



Childhood in the **Anthropocene**

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Foreword



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What a delight to read these additions to the field of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS) in the first issue of the new journal, *Childhood in the Anthropocene*, established in 2024 by Mälardalen University, Sweden, under the auspices of Chief Editor, Professor Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér. It is a testament to the growth of ECEfS research that this journal has its debut with these papers that emerged from the latest Transnational Dialogues in Research in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (TND for short!).

The first TND network met in 2010 with researchers from Sweden, Norway, Australia and New Zealand. Here, we have papers from Norway, Sweden and Australia, and also from Türkiye, Belgium and Ireland, just a sample of the researcher-participants who attended the 2023 TND in Sweden. This wider group included researchers from Finland, USA, Canada, and the Czech Republic, and we know from previous TNDs - both face to face and online - that international representation continues to expand. It was always the intention of the TND in its initial framing that it would be a network for researchers, would support and encourage research outputs especially from new and emerging researchers, would draw from interdisciplinary outlooks and lenses, and bring new ideas, language, and nuances to ECEfS.

As I read the ten papers in this issue, it became apparent that they highlight several of the threads that illustrate where the ECEfS movement is currently at - especially those enduring themes that continue to require amplification and strengthening. These include: encouraging nature play to expand to embrace EfS

(Ranta, Ireland, through emphasising children's rights and participation; evolving beyond traditional 'green' dimensions in ECEfS (Sageidet, Norway, emphasising synergies between peace education and EfS); and the demand for renovation of early childhood teacher education, preservice and inservice, to account for EfS (Alici, Turkey) and (Jørgensen- Vittersø, Norway).

These papers also provoke: how best to relate sustainability to pedagogical theories and practices (Dom & Willockx, Belgium); how to authentically engage children as the main drivers of learning and actions for sustainability (Engdahl, Sweden); how to overcome bobbing around 'amongst the waves of changing political priorities' (Elliott, Australia); making the case for co-creation and innovation in research design when working with children around sustainability (Ødegaard, Norway); advocating for quantitative studies in ECEfS (Pamuk, Türkiye); and introducing terminology drawn from interdisciplinary explorations (Ärlemalm-Hagsér, Sweden, who references 'solidarity' with people and planet). Of course, there is so much more in each of these papers than the fragments I highlight here – now read each in detail for your own learning and motivation!

Overall, these ten papers support the premise that ECEfS is context-driven. There is no one way to implement ECEfS. Everyone is on a journey, and every journey is richly diverse with unique starting points, goals, and outcomes. What is universal, however, is the commitment to young children and the role of early education in shaping and reshaping current lives and future prospects. As we know, today's children are the inhabitants the future, not us. We owe it to next generations living in the Anthropocene to continue to strive for ways of living that are healthy, just and sustainable for all.

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