



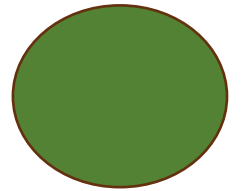
Humans as/in nature

Contextualisation, connection, restoration

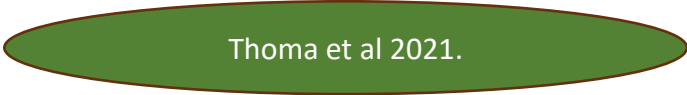
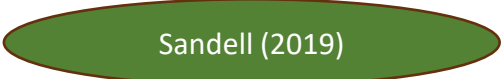
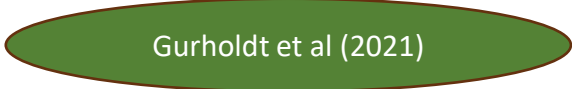
Trine Syvertsen

The argument and the activity

- Humans are multidimensional beings
- Hard to pin down exactly which factors stimulate wellbeing...
- ...and which theories best explain why nature is positive
- Based on my reading, what is recommended is:
 - Multimethod studies
 - Multidimensional programmes and activities
- A multidimensional nature activity for students intended to stimulate:
 - Contextualisation
 - Connection
 - Restoration



Starting point: Student health and barriers to nature activity

- An international class of 40 students: «Communicating climate change»
- Highly aware of environmental problems, climate anxiety  Thoma et al 2021.
- But not much in nature, online, watch cat videos 😊
- Student health: W 40%, M 25% report psychological disorders (Norway 2023)  FHI (2023)
- Immigrants more affected  FHI (2022)
- Stress, loneliness, money:
 - 1 of 2 anxiety about oral presentations  Sandell (2019)
 - 1 of 3 significant anxiety about exams
- Barrier for international students: not familiar with friluftsliv  Gurholdt et al (2021)

Metastudies find positive effects of nature contact....
...but difficult to determine precise factors ...
to stimulate activity and improve health

- Examples of varying evidence in studies:

- Green spaces: many studies are poor quality

Twohig-Bennett and Jones (2018)

- Outdoor good: but not causality

Gray et al (2015)

- Walking groups: not all indicators

Hanson, S and Jones, A (2015)

- Weekly hiking: no effect on health

Gatterer et al (2015)

- Childhood experiences: not necessarily facilitates adult outdoor

van Heezik et al. (2021)

- Outdoor programmes: depend on design

Carpenter and Harper (2016), Curry et al (2012),
Pryor et al (2005), O'Brien et al (2016)

Nature/outdoor works –
but how/why?
Theoretical perspectives



Key focus of theoretical frameworks

- CONTEXTUALISATION: Socio-ecological perspectives
- CONNECTION: Biohphilia-inspired perspectives
- RESTORATION: Loss and deficit-perspectives
- Differences, but also overlap + mix between theories.
- Many writers refer to more than one perspective. Eclecticism.
 - Ex: Louv: *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* draws on biophilia, environmental psychology, attention restoration, eco-psychology, etc.

Louv (2008, first publ. 2005)

Socio-ecological perspectives: «context»

- Human wellbeing is not just an individual issue: social, community, global and planet wellbeing are interlinked. Holistic perspective.
 - Refer to Bronfenbrenner (1986)
- Wellbeing depend on
 - infrastructures, systems, socio-economic factors
 - change of view from antropocentric to eco-centred outlook as the environmental crisis causes ill-being
 - Education crucial – just as important as cure (therapy)

Carpenter and Harper (2016)

(Thoma et al 2021)

Pryor et al (2005)

Biophilia-inspired perspectives: «connect»

- Human wellbeing improves with emotional connection to nature.
- Humans have a genetic, innate, evolutionary connection to all living beings.
 - Refer to Wilson (1984)

Steg et al (2013), ch 6, Carpenter and Harper (2016),
Marselle (2019), Louv (2008/2005)

- Nature connectedness

- identified in several studies as key to both wellness and pro pro-environmental behaviour.
- beyond exposure and knowledge to emotional attachment

Pirchio et al. (2021), Kuo et al (2019), Martin et al (2020)

Lemmey (2020)

Loss-and-deficit perspectives: «restore»

- Modern life leads to physical and mental ill-being, nature can heal humans through restoring what is lost
- ART: concentration, attention
 - Refers to Kaplan and Kaplan (1989), Kaplan (1995)
- SRT: physical and psychological stress
 - Refers to Ulrich (1981)
- NDD: ADHD-like conditions
 - Louv (2008/2005) Not medical term (but medical vocabulary)
- Fractal geometry – restoration by looking at natural shapes
 - Refer to Mendelbrot (1980)
- Environmental psychology – restorative environments, bring nature indoors

Dustin et al (2010)

Marselle (2019)

Louv (2008, first publ. 2005)

Marselle (2019), Berg et al (2016)

Steg et al (2013)



Many explanations – but also critical questions

Critique: Methodological issues

- **Vast complexity, comparatively few + small studies**
- Retrospective, few baseline studies, causal links difficult
- Problematic indicators, examples:
 - NC: Too broad: «I find beauty in nature» + «I treat nature with respect»,
 - both 99% (Self-selected respondents)
 - ART: Uncertainty: which aspects of attention affected by nature exposure
 - NDD: Nostalgic timeline imprecise: “When we were young”

Thoma et al (2021),
Ohly et al (2016),
O’Brien et al (2016)

Lemmey (2020)

Ohly et al (2016)

Dickinson (2013)

Critique: What is nature?

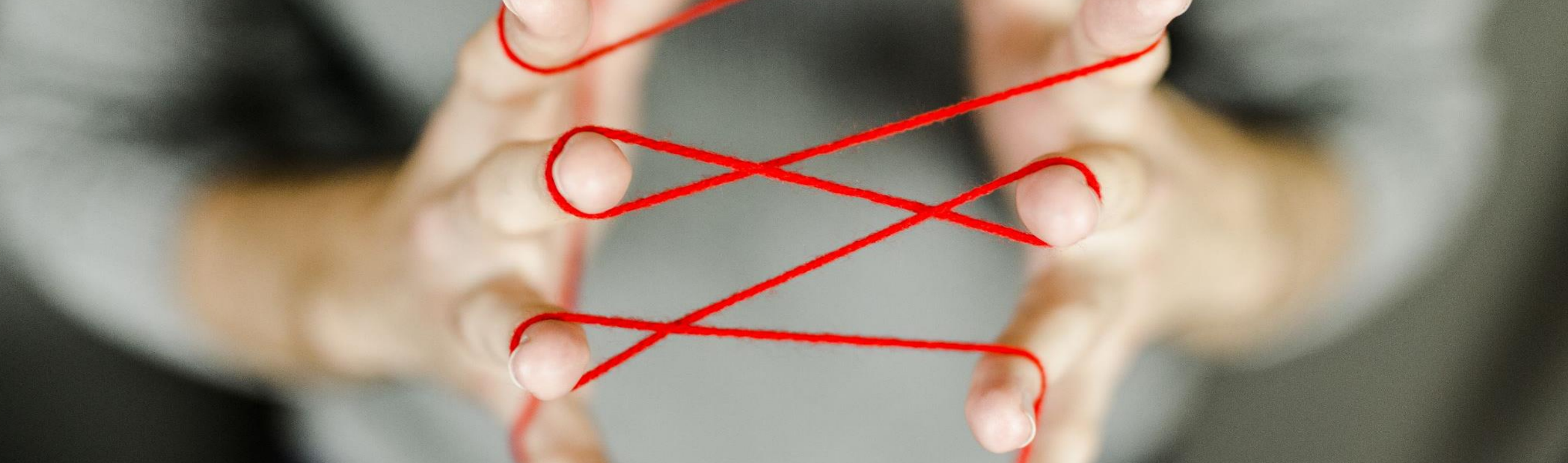
- Western? Preferences vary between cultures, ex openness
- Collection of scientific objects? Natural history bias (NDD)
- Always good? Ambivalent emotions towards wilderness
- Actual or representations? Photos, documentaries (cat videos, curtains?)
- Amount? The more the better? Live outdoors? Enough?
- Key problem: Binary
- Urban vs nature? Humans might prefer variety
- Nature vs humans? Humans also part of nature

Dickinson (2013) Steg et al (2013), chapter 5-6

Carpenter and Harper (2016), Steg et al (2013), chapter 7

Martin et al (2020)

Steg et al (2013), chapter 5-6



Conclusion:

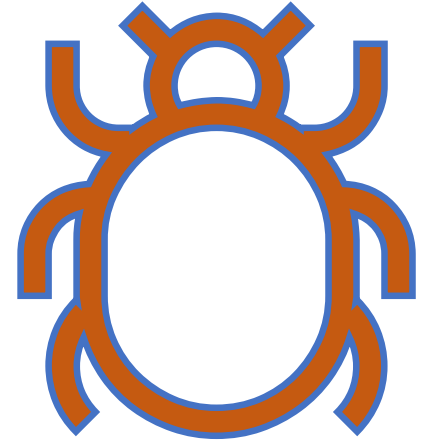
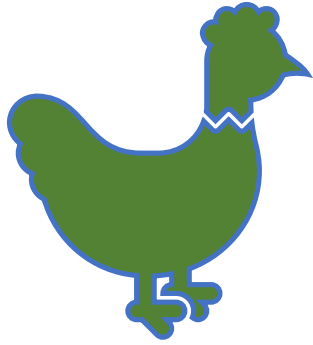
Multimethod studies needed – cumulative evidence

Humans are multidimensional beings –
multidimensional programmes and activities

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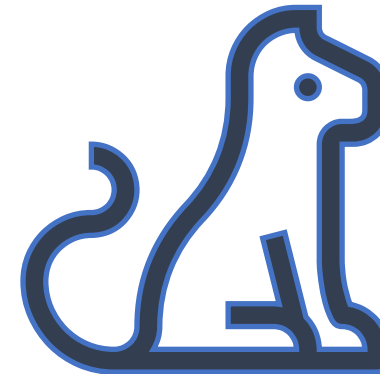
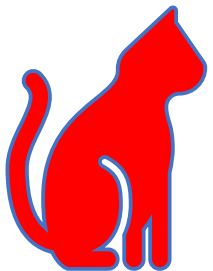
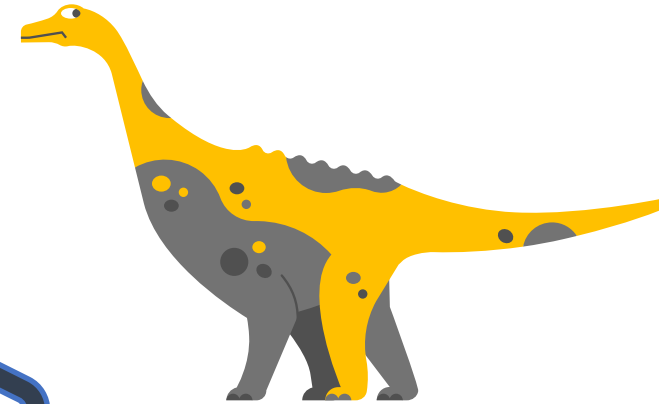
A close-up photograph of a person's hand gently holding a single, vibrant green leaf. The leaf is elongated with a serrated edge and prominent veins. The background is a soft, out-of-focus expanse of green foliage, creating a sense of being deep within a forest or garden. The lighting is natural and soft, highlighting the textures of the skin and the leaf.

Activity:
Humans as/in nature
Contextualisation, connection,
restoration



Be another living being!

animal, bird, insect
actual, prehistoric, fantasy



Preparations

- Who:
 - International group (Europe, US, Japan, Korea)
 - Expectations: beautiful wilderness Norway. Reality: student dorms, dark, city
 - Mental state: Stress, lonely, climate anxiety
 - Tech-oriented media students, watch a lot of animals online (cat videos)
- Information: Clothes, snack, navigation, phone number (get lost?)

Outcomes

- Contextualisation
 - Eco-centric outlook: Position as part of nature
 - mutualism rather than domination of animals
 - Learn about friluftsliv, benefit of international group
- Connection
 - Sensing, emotions, NC
 - Nature stimulate learning, also in academic subjects
- Restoration
 - Fun, relax, play, social experience

Inspirations from Steg et al (2013)

Gurholdt, local case

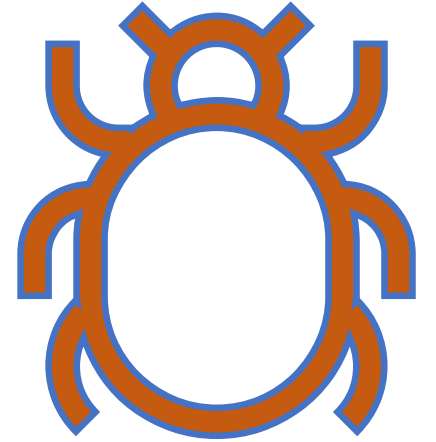
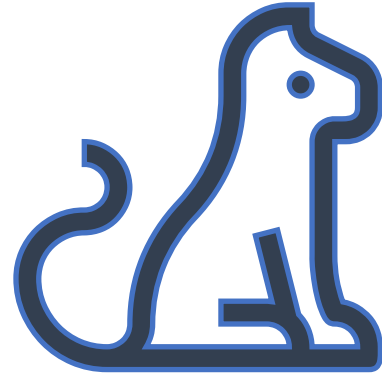
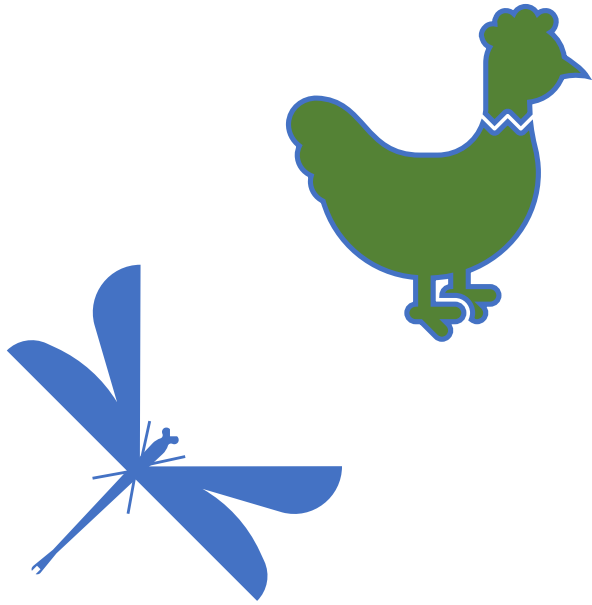
Inspirations from Pirchio et al. (2021), Dickinson (2013)

Kuo et al (2019) O'Brien et al (2016)

Inspirations from Thoma et al 2021)

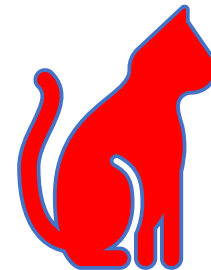
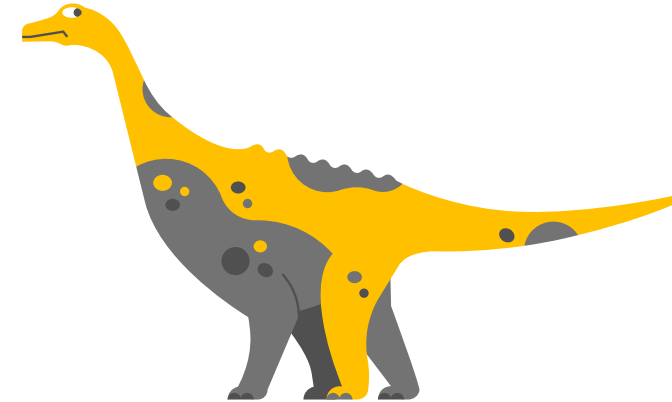
Schedule

- Warm-up: 1 minute: sensing and positioning indoors
- Framing: 5 minutes
- Task 8 minutes:
 - Be an animal, insect, bird - real, prehistoric, fantasy – you decide
 - Sensations: What do you sense, experience, see, feel, hear.
 - Positioning: Move around (if you can move), position yourself in relation to the environment, other living things, human-made structures.
- Warning/Risk:
 - Off-limit areas. Interaction possible, but mindful of others' experience
 - No right or wrong experience: OK to sense nothing.
- Reflection: 5 minutes
- Talk to one other person:
 - What were you, how was it? Sense and position? What does it tell you about human-nature interconnectedness?
 - Something that made an impression on you, if anything?
- Feedback: 1 minute.



Be another living being!

Sensations?
Positioning?





Reflections, feedback?