points, the chapter showed how these dimensions are inherently overlapping and mutually reinforcing. Rather than discrete pedagogical strategies, they can be understood as interconnected threads that together create conditions through which learners may become more attentive, affected, and responsive in their relations with the world. In the following reflection, I further explore how these threads become entangled and how, together, they may contribute to forms of learning that open possibilities for relational becoming and deep environmental care.

Interpreting the four dimensions relationally, wild and caring learning spaces can be understood as providing the relational ground through which learners become more open to being affected by the world around them. As argued throughout this dissertation, such spaces are not only physical environments, but relational atmospheres cultivated through shared practices of attentiveness, trust, care, and vulnerability. Within these spaces, relational

learning with the world further deepens this orientation. Through practices such as sensory immersion, attentive observation, mindfulness, embodiment of more-than-human perspectives, and extended time with other-than-human nature, the more-than-human world begins to participate actively within the learning process itself. Learning thereby shifts from learning *about* the world toward learning *with* and *through* it.

The disruptive dimension intensifies this movement by unsettling familiar assumptions and habitual ways of being. As explored throughout Chapters 3 and 4, experiences of uncertainty, discomfort, solitude, vulnerability, and unpredictability can interrupt dominant assumptions about human exceptionalism, control, productivity, and separation from the more-than-human world. While this resonates with Mezirow (1991)'s notion of the disorienting dilemma as a catalyst for transformative learning, the forms of disruption explored through wild pedagogies are not limited to critical reflection on existing assumptions. Rather, they emerge through embodied and affective encounters with the more-than-human world that unsettle both cognitive understandings and lived experiences of human–world relations. In doing so, disruption calls into question not only what learners know, but also who they understand themselves to be within a more-than-human world. Rather than as a disturbance, disruption therefore emerges as a relational opening in education. By interrupting familiar orientations, it creates possibilities for learners to encounter both themselves and the world differently, making space for forms of attentiveness and responsiveness that might otherwise remain unavailable.

Learning from curiosity and wonder moves through and across all these dimensions as a connecting thread. This dissertation, as well as previous work, shows how wild pedagogies actively engage curiosity – or what Schinkel (2017) describes as *active wonder* – by allowing spontaneous encounters within the more-than-human world to guide learning processes. Yet curiosity alone does not necessarily alter one's relation to the world. While it may heighten awareness of, connection with, and insight into human–world relations, *deep wonder* emerges differently. Whereas curiosity

can be intentionally cultivated through educational design, deep wonder appears more unpredictable and resistant to pedagogical control. In line with Fisher (1998), wonder can be understood as arising when the world exceeds existing categories of understanding, temporarily suspending habitual ways of interpreting experience. Deep wonder therefore involves more than interest or fascination; it marks an encounter with something that cannot be immediately assimilated into what is already known.

Deep wonder arises when curiosity slows down sufficiently for learners to become profoundly affected by what they encounter. Such moments cannot be scripted, only invited through extended time with the more-than-human world and through practices that encourage slowing down, attuning the senses, loosening habitual assumptions, and becoming receptive to what exceeds immediate understanding (Schinkel, 2017). Deep wonder often takes shape through experiences of awe, mystery, humility, interconnectedness, vulnerability, or existential openness that interrupt familiar ways of perceiving and positioning oneself. In this sense, deep wonder is inherently disruptive. It unsettles anthropocentric certainties and fixed understandings of self, creating openings through which learners may encounter themselves and the world differently. As Abram (1996) suggests, such moments may involve a heightened awareness of human participation within a living and animate world that exceeds human control and comprehension. Similarly, Jardine (2012) argues that educational encounters with mystery are significant precisely because they resist reduction to mastery, certainty, or predetermined meaning. Deep wonder, from this perspective, emerges through encounters that reveal the limits of existing ways of knowing while inviting more receptive forms of engagement with the world.

Recognizing deep wonder as a performative force within wild pedagogies does not automatically translate into clear pedagogical guidance. Rather, embracing deep wonder in education comes with additional challenges. While educators may intentionally design conditions that invite curiosity, attentiveness, disruption, and relational engagement, the emergence of deep

wonder itself remains beyond educational control. Wonder cannot be prescribed as a learning outcome, nor guaranteed through educational design. Its appearance depends upon relational encounters that exceed the intentions of both educator and learner. Educators can create conditions that invite such moments, but cannot guarantee their emergence. Deep wonder as educational vehicle therefore exemplifies the broader challenge discussed in the previous section: some of the most meaningful educational experiences emerge precisely through those dimensions of learning that remain only very little controllable. As Jickling (2015) suggests, it is precisely this unpredictability that gives such educational encounters their beauty.

Viewed in this way, the four dimensions of wild pedagogies may be understood not as pedagogical starting points but as relational threads enabling receptivity. Together they cultivate possibilities for becoming affected by the world. What appears to matter most are not educational activities themselves, but the gradual creation of conditions in which learners become available to encounters that may challenge, surprise, move, or unsettle them. Deep wonder emerges within the interplay of these conditions as a performative relational event through which established ways of perceiving and relating may be momentarily reconfigured. Such moments do not necessarily produce immediate change, but they may subtly alter how learners attend and respond to the world around them.

## 7.4 Relational Becoming as Ongoing World-Making

The preceding discussion argued that wild pedagogies may cultivate conditions through which learners become more receptive to encounters with the more-than-human world. Through the interplay of care, disruption, relational engagement, curiosity, and deep wonder, such encounters may create openings in which established ways of perceiving and relating are temporarily unsettled. The question that follows is how these openings might be understood educationally. What kinds of shifts emerge when learners begin to encounter themselves and the world differently? How do they last? And how do they affect broader sustainability transitions?

Chapter 5 approached these questions through the concept of relational becoming. Drawing on participants' experiences, the chapter explored how changes in awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and action emerged through ongoing engagements with human and other-than-human worlds in educational settings. Rather than appearing as isolated outcomes, these dimensions formed an interconnected and dynamic process through which learners described changing ways of sensing, understanding, and participating (with)in the world.

Addressing the third research question concerning how processes of relational becoming take shape among students engaged in wild pedagogies-inspired learning environments, the findings in Chapter 5 suggest that such processes do emerge, albeit not in uniform or predictable ways. Participants described shifts in awareness, insight, connection, purpose, and action that together indicate changing ways of relating within the more-than-human world. Importantly, these dimensions did not appear as discrete outcomes or sequential stages, but as interconnected and mutually reinforcing movements that unfolded differently across participants and contexts. Rather than producing a singular form of transformation, wild pedagogies appeared to create conditions through which diverse processes of relational becoming could emerge.

This interpretation invites a reconsideration of dominant understandings of transformative change within sustainability scholarship. Much of this literature has focused on shifts in individual knowledge, values, attitudes, mindsets, and worldviews as key drivers of broader sustainability transitions (Bristow et al., 2024; Woiwode, 2020; Woiwode et al., 2021). While more recent approaches increasingly acknowledge that such shifts are relationally embedded and shaped through interactions with wider social and ecological systems (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021; West et al., 2024), many transformation frameworks continue to rely on distinctions between the 'inner' and the 'outer', thereby reproducing separations between humans and the worlds of which they are part.

The notion of relational becoming developed throughout this dissertation offers a reorientation of such understandings by shifting attention from transformation within individuals toward the relational and more-than-human processes through which transformation unfolds. Relational becoming emphasizes how ways of being are continuously shaped and reshaped through embodied engagements with the world (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Haraway, 2008). From this perspective, transformation is not located within the individual but emerges through the continuously evolving relations through which humans become with the world. What changes, therefore, are not only individual attitudes, values, or worldviews, but how humans as relational beings come to attend, respond, and participate within wider webs of more-than-human existence (Haraway, 2016; Tynan, 2021).

Importantly, the findings presented in Chapter 5 suggest that relational becoming does not unfold as a linear trajectory toward a stable transformed state. Rather, it emerges as a fluid and undulatory movement that swells and recedes depending on whether and how it is nourished through relational engagements over time. Participants frequently described moments of heightened connection, awareness, responsibility, or care that fluctuated throughout their lives and were often difficult to sustain amidst the demands and routines of everyday life. Relational becoming is therefore better understood as an ongoing process of world-making than as a discrete transformative event or achieved condition.

This observation carries important implications for how transformative change in education is understood. If relational becoming is not a permanent achievement but an ongoing relational process, then the question shifts from whether learners have transformed toward how particular forms of attentiveness, care, and responsiveness are cultivated, sustained, interrupted, and renewed over time. Rather than seeking lasting transformations that can be measured and secured, education may need to concern itself more with creating opportunities for recurring encounters through which relational ways of being can continue to emerge. The challenge then becomes one of

nurturing the conditions through which relational becoming can be repeatedly practiced and renewed.

At the same time, understanding transformation as relational becoming invites a more nuanced engagement with both the possibilities and limitations of transformative change through education. The processes described above concern shifts in how people relate, perceive, respond, and participate within the world. Acting on a personal-relational level, such shifts do not automatically alter the structural, political, and economic systems underpinning socio-ecological crises (Abson et al., 2017). Educational world-making practices such as wild pedagogies may contribute to reconfigurations of human–world relations, but they remain insufficient on their own to transform the systemic conditions that sustain ecological destruction and social injustice. Rather than a singular 'solution', relational becoming through wilding pedagogies should therefore be understood as one of many interwoven threads that together shape broader processes of sustainability transformation.

Ultimately, understanding transformative change as relational becoming invites a move away from instrumental and individualized understandings of transformation toward more process-oriented, situated, and ethically engaged forms of becoming with the world. Transformation then becomes not an endpoint to be achieved, but an ongoing and collective process of learning to live, respond, and care differently with(in) the worlds through which we continually become.

## 7.5 Reconsidering Deep Environmental Care

Within the ongoing movement of relational becoming with the world, deep environmental care emerges as a supposedly inextricable thread. Various posthuman feminist and indigenous scholars argue that to be in relation is always already to be implicated in practices of attentiveness, maintenance, response, and responsibility (Haraway, 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Tynan, 2021). Rather than a moral stance directed toward an external environment, care is understood as emerging through lived experiences of

interdependence and shared vulnerability. In this sense, deep environmental care emerges as a form of *caring from within*, enacted through how individuals come to notice, inhabit, and respond to the relations that sustain life.

Findings of Chapter 5 suggest that practices of wild pedagogies may contribute to the cultivation of such deep care precisely because they create conditions in which relational becoming can unfold. By inviting learners into slowed-down, embodied, multisensory, and more-than-human engagements with the world, wild pedagogies open possibilities for experiencing ecological interconnectedness as a lived relational reality. The findings show that, through experiences of attentiveness, vulnerability, connection, and deep wonder, learners begin to feel increasingly implicated within wider webs of life and shared vulnerability. Whether deep environmental care necessarily emerges from there remains, however, an open question.

This question touches upon a broader tension within relational and posthuman thought. If care is indeed implicated in relational existence itself, why do relations so often take forms characterized by neglect, exploitation, extraction, and violence? As Haraway (2016) and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) remind us, relationality does not automatically generate care. Humans are already deeply entangled in ecological relations, yet many of these relations sustain systems of domination and destruction rather than mutual flourishing. Viewed from this perspective, the persistence of socio-ecological crises may itself be understood as illustrating the consequences of failing to care for the relations upon which life depends. It makes visible how the relations sustaining life continue to exert their influence whether they are acknowledged or not. Relations can be ignored, denied, or exploited, but they cannot ultimately be escaped. Ecological degradation, biodiversity loss, climate disruption, and social fragmentation all reveal how neglecting the conditions that sustain life eventually undermines the systems of which humans themselves are part. The question therefore becomes not whether humans are relational, but whether societies can learn to respond to ecological interdependence before the degradation of those relations

undermines the conditions upon which more-than-human flourishing depends. Whether such recognition can emerge in time remains another open question.

Yet framing the challenge in this way may still suggest that care is something that can ultimately be achieved once humans recognize their ecological interdependence. Care scholars have repeatedly challenged such assumptions. For example Mol (2008) argues that care is not a stable achievement or moral state but an ongoing practice of maintenance, adjustment, and responsiveness. Care is therefore never finished. It requires continual work because the worlds and relations being cared for are themselves constantly changing. This insight resonates strongly with the understanding of relational becoming developed throughout this dissertation. Just as relational becoming emerged not as a permanent transformation but as an undulatory movement that swells and recedes over time, deep environmental care may likewise be understood as something that must continually be enacted, renewed, and renegotiated through practice.

Viewed in this way, deep environmental care can be understood as an ongoing commitment to staying responsive to a world that continuously unfolds through relations that remain only partially knowable and controllable. Rather than asking whether individuals have become caring, the more relevant question may be how practices, relationships, communities, and educational spaces can sustain ongoing attentiveness to the vulnerabilities and dependencies that make life possible. Care, in this sense, shifts from a personal moral choice to a collective and relational accomplishment that must continually be woven into the worlds we inhabit. Such weaving is inherently future-oriented. To care is not only to respond to present relations, but also to participate in sustaining the conditions under which future forms of more-than-human life may flourish. Deep environmental care may therefore be understood as an ongoing practice of world-making through which more livable futures are continually sustained, negotiated, and woven into existence.

Yet care alone does not resolve the uncertainty that accompanies life in times of socio-ecological crisis. To remain attentive and responsive to vulnerable relations also means remaining open to grief, loss, and the possibility that efforts to care may not be sufficient (Haraway, 2016; Macy & Johnstone, 2012). What sustains practices of care under such conditions therefore becomes an important question. This directs attention toward the role of hope, not as optimism or certainty, but as a way of remaining engaged with futures that cannot be known in advance.

## 7.6 Nourishing Constructive Hope for Uncertain Futures

As discussions of care increasingly engage with questions of vulnerability, uncertainty, and future flourishing, they inevitably encounter questions of hope. Hope has become an important concept within scholarship on socio-ecological crises because it speaks to how individuals and communities continue to engage with futures that remain deeply uncertain.

Within public and political debates, hope is often associated with optimism, confidence, or the expectation that problems will eventually be resolved. Such understandings have been criticized for encouraging passivity, particularly when hope becomes detached from meaningful engagement with present realities (McInerney, 2007; Sköld, 2026). Constructive hope, as developed by Ojala (2017, 2023), offers a different orientation. Constructive hope acknowledges the severity of socio-ecological crises while sustaining engagement with them. It draws upon experiences of meaning, connection, trust, collective action, and perceived agency, enabling individuals and communities to remain engaged even when outcomes remain uncertain.

From such a perspective, hope cannot be reduced to an individual psychological state or a belief about the future. Hope emerges through relationships, practices, communities, and shared ways of making sense of uncertain futures (Nairn, 2019). It is cultivated through experiences of belonging, solidarity, and participation in worlds that are larger than oneself (Haraway, 2016; Ojala, 2023). In this sense, hope is relationally constituted in much the same way as learning, becoming, and care. It emerges through

engagements with others, with places, and with more-than-human worlds that allow possibilities for the future to remain visible and meaningful.

Hope also carries an important performative dimension. As argued by Oomen et al. (2022), futures do not simply await realization somewhere ahead of the present. Rather, they are continuously enacted through present relations, practices, and imaginaries. Hope participates in these processes by shaping what individuals and collectives perceive as possible, worthwhile, and worthy of care. It influences which futures are imagined, which actions are undertaken, and which relationships are sustained. In this sense, hope functions as a practice of futuring. Through hope, people orient themselves toward possibilities that do not yet exist while simultaneously participating in the conditions through which such possibilities may emerge.

This understanding of hope is particularly relevant in educational contexts that frequently emphasize scientific knowledge, problem-solving capacities with regard to sustainability, while giving less attention to the existential and emotional challenges of living within conditions of ecological uncertainty (Ojala, 2016). Yet ecological crises are experienced not only as cognitive challenges but also as experiences of grief, fear, anger, loss, and vulnerability. Research increasingly suggests that meaningful engagement with such emotions plays an important role in sustaining long-term environmental engagement (Nørgård & Holflod, 2024; Ojala, 2017, 2023).

The empirical material explored throughout this dissertation offers several illustrations of this dynamic. Across the courses studied, participants were invited to engage with ecological uncertainty emotionally, relationally, and bodily rather than solely cognitively. Practices inspired by Joanna Macy's Work That Reconnects (2012) created opportunities for participants to engage with grief, fear, anger, and despair in relation to ecological degradation and uncertain futures. Through shared reflection, embodied practices, and encounters with the other-than-human world, participants often described shifts toward renewed experiences of connection and hope.

Importantly, hope itself remains fragile and situated. Like relational becoming and care, it requires continual renewal. Experiences of hope may strengthen, fade, or be transformed depending on the relational conditions through which they are sustained (Macy & Johnstone, 2012; Ojala, 2023). Educational spaces therefore cannot produce hope as an outcome. They can, however, cultivate conditions in which learners are able to engage with uncertainty collectively, remain connected to what they value, and participate in practices that keep possibilities for the future open.

Constructive hope can thus be understood as another thread within the weaving of wilder futures. Emerging through ongoing encounters with wonder, care, vulnerability, and shared responsibility, hope contributes to forms of futuring grounded in relational responsiveness rather than certainty. It sustains engagement with futures that cannot be predicted while supporting participation in the ongoing work of shaping how those futures may unfold.

Yet the challenges for the future go beyond ethico-onto-epistemological and pedagogical concerns, they also raise questions about how such relational processes can be studied in the first place. If learning, becoming, care, and hope emerge through dynamic relations among humans, places, materials, and more-than-human worlds, then the challenge extends beyond educational practice toward research itself. This brings the discussion to the fourth research question concerning how qualitative inquiry may be reconfigured to align with relational and more-than-human understandings of learning and becoming.

## 7.7 Revisiting Methodological Wilding Through Relational Meaning-Making

Whereas the first three research questions in this dissertation primarily engaged with conceptual and pedagogical understandings of relational becoming within a more-than-human world, the fourth research question turned attention toward their methodological implications. Building on relational, mobile, and more-than-human methodological approaches,

Chapter 6 explored methodological wilding as an ethico-onto-epistemological reorientation that seeks to cultivate greater openness, attentiveness, and responsiveness to the situated, embodied, affective, and more-than-human conditions through which experience and knowledge emerge. Working with walking interviews as a method, practices such as sensory attunement, movement, grounding, and openness to spontaneity were explored as ways of engaging more directly with the relational entanglements that shape learning and becoming.

The methodological reflections developed throughout Chapter 6 suggest that researching relational becoming requires more than adapting existing methods to new theoretical assumptions. Rather, it raises broader questions concerning what counts as knowledge, how knowledge emerges, and how much control researchers can and should exercise over the research process. Similar to the tensions explored throughout the pedagogical discussions in this chapter, methodological wilding brings into view a series of challenges concerning emergence, participation, situatedness, and methodological control. Revisiting these tensions provides an opportunity to reflect on what it means to conduct inquiry within relational and more-than-human worlds.

A first tension concerns the understanding of knowledge itself. Relational and posthuman approaches to inquiry challenge conventional assumptions that knowledge exists as an objective representation of an independent reality waiting to be discovered. Instead, scholars such as Barad (2007) argue that knowing emerges through situated intra-actions among humans, materialities, places, and more-than-human worlds. Likewise, Haraway (1988) emphasizes that all knowledge is partial and situated, shaped by who listens and who is listened to (and importantly: who is not). Such critiques have led many scholars to speak not of knowledge in the singular, but of multiple knowledges, thereby acknowledging the plurality and situatedness of ways of knowing.

Yet these interventions also leave open a deeper question: what exactly is knowledge if it is no longer understood as universal, objective, or detached

from the world? While posthuman, feminist, and postqualitative scholars have extensively destabilized traditional epistemological assumptions, the concept of knowledge itself remains surprisingly elusive. The term often continues to carry connotations of something that can be acquired, possessed, accumulated, or transferred, even when relational ontologies simultaneously suggest that knowing emerges through ongoing participation within a world that is constantly unfolding.

Tim Ingold's work offers an important contribution to this discussion. Rather than understanding knowledge as something stored within the mind, Ingold (2011a, 2021) proposes the notion of *correspondence* to describe how understanding emerges through attentive engagement with the world. Knowing, from this perspective, is not a matter of accumulating representations of reality, but of learning to respond and attend within ongoing relations. Understanding as such develops through participation rather than possession. Across these perspectives, the emphasis shifts away from knowledge as a stable entity and toward knowing as an ongoing relational practice.

Viewed through the lens of this dissertation, the concept of *meaning-making* (Ingold, 2011a) may offer a useful complement to the language of knowledge. Meaning-making foregrounds process rather than outcome, the whole body rather than only the mind, participation rather than possession, and becoming rather than attainment. In line with relational understandings of knowledge-making, it directs attention toward how humans continuously interpret, negotiate, and reconfigure their relations with the world. The experiences described by participants throughout this study arguably speak less to the acquisition of new knowledge than to shifts in how the world comes to matter. What changed was not simply what participants knew, but how they understood themselves in relation to the wider webs of life of which they are part.

Methodological wilding can be understood as one attempt to create conditions for relational processes of meaning-making. Through practices

such as movement, sensory attunement, grounding, and openness to spontaneity, wilding approaches, such as walking interviews, create opportunities for meanings to emerge through encounters among participants, researchers, landscapes, memories, and other-than-human presences. Yet this raises a further question concerning who makes the meaning. If knowledge is no longer understood as residing within individual human minds, how do we understand meaning-making?

Posthuman, indigenous and feminist scholars have given considerable thought to questions like this one. For example Barad (2007), Despret (2016), Tynan (2021), and Ingold (2011a, 2021) each suggest in different ways that meaning emerges through participation in relational processes rather than through human interpretation alone. Meaning is neither imposed upon the world nor simply discovered within it. Instead, it unfolds through ongoing engagements in which human and other-than-human worlds mutually shape what becomes sensible, significant, and worthy of attention.

This perspective resonates strongly with the findings of this dissertation. As highlighted in Chapter 5 and 6, participants often described experiences in which meanings appeared to arise through embodied encounters with landscapes, other beings, or moments of deep wonder. Participants described such moments as becoming affected, noticing differently, or finding themselves drawn into new understandings of their place within wider webs of life. Meaning, in these moments, appeared as something emergent within relational encounters rather than something generated solely through individual cognition.

At the same time, understanding meaning as relationally emergent draws attention to the situated conditions through which meanings become possible. If meaning arises through encounters within more-than-human worlds, it cannot be detached from the particular configurations through which it emerges. The meanings explored throughout this dissertation were shaped by specific educational practices, landscapes, institutional conditions, and participants. They emerged within courses inspired by wild pedagogies,

situated within the rural surroundings of Wageningen and involving students who voluntarily engaged with these forms of learning.

Rather than merely constituting limitations of the study, these conditions reveal something fundamental about relational inquiry itself. Meaning does not emerge everywhere in the same way. Different landscapes, educational contexts, institutional structures, and cultural histories may invite different forms of attentiveness, different encounters, and consequently different possibilities for meaning-making. The question is therefore how different relational conditions shape what becomes meaningful.

This points toward an important avenue for future research. Further exploration of wild pedagogies and methodological wilding across a broader diversity of educational, geographical, and cultural contexts may deepen understanding of how relational processes of learning, meaning-making, and becoming take shape under different conditions. Such inquiry would not seek to identify universal patterns of meaning, but rather to explore the diverse ways in which human and other-than-human worlds participate in the ongoing emergence of meaning.

Taken together, these reflections suggest that reconfiguring qualitative inquiry within relational and more-than-human ontologies involves more than adopting new methods. It requires a shift in how inquiry itself is understood. Methodological wilding approaches inquiry as a situated practice of participating in and making meaning with a world that continuously unfolds through relations. Walking interviews represent one possible enactment of this orientation by creating opportunities for attentiveness, correspondence, and relational meaning-making to emerge through movement and engagement with place. The contribution of methodological wilding lies in cultivating conditions through which inquiry can remain responsive to the relational, embodied, affective, and more-than-human dimensions of experience. In doing so, it offers one possible response to the fourth research question by illustrating how qualitative inquiry may be reconfigured to align more closely with relational understandings of

learning, knowing and becoming. The meanings that emerge through such inquiry not only shape understandings of the present, but also influence how humans come to imagine, inhabit, and respond to the worlds to come.

## 7.8 Weaving Wilder Futures

The journey of this dissertation started with the question of whether and in what ways practices of wild pedagogies in higher education may contribute to relational becoming with the world among students in times of ongoing ecological crisis. The conceptual, pedagogical, empirical, and methodological explorations presented throughout this work suggest that wild pedagogies may indeed contribute to relational becoming with the world by cultivating conditions through which learners may become more attentive, affected, responsive, and connected within the more-than-human world they inhabit.

Seeking to move beyond educational approaches that position humans as separate from the world, this dissertation engaged with wild pedagogies as more-than-human ecologies of learning in which learning emerges through ongoing relations among humans, places, and other-than-human beings. Wild pedagogies were conceptualized as a relational pedagogical orientation that invites openness to uncertainty, emergence, and participation within more-than-human worlds. At the same time, wild pedagogies carry a disruptive impulse by challenging dominant educational assumptions grounded in control, predictability, productivity, and human exceptionalism. Their contribution to sustainability education therefore lies not only in fostering learning in and with the world, but also in unsettling the ontological and pedagogical assumptions that continue to position humans apart from it. In doing so, wild pedagogies create possibilities for learning with and as part of the world, opening pathways for relational becoming and deep environmental care.

Regarding how such relational commitments may be enacted within higher education, the dissertation identified four interconnected dimensions to guide educational practice: wild and caring learning spaces, learning from curiosity

and wonder, relational learning with the world, and disruptive learning for the world. Together, these dimensions function as relational conditions that cultivate receptivity toward encounters within the more-than-human world. Within the interplay of these dimensions, deep wonder emerged as a particularly significant performative force, creating openings through which established ways of perceiving and relating may become unsettled and reconfigured.

In exploring in what ways, if any, experiences with wild pedagogies foster processes of relational becoming among students, participants' accounts point toward interconnected movements toward greater relational awareness of the more-than-human world, new understandings of human–world relations, deeper affective connections, reconsiderations of purpose and responsibility, and more responsive forms of action for the world. Rather than representing a stable transformed state, relational becoming appeared as an ongoing and undulatory process that unfolds through continued engagement within more-than-human worlds. From this perspective, transformative change can be reconceptualized not as something that occurs within autonomous individuals, but as a relational process through which ways of being are continuously negotiated and renewed. Deep environmental care emerged as an important thread within these processes, although its emergence remains contingent, situated, and always incomplete.

Finally, addressing the fourth research question concerning how qualitative inquiry can be aligned with relational and more-than-human understandings of learning and becoming, this dissertation argued that researching relational becoming requires methodological approaches capable of engaging the situated, embodied, affective, and more-than-human conditions through which experience emerges. Through the development of methodological wilding and the use of walking interviews, the study explored how qualitative inquiry may be reconfigured as a relational practice of attentiveness and meaning-making. Rather than treating knowledge as something extracted and represented, methodological wilding approaches inquiry as participation within ongoing processes through which meanings

emerge among researchers, participants, places, and more-than-human worlds.

Viewed through the lens of futuring, wild pedagogies may be understood as practices of relational world-making. By creating conditions for relational becoming, they invite learners into different ways of perceiving, inhabiting, and responding within more-than-human worlds. Such processes remain partial, situated, and contingent. They do not offer a ready-made solution to socio-ecological crises, nor do they automatically translate into broader societal transformation. Their significance lies in cultivating possibilities for becoming differently with the world and, through those shifts in relation, contributing to the ongoing formation of alternative futures. Futures do not emerge independently of present ways of learning, caring, imagining, and responding; they take shape through the relations enacted today. The significance of wild pedagogies therefore extends beyond education itself to the kinds of worlds they help bring into being. Ultimately, the question is not what future awaits us, but what futures become possible through the relations we choose to cultivate today.

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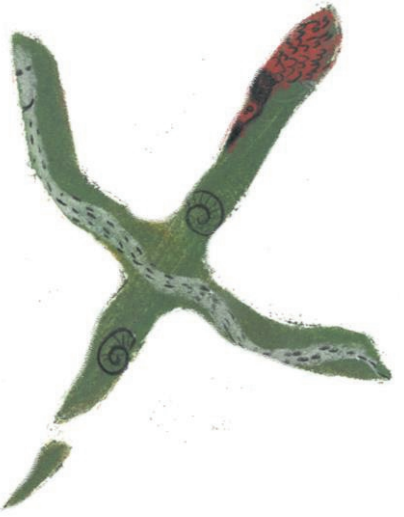
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# Summary

Contemporary socio-ecological crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and widespread ecological degradation, increasingly point toward the failure of dominant ways of knowing, being, and organizing life that position humans as separate from and superior to the more-than-human world. Rather than isolated environmental problems, these crises reveal profound disruptions in the relations that sustain more-than-human flourishing.

As a key institution through which dominant assumptions, values, and ways of relating are reproduced and legitimized, education is deeply implicated in both the persistence of these crises and efforts to respond to them. Questions of how humans learn to relate to the world therefore become central educational concerns. While such questions extend across the lifespan, higher education constitutes a particularly significant context in which to explore them. Young adulthood is widely recognized as a formative period in which identities, values, worldviews, and orientations toward the future are actively in formation, while young adults increasingly encounter ecological uncertainty, environmental degradation, and concerns about the future as part of their educational experiences. Higher education therefore becomes an important space in which learners may explore what it means to live, learn, and become within a changing more-than-human world. Against this backdrop, this dissertation examines the potential of wild pedagogies as an educational response to the converging socio-ecological crises of our time.

The central aim of the dissertation was to explore in what ways, if any, wild pedagogies in higher education foster relational becoming with the world among students in times of socio-ecological crisis. Four research questions guided this journey: (1) How can wild pedagogies be conceptualized within more-than-human relational ontologies? (2) How can wild pedagogies be enacted as more-than-human ecologies of learning within higher education? (3) In what ways, if any, do processes of relational becoming emerge among higher education students engaged in wild pedagogies-inspired learning environments? And (4) How can qualitative inquiry be reconfigured to align

with relational and more-than-human understandings of learning and becoming?

**Chapter 1** introduces the theoretical and societal context of the dissertation. Drawing on indigenous and posthuman feminist scholarship, it argues that contemporary socio-ecological crises can be understood as symptoms of dominant ways of knowing and being that position humans as separate from and superior to the more-than-human world. In response, the chapter develops a relational framing of learning and becoming, introducing the concepts of more-than-human learning ecologies and relational becoming as central lenses through which educational processes are explored throughout the dissertation. Engaging with the concept of (re)wilding, the chapter further introduces wild pedagogies as a relational educational response that seeks to cultivate more reciprocal, attentive, and participatory forms of learning with the world. Finally, the chapter positions deep environmental care as an important future-oriented aspiration of such learning processes and outlines the research objectives, research questions, and overall structure of the dissertation.

**Chapter 2** develops the onto-epistemological and methodological foundations of the dissertation. Building on posthuman feminist and relational scholarship, the chapter approaches research as relational process that emerges through ongoing engagements within more-than-human worlds. This perspective challenges conventional assumptions that position knowledge as detached from the contexts and relations through which it arises and instead emphasizes situatedness, embodiment, and relational participation. The chapter also explores the implications of relational ontologies for researcher positionality.

These commitments are translated into a qualitative research approach designed to remain attentive to the relational and more-than-human dimensions of experience. The chapter introduces the collective case study through which the dissertation explores practices of wild pedagogies in higher education and discusses the role of participatory immersion, reflective inquiry, and walking interviews in engaging with students' experiences.

Addressing the first research question, **Chapter 3** explores how wild pedagogies can be understood within more-than-human relational ontologies. Through engagement with scholarship on sustainability education, environmental education, outdoor learning, transformative learning, and posthuman approaches to education, the chapter identifies the emergence of what is described as a '*wild turn'* in sustainability education. This turn reflects growing efforts to move beyond educational approaches that position humans as detached observers of the world toward forms of learning that acknowledge humans as participants within more-than-human relations.

Within this broader development, the chapter conceptualizes wild pedagogies as a more-than-human ecology of learning. Rather than approaching learning as a process that occurs primarily within individual minds, wild pedagogies are understood as relational educational practices through which learning emerges among places, humans, and other-than-human beings alike. The chapter further argues that wild pedagogies are characterized by a distinctive openness to uncertainty, emergence, and spontaneity, while simultaneously carrying a disruptive impulse that challenges assumptions of human exceptionalism, control, predictability, and productivity. In doing so, the chapter establishes the conceptual foundations upon which the remainder of the dissertation builds.

Addressing the second research question, **Chapter 4** explores how wild pedagogies may be enacted as more-than-human ecologies of learning within higher education. Building on the conceptual foundations developed in Chapter 3 and drawing on empirical insights from the case studies, the chapter examines how relational commitments can be translated into educational practice. Rather than proposing a fixed pedagogical model, the chapter seeks to identify conditions through which relational becoming with the world may be supported.

This exploration resulted in four interconnected domains of wild pedagogical practice: (1) wild and caring learning spaces, (2) learning from curiosity and wonder, (3) relational learning with the world, and (4) disruptive learning for the world. Together, these domains describe ways in which educational practices can cultivate attentiveness, openness, participation, and care within

more-than-human learning environments. Rather than functioning as separate pedagogical strategies, they overlap and interact, creating conditions through which learners may encounter themselves and the world differently.

The chapter further highlights the importance of deep wonder as a particularly significant force within these learning processes. Experiences of deep wonder have the capacity to interrupt habitual assumptions, invite openness toward uncertainty, and create opportunities for new ways of perceiving and relating to emerge. In this sense, deep wonder functions as a performative force that helps facilitate processes of relational becoming. Through articulating these four domains and the role of deep wonder within them, the chapter offers a practical and conceptual framework for enacting wild pedagogies in higher education.

**Chapter 5** addresses the third research question by exploring in what ways, if any, processes of relational becoming emerge among students engaged in wild pedagogies-inspired learning environments. Drawing on participants' experiences across the three case studies, the chapter develops *relational becoming* as a sensitizing concept for understanding how educational experiences may contribute to shifts in how learners perceive, relate to, and participate within more-than-human worlds.

The findings suggest that experiences with wild pedagogies can support processes of relational becoming through interconnected movements of relational awareness of the more-than-human world, new understandings of human–world relations, affective connection with the more-than-human world, reconsiderations of purpose and responsibility, and more responsive forms of action for the world. Rather than emerging as separate stages, these dimensions appeared as mutually reinforcing and dynamically intertwined aspects of a broader relational process.

Importantly, relational becoming did not emerge as a stable transformed state or educational outcome. Instead, participants' experiences suggest an ongoing and undulatory movement that swells and recedes through continued engagement within more-than-human worlds. From this perspective, transformation is understood not as something that occurs

within autonomous individuals, but as a relational process through which ways of being are continuously negotiated, renewed, and reconfigured within changing webs of relation.

The chapter further identifies *deep environmental care* as an important thread emerging within these processes. Rather than approaching care as an individual attitude or moral obligation, care is conceptualized as emerging through lived experiences of interdependence, vulnerability, and relational entanglement. Deep environmental care thus appears as a form of caring from within, arising through how learners come to notice, inhabit, and respond to the relations that sustain life. In doing so, the chapter provides the empirical foundation for the dissertation's broader argument that wild pedagogies may contribute to more caring and responsive ways of becoming with the world.

**Chapter 6** addresses the fourth research question by exploring how qualitative inquiry may be reconfigured to align with relational and more-than-human understandings of learning and becoming. Building on the onto-epistemological commitments developed in Chapter 2 and the empirical experiences discussed in Chapter 5, the chapter examines the methodological implications of taking relational ontology seriously. If learning and becoming emerge through ongoing relations within more-than-human worlds, questions arise concerning how such processes can be studied without reproducing assumptions of separation, representation, and methodological control.

In response, the chapter develops the notion of *methodological wilding* as an ethico-onto-epistemological reorientation of qualitative inquiry. Methodological wilding seeks to cultivate greater openness, attentiveness, and responsiveness to the situated, embodied, affective, and more-than-human conditions through which experience and meaning emerge. Drawing on the walking interviews that were part of the study, the chapter explores how practices such as movement, sensory attunement, grounding, and openness to spontaneity may create opportunities for engaging more directly with the relational entanglements that shape learning and becoming.

Beyond methodological innovation, the chapter engages with broader questions concerning knowledge, meaning-making, participation, and representation within relational research. It argues that inquiry may be understood as a situated practice of participating in and making meaning with a world that continuously unfolds through relations. At the same time, the chapter critically reflects on the tensions and limitations that accompany such an approach, including questions of asymmetry, partiality, and response-ability. Rather than offering a definitive methodological solution, methodological wilding is presented as an ongoing practice of remaining attentive and accountable within the relational worlds of which research itself forms a part.

**Chapter 7** brings together the conceptual, pedagogical, empirical, and methodological threads developed throughout the dissertation. Drawing on the concepts of weaving and futuring, the chapter moves beyond the individual research questions to consider the broader significance of wild pedagogies in times of socio-ecological crises. Rather than treating futures as predetermined destinations waiting to unfold, the chapter approaches them as continuously emerging through present relations, practices, and ways of meaning-making.

Building on the findings of the preceding chapters, the discussion explores how wild pedagogies, relational becoming, deep wonder, deep environmental care, constructive hope, and methodological wilding can each be understood as important threads within the ongoing weaving of more livable futures. Within the context of wilding pedagogies, relational becoming is reconsidered as an ongoing and undulatory process through which humans continuously negotiate their place within a more-than-human world. Deep wonder is discussed as a performative force capable of unsettling habitual assumptions and opening possibilities for new ways of relating. Additionally, deep environmental care is explored as an emergent quality of such becoming, while constructive hope is approached as a way of remaining engaged with uncertain futures.

The chapter further reflects on the methodological implications of doing research within relational ontologies. Revisiting questions of knowledge, meaning-making, participation, and situatedness, it argues that relational

inquiry requires ongoing attentiveness to the conditions through which meanings emerge. Methodological wilding is therefore reconsidered as a practice of remaining responsive and accountable within the relational worlds that research seeks to understand.

Taken together, these reflections position wild pedagogies as practices of futuring. By creating conditions through which learners may become more attentive, affected, responsive, and connected within the more-than-human world, wild pedagogies contribute to the cultivation of alternative ways of sensing, relating, caring, and participating. While such processes remain partial, situated, and contingent, they may help nurture forms of relational becoming and deep environmental care that support more hopeful and responsive engagements with uncertain futures.



# Samenvatting

Hedendaagse sociaal-ecologische crises, waaronder klimaatverandering, biodiversiteitsverlies en grootschalige ecologische degradatie, wijzen steeds nadrukkelijker op het falen van dominante manieren van kennen, zijn en samenleven die mensen positioneren als gescheiden van en superieur aan de meer-dan-menselijke wereld. Deze crises zijn geen op zichzelf staande milieuproblemen, maar maken diepgaande verstoringen zichtbaar in de relaties die het floreren van zowel mensen als andere levensvormen mogelijk maken.

Als belangrijke maatschappelijke institutie waarin dominante aannames, waarden en manieren van relateren worden gereproduceerd en gelegitimeerd, is onderwijs nauw verweven met zowel het voortbestaan van deze crises als pogingen om erop te reageren. Vragen over hoe mensen leren zich tot de wereld te verhouden worden daarmee centrale onderwijskundige vraagstukken. Hoewel dergelijke vragen gedurende de gehele levensloop relevant zijn, vormt het hoger onderwijs een bijzonder betekenisvolle context om deze te onderzoeken. Jongvolwassenheid wordt algemeen beschouwd als een vormende levensfase waarin identiteiten, waarden, wereldbeelden en toekomstoriëntaties actief worden ontwikkeld, terwijl jongvolwassenen tegelijkertijd steeds vaker worden geconfronteerd met ecologische onzekerheid, milieudegradatie en zorgen over de toekomst als onderdeel van hun onderwijs. Het hoger onderwijs wordt daarmee een belangrijke ruimte waarin studenten kunnen onderzoeken wat het betekent om te leven, leren en worden binnen een veranderende meer-dan-menselijke wereld. Tegen deze achtergrond onderzoekt dit proefschrift het potentieel van wilde pedagogiek als een educatieve respons op de samenkomende sociaal-ecologische crises van onze tijd.

Het centrale doel van dit proefschrift was te onderzoeken op welke manieren, indien aanwezig, wilde pedagogiek in het hoger onderwijs zogenoemd ‘relationeel worden’ (*relational becoming*) met de wereld onder studenten kan bevorderen in tijden van sociaal-ecologische crises. Vier onderzoeksvragen stonden daarbij centraal: (1) Hoe kan wilde pedagogiek worden geconceptualiseerd binnen een meer-dan-menselijke relationele

ontologie? (2) Hoe kan wilde pedagogiek vorm krijgen als meer-dan-menselijke ecologieën van leren binnen het hoger onderwijs? (3) Op welke manieren, indien aanwezig, ontstaan processen van relationeel worden onder studenten die deelnemen aan leeromgevingen geïnspireerd door wilde pedagogiek? en (4) Hoe kan kwalitatief onderzoek worden heringericht zodat het aansluit bij relationele en meer-dan-menselijke opvattingen van leren en worden?

**Hoofdstuk 1** introduceert de theoretische en maatschappelijke context van het proefschrift. Vanuit inheemse en posthumanistische, feministische literatuur wordt betoogd dat hedendaagse sociaal-ecologische crises kunnen worden begrepen als symptomen van dominante manieren van kennen en zijn die mensen positioneren als gescheiden van en superieur aan de meer-dan-menselijke wereld. Als alternatief ontwikkelt het hoofdstuk een relationeel perspectief op leren en worden, waarbij de concepten meer-dan-menselijke leerecologieën en ‘relationeel worden’ worden geïntroduceerd als centrale lenzen waarmee onderwijsprocessen in het gehele proefschrift worden onderzocht.

Voortbouwend op het concept van (her)verwildering introduceert het hoofdstuk wilde pedagogiek als een relationele onderwijsbenadering die gericht is op het cultiveren van wederkerige, aandachtige en participatieve vormen van leren met de wereld. Ten slotte positioneert het hoofdstuk *diepe zorg voor de aarde* als een belangrijke toekomstgericht streven van dergelijke leerprocessen en presenteert het de onderzoeksdoelen, onderzoeksvragen en de opbouw van het proefschrift.

**Hoofdstuk 2** ontwikkelt de onto-epistemologische en methodologische achtergrond van het proefschrift. Voortbouwend op posthumanistische feministische en relationele perspectieven benadert het hoofdstuk onderzoek als een relationeel proces dat ontstaat door voortdurende betrokkenheid binnen meer-dan-menselijke werelden. Deze benadering bevraagt conventionele aannames die kennis loskoppelen van de contexten en relaties waaruit zij voortkomt, en benadrukt in plaats daarvan context, belichaming en relationele participatie. Het hoofdstuk onderzoekt ook wat relationele aannames betekenen voor de positie van de onderzoeker.

Deze uitgangspunten worden vertaald naar een kwalitatieve onderzoeksbenadering die aandacht heeft voor de relationele en meer-dan-menselijke dimensies van ervaring. Het hoofdstuk introduceert de collectieve casestudie waarmee praktijken van wilde pedagogiek in het hoger onderwijs worden onderzocht en bespreekt de rol van participatieve immersie, reflectieve vragenlijsten en wandelinterviews in het verkennen van ervaringen van studenten.

Ter beantwoording van de eerste onderzoeksvraag onderzoekt **hoofdstuk 3** hoe wilde pedagogiek kan worden begrepen binnen een meer-dan-menselijke relationele ontologie. Door in gesprek te gaan met literatuur over duurzaamheidsonderwijs, milieueducatie, buitenonderwijs, transformatief leren en posthumanistische benaderingen van onderwijs, identificeert het hoofdstuk de opkomst van wat wordt beschreven als een 'wilde wending' (*wild turn*) binnen duurzaamheidsonderwijs. Deze ontwikkeling weerspiegelt toenemende pogingen om voorbij onderwijsbenaderingen te gaan waarin mensen worden gepositioneerd als losstaande observatoren van de wereld, richting vormen van leren die mensen erkennen als deelnemers binnen meer-dan-menselijke relaties.

Binnen deze bredere ontwikkeling conceptualiseert het hoofdstuk wilde pedagogiek als een meer-dan-menselijke ecologie van leren. Leren wordt daarbij niet primair opgevat als een proces dat zich afspeelt binnen individuen, maar als een relationele praktijk die ontstaat tussen plaatsen, mensen en meer-dan-menselijke entiteiten. Het hoofdstuk betoogt verder dat wilde pedagogiek wordt gekenmerkt door een uitgesproken openheid voor onzekerheid en spontaniteit, terwijl zij tegelijkertijd een ontwrichtende dimensie bevat die aannames over menselijke uitzonderingsposities, controle, voorspelbaarheid en productiviteit ter discussie stelt. Daarmee legt het hoofdstuk de conceptuele basis voor de rest van het proefschrift.

Ter beantwoording van de tweede onderzoeksvraag onderzoekt **hoofdstuk 4** hoe wilde pedagogiek vorm kan krijgen als meer-dan-menselijke ecologie van leren binnen het hoger onderwijs. Voortbouwend op de conceptuele fundamenten uit hoofdstuk 3 en empirische inzichten uit de casestudies

verkent het hoofdstuk hoe relationele uitgangspunten kunnen worden vertaald naar onderwijspraktijken. In plaats van een vast pedagogisch model voor te stellen, richt het hoofdstuk zich op het identificeren van voorwaarden waaronder ‘relationeel worden met de wereld’ kan worden ondersteund.

Deze verkenning resulteerde in vier onderling verbonden domeinen van wilde pedagogische praktijk: (1) wilde en zorgzame leeromgevingen, (2) leren vanuit nieuwsgierigheid en verwondering, (3) relationeel leren met de wereld en (4) disruptief leren voor de wereld. Samen beschrijven deze domeinen manieren waarop onderwijspraktijken aandachtigheid, openheid, spontaniteit en zorg binnen meer-dan-menselijke werelden kunnen cultiveren. In plaats van afzonderlijke pedagogische strategieën te vormen, overlappen en versterken zij elkaar en creëren zij omstandigheden waarin studenten zichzelf en de wereld op nieuwe manieren kunnen ontmoeten.

Daarnaast benadrukt het hoofdstuk het belang van diepe verwondering als een bijzonder krachtige factor binnen deze leerprocessen. Ervaringen van diepe verwondering hebben het vermogen om vanzelfsprekende aannames te doorbreken, openheid voor onzekerheid uit te nodigen en ruimte te creëren voor nieuwe manieren van waarnemen en relateren. In deze zin functioneert diepe verwondering als een performatieve kracht die processen van relationeel worden ondersteunt. Door deze vier domeinen en de rol van diepe verwondering te articuleren, biedt het hoofdstuk een praktisch en conceptueel kader voor de vormgeving van wilde pedagogiek in het hoger onderwijs.

**Hoofdstuk 5** behandelt de derde onderzoeksvraag door te onderzoeken op welke manieren processen van relationeel worden ontstaan onder studenten die leren in leeromgevingen geïnspireerd door wilde pedagogiek. Op basis van ervaringen van deelnemers binnen de drie casestudies ontwikkelt het hoofdstuk ‘relationeel worden’ als een conceptueel kader om te begrijpen hoe onderwijs kan bijdragen aan verschuivingen in de manier waarop studenten de meer-dan-menselijke wereld waarnemen, zich ertoe verhouden en eraan deelnemen.

De bevindingen suggereren dat ervaringen met wilde pedagogiek processen van relationeel worden kunnen ondersteunen via onderling verbonden bewegingen van relationeel bewustzijn van de meer-dan-menselijke wereld, nieuwe inzichten in mens-wereldrelaties, affectieve verbondenheid met de meer-dan-menselijke wereld, heroverwegingen van doelen en verantwoordelijkheden en meer responsieve vormen van handelen voor de wereld. Deze dimensies verschenen niet als afzonderlijke fasen, maar als dynamisch verweven aspecten van een breder relationeel proces.

Belangrijk is dat relationeel worden niet naar voren kwam als een stabiele getransformeerde toestand of onderwijsuitkomst. De ervaringen van deelnemers wijzen eerder op een voortdurende golvende beweging die aanzwelt en weer afneemt door wisselende betrokkenheid bij menselijke en meer-dan-menselijke werelden. Vanuit dit perspectief wordt transformatie begrepen als een relationeel proces waarin manieren van zijn voortdurend worden hervormd binnen veranderende netwerken van relaties.

Het hoofdstuk identificeert daarnaast *diepe zorg voor de aarde* als een belangrijke draad die door deze processen heen loopt. Zorg wordt daarbij niet opgevat als een individuele houding of morele verplichting, maar als iets dat ontstaat vanuit geleefde ervaringen van onderlinge afhankelijkheid, kwetsbaarheid en relationele verstrengeling. Diepe zorg voor de aarde verschijnt daarmee als een vorm van zorg van binnenuit, die ontstaat door de manier waarop studenten de relaties die leven mogelijk maken leren opmerken en zich ermee verbinden.

**Hoofdstuk 6** behandelt de vierde onderzoeksvraag en onderzoekt hoe kwalitatief onderzoek kan worden herzien zodat het aansluit bij relationele en meer-dan-menselijke opvattingen van leren en worden. Voortbouwend op de onto-epistemologische uitgangspunten uit hoofdstuk 2 en de empirische inzichten uit hoofdstuk 5 verkent het hoofdstuk de methodologische implicaties van het serieus nemen van relationele ontologie. Wanneer leren en worden ontstaan door voortdurende relaties binnen meer-dan-menselijke werelden, rijst de vraag hoe dergelijke processen onderzocht kunnen worden

zonder aannames van scheiding, dominantie en methodologische controle te reproduceren.

Als antwoord hierop ontwikkelt het hoofdstuk het concept van ‘methodologische verwildering’ (*methodological wilding*) als een ethico-onto-epistemologische heroriëntatie van kwalitatief onderzoek. Methodologische verwildering richt zich op het cultiveren van grotere openheid, aandachtigheid en responsiviteit ten opzichte van de gesitueerde, belichaamde, affectieve en meer-dan-menselijke voorwaarden waaruit ervaring en betekenis ontstaan. Op basis van wandelinterviews onderzoekt het hoofdstuk hoe praktijken zoals beweging, zintuiglijke afstemming, belichaamde aandacht en openheid voor spontaniteit mogelijkheden creëren om directer betrokken te raken bij de relationele verstrengelingen die leren en worden vormgeven.

Naast methodologische innovatie gaat het hoofdstuk in op bredere vragen rondom kennis, betekenisgeving, participatie en representatie binnen relationeel onderzoek. Onderzoek wordt daarbij begrepen als een gesitueerde praktijk van deelnemen aan en betekenis geven met een wereld die zich voortdurend ontvouwt door relaties. Tegelijkertijd reflecteert het hoofdstuk kritisch op spanningen en beperkingen die een dergelijke benadering met zich meebrengt, waaronder vragen rond asymmetrie en onontkoombare onvolledigheid. Methodologische verwildering wordt uiteindelijk gepresenteerd als een voortdurende praktijk van aandachtig en verantwoordelijk blijven binnen de relationele werelden waarvan onderzoek zelf deel uitmaakt.

**Hoofdstuk 7** brengt de conceptuele, pedagogische, empirische en methodologische draden van het proefschrift samen. Aan de hand van de concepten ‘weven’ (*weaving*) en ‘toekomstmaken’ (*futuring*) overstijgt het hoofdstuk de afzonderlijke onderzoeksvragen en reflecteert het op de bredere betekenis van wilde pedagogiek in tijden van sociaal-ecologische crises. Toekomsten worden daarbij niet benaderd als vooraf vaststaande bestemmingen die op ons wachten, maar als iets dat voortdurend ontstaat door huidige relaties, praktijken en processen van betekenisgeving.

Voortbouwend op de bevindingen uit de voorgaande hoofdstukken onderzoekt het hoofdstuk hoe wilde pedagogiek, ‘relationeel worden’, diepe verwondering, diepe zorg voor de aarde, constructieve hoop en methodologische verwildering kunnen worden begrepen als belangrijke draden in het voortdurende weven van een leefbare toekomst voor zowel de menselijke als de meer-dan-menselijke wereld. Relationeel worden wordt opnieuw beschouwd als een voortdurende en golvende beweging waarin mensen hun plaats binnen meer-dan-menselijke werelden blijven herzien. Diepe verwondering wordt besproken als een performatieve kracht die vanzelfsprekende aannames kan ontregelen en nieuwe mogelijkheden voor relateren kan openen. Diepe zorg voor de aarde verschijnt als een emergente kwaliteit van dergelijke processen, terwijl constructieve hoop wordt benaderd als een manier om betrokken te blijven bij onzekere toekomsten.

Het hoofdstuk reflecteert daarnaast op de methodologische implicaties van onderzoek binnen relationele ontologieën. Door terug te keren naar vragen over kennis, betekenisgeving, participatie en context wordt betoogd dat relationeel onderzoek voortdurende aandacht vereist voor de voorwaarden waaronder betekenissen ontstaan. Methodologische verwildering wordt daarom opnieuw opgevat als een praktijk van responsief en verantwoordelijk blijven binnen de relationele werelden die onderzoek probeert te begrijpen.

Gezamenlijk positioneren deze reflecties wilde pedagogiek als een praktijk van ‘toekomstmaken’ (*futuring*). Door omstandigheden te creëren waarin studenten aandachtiger, ontvankelijker, responsiever en meer verbonden kunnen worden met meer-dan-menselijke werelden, draagt wilde pedagogiek bij aan alternatieve manieren van waarnemen, relateren, zorgen en participeren. Hoewel dergelijke processen altijd onvolledig, gesitueerd en afhankelijk blijven, kunnen zij vormen van relationeel worden en diepe zorg voor de aarde voeden die hoopvolle en responsieve betrokkenheid bij onzekere toekomsten ondersteunen.

# Data Availability & Ethical Statement

This research was performed in accordance with the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. The Wageningen University & Research (WUR) Ethics Committee for non-medical studies confirmed that the study met the criteria for minimal risk (WUR-REC, 2023). Students were informed about the study and data handling procedures in advance. Verbal consent was obtained for participatory immersion, while written consent was provided for walking interviews and the use of reflective essays. Participation in questionnaires and informal conversations was voluntary. All data were stored, analyzed, and published in pseudonymized form. Data supporting the findings of this study are available with restricted access through the Yoda@WUR data station repository: **https://doi.org/10.17887/WUR01-OAETKJ**.

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*All figures were created by the author with the assistance of ChatGPT's image generation function, except for Figure 7, which is a student-made drawing included as empirical material. Cover and chapter illustrations were made by Dafni Petratou.*

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# About the Author



Reineke Susan van Tol (Groningen, 1994) grew up in the rural north of the Netherlands, on the border between the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe. It was here, amidst open fields and forests that her love for the world began to take root.

As a sensitive and highly conscious child, the human world could sometimes feel overwhelming. Nature offered something different: a place of comfort, belonging, and quiet companionship. She spent countless hours wandering through the little forest near her home, alone or with a friend, or joining her parents on long walks. At the age of seven, she visited the mountains of France for the first time. Growing up in the flat Dutch landscape, the mountains felt both unfamiliar and awe-inspiring. They evoked a profound sense of wonder, humility, and connection. Standing before these vast landscapes, she became aware of the immense power and beauty of the more-than-human world. Ever since, the mountains have remained a place she continually returns to – through hiking, wild camping and later trail running.

Alongside this personal connection to the natural world grew a desire to contribute to a more sustainable and caring future as a professional path. She pursued this ambition through an interdisciplinary Bachelor's degree in Future Planet Studies at the University of Amsterdam, followed by a Master's degree in Forest and Nature Conservation at Wageningen University & Research. During these studies, she gradually realized that ecological challenges cannot be addressed through ecological knowledge alone. The deeper question concerns how humans understand and position themselves within the living world. This realization sparked a growing interest in social science, philosophy, and education, and in the question that would continue to guide

her work: who do we think we are as a human species in a more-than-human world, and how does that shape the ways we live, learn, and act?

In her Master's thesis, she explored children's perceptions of nature in primary education. Confronted by predominantly human-centered understandings of nature that she found in this study, she became increasingly interested in the role of education in shaping human–world relationships. As a teacher at Wageningen University & Research, she witnessed many students struggling with the social and ecological challenges of their time. While higher education taught them extensively about environmental crises, it often offered little space to explore how to relate to these issues emotionally, ethically, and existentially. Learning more about climate anxiety, ecological grief, and the search for meaning in times of uncertainty, she decided to pursue doctoral research into educational practices that nurture connection, care, hope, and belonging.

This search ultimately led to the work presented in this dissertation: an exploration of Wild Pedagogies, relational becoming, and deep environmental care. While this dissertation marks the completion of one journey, it also marks the beginning of another. As a scholar, educator, and fellow inhabitant of this living world, I hope to continue contributing to forms of learning that cultivate more caring relationships between humans, the Earth, and the many worlds we share.

# List of Publications

Van Tol, R. S., Elands, B. H., Buijs, A. E., & Schouten, M. G. (2022). Nature Is Where There Is No Electricity and Wifi. *Children, Youth and Environments*, *32*(2), 35-58. 10.1353/cye.2022.0014

Van Tol, R. S. (2025). The wild turn in sustainability education – a critical relational perspective on the role of education in caring for people and planet. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2025.2530097

Van Tol, R. S., & Wals, A. (2025). Wild pedagogies in practice: Inspiration for higher education. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, *41*(2), 177-199. https://doi.org/10.1017/aee.2025.16

# Appendix 1: Course descriptions

## 1. Wild perspectives

### Contents

Wild Perspectives is a summer course on the Dutch landscape from "wild" perspectives. In the course we reflect on our perspective on nature, our relationships with nature and the influences of these images and relations on the Dutch landscape. The course includes workshops and excursions on nature images and perspectives, on landscape architecture and management, on community supported agriculture and agroecology, on community-initiated nature conservation and on the cultural history of the landscape. The evenings will provide creative workshops that allow students to experience wild perspectives on nature. For two days students go on a nature walk to immerse themselves in the landscape and reflect upon it. Students work in teams on a creative assignment based on their summer course experiences that will be presented and evaluated during a campfire session on the last evening. Lastly, students submit a reflection assignment in which they also integrate literature and theory.

### Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this course students are expected to be able to:

- understand, embody and reflect upon the human-nature relationship from a variety of ontological and epistemological perspectives and in different social and scientific domains;
- reflect upon their own connection to nature;
- embody different animal or plant perspectives to the landscape;
- express new gained perspectives through arts-based expression (writing, design, theatre)

- explain, understand and reflect upon theory of nature connectedness, landscape design, bushcraft, agroecology, community conservation and cultural history of landscapes.

**Activities**

- Excursions to several sites and initiatives that represent a wild perspective (such as agroecology practitioners, community conservation areas;
- Workshops on wild writing, theatre, landscape design;
- Nature walk & wild camping;
- Presentations by experts from the field;
- Personal reflection & immersion in nature time;
- Creative assignments (writing, theatre, design);
- Performance evening;
- Academic reflection report.

**Assumed Knowledge:** Completed BSc first year

**Examination:** Students are assessed both on creative group assignments (25%) (writing, theatre, design) and on an individual academic reflection report (75%)

### 2. Anthropology of Basic Nature Skills

**Contents**

This course takes an anthropological approach to studying basic skills used in natural and outdoor settings, such as fire making, tracking and natural navigation. Key to the definition of 'basic nature skills' are situations in which the use of technique (as opposed to technology) in natural environments is optimized. The course combines theory and practice through relational learning, so that practical, hands-on experiences are used to support theoretical understanding, and vice versa. In other words, in this course you will not just be learning about, but thinking with and learning through basic nature skills. Studies of various local-resource dependent

peoples around the world will be used to examine historical and contemporary forms of nature skills, including how these skills are embedded in daily practices, cultural expressions or belief systems. Linkages between basic nature skills and environmental sustainability will also be analyzed.

The course will draw on anthropological literature from various (sub)disciplines in the social sciences, or combinations thereof, in which human-nature interactions are studied. These (sub)disciplines include ecological anthropology, human ecology, landscape history, ethnobotany, experimental archaeology, tourism and recreation studies, survival psychology, human-wildlife interaction studies, and environment sustainability studies. Key concepts include: Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK); landscape affordances, nature skill, ontological pluralism and environmental sustainability.

Thematically, skills relating to five topics will be studied:
1. Fire;
2. Shelter and clothes;
3. Food and water;
4. Natural navigation and travelling;
5. Tracking and observing wildlife.

In addition to developing practical skills relating to each of these topics, the following questions will be addressed:

I. What does the practicing of the skill say about human-nature relationships on an individual and social level?
II. How did the skill develop in the context of human evolution?
III. How is the skill performed and embedded into the daily practices, cultural expressions or belief systems of various local resource dependent peoples around the world, in historical or contemporary contexts?
IV. Can linkages between the skill and environmental sustainability be made and if so, how can they be appraised?

The relational learning approach in which theory and practice are combined, may lead to a suite of theoretical and practical gains for participating

students in their further studies and careers, including: increased confidence to spend time (alone) in nature as well as an increased ability to deal with potential outdoor survival situations; a 'wholesome', more holistic and de-romanticized understanding of nature; a deconstruction of the basic human-nature divide that often underpins the destruction of nature; an increased ability to accommodate multiple ontologies; and reflection on biased engagement with local resource-dependent communities in different parts the world.

**Learning Outcomes**

After successful completion of this course students are expected to be able to:
- demonstrate and experiment with a beginner's level of basic nature skill and evaluate one's own relationship with nature through a 'basic nature skill' lens;
- appraise various (anthropological) dimensions of nature skills both in historical and contemporary contexts;
- interpret, through the development of theoretical and practical approaches, human-nature relationships on an individual and social level;
- analyse potential linkages between basic nature skills and environmental sustainability;
- compose an (MSc standard) individual paper and reflection report based on the combination of above-listed learning outcomes.

[Cf. Bloom's taxonomy of action verbs – main categories: I Remembering; II Understanding; III Applying; IV Analyzing; V Evaluating; VI Creating.]

**Activities**

- participation in practical activities that revolve around basic nature skills, such as fire making, outdoor sleeping and natural navigation. Besides several separate full days of outdoor practicals combined with lectures, there will also be a weeklong 4 day (including 3 nights) practical;
- 'Homework out of home' individual assignments in the woods;
- attendance of lectures and (guest) presentations coupled with self-study (notably reading of texts);
- participation in discussions and exercises;

- preparation of a paper on a self-chosen topic that relates to this course, as well as an individual reflection report.

**Assumed Knowledge**

This is an advanced Masters course that assumes basic knowledge of social science perspectives, and a preparedness and ability to think and reflect critically and conceptually through an anthropological lens. While students from other disciplinary backgrounds are welcomed, please note that some course literature may prove challenging if you have little or no training in the social sciences.

**Examination**

The assessment consists of the writing of an individual paper (see the course guide for more details).

### 3. Exploring regenerative cultures for sustainability (ELS-58303)

**Contents**

This course provides a space for students to explore perspectives and practices for a regenerative culture in the context of major societal and environmental challenges of our time. Central to this course is the exploration of connectedness with nature, the world, self and others as part of a cultural consciousness for sustainability. It is widely recognized that motivation to care and act for sustainability co-arises with a sense of connectedness and belonging to the (natural) world, being a part of it instead of apart from it. The loss of regular meaningful contact with nature, and the 'outsider' perspective of science pose a challenge to the development of such consciousness as direct lived experience is necessary to explore what it means to feel for and to be in relation with the world. The course takes an experiential, place-based, relational approach to learning, where students are invited to explore their own place in nature as part of a community of life and how this embodied experience may benefit sustainability and personal leadership. Students will develop their own perspective on what relationality can mean in the light of environmental and societal challenges. The course also explores cultural practices that help to sustain a felt emphatic

connection in the face of insecurities and losses related to unsustainability.

Central to the course is a full-week outdoor summer camp in which we explore a diversity of nature and community-based practices that may contribute toward a regenerative culture. These include practices of Deep Ecology developed by, among others, eco-philosopher Joanna Macy. These practices aim to revive civic engagement through an emancipatory approach designed to empower students to widen and deepen boundaries of concern and to move beyond a crisis mentality toward an inspired commitment to sustainability. Activities include interactive group practices, outdoor activities, dialogue and journaling. It is a collective and co-created learning journey in which students actively participate in the construction of knowledge and meaning based on their experiences.

The course is also open for PhD students. In case you want to follow this course as a PhD student, please contact the course coordinator before the start. Maximum number of participants: 20

**Learning Outcomes**

After successful completion of this course students are expected to be able to:

- explain, understand and reflect upon the concept of regenerative culture/deep ecology and the role of relational consciousness and culture for sustainability;
- identify nature and community-based learning practices that build relationships between people and nature;
- explore their own place in nature as part of a community of life and how this embodied experience may benefit sustainability;
- critically reflect upon their personal role, value system and change agency in a complex world of sustainability challenges and opportunities;
- employ several personal leadership skills, such as reflexivity, perspective-taking, voicing their truth, empathy and care, self-sustainability, and an inspired commitment to sustainability;

- design their own self-directed learning by the articulation of learning goals and learning outcomes.

**Activities**

- formulate from their personal motivation an explorative learning question
- actively participating in the introductory lecture, preparation meeting and the iWEek summer training
- reading background literature
- write an in-depth reflection that relates the students learning experience to a broader perspective of building regenerative cultures for sustainability
- present a creative expression of gained insights in an art form free of choice.

**Examination**

The course will be assessed by the quality of a reflective and creative assignment. The minimum mark is 5.5. To be able to finalize the course, students are expected to actively participate in the provided activities.

# Appendix 2: Reflective questionnaire

## Evaluation & reflection Wild perspectives (2022) [7]

Dear participants of the Wild perspectives summer course,

Thank you for participating in this wonderful experience together. In this course we've explored 'wild perspectives' in a variety of ways through embodiment and experience. We are interested in how you have experienced the course as a whole and how different elements in the course have contributed to any insights you have gained in relation to yourself and the world around you. The questions below are both meant to serve as a reflection tool for yourself and for us to gain insights in your learning process and experiences. Please take time to answer these questions elaborately. Answers are anonymous and used both for research and for improving the course in the future.

### 1.What motivated you to participate in this course?

Voer uw antwoord in

### 2.What aspects of this course (if any) did you like or inspired you most and why?

Voer uw antwoord in

### 3.What aspects of this course (if any) did you like or did inspire you least and why?

Voer uw antwoord in

### 4.In this course, learning was approached for a large part as an embodied, experiential, inner and relational process. Could you explain how this influenced your personal (learning) journey?

Voer uw antwoord in

[7] Questionnaires were for all courses the same, except for the title and introduction and sometimes wording that fitted a specific course better.

5.Did you experience internal conflict (friction, resistance) with viewpoints or methods in this course (maybe compared to what you're used to)? If so, can you give some examples of elements in the course that elicited such conflict within yourself and could you try to explain why this resistance was there and how you dealt with that?

Voer uw antwoord in

6.How did you experience the learning community in this course? Please elaborate on how you felt in relation to instructors and other participants.

Voer uw antwoord in

7.How did you experience the outdoor learning environment? Do you feel the natural environment influenced your (inner) learning journey?

Voer uw antwoord in

8.Were there any elements in this course that made you feel your sensitivity toward the world around you changed? If so, can you describe your experience by giving some examples of course elements that affected your sensitivity toward the world and how?

Voer uw antwoord in

9.Were there any elements in the course that made you change your perception of yourself and/or humanity in relation to the rest of the world? Could you explain what elements in the course (if any) contributed to this?

Voer uw antwoord in

10.Did this course change your feeling of connection toward the rest of the natural world? Please explain.

Voer uw antwoord in

11.Did this course change anything to the feelings you experience with regard to the eco/climate crisis we find ourselves in?

Voer uw antwoord in

12.Did the course offer you any valuable insights for your personal way of living? Did it change something in how you would like to live?

Voer uw antwoord in

13.Are there any other things the course brought you that you'd like to elaborate on?

Voer uw antwoord in

14.What is your study program and at what institute?

Voer uw antwoord in

15.What is your age?

Voer uw antwoord in

16.How would you define your gender?

Woman
Man
Non-binary
Prefer not to say

17.In which country did you grow up?

Voer uw antwoord in

# Appendix 3: Reflection assignments

## 1. Wild perspectives

During the course Wild perspectives we have experienced wild perspectives in various ways, through literature, storytelling, drama and several other ways of embodiment. We have seen various landscapes, both through our human lenses as well as through our 'wild lenses'. To reflect upon your experiences and embed these into your academic journeys, we ask you to write an essay on *'Embodying wild perspectives'*. You can draw upon your experiences during the week, upon notes that you made, upon conversations you have had with teachers and instructors and on (provided) literature (see course guide). In your essay clearly bring forward your own journey into embodiment of wild perspectives as well as your reflection on this approach and embedding the whole within literature. Use in your essay at least three of the articles provided in the literature list. You are free to use any other literature. You can use non peer reviewed literature as well for inspiration. You are free to choose the form of your essay. Feel free to experiment with storytelling or poetry as well. Your essay should be about 1000 words, but this is rather flexible (we find it more important that you can tell the story you want to tell).

As an addition (and preparation) to the essay we ask you to fill in the following (anonymous) reflective questionnaire:

[link to questionnaire was inserted here]

This form is meant both as a personal reflection as well as a course evaluation. It might be helpful to fill in the form before you write your essay. You can store your answers and use them for your essay.

## 2. Anthropology of basic nature skills

*To be done in your own time on the last days of the field practical in week 3:*

a. Take yourself off into the woods for about 30-60 minutes. Reflect on the course thus far and think about its effects on you (if any) – conceptually, emotionally, creatively... In this

reflection, also take your personal learning objective(s) with a practical and theoretical component into account as formulated under assignment 1b. You can make some notes (words, drawings, etc.) to help you remember your thinking.

*To be done when you're back home from the field practical:*

b. Continue with the reflection you started in the field. Feel free to use some of the questions below as probes (so they do not require explicit answering – just to help you brainstorm/reflect):

- What aspects of this course (if any) did you like or inspired you most and why?
- In this course, learning was not approached as a pure cognitive process, but for a large part also as an embodied, experiential process. Have you experience your own learning in a different way as a result?
- Did you experience any internal friction (e.g. resistance, conflict) with viewpoints or methods in the course (maybe compared to what you're used to)? Can you see a benefit of such internal friction?
- How did you experience the learning community in this course? How did you feel in relation to teachers and other students?
- How did you experience the outdoor learning environment? Did this contribute to your learning experience compared to on campus or online learning?
- Has your sensitivity changed toward the world around you?
- Has you perception changed of yourself and/or humanity in relation to the rest of the world?

- Did the course offer you any valuable insights for your personal way of living? Did it change something in how you would like to live?
- Has your sense of self confidence or esteem in relation to the natural world changed?

c. Capture the results of both reflection exercises above in any shape or form (analysis, poetry, painting, physical expression, dancing, etc. etc.).
    - When writing, observe a max. of 500 words
    - When a physical expression, please provide a photo or video
    - When graphical (drawing, painting, etc.), please provide a title to offer the observer a little interpretation

**3. Exploring regenerative culture for sustainability**

<u>In-depth assignment</u>

This assignment is meant to deepen your learning experience and relate it to a reflection on the topic of learning for sustainability. It contains two parts. The first is two write an essay on the role of this kind of education in creating a more sustainable society. You should include your personal experiences and theoretical insights provided by the literature. We offer a selection of papers on Brightspace to get you started, from there you can find more papers on a certain topic if you need it. You can use the following questions to guide your reflection and analysis:

- What does it mean to build a sustainable or regenerative culture according to you?

- How have your experiences of the iWeek contributed to your viewpoint?
- Which methods or experiences of the iWeek do you think/feel are important for building what you think is a sustainable/regenerative culture, and why?
- How does your experience differ from or align with theoretical perspectives on transformative learning for sustainability?

In the second part we would like you to propose a learning activity that could possibly be implemented in the future design of the iWEEK or in another setting. Try to think of something new or different than what you have experienced during the week. Support your design with theoretical insights from research on learning for sustainability and your personal experience of the week.
Maximum number of words for this written assignment is 2500.

Creative Reflection

In this last assignment we would like you to express the core of your learning experience in an artistic form. You can choose whether that is a visual art, song, poetry, a dance or another form. If it is not visual, then you can record it. The assignment will not be graded, but you need to do it to pass. Enjoy it and have fun!
In September, we will come together once more and share our creations with each other to finalize this journey. This comeback celebration will not be part of your assessment.

# Appendix 4: Interview guide

To stimulate elicitation of place-related memories and emotions, the interviews took place at three different locations, where the courses took place:

1. With students of Anthropology of Basic nature Skills: In the forest around De Leemkuil (Wageningen, De Dorschkamp)

2. With students of the iWeek/Active Hope Training: The forest around ecovillage Ppauw

3. With students from Wild perspectives: Binnenveldse Hooilanden

Duration: appr. 1 hour

**Phase 1: Building rapport**

This first phase is meant to build a relationship of trust. After I have met the interviewee in the field, I start off with an informal conversation. I ask how the interviewee is doing, tell some things about myself and my research and give the interviewee the opportunity to ask me questions. I also directly involve the environment in the interviewing by pointing out some things I see and by bringing up some memories on the surroundings from the course. I invite the interviewee hereby to follow my example and relate to the surroundings. This is a start of the re-enactment process of experiences and facilitates the elicitation of memories and emotions attached to the landscape (and the course).

**Phase 2: Clearing the inner space, opening the senses**

When the interviewee seems comfortable and a relationship of trust has started to form, I go over to the next phase, which involves a clearing of the inner space and an opening up of the senses. This helps in guiding the attention toward the course experiences, the own emotions and unconscious experiences and the surroundings. For this I use a guided meditation exercise for which I let the participant sit, stand or lay down in the place we are at

that moment. I invite the participant to close their eyes and follow my voice. To make the interviewee feel more comfortable, I also close my eyes myself throughout the practice. I use focused breathing to stimulate the participant to turn inwards, to open up the reflective consciousness or even unconsciousness and to clear the mind. I focus on all the senses to help the participant orienting toward the environment and to direct attention from the head toward the body. When the interviewee seems calm, focused and bodily present, I end the meditation by going back to the breathing before I invite the participant to open their eyes again.

We walk for a bit in silence

We now start the recording

**Phase 3: The reflective interview**

1. How do you look back at the course?
2. Now we walk in this environment, are there memories from the course that come back to you?
3. Could you elaborate what, if anything, you have taken from the course?
4. Would you say your experiences in the course have changed something in you? And could you elaborate on that?
   *Did this make you do things differently in your life after the course?*
5. Could you describe what aspects in the course contributed most to your learning experience/the change? (the environment/the teachers/the activities/the literature..)
   *Can you elaborate on how nature played a role in your learning experiences?*
6. Were there elements or experiences in the course that you felt resistance to? And how did you deal with that?
   *How was the experience in the end in case you went through this resistance?*
7. Were there other experiences in your life that brought you similar insights or contributed in a similar way? Could you elaborate on these?

8. Is there anything else you'd like to add regarding you experiences with the course or the impact it had on you?

I now stop the recoding

**Phase 5: Closing**

I ask the participant how they experienced the interview. We reflect a bit on that. I thank the interviewee for participation and we walk back together to the starting point.

# Appendix 5: Teaching, supervision & development

Reineke Susan van Tol
Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)
Completed Training and Supervision Plan

| Name of the learning activity | Department/Institute | Year | ECTS* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A) Project related competences** | | | |
| **A1 Managing a research project** | | | |
| WASS PhD Introduction | WASS | 2022 | 1 |
| *'Rewilding Pedagogies: Exploring relational outdoor learning and inner transformation for young adults being and becoming with(in) a liquid world'* | World Conference on Ecological Restoration, online | 2023 | 1 |
| *'Becoming-with the world: wilding pedagogies for relational becoming and deep environmental care'* | Education for Transformation conference; University of Humanistic Studies; Utrecht; The Netherlands | 2026 | 1 |
| Reviewing Scientific Manuscripts | WGS | 2022 | 0.1 |
| Reviewing scientific manuscript | Australian Journal of Environmental Education | 2025 | 1 |
| Reviewing scientific manuscript | Journal Teaching and Teacher Education | 2026 | 1 |
| Reviewing scientific manuscript | PLOS Sustainability & Transformation | 2026 | 1 |
| **A2 Integrating research in the corresponding discipline** | | | |
| Advanced Qualitative Research Design (GEO-55804) | WUR | 2021 | 4 |
| Qualitative Data Analysis: Procedures and Strategies (MAT-50806) | WUR | 2022 | 6 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Transformative research for global social-environmental challenges | WIMEK | 2022 | 3 |
| **B) General research related competences** | | | |
| **B1 Placing research in a broader scientific context** | | | |
| Facilitation for Transformative Learning | WUR & Neza Krek | 2020 | 3 |
| *'Enacting the Wild: Exploring Wild pedagogies in higher education'* | Workshop Series on Animal-Human Relations; Amsterdam Sustainability Institute; VU | 2021 | 1 |
| Exploring Wild Pedagogies | Transformative Learning Hub; Centre for Space, Place & Society; WUR | 2021 | 1 |
| *'Wilding Pedagogies: Exploring relational outdoor learning and inner transformation for young adults being and becoming with(in) a liquid world'* | FNP, WUR | 2023 | 1 |
| *'Relational Outdoor Learning: What, Why & How?'* | ESG matters; WUR | 2024 | 1 |
| Going wild with your research: Wilding methodologies for research into relational outdoor learning | More Nature, Deeper Education Symposium; Nature College & WUR | 2024 | 1 |
| *'The Wild Turn in Sustainability Education: Wild Pedagogies as a Way of Becoming With the World'* | Pathways: Ontario Journal of Environmental Education | 2024 | 1 |
| *'Wilding Pedagogies: Exploring More-than-Human Ecologies of Learning for Deep Environmental Care'* | Lunch Seminar Radboud University | 2026 | 1 |
| **B2 Placing research in a societal context** | | | |
| *'Leren in het Wild: Een verkenning van 'Wilde pedagogiek' voor het middelbaar onderwijs'* | Leergemeenschap Duurzaam Onderwijs; Wageningen Pre-University; WUR | 2021 | 1 |
| Creative Writing | Schrijfclub Wageningen & WUR | 2022 | 1 |
| Podcast: Djupnatur | Djupnatur | 2023 | 0.5 |
| Outdoor Labodyratory | Studium Generale; WUR | 2023 | 0.5 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Blog: *'Relational outdoor learning improves learning experience for neurodivergent students'* | FNP blog | 2023 | 0.1 |
| Blog: *'Een wilde blik op natuur'* | Natuur College | 2023 | 0.1 |
| Video/interview: Weaving new narratives: Relational Outdoor Learning | Weaving New Narratives Collective | 2024 | 0.5 |
| Unexpected Encounters | Foundation We Are | 2024 | 1 |
| Podcast: Relational Outdoor Learning | Wageningen Pulse Podcast | 2025 | 0.5 |
| Teaching with Nature's Intelligence | Teachers' day WUR | 2025 | 1 |
| Wild Pedagogies | Outdoor Education Festival; WUR | 2026 | 1 |
| Nature-inclusive education at WUR | Education Design Festival; WUR | 2026 | 0.5 |
| De Natuur als Deelnemer | Comenius Museum | 2026 | 1 |
| **C) Career related competences/personal development** | | | |
| **C1 Employing transferable skills in different domains/careers** | | | |
| PhD representative | FNP & governance cluster; WUR | 2021-2023 | 2 |
| Board member | Living Landscapes Foundation | 2022-2026 | 2 |
| Member Education Committee | WASS; WUR | 2023-2026 | 3 |
| **Total** | | | **44.8** |

*One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load

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