Children’s use of places and artifacts as tools for negotiations of belonging.

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This paper explores how children’s desire and negotiation for belonging can be understood through their use of places and artifacts in the kindergarten. This is part of a PhD study (2016-2020) which investigates the concept and practice of belonging related to Education for Sustainability in Norwegian Early Childhood Education.

In Norway, Education for Sustainability in kindergartens are closely related to outdoor activities and the environmental dimension where the Arne Næss deep ecology philosophy has played an important role. The social dimension of Education for Sustainability, however, is about ensuring that all people have a good and just foundation for a decent life, and have the opportunity to influence their own lives and the communities in which they live. The social dimension of Education for Sustainability has until now not been explored to the same extent as the focus on environmental issues in Norwegian Early Childhood Education. The increased heterogeneity in the Norwegian population, however, implies a development of new pedagogical practices in kindergarten; among other practices related to children’s experiences of belonging to the community. The UN’s Sustainability Goal No.10; “Reduced inequality within and among countries” implies, among other, that everyone within a country should feel included as citizens in the society, which in kindergarten can mean that every child should experience belonging, regardless of race, ethnicity or origin.

Observations, photos and narratives from an ongoing fieldwork in a multicultural kindergarten in Norway, forms basis for a preliminary analysis of a boy with migrant background’s use of the football and the football-pitch. The research question which I seek to answer is; how can the use of the football-pitch as place and the football as artifact, be understood as materially mediated manifestations of belonging? I suggest that it can be understood as tools for negotiating belonging to a community. The analysis of the findings is done through a narrative and phenomenological approach within a cultural-historical framework.

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