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| **Fieldnotes 25th April North West Primary school**  **Ethnographer**  **Description** = this is ‘what is going on here’. My supervisor taught me that description is purely this – and value judgements do not come into ethnography | **Interpretation**= this is thoughts I had at the time or just after. | **Analysis**- bigger themes to follow up later. |
| 8pm: In the car on the way me and Educationalist talked about how Childhood Studies and working with children is quite invisible as a discipline. She talked of the ‘1000 ways’ in which she thinks about when working with children. This is something I repeated to one of the teachers later on in the day and she really appreciated it.  **First class**  We arrived slightly later as the road where the parents park is always busy with parked cars.  We walked in and there was the team. Artist had some large red bags of equipment. We were lugging the ipads as usual and our consent forms for later.  9. 15 It was arranged that we would start with First class. First class is the sparky year 3 one – full of mischief and quite exciting to work with. They did dialogic thinking with Philosopher and they planted the front hedge. They produced the worm drawings and did the forest school film.  We went in and Environmental Geographer introduced us. He made sure the children knew what disciplines we worked in. They called Childhood Geographer a ‘geographer’ and there was a sense that geography was the key discipline for us.  The children were then instructed to put on their wellies. Z, the child who did the worm pictures, asked me if I had printed them out and I said I had sent them to the teacher and she would print them out. The teacher then confirmed that and said she would print them out.  The children went outside to change into their wellies and I felt the bright cold air.  We were to first do an activity about what is amazing about trees, but the school had forgotten to do this.  Instead, this was to be done outside. We were asked to work in groups and do this. My group were not at all sure what was required.  The main message they all had was that trees breathed in carbon dioxide and breathed out oxygen. We clustered around a tree, and some people felt the bark. This felt very unsure and I also felt a bit tired – working with children requires a kind of attention to process but also structure that needed real skill, as Educationalist said. I produced an Ipad and a recorder and the children took these. The tree we chose had thick bark and we looked up into the branches where the buds were just coming out. I was not sure what kind of tree I was looking at. Along the side of the playing field there seemed to be a beech, an oak, a silver birch, a sycamore and a poplar, which indicated that the original tree planter, 50 years ago, had thought about what the children would learn from the planted trees.  We then clustered in a large group. Environmental Geographer asked us about the oldest tree and said the oldest tree was an oak in Nottingham that was 1500 years old. This was the same time as the Romans. This seemed incredible to me.  He next had devised an activity where we listened to him talk about why trees were important and good carbon and bad carbon. He talked about the idea of a tree for every person and the children were asked to image how many trees we needed. He discussed (this might have been in the later sessions) how we needed to plant a trillion trees to solve the climate crisis.  They were also diverted by a bee that flew through them.  He started with explaining about carbon dioxide in the air and then asked if the children planned to get married.  This seemed a confusing question for 7-8 year olds. He then talked about diamonds. I could see that most of the children were lost, but interested.  Then he asked about coal and diamonds. The children were asked what was in their pencils. The children said wood, and then Geographer explained about graphite. I didn’t know that diamonds were the purest form of carbon. I thought about their links to inequality and wondered why they were so prized. Geographer then asked children to wiggle their front leg and arm and this was the amount of carbon in them.  He then produced a bottle of fizzy water and said that this had carbon dioxide in it.  The carbon discussion both did and did not make sense. I wasn’t sure how the carbon in trees was good or bad.  The children then were given diameter tapes and asked to measure trees. We were asked to measure circumference and diameter which was not entirely clear to me.  One of the girls wanted to listen back to her audio recorder and spent time doing this.  I talked to the teacher as we worked, and she said how unusual this was to do lessons outside. I also wondered how the carbon in trees looked – like diamonds or coal.  When we had done the measurement we went back together and Geographer did explain circumference and diameter. The laser scanners came out and we tried to measure height but a bit unsuccessfully.  By 11 I was hungry and cold so we went in to re-group. Artist arrived with his enormous camera equipment. | We are writing about the ‘good research subject’. This is an article that critiques the idea of the ‘good’ child who answers correctly and produces ‘data that glows’. Instead we wonder about the children who don’t participate or who refuse to be in research.  In many ways one of the children in this class, who did a worm picture and also speaks multilingual, is this ‘good subject’. However, the class also have a keen interest in Youtube videos and tic toc and often are the ones who go off in their own direction.  Reflexivity about working with children. Why is childhood studies an invisible discipline?  Thinking about Philosopher’s notion of the tree and being 30 being grown up – how are the children making sense of trees and adulthood?  The planter of these trees might be around – this might be of interest to us.  Michael Gallagher’s article about the limits of childhood being found in the child mining in the DRC regions.  The visual elements of carbon seemed opaque.  Thinking later about carbon footprints, a few of the children mentioned driving to school when we talked about carbon footprints. One did mention saving up for an electric car.  My 1960s primary education was fantastic but terms like circumference and diameter were never taught. | How do we make sense of carbon guilt – see Jayne Osgood’s work.  How do we construct the voice of children in this project.  What does it mean for our project that geography is visible? In our awayday we talked of how childhood studies was the visible discipline. But how visible is it really?  Time and trees. |
| **Second class – year 3/4**  Second was the class that planted a hedge over beyond the nursery class. I got them muddled up with Third who planted the most trees. The class included some fairly confident boys, who I remember working with last time. They took hold of the voice recorder and ipads.  Again, we filed out and Geographer talked to us.  The children put their audio recorders near him and he seemed a bit uncomfortable with this.  This time the group task felt slightly more coherent. Geographer talked about tree hugging and one of the girls gave the other girl net to her a hug and said ‘you are a tree’.    My group got interested in tree rings and moss on the old logs that lay on the ground. The children also noticed bark and seemed more interested in the way the tree was constructed. The oldest tree activity also seemed more relevant.  In this group the activity where the children were asked about getting married seemed to be more pertinent and some of the children got excited about rings. But some children clearly did not find the question relevant.  Some of the children had slightly clearer notions of coal and carbon and when carbon was good and bad but the activity still seemed unclear. How is carbon bad?  The measuring felt more sensible now I understood circumference and diameter. The children measured a lot of trees and started to use the laser scanner.  What I missed was how the measurement captured the carbon that the tree had absorbed and the tree=twinning idea.  With this group I had less sense of it other than some of the boys were very talkative.  One of the boys was cold and said his hands were cold – he was not wearing a coat. | Children as researchers can feel uncomfortable. What if we asked the children to write fieldnotes like ours?  How is carbon both a part of a person, stored in tree, and in diamonds and coal?  Is it the same as carbon dioxide in bubbles?  Most of this was given but I wasn’t sure what the answers were.  Carbon Dioxide also helps us keep warm. The concept of global heating was attractive at this point in time, in a cold field in April. | Bodies and trees. How much are we Tree? |
| **Third class**  This was the class who planted the most trees. It was also the class with E who didn’t want to be filmed and several children who had got to know me.  Artist introduced his camera and the way the furry bit took away the wind sound.  When we were asked to go into groups one of the children looked at me and definitely did not want to go into my group which was interesting.  My first small group didn’t really want to do the task, partly because it was not clear.  We spent time squinting up at leaves and wondering what it would be like to climb the tree.  Geographer gave his talk and the children again clustered around him, a bit like reporters, so again he got uncomfortable.  This time I got distracted by the first activity so Children’s geographer was Bad carbon and Scientist was good carbon. The children were undecided about diamonds and coal as to whether they were good or bad. They moved between the two ends.  Wood was also something that could be good and bad.  The trees the children had planted were more visible – they nestled in some bark put down by Tree organisation.  With this group I became more interested in the relationship of the tasks to the children’s own sense of trees.  The bark was interesting to them, and the branches, and tree climbing.  Many children hugged trees. The idea that Geographer introduced that the tree liked this was interesting. Many children had trees in their back gardens. Geographer said the children could go home and hug them. The notion of carbon within them and in diamonds was again opaque.  But by the end, the children had realised how the laser scanner worked and were using it to measure the height of trees.  Ian brought the Laster scanner out and the children watched the eye of the scanner move around and the image on the ipad. | It would have been interesting to have a drone that captured the movement of the children around the trees – into groups and then into pairs and bigger groups.  How are the children finding the curriculum themselves?  How do concepts like height and mass come into these activities?  These activities seem to produce some confusion. Maybe carbon is a more indeterminate concept and we need a concept for how it moves around but also what is dangerous about it for us as humans.  What I came away with was a sense of undercurrents – of time, and affect/feeling and wind and cold and age being relevant to all the activities but not explicitly and also the children’s bodies within the space mentioned within the work.  What is the work of understanding carbon mass and trees? | What is a tree is something I went away thinking about. Geographer said there were more than 50 animals on a tree. An oak that is 1500 years old.  The tree hugging seemed clear to the children.  Bodies/space.  Time.  Children as trees. |
| **First class**  We went back to First class and showed the film. As we showed it one girl started to cry. She said her cat section was not in the film.  The children enjoyed the film and there was a sense that the school also liked our output.  The teacher thanked us at the end and said that it was unusual for them to have lessons outside and also she never went to Forest School so it was good for her to experience the school grounds. | Ethics being about leaving children’s work out of films as much as including it. |  |