



Childhood in the Anthropocene

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Introduction

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In this first issue of the journal, *Childhood in the Anthropocene*, ten papers from researchers in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability highlight contemporary issues in the field. The papers were contributed by participants in the 8th Transnational Dialogues on early childhood education for sustainability research (TND 8) held at Mälardalen University in August 2023. The TND research group was originally established in 2010 by Professor Julie Davis, then at the Queensland University of Technology and Professor Eva Johansson, then at the University of Stavanger, Norway. The aim of the research group was to promote international collaboration in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS), particularly to develop research projects and publications and participate in international conferences. Since 2010, the TND has had a significant role in placing sustainability issues on the research agenda for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and promoting early childhood education within the Education for Sustainability (EfS) fields. For example, ECEfS presentations at international events such as the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (ECECERA) conference and the World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC). The TND research network gathers regularly in-person aligned with major conferences and also online. The TND 8 gathering in Sweden brought international researchers together to share their studies on varied topics, thus creating a space for inspiring and constructive dialogues about ECEfS.

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The papers in this volume reflect the discussions and thinking shared over two days at the latest TND 8 conference at Mälardalen University focussed around 'Where to next? Examining the gaps, issues and needs in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability Research'. The participants rose to this challenge and many have reflected on their research and the TND8 discussions in this collation of papers.

TND 8 OVERVIEW FINAL PROGRAM

Where to next? Examining the gaps, issues and needs in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability research

- **TND8 Dates:** Thursday 24 August, and Friday 25 August.
- **Optional Pre and Post TND8 Dates:** Wednesday 23 August a preschool study visits in Västerås AND/OR Saturday 26 August a visit to the Valby Open Air Museum in Västerås.
- **Co-convenors of TND8:** Professor Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér, Mälardalen University, Professor Barbara M. Sageidet, Stavanger University, Dr Sue Elliott, University of New England, Dr Sule Alici, Kırşehir Ahi Evran University and Dr Lyndal O'Gorman, Queensland University of Technology.
- **Venue:** Mälardalen University, Västerås, Sweden, <https://www.mdu.se/>

As we gather in person for the first time in five years, it is timely to critically reflect and take stock about where to next in ECEfS research. We first celebrate how TND has been instrumental to the research trajectory of the last decade, building international partnerships and research collaborations with a shared commitment to urgency, agency and equity (Dean & Elliott, 2022; Emery et al, 2017). Shifts have occurred across research and policy alongside theoretical and pedagogical change. In particular, the ECEfS research trajectory has demonstrated a move away from an environmental focus and more traditional paradigms through to a healthy and diverse body of researchers producing multiple studies that explore broad dimensions of sustainability (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020; Davis, 2009; Hedefalk et al., 2015). In TND 8, we examine what is next for ECEfS, what are the ECEfS research gaps, what methodological directions are possible and what is strategically critical to inform urgent policy and practice change in this arena. Like the patches of a quilt, we ask what research patches are missing now and how can we fill these as we move forward

Table 1: TND 8 Program overview

Venue	Day/Time	Activity
Västerås	Wednesday 23rd August	Optional Morning Preschool study visit to two preschools with an EfS focus in Västerås.
Västerås Campus, Mälardalen University	Thursday 24th August	
	9.30am - 11.00am	<p>Welcome and Introductions: TND history overview for newcomers and framing of TND8, program and logistics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Official welcome by university hosts 2. Welcome to TND 8 from Eva, Barbara, Sule and Sue and thanks to host, overall goals of TND 8 3. Maps, logistics and program edits and wall paper for ideas sharing over 2 days. 4. Round the room introductions for everyone 5. TND history to date <p>National updates: Participants sharing. From the countries represented with questions and discussion.</p>
	11.00am -11.30am	Morning break
	11.30am - 12.30pm	<p>Keynote: Joining Children's Perspectives with Transformative Education for Sustainability Guest speakers: Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson, Gothenburg University and Ingrid Engdahl, Stockholm University.</p>
	12.30pm - 1.30pm	LUNCH on campus provided
	1.30pm - 2.30pm	<p>Research Roundtable 1: ECEfS Reflecting on research shifts and gaps, including pre-recorded interviews with TND co-founder Prof Julie Davis.</p>
	2.30pm -3.00pm	Afternoon break
	3.00pm - 5.00pm	<p>Research Roundtable 2: Participants invited to share their current research projects, up to 10 minutes per presentation pending numbers.</p>
	6.00pm	DINNER: Pre-booked dinner at a nearby restaurant.
Eskilstuna Campus, Mälardalen University	Friday 25th August	
8.30am Bus to Eskilstuna campus	9.30am - 10.15am	<p>Panel discussion: International perspectives on inservice and preservice teacher training research – led by Deb Harwood, Ann-Christin Furu and Sule Alici.</p>
	10.15am - 10.45am	Morning break
	10.45am - 11.30am	<p>Group discussion: Theorising and researching pedagogical principles for sustainable futures - led by Elin Eriksen Ødegaard and Sue Elliott</p>
	11.30am – 12.30pm	<p>TND Projects: Self-selected collaborative research interest group discussions, including a possible TND publication/outcome focus.</p>
ReTuna Recycling Mall 12.30pm Bus to Mall 2.30pm Bus back to Eskilstuna campus	12.30pm – 3.00pm	<p>Visit: ReTuna Recycling mall for lunch and study tour.</p>
Eskilstuna Campus, Mälardalen University	3.00pm – 5.00pm	<p>Public Symposium: ECEfS Research and practice symposium for Mälardalen University academics, local practitioners, and students.</p>
	5.30pm - 6.30pm	<p>TND 8 Concluding discussions: Where to from here? Topical issues? Challenges? Tensions? Initiatives? Actions?</p>
6.30pm bus from Eskilstuna campus back to Västerås Campus	7.00pm - 9.30pm	DINNER (OPTIONAL) in Västerås
	Saturday 26th August	
Valby Open Air Museum, Västerås	10.00am – 12 noon	<p>Visit: Optional Valby Open Air Museum visit and lunch on site possible</p>
		Some TND8 participants will be travelling on to Lisbon, see you at EECERA!

Participants

Sule Alici, Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, Türkiye
Sylvia Christine Almeida, Monash University, Australia
Mandy Andrews, University of Plymouth, UK
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Leen Dom, KdG University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Belgium
Sue Elliott, University of New England, Australia
Ingrid Engdahl, Stockholm University and OMEP Sweden
Elin Eriksen Ødegaard, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway
Ann-Christin Furu, Åbo Akademi University, Finland
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Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
Muireann Ranta, South East Technological University, Ireland
Barbara Maria Sageidet, University of Stavanger, Norway
Lisa Sonter, Queensland Early Childhood Sustainability Network, Australia

Final words – the contribution of TND8

Since the inaugural TND meeting in 2010, the ECEfS research momentum and output has steadily increased and the breadth of countries represented expanded. With each successive TND, whether online or in person, past relationships were reignited and new ones forged, and TND8 was no different. The TND, as a research gathering, creates an inviting and open space for innovative thinking and respectful debates, insights into varied cultural perspectives and collaborative action planning about where to next. Within the collated participant papers in this journal, we identify some of the gaps, issues and needs in ECEfS research. We argue these urgently require addressing at this critical juncture in the Earth's history, a history that will influence young children's futures forever.