|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fieldnotes North West School 29th April .**  **Ethnographer** | **Interpretation/comments** |
| I set off at 8pm determined not to be late. The route took me up the switch back routes over to Lancashire and then across to [name of place] via a strange mix of motorways and moor roads.  10.am When we got to the school there was a new system in place which is DBS plus ID.  10am We were greeted by the teacher who was a forest school teacher. I was really pleased that she seemed interested in our work as researchers and asked if we could email her. This seemed to be fine.  She said she had re-joined teaching after having children and was interested in this work.  She talked about the forest school space needing to be regenerated and the use of it meant it needed more work.  When we entered the classroom it was hard to remember the children from the year before. I could see the children slightly struggling with us as well.  Some individuals I remembered, but not all of them. It was nearly a year since we saw them.  I started with introductions – the children remembered ‘Trees n Us’ and something about trees and oxygen.  They did describe the process of sucking in carbon dioxide and giving us oxygen – which we need to breath they said.  There did seem to be a bit of a disconnect between the ways in which we had worked last year and their recollection of these ways.  This class seemed less memorable than their more sparky year 3s next door, but slowly we remembered episodes such as the tree-planting boys and the ways in which the children had had a conversation with the trees.  Artist set up his camera and started to film – the children did try and describe the advantages of trees but I could see they were struggling with the oxygen focus. The Tree organisation team introduced tree care.  We then worked on tables developing messages.  The children often moved between writing and drawing almost as distinct modes. Some of the children started to open up a bit and discussions started to take place on the tables.  11am The children then went out to do the Tree Care. The organisation were keen for the children to do the weeding themselves. There was a lot of really tough grass around the trees and I was aware of how hard it was but also how the children found ways to twist the grass and also construct mechanisms for removal. I was reminded of the 19 tree planting people and how efficient they could be. The worms again were a focus and also the bark and placing the bark on the trees.  I worked with the children and struggled to feel like I was achieving anything.  12 pm We then went in and discussed ethics again. I realised that we didn’t actually ask the children if they wanted to be in Artist’s film so we needed to do that again.  12-1pm In the staff room we discussed the impact and also the role of TAs in mediating the teaching process.  Children’s geographer talked about making a step change in impact – for example making it statutory that children and young people in schools had access to outside space but not just concrete over playground, particularly with newbuild schools.  1pm Back into the other year 3s, now year 4s. These were the ‘sparky’ ones who had gone off on video game visions of the future with Philosopher and often seemed like our favourites – the Forest School children. They also seemed more switched on in terms of the project and remembered us more clearly.  We asked them about the project and several people remembered it. They were the front of the school tree planters. We then asked them to draw images of what they would like to see and this also was a more dense and exciting process of imagining. I was again conscious of the distance between writing and drawing.  We then went out and did Tree Care. On the way out Artist told a story of the child who said trees were useful as you do a poo behind one.  It was interesting that the children didn’t work on their own trees – but other trees. There was the issue of the trees being uprooted as well.  I still struggled with the idea of pulling thistles. I noticed that one of the children had pulled a tree out and I was surprised how that had happened.  We continued but there was a bit of bark spreading all over the grass. We wondered why the trees had been moved from the space where they had been planted but thought it could be because the mower couldn’t get over it.  We went in and did ethics again. I think it was this one that the child who talked to the trees in the videos agreed to be in it.  When I finished I thought about how children experienced us and the trees and wondered whether they did feel like researchers or not. | The way in which North West School is situated amongst mill towers and moors reminded me of the Cottonopolis work and the situating of the cotton trade in the slave trade.  In the tree project there is quite a lot of discussion of about ‘indigenous’ perspectives but here the concept of indigenous is complex, the wealth of the area rests both on slavery, indirectly, and farming, directly and then now, a mix of small scale industry and service industries.  School entrance protocols – an ethnographic observation.  The discussion about the role of trees in terms of Oxygen and Carbon dioxide was complex as Tree scientists have both pointed out that this is not entirely the case. Possibly a new science of trees could nuance this a bit, to the point where that nuance was visible.  Here the Good Research Children come to the fore. The story of doing a poo behind a tree was a really good example of a child who did not fit that model. But this group also fit our ideas of sparky and interesting children who go off into different spaces and tangents.  When we started the project the story of the uprooted trees in (place) (all 2000 of them) stayed with me. |
|  |  |