

Towards an Ecological Consciousness: A qualitative narrative of a research journey.

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Abstract

My overall aim with this Masters thesis is to create an understanding of the need for social change and inspire individuals and communities to think and live nature-friendly (Schostak & Schostak, 2008). This perspective has evolved from a qualitative case study of a specific approach to addressing the human-nature relationship. My case study is The Joy of Living Nature-friendly, an approach that came to be through The Stetind Project in Norway. "Central to this project is the belief that it is possible to change the ways in which we think and act, in particular by focusing on deep joy as an impetus for inspiration and change" (Council for Eco-philosophy, 2009, home page: project description).

Through my research journey I have experienced a change in the way I think about the world around me and how I relate to it. Through this process I have developed my ecological self (Naess, 1989). I understand this, a development of an ecological consciousness, as the essence of what The Stetind Project is aiming for through the Joy of Living Nature-friendly. This Masters is a reflexive narrative that unfolds the process I have gone through to exemplify how the case study has functioned as my change agent (Dillow, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The material that the qualitative case study is based on is the sum of texts and events that have been interpreted in light of the context. The narrative has an emerging design inspired by the concept of a qualitative bricoleur that "edits and puts slices of reality together" to form a holistic understanding of the information at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p 7). I have done this through active engagement with my research and by collecting empirical material that has been stitched together to represent different elements of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The pieces of empirical material are reflected upon in light of an holistic understanding of the case as well as my research journey. The Masters thesis can therefore be seen as an ongoing hermeneutic process (Strong, Pyle, deVries, Johnston, and Foskett, 2008).

Through my personal involvement and engagement I am aiming at conveying the experiences and the research process that changed my way of thinking. I use the deep questioning model from the Deep Ecology Movement to derive my own integrated approach to how I think about the world and how this way of thinking can be lived out (Naess, 1989). This surfaced as my personal eco-philosophy: Ecosophy M. The different levels of deep questioning are based on my fundamental norm: Relational Empathy! Through an explicit narrative of how I developed an ecological consciousness I hope to inspire you to reflect upon your own way of being in the world: how you relate to people, living beings, places and the ecosystems they form as parts of the ecosphere (Ellis, 2002; Ellis, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).