Local weather events – exploring children’s sense and place making

*Elin E. Ødegaard¹, André Marandon²

¹Wesren Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway
²Kunstpilotene, Norway

The aim of the study presented here is new understandings and conceptualisations relevant for children, for early childhood education and for societies so that better care and protection of children in times of climate change can develop. Several reviews of early childhood education for sustainable futures point to the need for new knowledge. Even if the main discursive category is children and their need for and relation to nature(Davis, 2009; Davis & Elliott, 2014; Somerville and Williams, 2015), few studies point to the weather as a key condition for understanding children’s sense- and place-making. We agree on the arguments set forward from Elliot, (2016) that children’s rights should include active/agentic rights, collective rights, intergenerational rights and eco/biocentric rights and will further argue that the romanticised images of the child in nature, long-held in the early childhood education field, should be challenged. As children have a right to protection, we will need new knowledge that interrogate the nature-culture binaries.

The study is carried out through participatory and multimodal methodological frameworks, and holds an approach in the intersection between social and material epistemology, bringing together methodologies drawing on the sensory, place-making, artistic and narrative nature of human activity.

More specific this study will a present multimodal documentation and narrative analysis from data generated with staff, children and an artist in the role of the researcher. The study is the first explorative step into understanding more about how weather and especially extreme weather impact children’s lives, however in focus here is children’s sense-making, their place-making in local situated events outside the playground area. The kindergarten is situated at the west coast of Norway, in the outskirt of the city Bergen and the multimodal data is generated through a series of adventure trips to the same area of open landscape with the use of still camera, a log with weather reports and rich narrative descriptions. In particular, the significance of young children, staff and researchers activities on a local place and how they relate to the weather as key conditions for local and situated place.

Keywords: place-making, weather, exploration, climate change, sustainable futures