

**A Rhizomatic Edge-ucation: 'Searching for the Ideal
School' through
School Tourism and Performative Autoethnographic-We.**

**Being submitted for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy,
University of Hull**

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September 2017

Abstract

*Alys-we searched for that oxymoron of the 'Ideal School'.
Performing School Tourism In over 180 schools in 21 countries,
Unpicking the binary in education away from alternative or mainstream,
Embodying places that are 'educating differently' Towards a queering...
Rhizomatically dancing with those 'gems' of my edge-ucation.*

This thesis uses performing School Tourism to share stories that weave the complexities of the multiplicities of Alys, as the assemblage/ethnography (Wyatt & Gale, 2013) or my autoethnographic-we (Spry, 2016) searching for the 'Ideal School' around the world. The voices explored of the Alys-we are: Alys the UK state school teacher, Alys educating differently, Alys and Steiner, Alys the future parent, Alys the PhD student/ theorist, Alys the School Tourist, Alys the Performer, Alys the Van-Dweller, Alys the edge-dweller and the Queering of 'Bad-Alys'. This thesis has developed performing School Tourism as an embodied approach, a feeling journey, that connects the 'School Tourist' rhizomatically (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87) with the more-than-human world of ways of 'educating differently'. By accepting that their 'Ideal School' does not exist, these multiple-voices of Alys-we intra-act (Barad, 2007) to subvert the dominant discourse of education through uncovering 'gems' in these varied places around the world, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the edge-ucation. This thesis concludes that current understandings of 'school/schooling' are not the future of learning but that sharing these 'gems' have potentiality (Munoz, 2009), through the ripple effect from performing School Tourism, to lead not to the 'Ideal School' but to changes within the current world and, on a more global scale, for new understandings of the 'Earth-we' as a 'utopian performative of hope' (Spry, 2016).

Acknowledgements

I may not have found the 'Ideal School' whilst doing this PhD, but I did fall in love. I want to thank Bozz Connelly for selling his motorcycles and flying across the world to join me, living in a van and writing up a PhD. You brave, brave, man! Thank you for all your help, love and support (and proofreading!) it has made doing a PhD even more fun!

I wish to thank my supervisors Max Hope and Josef Ploner for bearing with me as I explored alternative methodologies and non-conventional approaches to research and guiding me towards this finished thesis. I would also like to thank the University of Hull for granting me a scholarship in 'Freedom to Learn' which I lived to the max, the support enabled me to truly explore performing School Tourism internationally. I would also like to extend my gratitude to all the schools/places of learning, adults and children who I have met through performing School Tourism.

As an itinerant PhD student, I have many people to thank for their support along my journey as much that has been written in this thesis (that was not written in the van or whilst travelling abroad) was written in their homes. My thanks go to my parents Sue and Gareth Mendus, my sister Lydia and my grandmother Valerie Rickerby OBE, and my amazing friends around the world - Cherry Strawberry, Acorn and Vanny McVanface (our home!), Annie, Roger and Digga in Uphall, Mark and Ian in Sheffield, Dan, Mel and Herdy in Kendal, Kath, Ben and May in the Peak District, Richard, Maureen, Sarah and Sam in Farnham, Eyal, Lauren, Daniel and Jude in London, Rachel, Dan, Esben and Narina on Privet Drive, PhD Dan, Susie and Jesse in Lewes, Stanmer Park Brighton (for being such a great park-up), Manda, Chris and Murphy in Dorset, Jonathan in Totnes, Davina and Ulf in Cornwall, Julie and Mike in Herefordshire, Chloe and Elkie in Glastonbury, Ben in Manchester, Karen, Keith and Finlay in York, Emma, Jonathan, Jack, Ellie and Harry in Fife, Jenny and Martyn for loaning us their refuge to prepare for the viva in Devon, Aldo and Claudia in Arezzo, Italy, Teresa in Lisbon, Portugal, Adam and Jo in Vietnam, Barbara, George and Ben in Massachusetts, USA, Phiona, Carolyn and Judy in Australia and to all the others who put me up for a night or two and suggested schools.

I also would like to recognise all the educators and academics who have supported me on my journey through conversations, emails and new friendships. Through the Freedom to Learn project: Catherine Montgomery, Michael Fielding, Diane Reay, Helen Lees, Dan Ford, David Gribble. At the University of Plymouth I found a lot of support for my interest in methodologies and alternative education: Ken Gale, Cath Gristy, Joanna Haynes, Paul Warwick, Mel Parker, Ciaran O'Sullivan. Through exploring collective biographies: Jane Speedy and Sue Porter (who said to me once, "*I want to read about the Queering of 'Bad-Alys'*" and so inspired that multiplicity). From attending the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry in 2015 and 2017: Tami Spry, Stacy Holman Jones, Anne Harris, Carolyn Ellis, Art Bochner, Kitrina Douglas, Phiona Stanley, Davina Kirkpatrick, Jonathan Wyatt, Elizabeth St.Pierre. I would also like to thank Paul Magnuson (Leysin American School, Switzerland) for inviting me to be a visiting scholar, Michael Kamen (Southwestern University, Texas) for sharing our love of visiting schools. To the many people from the Steiner World including Neil Boland (University of Auckland) for inspiring me with Waldorf 2.0, Susan Perrow (for the stories), Janni Nichol, Michael Rose and Linda Fryer for the guidance and belief in helping me think differently.

Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Original contribution to knowledge.....	4
1.3 Thesis Chapters overview.....	4
Chapter 2 – Methodological and theoretical underpinning of the thesis.....	10
Introduction.....	10
2.1 A methodological journey from autoethnography to performative autoethnography.....	10
2.1.1 Why use autoethnography?	10
2.1.2 Doing autoethnography for the PhD.....	13
2.1.3 Finding performative autoethnography.....	15
2.1.4 How performative autoethnography influenced my PhD.....	17
2.2 Finding Deleuze and being introduced to the Rhizome.....	19
2.2.1 Vignette 1: As the narrative-spine becomes my Performative-autoethnographic-rhizome.....	19
2.2.2 Thinking with Deleuze for the PhD.....	21
2.2.3 Stepping into Post-Qualitative Research.....	23
2.2.4 The emergence of the autoethnographic-we and the multiplicities of Alys-we.....	25
2.3 School Tourism.....	26
2.3.1 Theoretical positioning of School Tourism.....	26
2.3.2 Where does a van-dwelling school tourist sit?.....	28
2.3.3 The shadow sides.....	37
2.3.3.1 Unnecessary binaries.....	37
2.3.3.2 Ego and patriarchy.....	38
2.3.3.3 Colonialism, power and using the word ‘tourist’.....	39
2.4 School Tourism within this thesis.....	43
2.4.1 School sampling.....	45
2.4.1.1 What is a school visit?.....	45
2.4.1.2 Which schools do I visit?.....	47
2.4.1.3 What do I do there?.....	48
2.4.2 Ethics of the study.....	50
2.4.2.1 How ethics influenced the style and approaches to the research and final thesis.....	54
2.4.2.2 Positionality and the Insider/Outsider debate.....	59
2.4.3 Where do I write?	61
2.4.4 Where have my journeys taken me?.....	62
2.4.5 How do I understand what I see?.....	63
2.4.5.1 Writing and Storytelling.....	63
2.4.5.2 Vignettes.....	65
2.4.5.3 Dialogues.....	66
2.4.5.4 Poems	67
Conclusion.....	69

Chapter 3 - Defining key terms.....	70
Introduction.....	70
3.1 Traditional and alternative education.....	70
3.1.1 What is traditional, mainstream education?.....	70
3.1.2 What is alternative education?.....	72
3.1.3 Neoliberalism and education.....	79
3.1.4 Moving on from the binary of alternative and mainstream education.....	84
3.2 The 'Ideal School'.....	88
3.2.1 Exploring the literature on the 'Ideal School'.....	89
3.2.2 Utopia.....	93
3.2.3 Utopianism in Education.....	97
Conclusion.....	101
 Chapter 4 - Meet Alys.....	 102
Introduction.....	102
4.1 Background and rationale.....	102
4.2 Meet Alys-we.....	106
4.2.1 Alys the UK state school teacher	106
4.2.1.1 Essay on retiring from full-time traditional teaching in 2007..	107
4.2.2 Alys educating differently	113
4.2.2.1 On rediscovering Play - A Poem about learning from Par Albam Solvik, Jarna, Sweden.....	114
4.2.3 Alys and Steiner	115
4.2.4 Alys the future parent	115
4.2.5 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist.....	116
4.2.6 Alys the School Tourist	116
4.2.7 Alys the performer.....	117
4.2.8 Alys the Van-Dweller.....	118
4.2.8.1 An Ode to the carpark - 13th September 2016.....	119
4.2.9 Alys the edge-dweller	120
4.2.9.1 Going to the theatre, May 5th 2016	122
4.2.10 The Queering of 'Bad-Alys'.....	125
4.2.10.1 'First-Rites' Nine Ladies Stone Circle, Derbyshire, UK, August 2007.....	126
4.2.10.2 Those Dreadful Days On wearing/embodying my identity....	127
Conclusion.....	128
 Chapter 5 - With Steiner: Or there and back again.....	 130
Introduction.....	130
5.1 Why not Waldorf?: A play-script from Malaysia.....	130
5.2 Alys and Steiner - Alys and Steiner Waldorf education.....	137
5.2.1 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - What is Steiner Waldorf education?.....	137
5.2.1.1 Steiner Waldorf education.....	137
5.2.1.2 Kindergarten (3-6 years).....	139
Vignette 1. Alys the Performer: A poem about a Steiner Kindergarten through the imagined eyes of a five year old - A poem written after a 5 week placement as a Kindergarten Assistant in 2012, UK.....	140
5.2.1.3 Lower School (7-14 years).....	142
Vignette 2. Alys the School Tourist: An observation of a Steiner Class 1/2 (7-9 year olds) Main-Lesson February 2016 in Australia.....	142
5.2.1.4 Upper School (14+).....	144
Vignette 3. Alys Educating Differently: Reflections on	

teaching Upper School Geography.....	144
Vignette 4. A conversation between a school administrator in Australia and myself about Steiner Waldorf Upper schools in the 21st Century.....	146
5.2.1.5 Role of the teacher.....	147
5.2.2 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - What is anthroposophy?.....	150
Vignette 5. Alys and Steiner - When Kath and I found out about the Elementals.....	152
Vignette 6. A play-script from a conversation between myself and a Steiner Waldorf class teacher in Australia and Kindergarten teacher in the UK about 'inner work' and the influences of anthroposophy on their teaching and lives.....	154
5.2.3 What are the main critiques of Steiner Waldorf education?.....	156
5.3 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - Steiner Waldorf education around the world.....	158
Vignette 7. A conversation between a School Administrator in Australia, myself and a Kindergarten teacher in the UK about the role of Christianity in Steiner Waldorf education.....	158
Vignette 8. Kathmandu, Nepal, March 2008.....	160
Vignette 9. Making Steiner Waldorf education Malaysian.....	163
Vignette 10. Risk-taking or just play? Norway 2008.....	165
5.4 Alys Educating Differently - The Shadow of Behaviourism.....	165
5.4.1 Alys the School Tourist - Three vignettes giving examples of 'managing behaviour'.....	166
Vignette 11. 'Acorn 1, 2, 3'.....	166
Vignette 12. "You can't sit there!".....	167
Vignette 13. Red on the traffic light means no playtime.....	168
5.4.2 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - A Response to Vignette 11, 12 & 13.....	168
5.4.3 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - A call for change in Steiner Waldorf education.....	171
Vignette 14. Using storytelling with refugees on Lesbos, Greece.....	172
5.5 Steiner Waldorf education and the edge-ucation.....	174
5.5.1 Alys Educating Differently - The Alys and Kath poem.....	175
5.5.2 'Blended - Pedagogy'.....	177
5.5.3 Funding of Steiner Waldorf edge-ucation.....	179
Conclusion: Alys the PhD Student/Theorist making sense of becoming a School Tourist and why is this still not enough?.....	181
Chapter 6 'Sea of Stories' - "Oh! The places you'll go!".....	184
6.1 Alys the School Tourist - Using School Tourism to explore 'educating differently' in practice.....	184
6.1.1 Overview of the fieldwork.....	186
6.1.2 Self-labelled others.....	187
6.2 Different terms used for 'educating differently' - Innovative, Human-Scale and Holistic.....	190
6.3 Progressive Education.....	192
6.3.1 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist questions "What is progressive Education?".....	192
6.3.2 Alys the School Tourist in 2013 - Flavours of self-labelled progressive schools.....	193
Vignette 1. Rural Vermont.....	193
Vignette 2. UK: Reflections on school visits.....	194
6.3.3 Alys the School Tourist asks - What makes a 21st century progressive school progressive?.....	194

6.3.4 Alys the School Tourist in 2017 - Flavours of self-labelled progressive schools.....	196
Vignette 3. Elementary/middle progressive school, Manhattan.....	196
6.3.5 Alys Educating Differently - Project Based Learning.....	197
Vignette 4. PBL and other High Tech High influences in a UK state secondary school.....	198
Vignette 5. Ron Berger and Expeditionary Learning.....	199
6.3.6 Alys the edge-dweller - on feeling uncomfortable realising I am too radical for what I have seen.....	200
6.3.7 Progressive education and democracy.....	200
6.4 Democratic education.....	202
6.4.1 Alys the school tourist - my first democratic school visit.....	202
Vignette 6. My first democratic school visit.....	202
6.4.2 What is democratic education?.....	203
6.4.3 Alys the School Tourist - Different places that call themselves democratic.....	206
Vignette 7. Tallgrass Sudbury School, Chicago, May 2017.....	206
6.4.4 What makes these democratic schools different from other schools 'educating differently'?.....	207
6.4.5 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - The argument for why democratic education works.....	210
6.4.6 Alys educating differently - What is the role of the teacher in democratic education?.....	211
6.4.7 Alys educating differently - What is self-governance? - Democracy-in-action?.....	213
6.4.8 Alys the School Tourist - Observation of meetings.....	214
Vignette 8. UK school meeting.....	214
Vignette 9. Another school meeting.....	216
6.4.9 A discussion with an experienced democratic educator.....	218
6.4.10 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - What is democratic education's understanding of democracy? Part 1.....	219
Vignette 10. De Ruimte, Soest, Netherlands.....	220
6.4.11 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - What is democratic education's understanding of democracy? Part 2.....	222
Vignette 11. Embodied social justice in action, New York.....	223
6.4.12 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - democratic education and the 'Ideal School'.....	224
Vignette 12. Alys the edge-dweller - "Where was the singing?" On not feeling 'at home' at the International Democratic Education Conference!.....	224
6.4.13 Alys educating differently – Unschooling.....	226
6.4.14 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - Reflections on democratic Education.....	228
6.5 Montessori.....	228
6.5.1 Alys and Steiner - the view of Montessori.....	228
6.5.2 Alys the School Tourist - Blended examples.....	230
Vignette 14. Krishnamurti and Montessori, UK.....	230
Vignette 15. Community based Montessori, Portugal.....	232
6.5.3 The Queering of 'Bad-Alys' - accepting the shadow; observing Montessori with new eyes.....	233
Conclusion.....	236
Chapter 7 - The oxymoron.....	239
Introduction.....	239
7.1 The Queering of 'Bad-Alys' - The Green School epiphany poem.....	239

7.2 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - The oxymoron of 'The Ideal School'	240
7.3 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - Looking at School Tourism with a new light - What can the 'gems' actually mean, do they and can they bring hope?.....	245
7.4 Alys the School Tourist - Practical examples of edge-ucation.....	248
7.4.1 Using autonomous approaches with a set curriculum.....	249
7.4.1.1 eduScrum, Netherlands	249
7.4.1.2 Florescer (translation: to flower, flourishing) Home-Education support group Lisbon, Portugal.....	250
7.4.1.3 Koonwarra Village School, Victoria, Australia.....	254
7.4.1.4 A state-primary school, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.....	256
7.4.2 Teachers 'educating differently' within a traditonal setting.....	258
7.4.2.1 Blended approaches in a UK mainstream Reception (4/5 year olds) class.....	258
7.4.2.2 Running an 'Ideal School' project with Middle School Students, Leysin American School, Switzerland.....	261
Conclusion.....	263
 Chapter 8 - The Shadow side of performing School Tourism.....	264
Introduction.....	264
8.1 The Queering of 'Bad-Alys' - The dangers of pedestals - the Green School, Bali and then Tamera, Portugal.....	264
Vignette 1. Alys the future parent - Being triggered at Tamera.....	267
8.1.1 Alys the School-Tourist - learning from the Green School and Tamera.....	269
8.2 Alys the School Tourist standing up to the patriarchy	270
8.3 Alys the School Tourist - Sharing School Tourism with others.....	272
Vignette 2. First thoughts on group School Tourism.....	273
8.4 Alys the state-school teacher - I am no longer a teacher.....	276
8.5 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - Discussing the big-picture.....	277
8.5.1 Alys the edge-dweller - Learning from the Dark Mountain weekend, September 2016, Embercombe, Devon.....	278
8.5.2 Alys-we performing School-Tourism for the 'New Story'.....	281
Conclusion.....	284
 Chapter 9 - Stories of Hope.....	285
Introduction.....	285
9.1 Paper transcript: 'Searching for the Ideal School' - A Rhizomatic edge-ucation.....	285
9.2 Coda	296
9.2.1 Addendum - The rhizome is global 'ecological- Alys' speaks.....	300
 Chapter 10 - Conclusion.....	302
10.1 Overview of thesis.....	302
10.2 Contributions to knowledge.....	303
10.2.1 Performing School-Tourism.....	305
10.2.2 Edge-ucation - the 'gems'.....	307
10.3 Further work.....	309
10.4 Back in the van.....	312
 Appendix – School Visits List.....	314
 Reference List.....	321

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

It took a while to come to me

For a moment of clarity in the ever-spinning-rhizome of my life.

To realise that no one school exists in this moment that is my 'Ideal School'...

Knowing that my ideal does not exist.

Now.

And then from that refrain the narratives dance rhizomatically,

*Eloquently reminding me of Shakespeare's winds in *The Tempest**

Flowing in and out and ever changing but around the island.

"So what is your island Alys?"

This thesis answers a call for something different to happen in education.

A cry out for a new story - a new story for education and learning but also society.

Mendus, Journalling, [York, November 2016].

This thesis aims to interrupt the '*master narratives*' (Spry, 2005) of educational practice in our current (mostly) neoliberal society which Hill and Kumar (2009) argues is "*an ideologically compliant but technically and hierarchically skilled workforce*" (Hill & Kumar, 2009:3). This is achieved through rhizomatically performing School Tourism and performative autoethnographic-we (Spry 2016), 'assemblage/ethnography' (Wyatt & Gale, 2016).

Performing School Tourism (explained in detail in Chapter 2 and 6) is about the performance that occurs when you physically visit schools/places of learning and about the embodied experience and co-present intra-actions with those that spend time in that place. It is a temporal spatial experience that has the potential, by sharing stories of 'educating differently' from the visit, to lead to changes in your own/other peoples' work with children. It is also about the journey to and from schools/places of learning. Schools/places of learning include state-funded and privately-funded 'schools' and home-educated family homes and groups for home-educated/educated otherwise children.

This thesis has been written through the lens of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987), where rhizome is “*a metaphor for an epistemology that spreads in all directions at once*” (Tedlock, 2011: 333), similar to a root and flowering system of a lily or rhubarb. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, a rhizome “*has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines,*” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987: 263). This complexity of a rhizome is understood through the multiplicities of the performative autoethnographic-we. Where performative writing can be about the “*continual questioning, the naming and renaming and un-naming of experience through craft, through heat, through the fluent body*” (Spry, 2011: 509). As well as the:

Iconic moments that call forth the complexities of human life. With lived experience, there is no separation of mind and body, objective and subjective, cognitive and affective.

(Pelias, 2014: 12).

Autoethnography, as defined by Spry, is “*a self-narrative that critiques the situations of self with others in social contexts*” (2001: 710) and the performative-autoethnographic-we are the voices from the multiplicity of Alys-we as they are ‘Searching for the Ideal School’ (explained further in Chapter 2) as it is more complex than the singular ‘Alys’ as rhizomatically they are always intertwined. There are many embodiments of ‘Alys’ involved in the autoethnography as well as my collective biographical dialogues with others and the post-human world. I recognise, as defined by Spry, that “*autoethnography is not about ‘self’ but the wilful embodiment of ‘we’*” (2016:15) and realising that these multiplicities of ‘Alys’ and ‘other’ are co-present and need a voice if I am to critically reflect on the sociocultural privilege that the autoethnography carries (Spry, 2016). For as Butler says, “*The “I” has no story*

of its own that is not the story of relation," (2005: 8). The many voices of Alys-we are explored in Chapter 4 (Meet Alys).

Throughout my career in education (since 2003) I have been curious about what types of schools/ways of learning are possible and this thesis is about sharing stories, stories from places and people that the Alys-we have visited that are 'educating differently' on their journeys 'Searching for the Ideal School' around the world.

I am using the term 'educating differently' (explored in depth in Chapter 3) but it can be succinctly defined as state-funded or privately-funded schools/places of learning that are different from traditional approaches.

'Traditional' or 'mainstream' I am defining as a school focussed on following a set curriculum (probably government set), high stakes testing (in the UK as SATS, GCSEs, A Levels), uniform, hierarchies (Mr/Miss), strong Behaviourism focus (use of rewards and punishments), homework, ability grouping, organised classrooms with lots on the walls and interactive whiteboards.

Mendus, PhD Journalling, [Cumbria, March 2016].

This thesis aims to move away from the latent positivist influences on qualitative research methodology used in the first part of the twenty-first century (St.Pierre, 2014) towards post-inquiry, for example; not using research questions, data, coding and triangulation methods of analysis (see St.Pierre, 2011, 2014; MacLure, 2013c). The thesis is influenced by Foucault's aspiration to 'escape existing structures' (1966/70) and to 'think the unthought' (St.Pierre, 2011) which this thesis aspires to explore by using performative autoethnography where these, "*utopian performatives open up and out into the "not yet here"*" (Munoz, 2009:46).

This post-qualitative/post-inquiry approach influences my thesis, therefore there are no research questions, just an overarching theme of 'Searching for the Ideal School'. I am also encouraged by St. Pierre's recommendation for PhD students

to read theorists, to think about what I am interested in and then design new methodologies and this is how performing School Tourism emerged.

1.2 Original contribution to knowledge

This thesis argues that its original contribution to knowledge occurs through performing School Tourism and the stories from the 'gems' from the edge-education (defined later in this chapter) that emerge that can be shared, and embodied, leading to the potentiality of educational change.

I recognise that there is a space in the understanding of the future of education for my work because other people are also visiting schools (see Chapter 2), sharing stories and making films about their quests to search for their ideal school (Hentze, 2015). People from various backgrounds (not just academic) are interested in my stories and attending workshops that I have led at conferences (IDEC, 2016; Nowhere, 2015; Borderland, 2016; Leysin, 2017; Beyond Words, 2017; ICQI, 2017).

What makes this study unique is my University of Hull scholarship (Freedom to Learn) and my itinerant life-style (as a van-dweller) that has allowed me to pursue my exploration of schools internationally so that I have visited an incredibly diverse range of schools and educational settings from which to share stories.

1.3 Thesis Chapters overview

Chapter 2, 'Methodological and theoretical underpinning of the thesis', explores the literature and theory behind the use of performative autoethnography and develops performing School Tourism as the key approach of the thesis. It also follows my methodological journey and understanding after attending the

International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI) in Champaign-Urbana, USA in May 2015, moving to choosing to follow a post-qualitative performative autoethnographic approach. This chapter positions my thesis in the theoretical approaches of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/87) and outlines how this has influenced the presentation of the work.

I struggled with defining chapters for this thesis before I understood my embodied life as a rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987) my multiple-selves searching and interconnecting within the rhizome and rather than separate chapters (such as Alys and Steiner, Alys as an Educator, Alys as a School Tourist, Alys and edge-ucation, Alys and theorists).

Mendus, PhD Journalling, [Hull, March, 2016].

Chapter 3, 'Defining key terms' explores the challenges with the binaries that occur with the use of the terms 'alternative' and 'mainstream' education and puts forward 'educating differently' as the term used throughout this thesis. It also explores the literature on the topic of the 'Ideal School' with understandings and definitions of the words 'ideal', utopia and hope.

Chapter 4, 'Meet Alys', is where the multiple voices of the Alys-we (from Spry, 2016) are shared following Alexander who states "*I accept that the challenge is that the 'I' is never singular but embodies multiple selves competing for the authority to interpret a story for their own benefit*" (2013: 551). In this chapter these voices include: Alys the UK state-school teacher, Alys educating differently, Alys and Steiner, Alys the future parent, Alys the PhD Student/Theorist, Alys the School Tourist, Alys the Performer, Alys the van-dweller, Alys the edge-dweller and the Queering of 'Bad-Alys'.

It is through giving voice to these different ways of being and possible boxes that I have been in or tried to avoid (see Munoz, 2006) that my 'assemblage/ethnography' (Wyatt & Gale, 2013) can be created and through a theoretically grounded approach the text in itself "*performatively does analysis*"

(Spry, 2005: 501). The multiplicity of Alys will be woven into the performative autoethnographic rhizome:

The shift this offers away from the individualisation of the 'auto' towards the felt dynamism of Deleuze and Guattari's (2009) notion of assemblage with its flow and effect, time, space and place.

(Wyatt and Gale, 2013:301).

The different voices from the multiplicities of Alys-we come to life in Chapters 5-9 as the authors of different sections and vignettes show the live and rhizomatic nature of this thesis in a traditional paper form.

Chapter 5 , 'With Steiner, Or there and Back again' explores in detail my relationship with Steiner Waldorf education and anthroposophy as both a teacher and School Tourist. Through sharing stories, exploring the literature and philosophy I am able to unearth my bittersweet iterative relationship, seeing my challenges and at the same time my love for the approach and as well as realise that in its current manifestation it is not my 'Ideal School'. This chapter also offers some examples of the edge-ucation through 'blended learning' examples of Steiner Waldorf and mainstream education.

Chapter 6, "Sea of stories" "The place's you'll go!", explores my School Tourism around the world of places that are, or see themselves as, 'educating differently' in state-funded or privately funded places and is divided into self-labelled (by the schools/place of learning) sections including holistic, human-scale, innovative, progressive, democratic, Montessori (with examples from Krishnamurti, Reggio Emilia, Forest Schools, Home Education and unschooling).

As I weave together these different voices, these "*pieces of self*," (Spry, 2016:83), deciding what to tell and what to keep silent, knowing that this "*embodied knowledge is the researchers home, the methodological toolbox, the*

“breath” of the performative autoethnographer” (Spry, 2005: 502) and by this process of *“iterative journeying”* (Gale, 2016: pers. comm) I can attempt to story the ‘gap’ in the knowledge about the different ways available to educate children in the twenty-first century.

The thesis argues that although there are some aspects from these approaches that are ‘gems’ and worthy of sharing with others, they are still not the ‘Ideal School’.

Chapter 7, 'The oxymoron', recognises that 'Ideal School' is an oxymoron that does not currently exist. Although 'school/schooling' is not the answer, looking again at the stories from performing School Tourism allows the 'gems' from 'educating differently' to shine in the predominantly neoliberal world in which we live. This follows Jackson and Mazzei's suggestion of creating stories that seek *“connection and recognition in the midst of complexity”* (2008: 303). Some of these 'gems' defined in this thesis as part of the 'edge-ucation' are shared in this chapter, particularly ones connected to using autonomous approaches in places where they must teach a set curriculum and examples of individual teachers making changes in the places they work.

I visit many of these places 'educating differently' and I see ways they creatively fit our neoliberal society with its high stakes tests and behaviourism and can share ideas but sometimes I can look a bit deeper find some 'gems' to play with – to chuck into the melting pot of revolution – towards the utopia that needs a paradigm shift, a societal change to occur. These glimmers and gems are my edge-ucation.

Mendus, PhD Journal [Edinburgh, April 2016].

Chapter 8, 'The shadow side of performing School Tourism', explores the shadow side (see Jung, 1964) to performing School Tourism, such as the dangers of putting places yet-to-be visited on a pedestal as being the 'Ideal', the political responsibility of the School Tourist to resist challenges such as the patriarchy, the differences of performing School Tourism alone or in a group

and how Alys-we has managed to research themselves out of a job from visiting so many schools they no longer want to be a teacher. This chapter concludes by beginning the exploration of future work post-PhD that looks at the global changes needed for educational change rather than the minute details of types of school/places of learning. As Pelias described, *“We should use our lived experiences, examined with keen reflexivity, coupled with an ethic of care as the basis for social change,”* (2014: 2) and through writing the voices of this assemblage, the rhizome will change and understanding and theory will develop, as *“it expands its connections”* (Deleuze, 2009:8) and also could, *“jolt us out of our complacency and into attention”* (Butler, 1997: 144).

Chapter 9, 'Stories of Hope', is the performance piece and its reflexive Coda (from Spry, 2011). Stories of Hope, is a new story written from five of the key voices from the multiplicity of Alys-we, which was performed in a different format at Beyond Words, University of Plymouth in March 2017 and then in its printed format at International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois in May 2017. I wrote this piece to perform because performative autoethnography, *“takes on the responsibility to move into the spaces of no face saving conclusions, no hero narrative, just a messy, generative, reflexively labouring articulation”* (Spry, 2016: 134). This means that these voices arising from the rhizome, although only presenting one possible option of many, might create a space where others might see themselves (Pelias, 2014: 13). I am also aware of the power of using performance methodologies:

As a paradigm and shared corporeality, gives us the radical hope that acts of poiesis will productively intervene in our understanding of the world, and in the world itself.
(Hamera, 2011: 327).

These 'Stories of Hope' perform a major theme of the thesis by exploring my performative autoethnographic 'we' (Spry, 2016); weaving the iterative journey showing stories and voices from 'Searching for the Ideal School'. The rhizomatic 'nomadology' (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87), represents the journey always with possibilities, as it interconnects my positionality, my influences from theory, the literature and co-created dialogues towards a realisation that my 'ideal' education/school does not exist and that societal change is my utopia of hope (Spry, 2016).

"Who are we" is a bid for utopia,
For the Autoethnographic possibilities of "we",
For a utopian performative of hope,
For a "utopian to indicate a particular and practical strategy of gaining insight into cultural selves and other in order to (re)build community" (Alexander, 2013: 543).
(Spry, 2016:33).

And it is the experience from, "*the dialogic engagement in performance with the audience that is the reason for performing Autoethnography*" (Spry, 2016: 135) as "*our pasts whirling around the bodies of this present grabbing the hands of a future joy*" (Spry, 2016: 131).

Chapter 10, 'Conclusion', this final section of the thesis explores the learning from the rhizomatic nomadology of School Tourism. It explores the contribution to knowledge of performing School Tourism and the edge-ucation and how the 'gems' that have been discovered have the potential, through the ripple effect from sharing stories, to lead to not the 'Ideal School' but changes within the current world and the stepping into of new stories for the future.

Chapter 2 – Methodological and theoretical underpinning of the thesis

Introduction

Through performative autoethnographic-we/‘assemblage/ethnography’ and School Tourism this PhD embarks on an iterative rhizomatic nomadology in search for the ‘Ideal School’.

This chapter will place the study within the academic literature and theory of post-qualitative study, exploring its post-modern and post-human influences. By using a wide variety of narrative writing styles (poem, vignette, dialogue, journaling, prose) this thesis strives to be “*live, lively, or alive [and] attentive to its own emergence*” (Sheller, 2014: 804). One way that this will be shown on the page is through using quotes from my journaling during the PhD process. I have been constantly travelling (as a van-dweller performing School Tourism) so the place and time in which the journal entry or reflection was written will be added. For example: Mendus, Type of Journal entry, [Place written, Date written]. By adding this temporality to the text it is hoped that the reader will be able to connect to the text-body in a different way (Bennett, 2015).

2.1: A methodological journey from autoethnography to performative autoethnography

2.1.1 Why use autoethnography?

We need to do autoethnography.

We need to do autoethnography because it matters.

It matters because statistics stun but do not move people to action.

It matters because power is enacted and felt upon the body, and it is there that the true cost is measurable.

(Lockford, 2017:30).

Throughout my career in education I have moved back and forth between state funded and private education. Alongside this I have moved between

mainstream, special needs, outdoor and alternative approaches to education in the role of both a 'teacher' and as an outside observer. As a new PhD student in 2014/15 I was aware that my positionality influenced my understanding of others (Ellis, 2004) and my research for my thesis (see Chapter 4 Meet Alys where I will explore my identity and positionality further). This inability or lack of desire to extrapolate my identity, ethics and positionality from my research drew me to autoethnography.

As I learnt more about autoethnography I was excited by Denzin's (2011) description as it allowed me to feel empowered that my identity could be a position of activism and that a traditional academic style was not the only way to write:

Autoethnography is feminist...queer in its attempts to fill necessary **gaps** in social and academic discourse, disrupt harmful assumptions of normalcy, foreground identity politics, and take an activist-orientated, critical sensibility to understanding experience; indigenous in the multiple ways of knowing and representing information.

(Denzin, 2011:673). (Added emphasis).

I hoped that autoethnography would allow me to explore and show my complex role of an educator, a 'cultural broker' (Giroux, 2005) and a sharer of pedagogical stories, bridging what I saw to be an important 'gap' in the knowledge about 'educating differently'. I was excited that my creativity would not need to be stifled by academic study and that I could "*not just use prose, but also poetry, art, and music; and dialogue...collaboration,*" (Denzin, 2011: 673) and realising that "*flexibility is the mantra*" (Ellis, 2004: 74) within autoethnography I really felt like I had come home.

I saw autoethnography as a methodology of qualitative research that would allow my voice to be central throughout the research process. By being continually reflexive, it would allow me to construct meaning and develop

strategies and deeper understanding of my research (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000) as well as leaving space for the reader to reflexively analyse the narrative as they read it and digest it into their lives (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

However, as I came to understand autoethnography and academic writing in the first person in greater detail, I realised that I must be aware that although:

I speak as an "I" ... not to make the mistake of thinking that I know precisely all that I am doing when I speak in that way. I find that my very formation implicates the other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others.
(Butler, 2005: 84).

Although I can try to still give myself the permission to:

Eavesdrop on myself and pluck out salient messages from the internal static, fitting my observations into narrative arcs that follow the traces of individual subjects with more or less perceptible boundaries.
(Tamas, 2013: 188).

The debate continues in how the literature uses different theoretical and methodological approaches to autoethnography. Autoethnography has been described as postmodern (Ellis Bochner, 2000; Muncey 2010; Spry, 2011; Forber Pratt, 2015). Forber Pratt explains that post-modern means there:

Is not a single tangible reality. A world constructed on a basis of multiple realities. Human knowledge is built through cognitive process coupled with interactions with the world of material objects, Others and the Self. To this token, it is my belief and assumption that our own experiences shape our perceptions.
(Forber Pratt, 2015: 12).

This 'construction' of knowledge in a social environment is epistemologically known as 'social constructivism', another theoretical label that has also been assigned to autoethnographic approaches (Muncey, 2010) as seen by Holman Jones, giving credit to autoethnography for holding self and culture together (2005). In terms of critical pedagogy, the use of autoethnography has been described as an 'emancipatory pedagogy' as it frees and liberates the study,

analysis and approaches to understanding education (Starr, 2010). However, although there are elements of 'phenomenology' in autoethnography as it explores lived experiences, Muncey explains the usual pattern in phenomenology is to 'bracket' lived experiences from the research (2010: 3). She argues that it is not therefore phenomenology as there is "*no distinction between doing research and living a life,*" (Muncey, 2010: 3). Muncey explains her understanding fits with Wolcott's, (2002) idea of qualitative methodologies as a tree and that autoethnography fits onto the branch of ethnography, a study of culture, as "*participant observation strategies*" (Muncey, 2010). Later in the Chapter, I will explain my move away from this idea to viewing my research as a rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987).

2.1.2 Doing autoethnography for the PhD...

I initially struggled with actually going about 'doing autoethnography' until a new book published for postgraduate students on autoethnographic methods came to the rescue (see Adams, Ellis & Holman Jones, 2015):

We begin autoethnographic projects by starting where we are. From there we **begin to situate ourselves in story** – our own story, the story told in existing writing and research on our topic or experience, and the stories told by others...In addition to **looking for the clues and gaps** in existing research stories, autoethnographers also examine other relevant personal and cultural texts, including photographs, personal diaries, popular press books, blogs, films, and podcasts.

(Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis, 2015: 49). (**Bold my emphasis**).

I spent a week at my parents digging through old papers, files, diaries searching for more information (autoethnographically seen as 'raw data' by Ellis, 2004) about key times in my educational journey. I realised that the only evocative/emotional insights that I had recorded were from essays and journals when I trained to be a Steiner teacher and from essays for my MA, particularly one on how setting up a school garden led to me leaving that school and begin looking for educational alternatives. I recognised that I must rely more heavily on my memory of the time and not my written records from the past and here I struggled over reliability of my 'data'.

Mendus, Reflections on using Autoethnography Journalling, [Totnes, December 2015].

Further reading supports the challenges that arose for me in my journaling above. For example, Denzin and Lincoln, well respected editors of the Handbook of Qualitative Research (2005, 2011), understand qualitative research to be studying the representations of experience not the experience itself (2011: 417). Also reading Giorgio (2013) helped me understand that:

In Autoethnography, we begin with memory but end with story, memory and story are not the same things. We remember details of an event as moments; when we write we thread those remembered moments together to make sense of the meaning of the experience....Making sense of our experiences through our memories involves acknowledging and working with the gaps, or our forgetting, of the past. Forgetting is also a part of story-making – not only do we not include moments we find irrelevant to the story's meaning, we as writers cannot recall them all.
(Giorgio, 2013: 412).

I began to see how in combining my writing 'data' and my memory 'data' together to write my own autoethnography, I create a new sense of meaning, feeling that this writing could fill the 'gap' *"between the experience of living a normal life at this moment on the planet and the published narratives being offered to give sense to that life"* (Ellis & Berger, 2002: 176). Muncey described this 'gap' as giving information on the invisible through sharing their own personal stories (2010). Positioning the idea philosophically Foucault (1976) used the term 'subjugated knowledge' as information that is ignored by the dominant culture. So stories from the 'gap' connect people and help them to think away from the 'official' stories of society (Muncey, 2010 and see Eisenstein, 2013).

2.1.3 Finding performative autoethnography

To understand autoethnography in greater depth I attended the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois in May 2015, which gave me the necessary insights and confidence to refine my approaches. It was from speaking to Tami Spry and watching her papers using performative autoethnography that made me realise that the performance is not an afterthought and is essential. As Spry says, it is “*a performance of possibilities*” (2015: 498) because performance is not separate but innately part of the analysis. To understand this further Spry defines performative autoethnography where:

Performance is not an added scholarly bonus. It does not operate as an interesting feature or entertaining option that one might choose after ‘finishing’ the autoethnography. Here, performance does not “illuminate” the text, rather it assists in the creation of the text; it is in itself performative. (Spry, 2011: 28).

Spry (2005) gives some guidance on how this can be achieved particularly in context of this thesis, with my search for my ideal school, when she explains:

We offer our performing body as raw data of a critical cultural story. Performative Autoethnography can interrupt master narratives that become “stuck in time” through its continual re/creation of knowledge by critically reflecting back on who we are, and where, and when. (Spry, 2005: 501).

I recognise that when using terms such as ‘Performative’ and ‘Performance’ in an Education thesis some people may become unclear of the definition and use. For example, in my First Year Confirmation viva my examiner was unsure if I had been influenced by Lyotard's (1979/1984) ideas of performativity, “*the goal is no longer truth, but performativity—that is, the best possible input/output equation*” (Lyotard, 1979/1984: 46). Explained further by Locke as:

Through conditions of ‘performance’ capitalism, education is to conform to a logic of performativity that ensures not only the efficient operation of the state

in the world market, but also the continuation of a global culture of performance.
(Locke, 2015: 247).

So this approach views 'performativity' in terms of comparing 'results' between schools such as league tables of schools on the grades in 'High-Stakes-Tests' or success at government inspections. Therefore, it is essential to clarify that 'performance' and 'performative' are being used in this thesis to represent a style of writing and an embodied practice, one performed in-front-of-others (physically or on a screen). Following the definition from Hamera, that "*performativity is one way that performance makes and does something*" (2011: 320), I have realised that it is not just about the 'performance' or a piece that I 'act' or a story that I stand up and 'tell', it is also about the style in which I write the thesis. This reminds me to include sensory elements, historical, cultural and political elements, the imagination and co-creation with others (Hamera, 2011). As Hamera explains, performance ethnography "*lifts up the 'graph', the always taken-for-grantedness of writing*" (2011: 320). Conquergood also argued for performance methodology that would "*revitalise" the connection between practical knowledge (knowing how), propositional knowledge (knowing that), and political savvy (knowing who, when and where)*" (2002: 153).

I also gained insight from the post-human influences of performance, that it is more than the body, from Harris & Holman Jones' when they explained:

When writing for performance, spoken words become an extension of the body; they are never just words floating in air...language in performance is enacted in relationship to bodies - the performers and the audience's. Words join the body of the performer with the ears, eyes, noses, and bodies of the audience in ways that can be felt, heard, and seen.
(Harris & Holman Jones, 2016: 37).

2.1.4 How performative autoethnography influenced my PhD.

On returning from the conference, I decided to include performative autoethnography. I realised that I wanted my work to be “*generative personally, politically, pedagogically*” (Spry, 2011: 126) and I realised that this could be by an actual performance as well because the written thesis and its dissemination, particularly if shared on the internet, will access a wider range of people, not just academics (see the performance piece in Chapter 9.1). Conquergood explains this further:

Performance is based in activism, outreach, connection to community, to projects that reach outside the academy and are rooted in an ethic of reciprocity and exchange, and as such, generates knowledge that is tested by practice in the community.
(Conquergood, 2004: 318).

Conquergood’s words above also supports the popular belief that research should be accessible (Holman Jones, 2005) in terms of the language used and their availability so that a wide cross section of the public can be part of this interpretation rather than only an academic elite (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Following Bakhtin’s definition that an autobiographical story has “*the means by which values are made coherent in particular situations*” (in Holquist 2002: 37) and as long as the writer tells a “*lovingly honest story*” (Ellis, 2004: 177) then it could be argued that it does not need further analysis from the researcher, especially if the reader/audience has an important role in the continuing analysis which is discussed throughout the literature (Forber-Pratt, 2015; Jacobs, 2008; Bochner and Ellis, 2000; Ellis, 2004). I feel that Ellis and Bochner really clarify this in explaining that:

The crucial issues are what narratives do, what consequences they have, to what uses they can be put. Thus personal narrative is part of the human, existential struggle to move life forward.
(Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 746).

Although Ellis argues that there is “*nothing more theoretical or analytical than a good story*” (2004:194), Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010) argue that just telling stories is not autoethnography, it is the grappling with theory and positioning the story within culture that is the challenge and scope of the work. For example, Forber-Pratt explained that she “*told the stories that needed to be told while connecting it to the literature through the theoretical lens of cultural capital*” (2015: 11). Therefore, no separate analysis is needed as the words on the page or the body on the stage (Spry, 2011) do the work. Harris and Holman Jones clarify this further reminding us that by:

Writing for performance, the performer, the character, and the audience member exists in (and is affected by) this temporal and physical distance... As a symbolic representation of a three-dimensional world and event, performance texts are both material and symbolic, and their purposes are always shared collaborative and multiple.
(Harris & Holman Jones, 2016: 12).

In more recent work on autoethnography, I am seeing a rise in the importance of using critical theory to provide a framework for writing and thinking in understanding the dynamic relationships between theory and story (Holman Jones, 2016; Hamera, 2011; Madison, 2008; Denzin, 2003, 2006). Holman Jones explains that, “*theory tells a story – in non-ordinary language (which Judith Butler, 1997, says jolt us out of our complacency and into attention) of how things are and helps us discover the possibilities in how things might be*” (2016: 228). Therefore within my writing I need to be continually aware as Holman Jones explains of using “*language that unsettles the ordinary while spinning a good story*” (2016: 229) whilst being aware of Pollock’s advice that theorising in critical autoethnography is an “*ongoing, movement driven process*” where the author is continually, “*doing theory and thinking story*” (2006: 8).

2.2 - Finding Deleuze and being introduced to the Rhizome

2.2.1 Vignette 1: As the narrative-spine becomes my

Performative-autoethnographic-rhizome...

In the Autumn term of my second year I began in earnest to look back reflexively at my life and my journey in education. I started by making a concertina of my life with one A4 sheet per phase and filled it full of experiences, connections, feelings, key people, theories and events. From this I found/chose 'epiphanies' and began to read all the data I had available (my memory, friends' memories, emails, letters, journals, assignments, photos etc) to start writing. Initially I attempted two different 'epiphanies' or 'nodal points', one on working in and leaving a mainstream comprehensive and another on a Steiner Waldorf home-education project that I ran. I was struggling and disappointed that doing performative autoethnography still seemed so linear and not as radical as I had hoped.

Mendus, Journalling on the writing of the PhD, [Sheffield, December 2015].

I brought this frustration (shown in the journalling above) to my meeting in December 2015 with the experienced qualitative researcher Ken Gale in Plymouth, telling him about how I was struggling to begin writing my own autoethnography of exploring education.

Alys: *So what I am planning to do is turn my life into something that at the moment I'm calling my 'narrative spine' which is the chronology of my journey exploring education and it will have a real mix of narrative, recount, some case study and creative writing and theory and literature woven in. I'm seeing myself as a 'cultural broker' following Giroux (2005) moving between different schools and sharing stories. I'm going to explore several key epiphanies like why I decided to leave a secondary school I was working in and the anger that I felt and how that is linked to future learning and people and influenced from my past.*

Ken: *Interesting... I'm interested in your use of the term... What was it, 'narrative spine'? Just that it suggests something that is linear or chronological and all the epiphanies that you speak about are interlinked?*

Alys: *Yeah, I have been struggling with that term.*

Ken: *So, just wondering if you have thought about using Deleuze's idea of rhizomes? It fits with what you were talking about that Gribble (2015, pers.comm) said "no school fits everyone..." The idea of the tree of life is an old analogy. It suggests that the tree grows upwards and spreads toward the light and the energy in the light goes into the trunk and down into the roots. It is fixed. Lots of individual trees. It shows individual arborescence.*

(I had to look up arborescence, it means tree-like, and it got me thinking that this is describing the problem with my 'spine' idea, I realised it is like thinking there is a Steiner tree and a Democratic tree and a Mainstream tree and that there are no interconnections).

Ken: *Deleuze was against this and he saw life as a web, as a rhizome going in multiple directions and ever changing and it can just shoot up to a nodal point (like a lily or rhubarb) and then wither and die. You can even dig it up and replant it somewhere else."*

(Wow! (I am thinking) then answer...)

Alys: *So thinking about my autoethnography as a rhizome I don't need to feel sad or angry about projects that I set up that did not continue but see them as a nodal point?*

Ken: *Exactly if you read the first part of Deleuze and Guattari's 1000 plateaus (1980/87) you will see that the rhizome...so your journey in education...is constantly growing, sometimes there is a nodal point which then withers and dies but feeds back in. So each project you are involved with, each conversation or story you share about education may be over but the effect continues rhizomatically. As it is on its own journey nourishing your path and potentially others that it has touched... And to take it further, if you view your*

autoethnography as a rhizome then partly carrying the story and as you share it with others and they reflect back, your story can change. Your story is always moving so autoethnography is not 'backward looking' as you feared but looking and revisiting things with different takes. As Bronwyn Davies (2014) says, you are 'writing into the not yet known' so you are creating a new vision or take on education. You are not stuck in the past, you are part of this interconnected rhizome.

And so I left Plymouth to grapple with Deleuze, was he really talking my language? When I thought further I was a little embarrassed as the idea of a rhizome was making so much sense, this '*tree-less logic*' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004), why had I not thought of this before?

Mendus, Vignette 1 written from Journal and Reflections December 2015 to June 2016, [Cumbria, June 2016].

2.2.2 Thinking with Deleuze for the PhD

I realised that if I am taking seriously Deleuze and Guattari's idea of rhizomes (1980/87) then I need to begin to draw a complicated web of how all my past experiences are influencing my present views and where there have been 'nodal points' that have come up and then died back but in doing so have taught me something. So instead of the large chronology of my life that I created with one A4 page for each section, I need to draw one diagram that showed all the interconnected layers. I soon realised how complicated a task this was and kept attempting to draw the diagram, unsuccessfully.

Mendus, Journalling, [Sheffield, December 2015].

How could all the interconnecting aspects of my journey possibly be written into a straight chronology? Sketching out all the interconnections, nodal points, epiphanies and stories showed me the 'chaos' of all these connections (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004) and I began to worry, how could that possibly be scribed in a written format? My autoethnography was beginning to look like a childhood mystery book where you could choose what happens next to the

characters, jumping between sections... Could this approach be done or even make more sense if my thesis was made into an interactive web platform... and all these different possible endings and directions, how could I comprehend all of them?

Reading an article by Gale (2017), placed the ideas that Gale had raised with me in December 2015 into perspective and helped me to “*think with theory*”

(St.Pierre, 2011). Gale explains:

I have come to the view that any active, vibrant, and living autoethnographic practice needs to move beyond the humanist and phenomenological proclivities of thinking with and of selves, of bodies as beings, as categories of differences, and to start thinking of post-human ways of affectively engaging with them in terms of multiplicity, intensity, and becoming and always differentiating heterogeneity and contingency. Autoethnography, the very name that many people here identify with, in my view, appears to enshrine the narrow individualism of the Cartesian ‘I’ and the arborescent sense of self idealised by Enlightenment through. To prefix the ethnographers we do with ‘auto’ has the tendency to further the dislocation of selves from what might emerge from the ‘entanglements’ that Barad (2007) encourages us to engage with.

(Gale, 2017: 6).

I recognise that my writing, my understanding of what is truth, knowledge and even methodology began to shift further. This excerpt from January 2016 articulates this change in consciousness:

So here I am becoming a writer in the Deleuzian (1980/87) sense, exploring ways to share my iterative story as an educator, as a school tourist and someone passionate about change, pedagogy and education for the future, wanting to create something to shock, knock the reader out of a sense of safety and challenge by disrupting the major literacies and free myself from what Foucault (1966/70) called ‘the order of things.’ This means the writing will jump around from my voice, to the voices of some I have met and others I have not, to prose, poetry, and all in-between. Following Pelias’ (2011) idea of ‘what work does the text do?’

Mendus, Journalling, [Sydney, Australia, January 2016].

2.2.3 Stepping into Post-Qualitative Research

St.Pierre's work urges academics to "*refuse methodology*" (2016: 11). From an email exchange to me about my struggles with autoethnography and post qualitative research she urges me to use the rhizome:

My stance is that any traditional, conventional pre-given, methods-driven methodology, including autoethnography, constrains us. The "post" scholars (Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze & Guattari, Lyotard, etc.) denied method and thought it was too constraining. The rhizome is anti-method. In conventional methodologies, the researcher is slotting thought and practice into the pre-existing categories of the methodology, whether the categories work or not. I don't think that is good research.

(St.Pierre, 2016: pers comm via email).

By using the rhizomatic approach, my research began to move beyond what St.Pierre describes as the "*conventional humanist qualitative inquiry*" (2011: 613) to the "*radical possibilities*" that St.Pierre argues that post qualitative research can allow, particularly if seen with Derrida's deconstruction theory, "*it is the overturning and displacement of a structure so that something(s) different can be thought/done*" (1972/81).

The post-qualitative argument suggests moving away from the artificial separation of set sections of research and coded analysis as this does not include space for the transgressive 'data' – the emotional, dreams, sensual and memory (St.Pierre, 2011) and in methods such as autoethnography where writing is analysis (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005), it cannot be disentangled. Coding sees words as data in a positivist manner as it treats words as un-interpreted data rather than already interpreted data and St.Pierre would argue that words are, "*already products of theory,*" as well as leaving space for using "*thinking in analysis*" (2011: 621). This is expanded by MacLure's critique of coding which is influenced by Deleuze's (2004) critique of representation:

“The world is not held still and forever separate from the linguistic or category systems that ‘represent’ it (Deleuze, 2004)”. Representational thinking categorises the world and establishes hierarchical relationships among classes – genus and species, category and instance... This is the same logic that regulates research coding.

(MacLure, 2013a: 165).

Therefore in my research I have moved away from calling my observations, journaling, memories and old photos ‘data’ as that would suggest, as St.Pierre argues, they are, “*words...waiting to be analysed*” (2011: 621). I agree with St.Pierre (2011) that I continually theorise and analyse my subject so there will be no separate data/data collection or data analysis as this would create an artificial separation of the research from matter that cannot be disentangled.

I also agree with MacLure that, “*coding recodes that which is already coded by language, culture, ideology and the symbolic order,*” (2013a: 170), but by writing a performative autoethnographic rhizome I can allow an embodied aspect to the work and give space for a data ‘glow’ (MacLure, 2010, 2013b). This has been described as:

Some detail – a fieldnote fragment or video image – starts to glimmer, gathering our attention. Things both slow down and speed up at this point. On the one hand, the detail arrests the listless traverse of our attention across the surface of the screen or page that holds the data, intensifying our gaze and making us pause to burrow inside it, mining it for meaning. On the other hand, connections start to fire up: the conversation gets faster and more animated as we begin to recall other details in the project classrooms, our own childhood experiences, films or artwork that we have seen, articles that we have read.

(MacLure, 2010: 661).

I am seeing in my thesis that:

What matters and counts as empirical...is the face-to-face collection of data in the present. The language that matters is spoken, heard language. Written language, the text is supposedly too far removed from the present, the really real, to matter much.

(St.Pierre, 2014: 11).

It is different from traditional qualitative inquiry where *“what is analysed is the text because we are taught to textualise face to face interviews into words ‘thereby acknowledging the present can never be present’”* (St.Pierre, 2014: 12) and that everything must be put into words for science. So St.Pierre argues that conventional humanist qualitative methods are only ‘textual analysis’ (1997). Following, Deleuze and Guattari, my thesis does not have any research questions because as Deleuze says, the aim is, *“not to answer questions’ but to create concepts and, with this usage, with these constant processual conceptualizations, to make new, to get out of old”* (in Gale, 2014: 7). As this thesis aims not to be writing to repeat, or to represent, but to be writing to inquire (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005) then the thesis has a title that covers the work but no individual questions that are answered and supported with coded data.

2.2.4 The emergence of the autoethnographic-we and the multiplicities of Alys-we.

I began to write Chapter 5 of the thesis, a section called ‘Steiner Waldorf Education - There and back again’, as a ‘choose your own story book’ but I immediately came into difficulties, realising that it was too arborescent and unless I worked hard on making sure that each section was continually connected to a variety of choices it was not becoming a rhizome. I was also aware that I needed to write a physical paper thesis and that unless I was creating a digital version then, particularly for the examiner, a ‘choose your own story book’ would be very complicated.

After Tedlock (2011), this thesis has moved away from the autoethnographic-I (Ellis, 2004) to the multiplicity of the Alys-we:

The development of rhizomatic thought without hierarchies produces nomadic space, a space where individuals are spaced by new experiences and identities that may lead to the development of double consciousness. This nomadic state of being moves beyond unified identities and affirms unique differences between people (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986). (Tedlock, 2011: 333).

Chapter 4 of the thesis, 'Meet Alys', is the introduction to the multiplicities of Alys-we, the different aspects of my life that have influenced the search for the 'Ideal School'. Here I present short excerpts from my life as it "*moves beyond unified identities*" (Tedlock, 2011) that rhizomatically intra-act (Barad, 2007) with each other and post-human understandings. As I began the first drafts of Chapters 5 - 8, I realised that writing in different voices of Alys was a way of placing the dynamism of the rhizome and multiple voices of Alys on the page. I realised that by writing Chapters 5-8 as an autoethnographic-we (Spry, 2016) or, as Wyatt & Gale (2013) describe it, as an 'assemblage/ethnography', it becomes possible to write a post-qualitative-performative-autoethnography. Therefore, the main chapters of this thesis (Ch 5-8) are written in multiple voices, with an introduction to the multiplicities in Ch 4. Chapter 9 is a performative autoethnographic-we/assemblage/ethnography piece where the multiple voices have a chance to speak, giving access to my work to audiences at conferences and shared online.

2.3 School Tourism

2.3.1 Theoretical positioning of School Tourism

One of the multiplicities of the Alys-we is the School Tourist, (someone who visits schools). School Tourist is something that I have been labelling myself for a while to describe my life visiting schools around the world. Throughout my life, when I come to a new place I would always look over the wall into the playground of the village school and wonder... what would it be like to live here? To go to school here? That sense of longing or curiosity seems to be part of my identity. This role of Alys-the-School-Tourist has been a major methodology of living my life (and this interest in schools and places) through visiting a school and thinking, "What if?"

Mendus, Meet Alys Chapter drafts, [Dartmoor, September 2016].

And it is through exploring literature on 'curiosity' that I gained deeper understanding of School Tourism as Stagl describes "*curiosity is a feature of world-openness*" (2012: 2) and the following definition which Stagl deduced from work by ethnologists and psychologists could be seen as continually active within School Tourism:

Curiosity is (1) a directed activity involving locomotion and the senses; has (2) something to do with new or unknown situations; is (3) "superfluous" activity having no immediate utilitarian goal; is (4) closely connected with play; and leads (5) to indirect, long-range advantages in the form of learning. (Stagl, 2012: 2).

After reading extensive literature on the mobilities paradigm (Sheller, 2014; Sheller, 2011; Urry & Larsen, 2011; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2002; Urry, 2000) I began to reframe my approach to, and understanding of, the term 'School Tourist' which in turn has allowed me to theoretically understand School Tourism as my embodied approach to my research and gave me the confidence to see my thesis as a 'live method' (Back & Puwar, 2012). I began to not just see one of my multiplicities of Alys-we being a 'School Tourist' but that it was actually a theoretical approach that I was using for my whole thesis. So using Crouch's idea that tourism is "*a process of seductive encounter*" (2005: 23) and Bauman's, (2011) concept that tourists are consumers, "*because they have been seduced by the true or imaginary pleasures of a sensation-gatherer's life,*" (Bauman, 2011: 22) has helped me position my work.

I visit schools and observe, sometimes I teach or share a story of other schools that I have visited, but mostly I consume... I take photos, think and reflect on what I have (in my opinion) observed and add those thoughts and assumptions to my 'bag-of-tricks' of knowledge about places 'educating differently'.

Mendus, Alys the School Tourist Journaling [Isle of Skye, Scotland, April 2017].

I also began to reflect further on the spatiality of School Tourism, its rhizomatic iterative nature, of continued journeying, possibly from a home location away to an unknown/new location and back again. It is influenced by the mobilities perspective aim to *“lead us to discard our usual notions of spatiality and scale, but it also undermines existing linear assumptions about temporality and timing”* (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 214). It is worth recognising that School Tourism, following the ‘New Mobilities Paradigm’, is moving beyond what has been seen as *“a clear distinction...between places and those travelling to such places”* (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 214). For example, the school building and the school tourist visiting, away from *‘this ontology of distinct `places’ and `people’ to a ‘complex relationality of places and persons connected through performances...’* (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 214). This post-human intra-action is well described by Sheller and Urry as:

Places are like ships, moving around and not necessarily staying in one location. In the new mobilities paradigm, places themselves are seen as travelling, slow or fast, greater or shorter distances, within networks of human and nonhuman agents. Places are about relationships, about the placing of peoples, materials, images, and the systems of difference that they perform.

(Sheller and Urry, 2006: 214).

School Tourism also looks at van-dwelling...

2.3.2 Where does a van-dwelling school tourist sit?

As a van-dweller (someone who lives in a van as their main place of accommodation in continually changing locations), I find resonance in Sheller and Urry’s (2006) understanding of *“dwelling-in-motion”* and from Bel hooks’ assertion that for richer households in the west *“home is no longer one place. It is locations”* (1991: 148) or, like Urry (2000) argues, being *“on the move”* has become a *“way of life”* for many. I am interested by ethnomethodological studies

of driving and 'passenger' (Laurier et al., 2008) as they show contrasting ideas of what it is like to drive/be a passenger in an automobile similar to that of a van-dwelling school tourist, but not covering the living-in-a-vehicle aspects.

For example travelling in a van is:

Like walking, biking, or riding, driving and flying [it] can be included among the active corporeal engagements of human bodies with the sensed world, suggesting many different kinds of affordances between varied bodies, vehicles, and 'movement-space' (Thrift, 2003), and the affects and feelings that these produce. These feelings are neither located solely within the person nor produced solely by the car (or bike, or skateboard, or bus, etc.) as a moving object, but occur as a circulation of affects between different persons, different vehicles and historically situated mobility cultures and geographies of mobility: 'Motion and emotion' are 'kinaesthetically intertwined and produced together through a conjunction of bodies, technologies, and cultural practices' (Sheller, 2004a: 227).
(Sheller, 2011: 5).

Bauman argues, "*the tourists stay or move at their heart's desire. They abandon a site when a new untried opportunity beckons elsewhere,*" (2011: 22)

which is how the sampling strategy within School Tourism can work... A

mention of another school to visit and off the School Tourist takes on another journey. As Van-dwelling is a '*live method*' (Back and Puwar, 2012):

[It] requires researchers to work on the move in order to attend to the "newly coordinated" nature of social reality. One of our current challenges is to re-invent forms of attentiveness that are mobile and can respond precisely to admit the fleeting, the tacit, the mobile, chaotic and complex.
(Back and Puwar, 2012: 29).

Bauman uses several metaphors for modern life (such as tourist, vagabond, nomad), although they were written to be separate entities, I see a van-dwelling School Tourist fitting into more than one category. For example, by living in a van, as my home also is constantly moving, my life is that of a 'vagabond' which Bauman describes as, "*the vagabonds, however, know that they won't stay in one place for long*" (2011: 22). 'Vagabond' casts images of the 'down-and-out'

in the stratified, consumer society (Bauman, 2011) and I wonder, can my life be one of a 'rich' vagabond?

Those "high up" and "low down" are plotted in a society of consumers along the lines of mobility - the freedom to choose where to be. Those "high up" travel through life to their hearts' content and pick and choose their destinations by the joys they offer.

(Bauman, 2011: 17).

Reading Bauman's words make me smile as it reminds me directly of one of my life's mottos from my friend Chloe to be able to spend at least a day, if not my whole life, following my highest excitement. To be fully present in each moment - what do I want to do next? Really truly? Climb a mountain? Read a book? Jump naked into a woodland stream? Or go to the supermarket and buy some food to cook a meal? Or even write this thesis or go visit another school?

Mendus, Reflective writing, [Uphall, Scotland, April 2017].

Realistically, is following my highest excitement fundamentally about privilege? For it is true, who can be a School Tourist is deeply connected to the ability to be mobile and, therefore, to privilege. As Skeggs argues, "*mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power. Mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship*" (Skeggs, 2004: 49). How many people really have that choice as I 'pick and choose' as a vagabond school tourist? I may be on a low-income (comparatively in the UK in 2017, under the Living Wage) but I am not destitute or homeless. I just choose (at present) to live an itinerant life as I know it means I have more disposable income and freedom than renting a physically fixed room in a house - more possibilities to follow my highest excitement than be stuck dreaming of the time to do things. Also, I am aware that it would be perfectly possible to carry out school tourism from a base-location, it would just be more expensive (in terms of running a home that you may not always be physically present in) and thereby give less opportunities to visit so many international schools. The itinerancy gave this particular study extra depth as I was able to stretch my money further. It is also

worth mentioning that a well-funded School Tourist would not necessarily need to live an itinerant life. For example, during my research I met and visited schools with Professor Michael Kamen, South Western University, Texas, who has also visited innovative schools all around the world, but returns each time to a home base, job and responsibilities.

The influence of an embodied itinerant life will be apparent throughout giving opinions from the journey(wo)man School Tourist. And the reader should not feel sorry for the van-dweller as it is also an activist choice, a place of privilege to resist the normatively of fixed-home-dwelling.

If they are on the move, it is because “staying at home” in a world made to the measure of the tourist is a humiliation and a drudgery. They are on the move because they have been pushed from behind, having been first spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise by a force of education or propulsion too powerful, and often too mysterious, to resist. They see their plight as anything but a manifestation of freedom. These are the vagabonds.

(Bauman, 2011: 22).

The van-dweller can also be seen as lonely-choice following Heller (1995) as she describes the life of an international businesswoman that she met on a plane:

She constantly migrates, and among places, and always to and fro. She does it alone, not as a member of a community, although many people act like her...The kind of culture she participates in is not a culture of a certain place; it is the culture of a time. It is a culture of the absolute present.

(Heller, 1995: 41).

Heller’s suggestion of loneliness or uprootedness that appears here could also be applied to a van-dwelling school tourist, always constantly moving, looking in at ‘others’ but not having a ‘community’ (a school?) of their own. Boland (2017) also recognised that following a non-normative line of enquiry such as his work questioning dominant discourses in Steiner Waldorf education meant that at times it was ‘lonely work’ and isolated. However, there is a correlation here to

joys of connection with like-minded others for the School Tourist. I resonate with Boland who argues *“it is a burden because it is lonely work, and I can miss the stimulus or support of others. Discovering fellow nomads on their own journeys is a moment of mutual celebration”* (Boland, 2017: 55).

Other theorists have seen the ‘vagabond’ or ‘tourist’ (Bauman, 2011) as the ‘nomad’:

The figuration of the nomad renders an image of the subject in terms of a non-unitary and multilayered vision, as a dynamic and changing entity. (Braidotti, 2012: 5).

Or the mobility of the nomad as the nomadology (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87) or nomadic subject (Braidotti, 2012).

The journey of a School Tourist (with aspects from the vagabond/tourist/nomad) is not linear, it twists and turns, sometimes returning to a ‘home’ location and other times not. Similar to Ingold’s (2007) idea for a wayfarer or seafarer, the van-dwelling School Tourist has *“no final destination, for wherever he is, and so long as life goes on, there is somewhere further he can go”* (Ingold, 2007: 77). It could also be viewed as an unsettled dialogue between an ever-changing-peripheral and its centre (Braidotti, 2012). Braidotti envisions this as:

Politically, nomadic subjectivity addresses the need to destabilize and activate the center. Mainstream subject positions have to be challenged in relations to and interaction with the marginal subjects. (Braidotti, 2012: 5).

Braidotti’s (2012), Foucault (1976) and Derrida’s (1990) influence can be seen in the role of School Tourism to ‘destabilise’, or ‘deconstruct’ (Derrida, 1990) or ‘to subvert the dominant discourse’ (Foucault, 1976). St.Pierre asks:

How do we dislodge the taken-for-granted to make room for something different, something “new”? Derrida’s deconstruction is helpful in that work because it is a critique of a structure one intimately inhabits but must say no to. (St.Pierre, 2016: 4).

In terms of deconstruction of School Tourism, this applies to thinking differently to the current 'traditional' education model (as defined in Chapter 1 and 3) although it does not designate which schools to visit which could reinforce a binary of alternative and mainstream schooling which this study aims to unpick.

How is it possible to do this? Braidotti suggests:

The point of nomadic subjectivity is to identify lines of flight, that is to say, a creative alternative space of becoming that would fall not between the mobile/immobile, the resident/the foreigner distinction, but within all these categories. The point is neither to dismiss nor to glorify the status of marginal, alien others, but to find a more accurate, complex location for a transformation of the very terms of their specification and of our political interaction.

(Braidotti, 2012: 7).

Another way to understand this complexity is through rhizomatic theory and nomadology (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987). It is important to link here to the theory behind School Tourism and that which was unpicked in Part 2 of this Chapter on the Deleuzian and Rhizomatic influences on how this thesis has been created. School Tourism can learn from Braidotti's emphasis on the mobility of the nomad and the need to fill the gaps:

The central concern for my nomadic subject is that there is a noticeable gap between how we live—in emancipated or postfeminist, multiethnic, globalized societies, with advanced technologies and high-speed telecommunication, allegedly free borders, and increased border controls and security measures—and how we represent to ourselves this lived existence in theoretical terms and discourses.

(Braidotti, 2012: 4).

The stories shared from and between schools/places of educating differently could be viewed as ways to overcome, "the *“jet lag” problem of being behind one's time...*" (Braidotti, 2012: 4) which *“filling in this gap with adequate figurations is therefore one of the greatest challenges of the present”* (ibid).

Giroux's concept of 'cultural brokering' (2005) is another way of viewing this role

of storytelling, that sharing stories of 'educating differently' connects and networks, as it occurs as an iterative part of 'school tourism' as it bridges the 'gaps' of known/unknown.

It is important to be aware that School Tourism and Van-dwelling/Vagabond living differ here from the nomadism argued by Bauman (2011) and Braidotti (2012). Braidotti explains that:

The nomadism in question here refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior. Not all nomads are world travelers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat. Consciousness-raising and the subversion of set conventions define the nomadic state, **not the literal act of traveling.**

(Braidotti, 2012: 24). (**Bold my emphasis**).

Where I argue that it is "*the literal act of travelling*" that is essential for School Tourism as it is an embodied spatial practice following Urry (2002) that virtual travel does not substitute corporeal travel. I recognise that it is possible to use the internet to visit school websites, watch documentaries on particular schools or read articles to be 'visiting' the schools abstractly, however this is not School Tourism as it misses the emotional aspect of the practice (Zemblyas, 2003) and as Braidotti also argues that embodied accounts, "*illuminate and transform our knowledge of ourselves and of the world*" (2012: 16).

It is the 'visit' itself which could be seen as a 'nodal point' as Gale explains, "*where the latencies of emergence become manifest in nodal points in the flows of possibilities of each new rhizomatic encounter*" (2014: 2). Following Urry's (2007) argument that, "*people ... desire to know a place through encountering it directly. To be there for oneself is critical. Many places need to be seen 'for oneself', to be experienced directly*" (2007: 261). Then School Tourism is about those corporeal spatial visits as "*a further sense of co-presence, physically walking or seeing or touching or hearing or smelling a place*" (Urry, 2007: 261).

This co-presence is also about “‘*facing-the-moment*’ as ‘*what is experienced is a ‘live’ event programmed to happen at a very specific moment*’” (Urry, 2007: 262).

The word ‘embodied’ itself is contested as some say that it too can be virtual (Kilteni, Groten and Slater, 2012). However for School Tourism I am arguing ‘embodied’ to mean a physical visit following Harris and Holman Jones:

Embodiment for performing bodies exists and is enacted in place and time, including both virtual and ‘live’ spaces. Embodiment as performed involved a pact/contract with the audience. From the experience of cohabiting within the performance space, the words of the performer create an altered or heightened world into which the audience member is invited.
(Harris & Holman Jones, 2016: 13).

It is worth recognising connections here into performance studies (and linking back to the earlier section on performative autoethnography) as it makes sense to view School Tourism as a performance or using the Deleuzian concept of ‘becoming’ (1980/87) reframe it as ‘performing School Tourism’.

As Gingrich-Philbrook suggests that performance can be connected to “*crossing the thresholds of performance spaces*” (2014: 83) both virtually and in-person, it makes me aware that this is what happens in School Tourism from initial emails, connection to websites to the physical visit and afterwards to thank you and reflections as well as filmed papers shared on the internet. The act of visiting a school could also be envisioned as a performance. Following Adler, the performance is not just taking part in the visiting of the school but also includes the travel, in this case the travel to/from a school, as a ‘performed art’ which involved anticipation and day-dreaming about the journey, the destination and also who/what might be encountered on the way (Adler, 1989). Taking this further, it is worth mentioning the work by Goffman (1959) on the concept of ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ within a performance and its analogies with School

Tourism. For example, the front stage, less open, more guarded conversations with Senior Management and in correspondence in comparison to those back stage, much freer, conversations over a cup of tea in the staff room, or with a student being shown round without observation by teachers. The influences of Goffman's understanding of performance will be explored within the School Tourism chapters (5-8) of this thesis.

Performing School Tourism is also a temporal practice. When physically in a school/place of learning then following Wunderlich, "*one experiences place-temporality by being in touch with the place, listening to its sounds, and observing what goes on*" (2010: 47). Wunderlich's concepts can be applied to performing School Tourism as Wunderlich too sees that when one "*dwells through time in place*" (2010: 47) they rely on the body (the School Tourist) as performer:

Only through everyday corporeal and sensory involvements (being in place-time) is it possible to discover the temporal, sensual and affective qualities of urban place [or school], and the aesthetics of place-temporality. As urban places comprise a multitude of complex rhythmic events that synchronise and repeat over time, with their identifiable sensual and affective (or meaningful) qualities, the aesthetics of place-temporality may be defined by the entangled temporalities of social life, nature and space. (Wunderlich, 2010: 47).

Place-temporality continues to be important throughout this thesis as the stories that I share from particular school visits are connected to a time and place in the school/place of learning's timeline and in the timeline of the School Tourist especially realising that, "*places are not experienced in a similar manner by everyone, for place is both the content for practice as well as a product of practice*" (Jiron, 2010: 131). As a School Tourist it is also important to be aware as Edensor argues that "*places are always becoming, and a human, whether*

stationary or travelling, is one element in a seething space pulsing with intersecting trajectories and temporalities” (2010: 7).

2.3.3 The shadow sides

2.3.3.1 Unnecessary binaries

Sheller and Urry, (2006) following Heidegger (2002) explain that sedentarism is, *“for whom dwelling... means to reside or to stay, to dwell at peace, to be content or at home in a place. It is the manner in which humans should inhabit the earth”* (Sheller & Urry, 2006: 208) and it is not about movement or travel. However, if nomadic theory is argued to follow the opposite of sedentarism, *“metaphors of travel and flight”* as Sheller and Urry (2006: 210) argue then there is a danger of a binary developing between nomadism and sedentarism. Kaplan argues against the *“romanticisations of mobility”* because if *“mobility [is] rendered simplistically as unfettered nomadism [it] can mask the unequal and diverse social relations that mark modernity”* (2006: 395).

Sheller (2011) has made me aware that:

New directions in mobilities theory are also a response to several important feminist critiques of nomadic theory, which pointed out that it was grounded in masculine subjectivities, made assumptions about freedom of movement and ignored the gendered production of space.
(Sheller, 2011: 3).

However, I see nomadic theory, nomadology and nomadism as still playing a role within School Tourism as the School Tourist is not necessarily always on the move (as a nomad) or always in one place (sedentary) it is much more complicated and part of a rhizomatic relationship. Sheller and Urry argue that it is the new mobilities paradigm that addresses the challenges with the binary.

A new mobilities paradigm delineates the context in which both sedentary and nomadic accounts of the social world operate, and it questions how that

context is itself mobilised, or performed, through ongoing sociotechnical practices, of intermittently mobile material worlds.
(Sheller and Urry, 2006: 212).

2.3.3.2 Ego and patriarchy

There is a danger in this presentation of the School Tourist to keep using the singular 'I', almost glued to the concept that 'A School Tourist is Alys' or 'Alys is the School Tourist.' This thesis does explore the multiplicities of the Alys-we in their nomadology performing School Tourism, however the aim of this thesis is to contribute the approach of School Tourism to academia as something that can be developed, disagreed with and understood in new ways.

School Tourism is not trying to create a rose-tinted view of research as there are many aspects that could easily be overlooked, for example the role of patriarchy and hierarchy in the schools that are visited, even knowing about a particular school or pedagogy, in the acceptance of a visit and during the visit itself.

Performing the nomadology of rhizomatic School Tourism is one way of stepping away from current patriarchal educational patterns. As Braidotti says:

Nomadism is an invitation to disidentify ourselves from the sedentary **phallogentric** monologism of philosophical thinking and to start cultivating the art of disloyalty, or rather that form of healthy disrespect for both academic and intellectual conventions that was inaugurated and propagated by the second feminist wave.

(Braidotti, 2012: 24). (**Bold my emphasis**).

Reading this idea of 'phallogentricism' reinforced my awareness of something that I had coined OWMs (Old White Men with assumed privilege), which had been troubling me as I visited places that aim to be educating differently. It also began to give me the bravery to bring the concept of 'OWMs' into the dialogue of the thesis. I am also aware of the term DWEM (Dead White European Male)

used to think about the number of dead, white, European men who continue to influence the academy (Ken Gale, 2017: pers.comm).

For example, when reading back an article I wrote (Mendus, 2016a) for 'Other Education' online journal about my experience of working with refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos in 2015, I do not directly mention my 'OWM' experience. The man in charge, who was the founder of the organisation, and is behind the philosophy of the work with which we were using, reminded us daily that he must sit in the front of vehicles and was the only one to be spoken to by the media although he refused to speak English. This superiority and arrogance did not impress me, especially as he would continually take photos of people in upsetting and harrowing situations rather than offer them a hand. I manage a couple of jibes in my piece, "*I was intrigued by how important using the precise Waldorf emergency pedagogy methods were*" (Mendus, 2016a: 76) and "*I did notice that Save the Children did have clear child protection policies in place: for example, no photos of the children present which I think Die Freunde could learn from*" (Mendus, 2016a: 76). I wonder if a more advanced understanding would have given me the language to explore these situations further and I aim that within this thesis experiences of OWMness are explored with more integrity.

2.3.3.3 Colonialism, power and using the word 'tourist'

Another point that needs to be raised about School Tourism, particularly when visiting places in a different country or culture of your own, is a level of assumed hierarchy and potential colonial privilege. Stanley's work on 'voluntourism' (2013, 2017) explores this further:

Like backpacker tourism, 'saving the world' is one of the discourses among foreign teachers. This motivation type, of 'helping', carries overtones of the

'White man's burden' in which imperialism was justified as a noble purpose in which Western expertise could help lift non-Western peoples out of poverty and ignorance.

(Stanley, 2013: 27-28).

One of the critiques of 'voluntourism', particularly for gap years in developing countries, is the unofficial "*position of expert, or at least as knowledgeable by locating them in roles such as teachers*" (Simpson, 2005: 51). Stanley rightly questions that the "*hiring of unskilled Westerners in jobs that would normally require qualifications may be of questionable ethical standing*" (2013: 28).

However, in my thesis as well as being a School Tourist I am a qualified teacher, so when I visit schools I come truthfully in the position of a trained teacher, but not necessarily an 'expert' as I only taught full-time in a state-school for 2 years before spending the next 10 years as a self-employed educator. I have become an 'expert' in different types of schools from the sheer number and variety that I have visited, but each country is different and there are huge gaps in my work. For example, when I give presentations about my work visiting schools around the world I often get asked questions about countries that I have chosen and it is often noticed the large gaps of countries that do not predominantly speak English. In most cases, this is due to ease, in places where I speak the language I can have more in-depth conversations and speak to both adults and children. I have visited some places where I do not speak the language but I have a friend or someone at the school who will translate for me. I have been aware of work going on in educational alternatives in German, Spanish, Portuguese and French speaking places that has not been translated into English so as I do not understand it, this work is not included in this study. I have contacts via the 'Edu on Tour' network who are visiting schools and sharing these stories in other European countries.

Learning from work on mobilities (Sheller and Urry, 2006) has influenced the development of School Tourism through the use of the concept 'motility', defined as "*the manner in which an individual or group appropriates the field of possibilities relative to movement and uses them*" (Kaufmann & Montulet, 2008: 45). Kaufmann et al (2004), discuss a 'mobility capital' where different people have different levels of access to motility. For example, I have chosen to have a high level of motility and thereby travel the UK and abroad to visit many schools. However, many educators that I work with have a low level of motility as they are bound by contractual agreements to be in their own school throughout the year so do not have the time to visit other places. As well as being aware of my motility I need to be aware of the "*power relations between gazer and gaze within tourism performances*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 15) as I am able/choose to do something that the other teachers in a school are not as likely to be able to do.

Sharing the concept of School Tourism with others has caused some negative reactions, particularly to the word 'Tourist'. Professor Michael Kamen, fellow teacher, academic and school visitor wrote me a thoughtful response:

I find myself reluctant to embrace the term school tourism. My personal tolerance for being a tourist in other contexts is rather limited—I personally much prefer going to a new place to attend and present at a conference, establish professional relationships with educators and researchers, and visit schools to observe and chat with children, teachers, and parents on their turf. Mostly, because I only like to do touristy things for a little while before it gets old. Perhaps it is simply my desire not to be one of the crowd??? Or perhaps I am reacting to the arrogance and insensitivity I see in some of my fellow Americans as they visit other cultures and lands.

I also worry that "tourism" may be associated with outsiders changing a place, pushing interactions away from their cultural fidelity.

(Kamen, 2017: pers.comm by email).

Reading Michael's words made me question my terminology, maybe I was not a 'tourist' as he continues to question in his emails to me:

Is Alys indeed a tourist, or is she better described as an ethnographer, or on a "walk about," or on a quest, or a story teller, or an explorer, or an educator, or critic (as in restaurant or theatre or film)?

I am thinking what Alys is doing is much deeper, more important, and more interesting than the image of a tourist provokes in me.

(Kamen, 2017: pers.comm by email).

I read Michael's concerns with the term 'tourist' and yet I am beginning to see it not as a negative term but one that is empowering as through the 'tourist gaze' that I, "*view a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscapes which are out of the ordinary*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 3). I do not see myself as a school inspector, taking on the 'critic' hat that Michael suggested, as that involves a different approach altogether of one that is comparing each school to an 'Ideal School' rubric which as well as being too subjective is not possible as the thesis explains later as there is currently no 'Ideal School'. However, through performing School Tourism, as the School Tourist, I am able to share stories between different schools, settings, educators and parents in the UK and abroad that can cause a ripple effect for personal change rather than top down hierarchical 'school improvements' from an inspector.

I agree with Michael that my work is deeper overall, as I see School Tourism rhizomatically, through post-humanism that it is not just about my body but a body-without-organs (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87), diffraction (Barad, 2007) that occurs between schools, from schools "*and...and...and*" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87). It is more than just a critique of the word tourist. So in a way I like the 'grittiness' of School Tourism, that it creates a rise and a raise of an eyebrow. However I am aware of the level of privilege and colonialist history

that accompanies 'tourism' that I must continue to unpick throughout the thesis and this term of School Tourism will continue to be explored throughout.

2.4 - School Tourism within this thesis

Most of the School Tourism (as in the physical visit to schools or places of learning) that occurred within this thesis was on solo trips where I had found out about or had been told about a school that I then contacted and visited, usually alone but sometimes with a friend. At some of these schools I also knew a member of staff, if it was a Steiner School then I was known as a 'Steiner Teacher' so potentially seen as less threatening and more understanding to the approach that they used. Thinking with Braidotti helps remove the concept of solo, separate School Tourist and looks at it as a nomadic vision of the body, going in and out of schools, *"as multifunctional and complex, as a transformer of flows and energies, affects, desires, and imaginings"* (2012: 24).

A few others have written books or been interviewed for podcasts about visiting schools educating differently around the world (Gribble, 1998; Little & Ellison, 2015; Grauer, 2016; Gravata et al, 2017; Reddy, 2017). My work has been inspired by David Gribble, retired teacher and author of many books on 'educating differently' particularly democratic education. His book 'Real Education' (1998) shares his stories from 18 schools (16 of which he visited) from around the world that *"decline to train children to become cogs, and indeed help children who have been so trained to lose their coggishness"* (1998: 2). Gribble does not give his journeys to visit schools a specific term (like School Tourist) but Grauer (2016) suggests the term of 'Edu-tourism' for students and teachers travelling to visit other schools and their students around the world.

Throughout my PhD I have been aware of the online-based organisation called 'Edu on Tour', headed up by Austrian Philippe Grier, which aims to mobilise change makers and educators around the world to make a difference in education. They have held several six week long events for people to visit schools in a particular country, network them together so that they can skill share and host an in country conference. I had hoped to join one of these in Brazil in Autumn 2014 which would have been very helpful to understand the similarities and differences of my approach to School Tourism and 'Edu on Tour', unfortunately this was vetoed by an earlier supervisor. Many people on 'Edu on Tour' are not educators nor have much information about alternative pedagogies so I was involved in a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) making a series of videos to share my understanding and knowledge. I always found the choice of the name 'Edu on Tour' interesting as it is written in English but hard for a native English speaker to say. I mentioned this to a German educator when at the International Democratic Education Conference in Finland and she quite succinctly replied, "'Edu' is easy for non-native English speakers from Europe to say... So why does it need to be accessible for native speakers, do they not already have unspoken privileges?" This brought me even more aware of the potential danger of colonialist understandings seeping through into my research.

In March 2017 I gave a paper (an early version of Chapter 9) at the Beyond Words conference at the University of Plymouth and in the audience was Professor Michael Kamen from the Southwestern University, Texas, USA. Michael invited me to join his students on a May Semester course where they spend a week in New York visiting a wide range of schools - from very exclusive independent schools to democratic, charter and public schools. This was the

first time that I had the experience of visiting schools in a group that was not part of a school's open day. This will be explored further as it becomes relevant to the rhizome in Chapters 6-8.

2.4.1 School sampling

2.4.1.1 What is a school visit?

What constitutes a visit has become a challenging concept for me in this thesis.

For example:

Do I need to spend a week in a school or a full year to understand how it works?

Or is one day enough?

And within that day must I observe lessons to really know what is going on?

Or is a chat with teachers and being shown round enough?

And do the students need to be there? (As it could be that the opportunity arises to visit during a school fair or during the holidays).

When creating a list of schools that I have visited around the world - all or some of the above counted as a visit and sometimes I was not a 'visitor' per se but the teacher or visiting mentor (and yet due to rhizomatic nature of School Tourism, as it was a new place of learning for me, also a School Tourist...). This is definitely not a quasi-quantitative study with each school allowed a set time for a visit with the same structure so that direct comparisons can be made. I have argued that School Tourism is an embodied practice and that the visits are part of a rhizomatic feeling journey (explored later in the chapter) which cannot be put into a regulated box, however as this is not only a geographical study of educational spaces but about those whom occupy these spaces, both children and adults, I am heading towards suggesting that although visiting an empty

school site (holidays/evening/weekends) is still School Tourism, to be able to have a more 'embodied' experience than interaction with those that inhabit the space leads to more in-depth stories to be able to share.

The stories from the schools and places of learning that have been included in this thesis are chosen to create the 'messy' (Law, 2003) assemblage of Chapters 5-8 and often the more creative pieces or poems are snapshots of a very short time or experience. However, I am aware of the potential dangers of using my experience from a short visit to extrapolate assertions about the whole school as this is exactly what school examiners such as OFSTED in the UK do when they turn up for two days, pass judgement and leave. How do I justify School Tourism to be different from this? For example, retired Democratic educator and writer of many books on alternative education and schools around the world, David Gribble, replied to my email where I mentioned how at that point I had been to over 170 schools in 19 countries:

I am a little startled that you have visited quite so many of them. When I was visiting schools I felt it was necessary, if possible, to spend about a week in each one, because over and over again my first impressions were neutral or negative, and it was only on the third or fourth day that I seemed to begin to understand what was happening.

(Gribble, 13 April 2017: pers comm by email).

Maybe a week could be the suggested goal as there is the potential for any longer meaning that the School Tourist moves beyond touring to becoming part of the school and potentially intertwined with politics. Following Urry and Larsen's definition of tourism as:

The notion of 'departure', of a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and mundane.

(Urry and Larsen, 2011: 3).

However, this is where an element of the 'tourist' plays in as the School Tourist is a guest into a busy organisation that is a school or place of learning. Urry and Larsen also argue that tourism is also "*about the body-as-seen, displaying, performing and seducing visitors with skill, charm, strength, sexuality and so on...*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 22). So, although I may argue that the School Tourist brings stories from other places and shares reflections and insights with the teachers who are often too busy to visit schools elsewhere, they are also taking up time, resources and energy from children and adults involved in the school. This is the difference of my solo visits compared to the organisation of a larger group (for example when in New York). However, if the same time is required to show a School Tourist around, answer questions and observe lessons for one or for six, then maybe it is easier for a school for have a larger group? I know that I can ask more questions when I go alone, however with others they think differently and I learn from their questions and from having the opportunity to debrief afterwards.

2.4.1.2 Which schools do I visit?

Most schools that I contacted directly replied to my emails, were interested in my research and helped to coordinate a visit. I realise my privilege as a Steiner Waldorf teacher as this qualification allowed me almost instant access to all Waldorf schools around the world that I contacted. The only place that I really wanted to visit that I did not gain access to was the original Sudbury democratic school in Massachusetts, USA .

Kraftl's description of how he connected alternative educational establishments to visit as part of the fieldwork for his book on 'Geographies of Alternative

Education' (2013) was helpful as it supported some of the approaches I had used already:

The case studies were chosen and contacted in one of two ways: through initial communication followed by snowballing (homeschooling participants); through public available websites dedicated to each approach (for example, for Steiner schools, www.steinerwaldorf.org).

(Kraftl, 2013: 14).

However, I see School Tourism as different from the more arborescent approach of 'Snowball' sampling. The whole process is, "*engaged in a nomadic, rhizomatic logic of zigzagging interconnections*" (Braidotti, 2012: 16) so the sampling method itself can be seen as a rhizome.

2.4.1.3 What do I do there?

When I visit each school, whether as a teacher or as an observer, I chat with and informally 'interview' every person that I meet, the conversation usually includes me asking about their journey to be working at/attending that school and how the school runs in the day-to-day. After the visit to a school/educational place, when I have come as an observer rather than a teacher, I write up my notes and send them to each school to be checked for authenticity and for ethical approval. I am aware that some people share particularly sensitive or evocative memories or strong opinions that I do not always feel are appropriate to share in a document that is emailed and shared to the school and in my records. These stories are stored in my head, I disseminate the new information internally and it may help me in my thinking and understanding of my research in the future. I also may have opinions about a school that I do not want to share directly with them, so I may keep these in a separate journal and, if I think they are relevant to the rhizome, include them, but as consent is not possible from the school then I make sure that the experience and place is anonymised.

In terms of my research, I am not carrying out formal 'interviews' but conversations with purpose (see Kvale, 1996) as I speak to colleagues in education or to teachers and parents at schools that I visit as well as school and teacher observations, aiming for 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). I need to be aware, as Peterson and Langellier (in Ellis, 2004) argue, of the power relationships in interactive interviewing as well as the actual context in which the interview took place. Ellis explains that it is:

Possible...to do reflexive, dyadic interviews... (w)here the interview might take a conversational form in which the interviewer tries to tune in to the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics within the interview itself.

(Ellis, 2004: 61).

I am aware that building on my earlier argument of performing School Tourism that these conversations also are a performance, do the people I chat to, even though informally, share what they think I want to hear or what they truly feel? I am particularly aware of hierarchies if students are allowed to talk to the visitors alone or if these conversations are chaperoned. I am aware that we make meaning about ourselves and our lives through our interactions with others (Spry, 2011) and that this "*opening into the complex negotiations of meaning making with others for the purpose of adding alternatives to a single story*" (Spry, 2011: 124), as well as having a space to "*radically rethink the relation between bodies, movement and space*" (Sheller, 2011: 2) is essential for this rhizomatic understanding of each place a School Tourist visits. Performing School Tourism is also an inner feeling journey, Blackie's (2016) words resonate with my experiences visiting schools:

As I walk, my own stories begin to take shape and merge with stories past. So it is that we give birth to new stories each morning, the land and I, along these old bog roads. I set out as one creature and may return home another. (Blackie, 2016: 184).

With reflection, it is these stories that begin to take shape (see Blackie, 2016 above) from the inner-work of contemplation and intuition (Manning, 2015). They evolve out of the embodied experience which “*provokes a waiting, a stilling, a listening, a sympathy*” (Manning, 2015: 75) from which intuition develops as:

The relational movement through which the present begins to coexist with its futurity, with the quality or manner of the not-yet that lurks at the edges of actual experience.

(Manning, 2015: 45-46).

2.4.2 Ethics of the study

For my first year of my PhD my initial methodology was autoethnography - I saw the main research participant as myself, although I realised that I do not live alone in this world and a large focus of my writing was about schools, teachers and educational experiences and stories that had already happened. My aim was that the main autoethnographic section of my thesis would be, “*a provocative weave of story and theory*” (Spry, 2001: 713) and I would aim to contact those schools/educators that were part of this story but had not yet been asked for consent after the ethics of ‘non-maleficence’, the principle of doing no harm (Bartlett & Burton, 2009). However, throughout this process I knew that this may not be straightforward and if consent was not available then, after the ethics of ‘beneficence’, the principle of maximising benefits whilst minimising harm (Bartlett & Burton, 2009) on the inclusion of the story, I would ensure that names/places are changed to aim to keep confidentiality. The initial thinking behind this when using autoethnography then it is introspective and it is my reflections on the experiences rather than the views of others so informed consent is not required.

However, in writing about yourself, and others in your lives, autoethnography, potentially leads to challenging questions on confidentiality and ethics. For example, the question has been raised should autoethnographers write things about people that they would not say to them face to face? (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Ellis, 2004). Or about topics that will evoke outrage and upset or may even jeopardise your future career? (Tamas, 2009; Spry, 2011). Richardson (in Ellis, 2004: 174) explained that the autoethnographer has to, "*make a situated ethical decision about what to say and whether to say it.*" However, it could be argued that autoethnography gives the researcher the means to explore more 'challenging/sensitive' topics as it is the final product, the creative story, performance or poem that is shared, not the rough drafts and not the emotional experience of producing the text (Ellis and Bochner 2000; Ellis 2004).

Following Ellis, "*how do you write honestly about what you are feeling, but also take into consideration that people you are studying will read what you wrote?*" (2004: 177) supports one of the challenges of purely autoethnographic School Tourism. Although, I feel that dialogue and communication and respecting the wishes of those involved is essential, I am still struggling with the idea; if autoethnography is about researching the 'gap' then potentially excluding sensitive and evocative accounts still leaves some stories left untold. So as Spry explains that autoethnographers are "*responsible for and answerable to their representation of others*", and being aware of the way in which the author, "*represent people, places, cultures through writing illustrates values, beliefs, biases, and perspectives held by the writer*" (2011: 60). Following the advice from Spry (2011) that "*the autoethnographer creates a version of reality... she is, then, responsible for the reality she creates*" (2011: 61), into my initial journaling from school visits I am very aware that what I write is my view and I

have developed a style of observation including my own feelings and descriptions of the setting with a few questions that were still unanswered rather than a critique or list of criticisms.

Another challenge within my study is that in terms of 'alternative schools' (defined more fully in Chapter 3 but here meaning those different from the traditional mainstream), it may be challenging to truly hide their identity when they are in themselves famous for their unique character. If it is a teacher working in a school then consent and protocol from Senior Management will be sought and followed, including the school's protocols for informing parents about research being carried out in the school. All schools/places of learning will also be able to read the sections that are connected to the time that I spent with them and have the opportunity to decline participation at any point as I will send my completed observation notes to my email contact at each school. I will not be formally interviewing participants but using a range of qualitative techniques which could include: observing, conversations, discussing approaches (possibly collaborative writing), sharing stories and co-teaching.

Performing School Tourism is an informal and spontaneous methodology so no formal consent is gained in advance from children. The adults in the school give permission for the School Tourist to visit and have the opportunity to give feedback and final veto on any written reflections. Lack of formal consent for children is a recognised limit of this approach - no parental consent is gained in advance as it is unknown which children (if any) will talk or interact directly with the School Tourist. Conversations (both front and back stage) are part of School Tourism and occur with both adults and children. For children (as no formal consent as been granted) then their direct voices are not used but the feeling and emotions that arise within the School Tourist from these interactions will be

included in personal journaling as it is important to also see the school/place of learning through the eyes of the young people who attend.

The choice to perform rhizomatic School Tourism takes a different approach from purely autoethnographic School Tourism in how the sections and experiences of each separate school visit or conversation are more fragmentary and less accountable to one person or view and more a diffractory (Barad, 2007) experience. As I have moved into post-qualitative approaches, particularly in terms of a rhizome, then it could be seen as the stories having 'agency' and that it is the 'agentic realism' (Barad, 2007) of my multiple selves beyond my single "I" that have visited, interacted and shared other-than-body experiences rhizomatically together. This is the composting that occurs after an intra-action (Barad, 2007) - the new thoughts, feelings, smells and ways of looking at the world. The taking on and the letting go of other ideas to decompose, nourishing existence both human and non-human. The agency of School Tourism can allow for consent to be asked for a story to be shared but once a story is told it takes on its own agentic level of '*aliveness*' (see Sheller, 2014: 804) and those that share and those that tell do not have control of where it ends up as whatever comes in contact with that story interacts with it from their own rhizomatic story of existence.

Throughout this thesis, University of Hull ethics procedures have been abided by - ethics gained for the fieldwork of visiting schools and for anonymising those places where consent is not formally granted (because of visits prior to the PhD or non return of forms) and non inclusion if a school chooses to decline at any stage in the research. However, there is a difference between a school accepting the information in my journaling after a school visit and what way that that the 'data...' story... experience... eventually ends up within the

assemblage. This means that as consent from the schools/people will not be possible as it is view of the multiplicity of Alys-we then, in these cases, anonymity will be given. The only exception is where I have paid for a school visit and the same explicit procedure was not carried out. After the visit, I shared a factual observation of the course/visit but the sections about the reflections in my journalling from these schools are much more personal. I chose not to send any personal journalling sections to any of the schools I visited as it is very subjective and I wanted agreement to observations of details and facts, not the personal, emotive aspect. I have included the names of the places that I paid to visit as I feel that I have a different relationship with them, an economic transaction, and I think they are too well-known within their particular circles to truly anonymise. As money was involved, I have viewed the relationship differently, always as 'front-stage' (see Goffman, 1959) in terms of what was presented to me by the schools. However, I decided my back-stage thoughts, influences and opinions through my journalling were fundamental for the dissemination of this thesis.

2.4.2.1 How ethics influenced the style and approaches to the research and final thesis.

The final thesis includes the names of schools where informed consent was given. In other cases, schools have been anonymised and described only by their 'self-labelled pedagogy' and location. In all cases I argue that *assent* was gained for me, as a researcher, to be visiting the school and carrying out research into for my PhD. Before visiting a school as a solo School Tourist, I emailed each school, including in the body of the email an overview of my project and my wish to visit their school as part of my study. I also sent my ethical approval forms from the University of Hull (ethical approval was given in No-

vember 2015). After each visit, I sent back my observation notes to each school, asking for consent and to check the details from my writings. Many schools replied to these notes and I updated my records. However, many schools, although keen for me to visit, and whom had organised visit schedules and when many members of the school community gave me extensive time during the visit did not reply to my follow up email. In these situations I inferred *consent* from the school for my physical visit as a School Tourist and from that took *assent* to use notes from the visit in my thesis. In these cases, I followed Noddings (1984) 'ethic of care' in that I made sure that the school and searchable location were anonymised. These approaches follow my ethics approval form (approved November 2015) which stated that informed consent would not be gained from all participants.

A degree of ethical complexity arises through my reflexive journalling, ethnodramas, poems and vignettes. The considerations here are different from those concerning the notes from a school visit. These creative approaches merge the multiple corporeal experiences of performing School Tourism layering a 'patchwork text' (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska, 1999) with different voices and experiences. This excerpt is from my accepted Ethics Approval form, which supports that this unusual approach had ethical support from the University of Hull:

The final analysis of the PhD is by Performative Autoethnography. A pedagogical story that I will write weaving fiction and non-fiction where all identities, locations and names will be changed.

Mendus, Ethics Approval Form, November 2015.

However, as Murray et al argue, autoethnography and narrative methods could be viewed differently from traditional research:

Can we continue to judge qualitative research against the same standards we set for quantitative research? In addition, can we judge autoethnography and other forms of narrative, for example, memoir, performance ethnography, and arts-based research, against more traditional qualitative research, for example, surveys, focus groups, mixed methods, and interviews. And is

the role of an ethics board to judge or facilitate? If this is important research, how can we work together to make it happen in a very thoughtful and considerate manner?
(Murray et al, 2011: 46).

Expanding on this concept that autoethnography is different is Ellis's argument that gaining ethical approval in itself does not make your work ethical, you have to continually be reflexive to be ethical. Ellis suggests making, "*ethical decisions in research the way they make them in their personal lives*" (Ellis, 2007:23). Ellis (2007) explains that she tells her students that they do not always need to show their autoethnographic writing to those involved in your research as, "*sometimes you may decide not to take your work back to those you write about. In those cases, you should be able to defend your reasons for not seeking their responses*" (Ellis, 2007: 25) being aware that you must always assume that everyone in your story will read it (Ellis, 2007).

I kept Ellis's words with me as I wrote my thesis and helped me decide which sections of my autoethnographic writing to include in the final document:

I tell them that most important to me is that they not negatively affect their lives and relationships, hurt themselves, or others in their world. I tell them to hold relational concerns as high as research. I tell them when possible to research from an ethic of care.
(Ellis, 2007: 25).

Wyatt (2006) in his article reflecting on his article writing about his father's death reminds researchers that, "*the ethical questions, therefore, might be the following: How do we, in autoethnographic research, manage our mixed motives and purposes in under-taking it...*" (Wyatt, 2006: 816). Wyatt's work is an example of a carefully articulated argument for a situation which he felt was worth writing an autoethnography on where he did have his father's informed consent and in his reflections on this piece he positions himself again making the reader aware

of his decision to *“not to share this paper with my mother and siblings”* (Wyatt, 2006: 816).

Ellis has also written about loved ones and found herself like Wyatt in a difficult situation. Ellis (2007) argues that she did not share all of her paper with her mother as she *“was not sure she would understand my purpose—for example, to generate discussion of caregiving as a gift rather than a burden”* (Ellis, 2007: 14). For me, the story of the many ‘others’ whilst performing School Tourism came and went, influencing my writing in numerous ways. I was not writing about pain, nor mostly about ‘intimate others’ but about the corporeality of a school visit, the journey to and from, the actual experience and the conversations that I had, but also the deeper more personal reflexive experience, thinking on a larger scale about education in general and what gems I had seen (in my opinion) in that school visit. My autoethnography followed Ellis’ explanation that *“autoethnography involves a back-and-forth movement between experiencing and examining a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of that experience”* (2007: 14).

However, the situations where informed consent in autoethnographic research was not gained (see Ellis, 2007; Wyatt, 2006) has caused debate within more traditional qualitative research (Tollich, 2010). As Chang argues those mentioned in the text have rights and *“that your story is never made in a vacuum and others are always visible or invisible participants in your story”* (Chang, 2008: 69).

Taking heed of the rights of those mentioned in the text the approach could be to view research through the lens of situational ethics (See Murray et al, 2011; Ellis, 2007) as the kind that deal with the unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments that come up in the field (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). El-

Ellis (2007) argues for a further ethical dimension of 'relational ethics' as one related to ethics of care (see Noddings, 1984) and feminist ethics. Ellis explains that relational ethics, *"recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work"* (Ellis, 2007: 4) Ellis (2007) and Denzin (2003) recognise that relational ethics are not the usual focus for institutional ethics applications however, as Ellis (2007) points out that when using autoethnography researchers *"encounter ethical situations that do not fit strictly under the procedures specified by IRBs [Institutional Review Board]"* (Ellis, 2007: 5).

Therefore, by being aware of this complexity around writing about others I ensured that I was constantly reflexive throughout, using journalling but also ethnodrama and poems to show my developing arguments. Ellis's (2013) words give further guidance for the essential element of reflexivity in the ethics of autoethnography: *"[autoethnography] 'requires that we observe ourselves observing, that we interrogate what we think and believe'"* (2013: 10).

Following Warmstead (2012) and Etherington (2004, 2007), I position the inclusion of my reflexive autoethnographic journalling sections as space for me to think, question and explore the complex rhizome of performing school tourism. Etherington (2007) sees these reflexive sections as having agency as a "space between subjectivity and objectivity that allows for an exploration and representation of the more blurred genres of our experiences" (Etherington, 2004: 37).

Warmstead explains:

My (re)telling of what happened that day in the hallway is my story, and my colleague's involvement in the tale is relevant only insofar as her words resonate with my own thoughts, my own feelings. In that sense, it is useless to wonder at what she may have been thinking or feeling, as the story in actuality has nothing whatsoever to do with her; it only exists in my mind because it caused me to think and feel enough to continue to (re)tell it in social

situations. My colleague is, for all intents and purposes at this point and in this respect, merely a character in the novel I am telling about my own life—a character far beyond my ability to theorize as an independent being. (Warmstead, 2012, 185-186).

Positioning performing School Tourism within ethical autoethnographic practice allows for the reflexive voice of Alys-we to unpick and explore the complex rhizome of 'Searching for the Ideal School' whilst continuing to do no harm to the people, schools and all others involved in the research. This was achieved by gaining written informed consent from as many schools/people as possible and for all other situations engaging in reflexivity to ensure as much anonymity as possible but also give space for the 'gems' to shine from places 'educating differently' and for the hidden 'gaps' that autoethnography aims to explore to become visible.

2.4.2.2 Positionality and the Insider/Outsider debate

I am aware of my influence from my positionality throughout my PhD journey. It was through my recognition of my strong stance against traditional, mainstream education that I grew more aware of my subjectivity and the challenge of positionality that led me to choose to use autoethnography as a method.

Following St.Louis and Calabrese Barton (2002), I recognise that positionality is crucial to the understanding of the subjectivity of researchers. Chacko defines positionality as:

In keeping with the viewpoints of feminist theory, "positionality" here refers to aspects of identity in terms of race, class, gender, caste, sexuality and other attributes that are markers of relational positions in society, rather than intrinsic qualities. Unequal power relations are implicit in positionality. Changing combinations of affiliations of both researcher and subject produce a multiplicity of identities, which variously allow for convergence or divergence of views, actions and understandings. (Chacko, 2004: 52).

Maher and Tetreault (1994) add that positionality describes how people are defined, "*not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed*" (1994:164). This thesis has aimed to explore the positionality of Alys-we by offering many sections, poems, vignettes and journalling from different positions, different voices of the Alys-we.

One way that has been explored to conceptualise the influence of positionality on research is through insider/outsider (emic/etic) research. Emic perspectives are those taken by a researcher who is a member of the community being studied. Etic perspectives are those taken by a researcher who is an outsider to the community being studied (Naake et al, 2011). An 'insider' is a researcher who personally belongs to the group to which their participants also belong (based on characteristics such as ethnicity, sexual identity and gender) (Hayfield and Huxley, 2015). Outsider research has been defined as "*the researcher is not a priori familiar with the setting and people s/he is researching*" (Hellowell, 2006: 485).

Hellowell (2006) argues that instead of stressing a binary between insider/outsider research for doctoral students should instead use the insider/outsider continuum as a heuristic device:

The realization then often begins to emerge that there are subtly varying shades of 'insiderism' and 'outsiderism'. The issue may be more one of empathetic, rather than spatial, closeness or distance. Moreover, it can sometimes become quickly apparent that the same researcher can slide along more than one insider outsider continuum, and in both directions, during the research process.
(Hellowell, 2006: 489).

I recognise within my thesis what Hellowell observes "some elements of insiderness on some dimensions...and some elements of outsiderhood on other di-

mensions” (Hellowell, 2006: 490), but I see these roles as having rhizomatic agency, continually moving reflexively between different multiplicities of Alys (showing multiple, ever changing and moving, positionalities). When I visit a Steiner Waldorf school, for example, as a qualified Steiner Waldorf teacher I enter into a different relationship (that of somewhat insider) but also I am a visitor to that particular school and a researcher with my own list of critiques to Steiner Waldorf education (so also partially an outsider). I move from the margin and centre several times even within one school visit. This is also similar to the idea discussed elsewhere in this thesis of Goffman’s (1959) idea of front and back stage conversations where elements of the insider and outsider impact those corporeal experiences and conversations.

This can be taken further knowing that the role of autoethnography in this thesis. Thereby, following Reed-Danahay’s (2017) arguments that autoethnography lies at “the intersection of insider and outsider perspectives, rather than setting up a dualism that privileges the insider account” (p1) this thesis is able to use reflexivity to attempt to prevent a dualism of positionality being established.

The rhizomatic movement between insider and outsider reflexively throughout the thesis could also be recognised as following hooks’ (1984) use of margin and centre as descriptors of positionality, adding to Braidotti’s (2012) concept of the nomadic movement between the centre and the periphery, as an awareness of power and change to positionality within different relationships.

2.4.3 Where do I write?

As a van-dwelling School Tourist I do not have one desk, set routine or view to daydream into. It could be argued that even the writing of this thesis has been a

performance as this thesis has been written itinerantly from friends' kitchen tables, to my parent's dining room table, supermarket cafes to access the free internet, on the tiny reclaimed oak table in the back of our van, to cafes and hotel rooms across South East Asia or buses and trains and even aeroplanes around the world. The nomadology of my constantly changing environment has enabled me to train my mind to stop and focus for a short time that is available or to organise my day. I know the quietest time is early in the morning so I get up before others in the house and work then. My main Supervisor, Max Hope, began running 'writing days' at the University of Hull in 2016 and I have made a point to attend as many as I can as I find these highly focussed, internet off, work sessions with time to talk to colleagues in between incredibly helpful but also insightful - it is not just me working on research. I have used the 1.5 hour focus sessions approach in my own writing of the thesis particularly first thing in the morning in the van - door open with a view out to the sea or moors.

Looking out at the rushing stream

Cotton grass dances in the breeze

Remembering swimming and playing in the icy waters

But now I am snug in the van

Looking out.

Mendus, 'Looking out' a poem written in the van, [Cumbria, June 22nd 2017].

2.4.4 Where have my journeys taken me?

Section 6.1 describes some of the journeys that I have taken performing School Tourism and each journalling section included throughout the thesis includes the place and date it was written to visibly include the itinerant nature of the study. A table of school visits and locations can be viewed in the Appendix. Post-PhD completion, I plan to create an arts-based-research project sewing the maps of the journeys of performing School Tourism between September

2014 - September 2017 to give a sense of my nomadology in action and the itinerant way in which I have performed this thesis.

2.4.5 How do I understand what I see?

2.4.5.1 Writing and Storytelling

Labonte, argues that “*all social research, regardless of design, is a story. All evidence of social phenomena, regardless of method, is story-telling*” (2011: 154). As a School Tourist I write for myself, for others, I orally share stories to make sense of what I have seen and to entertain and again to share stories of my experiences.

I see ‘story’ as the personal retelling of an event that has happened, such as the thoughts and feelings connected to a school visit, the chronology of events such as who I met and what I observed, my observations and influences from my senses. It could be in simple language, very matter of fact, or in more eloquent prose AND, most importantly, it changes depending on the audience to which I am sharing the story of the experience. It is a political event - I aim to not insult but to share observations and thoughts, not direct criticisms as often people are deeply connected to their school or educational philosophy and I want to be invited back to visit more schools. Stories are situated within the time and place that they are told but they are also part of the rhizome so interconnected with stories and experiences from my past and future.

Mendus, Journalling, [Brighton, August, 2016].

Following Muncey (2010), in my thesis the words narrative and storytelling will be used synonymously as both can be written or read/performed orally.

Stepping further, Pelias’s description that, “*the echoes between autoethnography and personal narrative are, at times, so loud that differences are drowned out*” (2013: 386), further supports the use of narrative methods (including personal narrative, autobiography, personal ethnography, memoir) in autoethnography as methods with ‘resonant possibilities’ (2013):

Writing the personal, I want to offer a detailed account of my human experience, stripped of the pretence and equivocation. I strive for an open and raw presentation as I turn remembered fragments into narratives. I struggle, wrestling with memories, images, and glimpses of the past, hoping

that they may come together, become momentarily set for my own and others' consideration. I seek to reveal the human in humanity, to show how one human life might or might not find resonance with others.
(Pelias, 2013: 387).

This variety in definitions of terms used, methodologies and analysis fits what Geertz (1973) described as a 'blurred genre' and maybe even more appropriately by Law, (2003), as a "*mess, but that is not a concern as reality is not definite or singular*" (supporting the rhizomatic analogy). Denzin also supports the view that research, in particular performance, is 'messy' as "*through our writing and our talk, we enact the worlds we study...instruct our readers about this world and how we see it*" (2006: 422).

The rhizomatic School Tourist takes guidance from Harris and Holman Jones (2016) as:

Writing is an act of performance...It often begins as a private performance - or sometimes a collaborative performance between co-writers- but always ends in a kind of performance for others, whether in a page based performance for readers, or a stage- or other-performances in/by/with moved bodies or even - increasingly - in virtual and extended performances that include human, post-human, and more-than-human bodies.
(Harris & Holman Jones, 2016: 2).

Following Labonte, "*there is a long history of the use of stories in generating new social knowledge*" (2011: 155), Giorgio explains that "*in many ways, we come to define and know ourselves and the world we inhabit through storytelling*" (2013: 407). Poulos (2008), reminds us that humans are fundamentally:

Homo narrans,...storytelling creatures...we humans are naturally, deeply, and magnificently oriented toward story-making. Indeed, we arise in—and out of—our stories. We are, as co-narrators, ever in the act of creating new realities, narratively.
(Poulos, 2008: 127).

And it was through beginning to define myself as a storyteller (from my work using Steiner Waldorf approaches in mainstream Early Years teaching from

2009) that I grew in confidence to not just share stories between teachers and schools that I visited but to write papers and film these ‘academic’ storytelling events.

I recognised that the stories of a School Tourist could be therapeutic to a teacher who does not have the time to leave their classroom or school and see and feel what else is out there. Following Susan Perrow from Australia, who has been one of my storytelling mentors, as she describes therapeutic stories, *“stories that return balance and wholeness to a behaviour or situation that is out of balance”* (2012: 3). This sharing of stories of ‘educating differently’ is following Freire’s (1970) idea of inspiring others to *“speak their world”*, as Labonte argues *“as stories are shared between people, they become ‘generative themes’ for group reflection, analysis and action planning”* (2011: 156).

2.4.5.2 Vignettes

Ken Gale’s (2014) paper has really helped me conceptualise how the assemblage of the rhizomatic nomadology of school tourism is created:

As our bodies and words engage in dialogue, in dialogic inquiry, and as our selves, our becoming subjectivities, engage in nomadic circling of texts, narratives, and touch, we both create and are created by these rhizomatic patterns and flows. As our thoughts, feelings, and values, expressed in utterances and the movements of our bodies, are folded in to establish territorial distances, the thoughts, feelings, and values of others intra-act, combine, and exchange with them in rhythmic response, allowing new utterances to emerge and new meanings to unfold.

(Gale, 2014: 6).

In practice, within this thesis, it will be embodied creatively with poems, dialogues and reflective writing throughout the main chapters and will conclude with a performative piece exploring the multiplicity of Alys-we ‘Searching for the Ideal school’. Following what Braidotti argues, *“as an approach, nomadic*

philosophy consequently challenges the separation of critique from creativity and of reason from the imagination,” (2012: 13).

Vignettes (one already included in this Chapter section 2.4.5.2) are aimed to:

Offer a little window, an in/out/sight, a glimpsing of an image that is literally smaller than the original and yet provides subtleties and flavours, nuances, and qualities that might otherwise not be seen, felt, or heard: a sharpening of focus, a heightening of awareness a touching upon intensity.

(Gale, 2014: 3).

Gale (2017, Paper at Beyond Words conference) explained he had found out the origin of the use of the word ‘vignette’ that it was a message written on a vine leaf that could shared and then would wither and die and go back to composting the earth. This reminded me of a nodal point of a rhizome that also flowers (like a lily) and then dies and puts energy back into the network. So for me the use of vignettes in my thesis does just that, it highlights an idea before retreating back into the rhizome. As Gale also pointed out, *“it is possible that vignetting is the methodology of moment and movement that in its glimpsing fragility keeps this alive.”* (2014: 4).

2.4.5.3 Dialogues

This thesis uses dialogues to represent conversations that happened or aspects of conversations that might have happened with me, one or many of the multiplicities of Alys-we, or via the internet to illustrate the intra-active (Barad, 2007) nature of the conversations and storytelling between different schools and about different pedagogies. These dialogues are similar to ethnodrama (Saldana, 2005) as *“ethnodrama is dramatic literally writing...”* (Chilton and Leavy, 2014: 411) written from *“journal entries, personal memories, historical documents, and other data [which] are dramatised into a theoretical script”* (ibid). Saldana argues that ‘ethnodrama’ is a way to *“present and represent a*

study of people and their culture-ethnography" (2005: 2). It was Saldana's (2005) book, *Ethnodrama: An Anthology of Reality Theatre* full of ethnodramatic and auto-ethnodramatic texts, including playscripts, performance work and creative non-fiction that inspired me to write these multi-voiced dialogues into my thesis sometimes within Vignettes (described before) or within their own play-script.

2.4.5.4 Poems

Arts-based research is described as a political process that creates empathy, raises consciousness, and disrupts complacency. It touches the souls of the reading, viewing, or listening audience, often inspiring social activism. Several ways to use art in research are ...including poetry. (Lawrence, 2015: 14).

The use of poetry in research has many roles including helping to understand the data and give voice to those involved (Carless and Douglas, 2009) and as a way of sharing emotional and life journey of a doctoral student (Chan, 2003). It has been recognised as a part of arts-based research (Lawrence, 2015) and specifically *a/r/tography*, "*the relationships between artist, researcher, and teacher*" (Springgay et al., 2008: 87). Leavy explains, "*in my work toward integrating my a/r/t identities, and thus producing holistic and fulfilling work, I have turned largely to poetic forms of inquiry*" (2010: 240). Pelias eloquently adds there is a need for "*writings that mark a different space. They collect in the body: an ache, a fist, a soup*" (2004: 11). I have used poetry to share the thoughts and feelings of the different voices of the multiplicity of Alys-we and perform a different purpose of connecting to the readers emotions (see Bakhtin's, 1982, concept of multivoicedness). As Furman argues, with poetry, "*meaning resides neither in the speaker nor the receiver, but is created through the interaction between the two*" (2007: 2).

School Tourism, as argued earlier, is a feeling journey and Leavy (2010) explains that poetry can show this felt expression, *“truth that is felt and understood in the moment, truth that may shift and become something else. For this purpose, I have turned to poetry”* (Leavy, 2010: 240). Following Leavy’s idea that *“poems, surrounded by space and heightened by silence, break through the noise to present an essence”* (2015: 77) and through that *“poems push feelings to the forefront capturing heightened moments of social reality as if under a magnifying glass”* (ibid) supports the use of poetry as a means of articulating this rhizomatic feeling journey within this thesis. Particularly when following Furman’s comment that *“poetry is not based upon linear cause and effect logic; a poem does not need to ‘make sense’”* (2007: 2) supports the space of poetry as part of the ‘mess’ (Law, 2003; Denzin, 2006) of the assemblage. For as Leavy argues:

Poems are highly attentive to space (which includes breath and pauses), using words sparsely in order to paint what I term a feeling-picture. Put differently, poems use words, rhythm, and space to create sensory scenes where meaning emerges from the careful construction of both language and silences.

(Leavy, 2015: 78).

Conclusion

Chapter 2 has aimed to set out the theoretical and methodological background of this thesis.

A contribution to knowledge that this thesis aims to give is the role of performing School Tourism as an approach to sharing stories of educating differently around the world. The rhizomatic nomadology of School Tourism will be developed further in Chapters 4-7. Chapter 3 will continue to develop key terms and concepts such as alternative, traditional and ideal which will give deeper understanding of where School Tourism fits within the literature.

Chapter 3 - Defining key terms

Introduction

Section 3.1, written in an autoethnographic style, aims to define both traditional and alternative education from the current literature, position both within neoliberalism and then attempt to unpick the binary and suggest that by seeing education through rhizomatic theory (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87) as 'educating differently' then new possibilities are available. One rhizomatic understanding that is mentioned is the edge-ucation, defined in this context as the 'gems' from stories from learning that is happening in places that are 'educating differently' even though they are within the current neoliberal society. These stories are shared and explored further in Chapters 5-8.

Section 3.2 aims to position 'Searching for the Ideal School' within the small research field of work on the topic of the 'Ideal School'. It then aims to explore the history of the terms utopia (More, 1516) and hope (Bloch, 1954) and how they are connected to educational thought. The section concludes offering another understanding of edge-ucation as one that has potentiality (Munoz, 2009) through the 'utopian performative of hope' (Spry, 2016).

3.1 Traditional and alternative education

3.1.1 What is traditional, mainstream education?

This thesis stems from my personal choice to leave the 'traditional mainstream education' system in the UK in 2007 and begin searching for what else was available in terms of education. Following Kraftl's description that:

Schools are dehumanising and anti-democratic... they obstruct creativity in favour of learning knowledge by rote...they simply institutionalise children to become good, neoliberal workers and consumers - flexible, responsible

labourers who can contribute to a country's global economic competitiveness (Mizen, 2003; Fielding & Moss, 2010).
(Kraftl, 2013: 10).

I argue that traditional, mainstream education has not moved on from the 1870 Education Act when Menter argues society and the economy needed:

A literate workforce, it needed one that was (largely) compliant. The purpose of education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was therefore...one of facilitating social reproduction as well as economic production (Simon, 1965).
(Menter, 2016: 258).

In the 21st century the influence of neoliberalism has meant that, *“children, teachers and schools are all evaluated by their conformity to ever more standardised norms, with standardised achievement the main currency of education”* (Fielding & Moss, 2010: 17).

However, as Woods and Woods (2009) argue, there are some places where the definition of mainstream education is more fluid, for example:

We take a fairly pragmatic view...of what constitutes mainstream education, thinking of it as the main conventions of publicly funded school education... However, we recognise that mainstream education is itself not a monolithic entity, but varies in its form between and within countries and contains differences and alternative perspectives - sometimes representing the distinctive pedagogy or innovations of teachers or a particular school.
(Woods & Woods, 2009: 3).

And although I left working full-time in a mainstream, state funded school in 2007 I had been already able to use alternative perspectives and pedagogies within my teaching as part of the Learning and Teaching group at the school and from my Steiner Waldorf teacher training. Examples like this are explored further in this section as I aim to unpick the binary between mainstream and alternative education and introduce the concept of edge-ucation.

3.1.2 What is alternative education?

The otherness of alternative education, its position of difference, is a key factor in the literature of their difference from traditional, mainstream education which Lees sees as a benefit as it is through educational alternatives that:

We find tools for living in responsive, flexible ways. It is not about learning to live according to instructions now, but coming into being through engagement with education... Education is no longer about right, sweet, pretty answers and following.
(Lees, 2016a: 5).

Supported further by Kraftl that alternatives “*exist in order to make ‘us’ (those not able, brave, well-resourced or willing enough to be different) realise that life could be otherwise*” (2013: 237).

However, ‘alternative education’ is understood and defined in a wide variety of ways around the world. This causes confusion and makes me question my use of the term in this thesis. The term ‘alternative education’ in the US is used to describe education for ‘at-risk’ youth. For example, ‘alternative education’ is used at the federal level to address “*needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school*” (Sable, Plotts, & Mitchell, 2010: C-1) and from a research project by the ‘Institute for Education Sciences’ in 44 states for the US Department of Education which concluded that, “*alternative education programs —broadly defined as ‘educational activities that fall outside the traditional K–12 curriculum’*” (Porowski, O’Conner & Luo, 2014: i). It should be noted that there becomes increased confusion as the UK government use the term ‘alternative provision’ for ‘at-risk’ young people (Department for Education, 2013) similar to the US government definition for ‘alternative education.’

Dean tries to explain this confusion, raising parental choice as part of the difference, and it must be recognised that Dean is writing with a UK standpoint:

Alternative Provision 'is not the same as 'alternative education', which is selected by parents and children through their own preferences and choice (such as Montessori, Steiner or Democratic Education)... Alternative Provision is for children and young people who have struggled to attend mainstream schools...
(Dean, 2016: 356).

Issues rising from Dean's (2016) quote are that of choice and preference (and the association of privilege and who has that choice?) as well as the mention of different types of 'alternative education' such as 'Montessori, Steiner or Democratic' all of which will be discussed and explored further in this thesis, however for now I will explore other understandings of the generic term 'alternative education'.

AERO, the Alternative Education Resource Organisation, run by Jerry Mintz in the US has an active online platform aiming to support "*educational alternatives around the world*". Their definition of alternative education is "*student-driven, learner-centered approaches to education...help create an education revolution to make learner-centered education available to everyone*" (Mintz, 2017). The focus of 'alternative education' by AERO could still be described as prescriptive and potentially not all types of particularly self-labelled places offering 'alternative education' would directly support the definition.

Of interest is that AERO include 'at-risk' students within their definition as these schools have realised that 'learner-centred' approaches have a greater impact on their students' learning than traditional schooling. This idea is supported further by Kraftl (2013) as he argues within his definition of 'alternative education' for the inclusion of 'Care farms' in the UK, another type of education alternative for young people unable to thrive in mainstream.

I began to re-think my own definition of what I think is alternative education. I did not see alternative education as being for those children who are 'at risk of school failure'. Initially I saw 'alternative education' as the catch all term for the wide range of creative 'other' options for children who were not necessarily unable to be taught in the mainstream but their parents had found other ways in which to have their children educated. In my teaching experience after mainstream and outdoor instructing this was through Steiner Waldorf, then Forest Schools and then home educating families. As I learnt more about education and began to visit other schools that were consciously investigating such questions as: What is education? And how to educate? I came across: Montessori, Kristnamurti, progressive education, Tagore, Art of Mentoring, Project Based Learning, Reggio Emilio, Pikler, democratic, human-scale, unschooling and Outward Bound Exploratory Learning. Terms that were used to define these schools/educational approaches were holistic, human scale, democratic, progressive as well as alternative. However although these terms are similar to alternative they all have multiple definitions, understandings and historic time periods making them less suitable I thought as a catch all term.

Mendus, Journalling, [Arezzo, Italy, April 2015].

Reflecting on my journalling, the next logical step could be to use the term 'alternative method education' reinforcing that it is about how educators view the child, how they choose to 'teach' and it is primarily aimed at mainstream children or actually to be accessible for all children rather than 'alternative education' being something for only those at risk. It also broadens the term to include those working 'alternatively' within a mainstream school setting and those working within a prescribed 'alternative pedagogy' like Steiner or Montessori.

Another interesting definition comes from Kraftl where he states that:

My working definition is that 'alternative' educational approaches are those that are not administered, controlled and/or predominantly funded through state-sanctioned educational programmes assumed to be the 'mainstream' in countries where education is an assumed, universal right for children (as it is in the UK).

(Kraftl, 2013: 2).

A challenge that I have had with Kraftl's definition of 'alternative education' is his assertion that 'alternative education' is not predominantly funded by the state (2013). This may be true in the UK but things are changing through the

Academies Act (2010), I know of several state funded 'alternative educational methods' schools including four Steiner schools, a Reggio Emilia school, a project based learning school and a Montessori school. In some areas alternative has become a choice for some families who could not afford it before. However, with this state funding comes more control and limits on the freedoms of these alternative pedagogies as they are expected to comply with particular rules in order to keep their funding: for example the number of GCSE subjects offered. Woods and Woods (2009) raise some concerns of 'engagement orientation' of alternatives having relationships (such as funding) with the mainstream that by the compromises of state tests or assessments can just "*erode some of its fundamental principles*" of the alternative approach and also at the "*cost of retaining or even reinforcing key elements of the dominant, instrumentally driven culture*" (2016: 229).

State-control of alternatives can be seen as giving more choice to families but also as the watering down of different ways of educating to support the neoliberal system. As Martyn Steiner argues that for 'alternative educational models' to have enough of the desired freedoms then "*a school generally has to step outside of the state system and become fee-paying*" (2016: 425). However, what about those who cannot pay or do not even know there is something different out there? Fielding and Moss, argue that economic freedom is not the only way to "*overthrow the dictatorship of no alternatives*" (2010: 1) to mainstream education but that a radical education of the Common School, where there is no difference between mainstream and alternative as everyone attends the same radical school is the answer. Fielding and Moss see 'Radical Education' as one that aims to include "*fostering the values of democracy,*

justice, solidarity and experimentation, and the ethics of care and encounter”
(2010: 33).

Following Fielding and Moss’s (2010) idea of ‘radicalism as transcendence’ gives hope for the impact from performing School Tourism that many possible changes could happen in education and although I do not think the common school/one-school-for-all is my ‘Ideal’ (term defined in section 3.2 of this chapter) the thinking-with-radical-thought approach is helpful towards a ‘becoming’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87) because anything is possible if radicalism is viewed:

As a set of aspirations that stretch beyond the reach of innovation to imagine and enact a future that rests on very different assumptions and values to those which define the basis and the boundaries of the current system.
(Fielding and Moss, 2010: 40).

Tannock et al, also argues that there is a danger with Fielding and Moss’s argument of an either/or binary between the common school/mainstream schools as it ignores:

The possibility that different forms of education may work better in a combination of different institutions - community groups, trade unions, religious organisations, as well as formal, mainstream educational establishments.
(Tannock et al, 2011: 944).

The choice of influences, approaches and methods within education has been discussed by Dewey when he advised educationalists in his book ‘The Quest for Certainty’, (1929), to abandon the search for one pedagogical method that will work for all subjects, students, and teachers. The educational psychologist Cronbach emphasised the same point arguing, *“I have no faith in any generalisation upholding one teaching technique against another, whatever the preferred method...”* (1966: 77). The legacy from Dewey and Cronbach supports choice in how you educate and accepting different pedagogies have a

role but not one above the others. Nel Noddings argues that the current 'alternative practices' in the US are directly against what was recommended by Dewey and Cronbach:

Greater and greater emphasis is on standardisation of content, "best practices," "scaling up" and standardised testing. Even charter schools, meant to provide a positive alternative to regular public schools, often fall back on authoritarian methods and strict regimentation designed to provide higher test scores. These schools are rarely forms of what we call here "alternative education."
(Noddings, 2016: 2-3).

However, Noddings (2016) does not define what is 'alternative education' directly, she only gives examples on matters as essential to 'alternative education' but no definition, preferring to quote the words of E.O.Wilson to guide the reader's understanding of 'alternative education' by choosing to "*Dare to think on your own*" (2006: 137). Co-Editor of the Handbook, Lees, also prefers not to give a definition of 'alternative education' explaining, "*we do not know exactly to what our alternatives are alternative*" (2016: 3). Lees does however give a direction, some guidance for what connects all the opinions they have gathered into their handbook. Their 'alternative education' contains "*principles of autonomy and self/social empowerment*" (2016: 3). Even Sliwka (2008) when looking at the contribution of alternative education is defining it as including a "*flexible curriculum, a focus on personalised and/or informal learning...principles of democracy*". These definitions lead to similar challenges from AERO's definition of 'student-driven, learner-centred' education as both could be seen to not include major 'alternative pedagogies' such as Steiner Waldorf, which interestingly is not included in the handbook of alternative education (Lees & Noddings, 2016). This could be as Woods and Woods (2009) argue that:

Not all alternatives espouse democratic aspirations in the way they run themselves...Steiner/Waldorf schools are run by a collegiate of teachers... but this does not extend to students and there can be tensions with regard to non professional staff in the collegiate system (Woods and Woods, 2006a/b, 2008).

(Woods and Woods, 2009: 241).

As Steiner Waldorf education aims to 'Educate to Freedom' (Steiner, 1909) there is a set age-related curriculum and a key role of a teacher that may not be interpreted as autonomy or self/social empowerment by someone without extensive experience of the Steiner Waldorf approach making categorisation of different types of education controversial to those not part of that system.

However, I do not think it is possible to generalise on what is 'alternative education' except perhaps for its perceived 'otherness' to traditional, mainstream education. Following Fine, I agree that, "*Self and Other are knottily entangled*" (1994: 72) so although 'alternative education' may perhaps be perceived as 'other' or 'different from' mainstream education it is not a fixed binary. It is important to avoid deepening this binary as Krumer-Nevo warned, "*the desire to know the Other, which lies at the heart of the desire to do research, carries in it a potential for both emancipation and oppression*" (2012: 187). It is this oppression that could become "*a justification for inequality*" (Krumer-Nevo, 2012: 187). Therefore, in my exploration of the definition of 'alternative education' I want to look further rather than use "*self-consciously, acts of othering*" (Fine, 1994: 57) and unpick the binary between 'alternative education' and traditional, mainstream education.

Therefore, in the next sections I argue that there is not a simple binary between alternative and traditional education and that they are part of a complex iterative web and argue for the use of the term 'educating differently'. This section also has not explored many key issues arising in the definitions of 'alternative'

particularly in terms of the influence of neoliberalism and views of what is schooling, the spatiality of school, the role of the teacher and the student as well as the multiple different pedagogies for education. Chapters 5- 8 will develop this further as I share stories of places that are 'educating differently' and in Chapter 7 show examples and have more in-depth discussion about the education.

3.1.3 Neoliberalism and education

Following Mason's argument that neoliberalism, "*is the doctrine of uncontrolled markets*" (2015: xi), it is important to recognise that the rise of neoliberalism in the UK is attributed to Margaret Thatcher coming into power as Prime Minister of the Conservative Party in 1979 (Harvey, 2007). The key elements of neoliberalism, Harvey argues, are "*liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade*" (Harvey, 2007: 2). It has been argued that the central message of neoliberalism is that there is no alternative (Mason, 2015) and this has been seen in international politics as Mason (2015) posits:

In the past twenty-five years, neoliberalism has triggered the biggest surge in development the world has ever seen, and it unleashed an exponential improvement in core information technologies. But in the process, it has revived inequality to a state close to that of 100 years ago and has now triggered a survival-level event."
(Mason, 2015: xi-xii).

The influences of neoliberalism are seen throughout this thesis arising in the background philosophies of many different types of schools and places of education. Following Au, I see neoliberalism as:

A paradigm that implicates ideology, policy, and economy, and operates on the assumption that human progress and development is best served

through economic systems based on free trade, deregulation of markets, and individual, entrepreneurial freedom (Harvey, 2007).
(Au, 2016: 316).

In terms of education, Au argues that it is seen through the privatisation of education and the continued use of *“high-stakes tests as a market metric for evaluating, transfer of public money to private, profit making firms (academies/charter schools/exam boards/textbooks)”* (Au, 2016: 316).

The influence of neoliberalism in education leads to different responses. For some the top-down pressure for teachers is always to *“stay safely within the narrow confines of a lesson plan...to transmit pre-processed knowledge from the front, to stay on the tramlines...do this because it might be in the exam, hand it in after an hour, and you’ll get a grade or mark”* (Wrigley, 2016: 336).

And ‘teaching to the test’ has become a continual critique of the traditional, mainstream educational system. Biesta (2010) argues that education has changed for the worse and turned what is seen as ‘legitimate knowledge’ to anything that can be examined on high-stakes tests. The controversial outcome here is that in some cases neoliberalism can become normalised as Joldersma argues once it *“becomes perceived as common sense, it no longer appears to be politically charged”* (2016: 85). However, the argument continues that education is politically charged (Joldersma, 2016; Spry, 2016) and *“it thus gives politically shaped answers to what counts as legitimate knowledge, good teaching and authentic learning,”* (Joldersma, 2016: 85). The outcome of this is that *“alternative forms of education are thus not merely educational differences but also might constitute a visible challenge to the political ideology at the heart of the neoliberal shift in education”* (Joldersma, 2016: 85).

Therefore, this whole thesis and work by others exploring educational alternatives (Kraftl, 2013, Lees & Noddings, 2016) are entering a deeply political

debate as every school operates within its own socio and political environment and most of these are neoliberal. As such, I need to be aware that through the evocative nature of sharing stories of places 'educating differently' that they may challenge, and in turn it may make changes to, how people think about education, learning and schooling away from the current dominant discourse of neoliberalism. Fielding and Moss argue that within this present system there is "*no alternative but to explore alternatives*" (2010: 38). However, it is also a very fine line to walk as some aspects of neoliberalism I realise have influenced the growth in state-funded educational alternatives such as the concept of 'choice' which has allowed the UK Free School and academy programme to open different types of schools (including Steiner Waldorf, Reggio Emilia, Project Based Learning).

The privatisation of the state-funded education system in the US through Charter Schools and the UK through Free Schools and Academies has supported the neoliberal ideal of choice. However, Fabricant and Fine (2013)'s research shows that neoliberalism has failed to improve public education in the US and has worked against social justice and educational autonomy. Au, even argues that as public education has become increasingly marketised it has begun to challenge "*the very existence of education as a public institution*" (2016: 321).

The influence of neoliberalism has stretched beyond that of traditional schools, Mycroft (2016) argues, into influencing what have been described by some as alternative educational approaches such as using silence and mindfulness in schools (also see Lees, 2016b). I think the dialogue here is about integrity, and authenticity about why a certain approach, particularly a pseudo-spiritual one, is being used in schools and what is the underlying thinking behind this approach.

For example, there is research that shows that using mindfulness in schools has led to improved social wellbeing with reduced levels of anxiety (Weare, 2013) and I do not want to be critiquing the successful use of alternatives in mainstream education. However, following Lees (2016b) above I am wary of other agendas which would profit the neoliberal machine.

Learning can be gained from Reay's assertion that what we desperately need in contemporary neoliberal times are totally different ways of envisioning education; ways that accord respect and value to all children and their teachers (Reay, 2012). Reay's argument brings to the forefront the importance of social justice when she explains:

While the three Rs are important, teaching children to be caring, respectful, cooperative, knowledgeable about their own and others' histories, and well informed about contemporary global issues is equally, if not more, important. (Reay, 2016: 328).

A way forward could be to use the term 'educational alternatives' that Montgomery & Hope use in an ESRC project called 'Freedom to Learn' where:

The central focus of the project has been the exploration of educational alternatives, specifically those offering greater degrees of freedom and autonomy to students, and one of the main aims has been to consider how a freer, more democratic education might contribute to a socially just society. (Montgomery & Hope, 2016: 307).

I feel that Montgomery & Hope's definition of 'educational alternatives' aims not to position itself as an absolute 'other' to mainstream education but to be inspired by Bernstein's (1996) work and "*his belief in the intrinsic power of pedagogy to interrupt dominant paradigms and in pedagogy as the space to think the unthinkable*" (Montgomery & Hope, 2016: 307). Montgomery and Hope (2016), edited a special edition of the journal 'Forum' to share stories of 'educational alternatives' to offer an alternative to the dominant model. Their work explored what 'Freedom to Learn' meant to education:

Freedom from overemphasis on high-stakes testing, fixed-ability thinking, reign bureaucratic rules, constant comparison and competition, narrow interpretations of success, and coercive disciplinary systems; and freedom to choose, think, create, develop, explore, be accepted, and be respected; and the real freedom that comes as a result of having the self-confidence, power and support to be able to fulfil personal ambitions.

(Montgomery & Hope, 2016: 310).

By exploring 'Freedom to Learn' Montgomery and Hope are not trying to define 'alternative education', they are talking about all education. However, they realise that some articles, *"specifically focus on presenting cases for how things might of have been done differently...(Mendus, 2016), and it is these in particular which open up avenues of "thinking the yet to be thought"*. And one way of exploring this is by not creating a binary between mainstream and alternative education as Montgomery & Hope explain that:

So many teachers and educationalists still believe that the purpose of education is to provide opportunities to address society's inequalities and construct an open space where all children, young people and adults, regardless of their backgrounds, can find a freedom to learn.

(Montgomery & Hope, 2016: 311).

Following Reay's (2012) call for 'different ways to envision education', Cooper et al's (2015) examples of socially just radical alternatives and Montgomery and Hope's analysis that:

Despite the rising tide of neoliberalism in education across the world, there are so many examples of positive educational practice and spaces of resistance where schools, colleges and other educational institutions are doing things differently.

(Montgomery & Hope, 2016: 311).

One aspect that this thesis will explore is the edge-ucation by offering new ways of 'educating differently' from within the existing neoliberal system. The edge-ucation is something that I am defining in multiple ways (explored throughout the thesis) but here it is about the importance of the 'gems' inspired by MacLure's (2010, 2013b) concept of 'data glow', the things that shine-out, illuminating ways to be 'educating differently' in these neoliberal times, that I

see as a School Tourist and then share in stories between different educators and schools. The edge-ucation bridges the gap between defining education as alternative or mainstream. The edge-ucation is explored further in this section of my journaling:

I have begun to feel that neither 'alternative education' nor 'alternative method education' or 'educational alternatives' are the terms that truly define my understanding of these systems, approaches and methods of learning and educating that position themselves at the edge of current thinking. Learning from the 'edge' has been recognised as being a very important concept in eco design based systems such as Permaculture:

Make use of edges and margins at all scales in all systems. Whatever the object is of our attention, we need to remember that it is at the edge of anything, system or medium that the most interesting events take place; design that sees edge as an opportunity rather than a problem is more likely to be successful and adaptable. In the process, we discard the negative connotations associated with the word "marginal" in order to see the value in elements that only peripherally contribute to a function or system.

(Holmgren, 2006: 223).

So by seeing the value of looking at these different methods and approaches to education as being on the edge and that being beneficial to wider society refocused my research then the edge-ucation learns from the democratic community based model in a democratic school and the creativity in a Steiner school, the self determination of a Montessori and inclusiveness and alternative teaching styles of mainstream. Yet it is not stuck in one current mindset or paradigm, it is a conversation open to changing, evolving and maybe dreaming towards an educational utopia past our current neoliberal understanding of education, society and learning.

Mendus, Journaling on defining edge-ucation July 2016, [Totnes, Devon, July 2016].

3.1.4 Moving on from the binary of alternative and mainstream education

Although this section is aiming to unpick the binary between alternative and mainstream education, it is important to position my thesis within the literature on educational alternatives to see where it is located within the field. Key people are retired teacher Gribble (1998, 2010) who focuses mostly on progressive and

then democratic education and Kraftl (2013) who argues that important aspect of his work is the comparative element because:

Most academic research on alternative education focuses upon a particular learning approach or philosophy, rather than looking across a range of approaches for congruencies and disjunctures.

(Kraftl, 2013: 3).

This thesis also shares stories of ways of 'educating differently' rather than focussing on one pedagogy or philosophy. My work tries to continue Kraftl's argument away from creating a "*simple binary between 'alternative' and 'mainstream' education*" (2013: 3). Although I am not using a comparative methodology, by sharing stories, my audience could choose to compare different places and as Kraftl argues that the, "*comparative perspective can tell us about the multiple intersections - connections and disconnections- between what will appear to be 'mainstream' and 'alternative' educational practices*" (Kraftl, 2013: 3). I have found Kraftl's continual recurrence of his aim not to 'deify' alternative education above the mainstream both helpful and a hindrance as it helped me have a more balanced, less binary (us and them) approach but it also frustrated me as the current mainstream is not 'good-enough' for me, hence why I am searching for the 'Ideal'. However, I also realise that not all 'alternatives' are in my opinion better.

Kraftl (2013) explores the idea that most alternative learning spaces (but not all) can be viewed as 'autonomous learning spaces'. Although Kraftl argues that this move from alternative to autonomous learning spaces is a significant one in unpicking the binary between alternative and mainstream education, I feel it does not include all approaches of educating differently and is still at risk of creating more binaries of another 'other', this time within alternatives. I agree with Kraftl when he explains that, "*some alternative educators work with or offer*

resources for mainstream educators... which has successfully sought to move beyond the alternative/mainstream binary" (2013: 5). Kraftl touches on this when he asks if mainstream and alternative education can enter into a dialogue, particularly about how, *"mainstream could engage with local communities like alternative education can...and vice versa partnerships..."* (2013: 242) and Woods and Woods hope that alternatives will learn from each other as well (2009). However, I agree with Woods and Woods, (2009), when they reinforce the value of alternative education, they argue:

The potential for mutual learning across schools about matters concerning the deep purpose of education and fostering of democratic citizenship is increased where alternative forms of education are facilitated and valued. (Woods & Woods, 2009: 233).

This cross over of sharing resources from alternative approaches to mainstream, and taking it a step further, from mainstream to alternatives is something that this thesis aims to develop in one of its understandings of the term edge-ucation.

Therefore, if *"education is ultimately, about dissolving boundaries"* as Woods and Woods (2009: 247) argue, *"between institutional religion and secular systems; between alternatives and mainstream; between people, where injustice and conflict distort relationships"* (ibid), then this needs to be a fundamental focus of research into education or there is the danger of reciprocating traditional power struggles as Haynes and Murriss explain:

Binaries produce relations of power in that categories on one side of the binary are granted power over other categories, in a hierarchically structured understanding of the world mediated by normative judgements of what is more or less valuable according to anthropocentric criteria of their measurement.

(Haynes & Murriss, 2016: 7).

Woods and Woods, (2009) argue educational alternatives can play many roles and Kraftl explains *"they may stimulate discussion across mainstream and*

alternative settings about the purpose of education beyond contemporary (neoliberal) concerns for school improvement, testing and accountability” (2013: 36).

In an attempt to categorise the relationship between alternative educational approaches and mainstream education, Woods and Woods (2009, 2016) offer a three-fold theorisation of educational alternatives, ‘engagement orientation’ (working with mainstream), ‘separation orientation’ (creating and sustaining own educational environment e.g. Steiner Waldorf or Summerhill democratic school) and ‘activist orientation’ (existing at the margins as a beacon). I have not adopted Woods and Woods (2009) categories as within this thesis I have tried as much as possible to use the ‘self-labelled’ title by the schools that I visit rather than label them myself as an outsider. But also, as a post-qualitative scholar, I am not placing the schools I visit into organised themes or codes as I believe it is much more complex.

However, I argue from visiting so many places of learning I am also aware that places that are ‘educating differently’ also vary greatly and the idea of putting them all in one box or even three categories is far too simplistic. Rhizomatic theory influences School Tourism in how all the places I visit plus the multiplicities of Alys-we are an interconnected web. I argue the same is true for each place of learning, agreeing with Kraftl’s (2013) importance of the spatiality of the mess and order of each place of learning (virtual and physical). The different spaces of learning may be apart but *“always in relation to, mainstream education, is a dissonant understanding of life-itself that somehow endures”* (Kraftl, 2013: 20). So education or learning needs to be viewed rhizomatically, as a ‘becoming...’ (Deleuze/Guattari, 1980/87) not as a clear-cut binary but iteratively ‘diffracting’ (Barad, 2007) as a network between and reinforcing some

approaches if pushed more strongly by neoliberalism or influenced by theorists or pedagogies, the cultures of a country or place or other times in new directions, stepping through into a parallel rhizome of the 'not yet thought'. Viewing education or learning as a network rather than a binary or even a spectrum allows this thesis to offer an assemblage of experiences from the multiplicity of Alys-we, performing School Tourism, 'Searching for the Ideal School'. This approach supports Mycroft's plea *"as philosophers of praxis, we believe that there can be a future for education, which is co-created, rhizomatic and less dependent on what the government of the day chooses to fund"* (2016: 418). Also as Kraftl points out, it is an ever changing rhizome as:

The positioning of 'alternative' learning spaces is often multiple and shifting, incorporating many kinds of connection and disconnection, sometimes simultaneously, with several 'mainstreams' - including local authorities, local communities, members of the public, and mainstream schools. (Kraftl, 2013: 90).

3.2 - The 'Ideal School'

I began using the term 'Ideal School' in 2015 to bracket my research from 'sharing stories of educating differently' (which had been the working title up to that point) because I felt it was giving direction to my journey and was a reason why I kept visiting so many schools as I could not find my 'ideal'. I had thought that I would find a 21st century version of an influential 20th century pedagogy (such as Steiner or Montessori). As a post-qualitative study there is not a set rubric of the 'Ideal School' and for some people from more traditional backgrounds this has been challenging (see Morgan, 2016's critique of Mendus, 2016b). However, once I began to realise that my 'ideal' did not exist in this current neoliberal time, I realised that a key element of this thesis is the education of which one definition is sharing stories of places 'educating differently'

in the current neoliberal world, and another is about the yet-to-be-thought (Bernstein, 1996; Munoz, 2009; St.Pierre, 2011) which is explored later in section 3.2.

Section 3.2 aims to position my search for the 'Ideal School' within the literature, then explore similar terms to 'ideal' of utopia, hope and futurity and their impact on education and finish with a deeper understanding of what education and 'Searching for the Ideal School' means for this PhD by offering my understanding and definition of the term at the end of the section once it has been explored in depth.

3.2.1 Exploring the literature on the 'Ideal School'

As I researched the literature on the 'Ideal School' to see where to position my work (Mammary, 2007; Pirotta, 2016; Williams & Hanke, 2007; Leshem, Zion & Friedman, 2015; Correa, Martinez-Arbelaiz & Gutierrez, 2014; Gribble, 1998) I realised that they all had a common thread of not defining the term 'ideal' although they approached the subject from different angles. The lens of the child (Pirotta, 2016; Williams & Hanke, 2007), the lens of a pre-service teacher (Leshem, Zion & Friedman, 2015; Correa, Martinez-Arbelaiz & Gutierrez, 2014), of teachers and school districts (Mammary, 2007) and that of the qualities of the school-leavers (Gribble, 1998).

Pirotta (2016) and Williams and Hanke (2007) talk about an interesting technique they used with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) children to 'draw their ideal school' from Moran (2001). After reading these papers I feel that there is a cultural assumption that people understand the word 'ideal' to be

defined as point 1 from the Oxford English dictionary as *“Satisfying one’s conception of what is perfect; most suitable”* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Pirotta (2016) wrote his PhD thesis on ‘My Ideal School: A Personal Construct Psychology approach to understanding the school constructs of children described as anxious.’ His work describes the ‘Ideal School’ as *“one they would like to attend”* (2016: i) and his work also asked the participants, *“to think of how the school they currently attend can become more like their ideal school”* (2016: i). Pirotta used a technique devised by Williams and Hanke (2007) called:

Drawing the Ideal School technique, and was used to generate what children thought would be optimum school provision. Aspects included school environment, staff qualities, other pupils and school activities. (Pirotta, 2016: 34).

Pirotta’s work with ASD children adds a dimension of using the lens of the child in the search for the ‘Ideal School’ and also to offer ideas for ASD children who are school refusers.

Pirotta’s thesis built on the ideas of Williams and Hanke (2007) who coordinated with Moran (2001) to devise the ‘Drawing the Ideal School’ approach. Although their research was successful as it brought clarity, *“about the adverse impact on... well-being and mental health that attending a non-ideal provision would bring”* as well as the *“positive impact and educational benefits of attending an ideal provision”* (Williams and Hanke, 2007: 134), it is written on the assumption of a non-defined cultural assumption of what ‘ideal’ means. This is not only confusing but also seems to counteract the possibilities that ‘ideal’ could mean. For example, their paper includes ‘Figures’ drawn to show outcomes from the children of what their ‘Ideal School’ would be like and what it would not be like. However, they show a recreation of known definitions and understanding of ‘schooling’ that school examiners would be looking for. For example - in a

building, classrooms, playground, rewards, organised teachers, happy staff, hand in homework, join in activities, friends, a place children want to go. There would be no bullying or boredom and no one would be sad and lonely (taken from Williams & Hanke, 2007).

'School Tourism' has some similarities with the study conducted by Leshem, Zion and Friedman, (2015) with the pre-service teachers visiting schools and then in groups designing their own Ideal School based on these visits:

Students visit, as a group, with their pedagogical instructor, different educational systems such as democratic schools, special education schools, religious/secular Jewish and Arab schools, private/public schools, bilingual schools, professional schools, and more. The rationale for choosing these schools is to expose students to a wide spectrum of educational systems (something that usually does not occur when they are settled already in one school as in-service teachers). The assumption is that the exposure to different "outstanding" schools and a variety of teaching and learning styles would help them to reflect upon their own experiences and start reconstructing and formulating personal theories.

(Leshem, Zion & Friedman, 2015: 3).

However, this research was deeply connected to how the process would impact on their professional teacher identity and at no point attempts to define what the 'Ideal School' means except to direct the students to design their 'Ideal School' from four different perspectives: ideological, pedagogical, physical, and interpersonal relationship (Leshem, Zion & Friedman, 2015).

Correa, Martinez-Arbelaiz and Gutierrez's (2014) work "*between the real school and the ideal school: another step in building a teaching identity*" looks at developing pre-service teacher identity. Although 'Ideal' is in the title it is never defined or explored more than a few mentions within the article and the claims by an interviewee Education major, "*shouldn't all teachers and future teachers be idealists and utopian in order to make school a better place?*" (2014: 456) are shared but not disseminated. This supports the idea that 'Ideal' is

something that is espoused towards compared to the 'reality' available in schools today.

Mammary's (2007) book 'The Ideal School' is written as a handbook for teachers and school districts to learn and reflect on their practice. Glasser (2007) in his 'Foreword' to Mammary's book claims that, "*we must strive to make all our schools ideal ones. Why would anyone not want to create the ideal school?*" and yet is not 'Ideal' a personal construct? He continues to recognise that "*no one can give a schools program to replicate. Each school or district must take on the tax of developing its own framework for creating the ideal school*" (Glasser, 2007: xxii). Neither Mammary nor Glasser define 'Ideal'.

Mammary does attempt to connect 'vision' with 'Ideal.' He explains that the 'Ideal School' is about the role of the teacher because:

As a teacher, your vision is a personal and professional ideal that expresses a desired picture of what you and your colleagues really want for all of your students while they are part of your school...
(Mammary, 2007: 38).

Mammary's work is about change to the current system into an 'ideal' way designed by (progressive?) teachers and school boards. He summarises that:

It is our choice whether to create an ideal school or simply continue doing what we have always done. Are we bold enough to choose a different path - one that will prepare all students for the competitive futures they face?
(Mammary, 2007: 307).

Gribble's (1998) work is interesting in its similarities to my own - taking time to journey to and visit schools around the world whilst searching for our 'Ideal School'. However, although we both agree that we do not know exactly what our 'Ideal School' would be like Gribble is able to describe an ideal school-leaver as:

Literate and numerate, of course, but they would also be happy, considerate, honest, enthusiastic, tolerant, self-confident, well-informed, articulate,

practical, co-operative, flexible, creative, individual, determined people who knew what their talents and interests were, had enjoyed developing them, and intended to make good use of them. They would be people who cared for others because they have been cared for themselves.
(Gribble, 1998: 2).

However, as I critique the limited research into the 'Ideal School' I need to put myself into the equation as neither of my two published articles (Mendus, 2016b; Magnuson & Mendus, 2017) define the use of the term 'ideal'. I wonder if for myself and for the other academics above the word is seen to be self-evident? I am also aware of the danger of this lack of clarity as, for example, the second definition from the Oxford English dictionary of "*Ideal = Existing only in the imagination; desirable or perfect but not likely to become a reality*" (Oxford University Press, 2017) suggests that the 'Ideal School' is not possible? At the beginning of this PhD I thought the 'Ideal School' was out there somewhere and it was not until half-way through that I began to realise that it did not currently exist in reality. This journey is explored within this thesis.

3.2.2 Utopia

Sir Thomas More, coined the term 'utopia' (1516) as the name of an imaginary island in his book and since then the word, 'utopia', has entered the English language defined as, "*an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect*" (Oxford University Press, 2017). Halpin's (2001) article exploring utopianism and education allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of More's ideas for his utopia. 'Utopia' (More, 1516) was written in two parts - the first a critique of the injustices in society at the time and the second More's vision for a 'perfect' society. More's 'utopia' gives a lens of sixteenth-century thought. He depicts, explains Halpin:

An imaginative illustration - a kind of 'thought experiment' - of what is possible if you dare to deliberate, daydream even, outside the strict confines of ways of thinkings that currently have the greatest salience and influence. (Halpin, 2001: 309).

More, (1516) did dare to '*deliberate, daydream*' outside of his current world, but for a reader in the 21st century his 'utopia' is still far from perfect as it is not totally egalitarian, still patriarchal and sexist. However, it is More's ideas for education that had a ripple effect into wider society. For example, More suggested that education should be in the native language rather than Latin as was commonplace at the time. In terms of this thesis it is not that I need to agree with More that his utopia is my utopia, but to join with him in dreaming about something else, other, to the current way of living/educating being possible.

I do not see utopia, like Foucault (1967) as being 'fundamentally unreal' but take guidance from Midgley (1996) that utopias provide "*searchlights [that plunge] their beams deep into the surrounding landscape...to light up our journey... [and] indicate general directions*" (1996: 24). This supports the idea that utopia is not just about imagining a 'perfect' place but also about realising that once you begin to think differently this allows change to begin to happen. This also supports Halpin's conclusions that, "*utopianism in education...[is] a catalyst for social change*" but following Midgely, "*only when the latter is expressed in terms of concrete suggestions for improvement - which is the way of many utopias - ... is [it] capable of performing the task*" (Halpin, 2001: 313).

These developments in the understanding of 'utopia' as having possibility adds hope to my PhD study. Whilst visiting the Green School in Bali in 2016, I was suddenly overwhelmed that my ideal did not exist (explored further in Chapters 7 and 8). When I explained this to other people they were surprised at my naivety, expecting me to realise that neither the ideal nor utopian school would be possible.

Mendus, Journalling about utopia, [Portugal, October, 2016].

The 'Principle of Hope' comes from Bloch's (1954) work into the possible realisation of utopia. His first book on the 'not yet conscious' resonates with some of the thinking behind this thesis that change in education is possible, it just has not been thought about 'yet'. Munoz synthesised Bloch's message to, *"Utopia, according to Bloch, is a time and a place that is not yet here"* (2009: 99). Macy and Johnstone's concept of 'Active Hope' is about *"becoming active participants in bringing about what we hope for"* (2012: 3). The 'Principle of Hope' (Bloch, 1954) and 'Active Hope' (Macy and Johnstone, 2012) run a thread throughout my research as I continue to search for the 'Ideal School' and even after I decide 'ideal' does not exist (now) I continue to visit schools and share stories between them. I am beginning to realise following Munoz, that *"utopia is about a politics of emotion"* (2009: 97) and through hope (and sharing stories) and the ripple effect then change can happen towards the not yet here. However, following Munoz's argument that, *"utopia is an idealist mode of critique that reminds us that there is something missing, that the present and presence (and its opposite number, absence) is not enough"* (2009: 100). This gives way to Braidotti's argument for hope being a *"vote of confidence in the future"* (2012: 14) as *"the imagination is not utopian, but rather transformative and inspirational. It expresses an active commitment to the construction of social horizons of hope"* (Braidotti, 2012: 14). This concept of striving forward follows Munoz's (2009) argument that utopia is towards queerness or, I would argue from conversations with Ken Gale, (2016, pers.comm) and also influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, (1980/87) for a 'queering' of identity. Utopia as a possibility, follows into work on performance, both the performing of School Tourism and the performative autoethnographic-we as Munoz explains, *"performance, seen as utopian performativity, is imbued with a sense of*

potentiality" (2009: 99). There is a potentiality in sharing stories as for whom and how they will create change in other people and when is unknown. Munoz explains further that:

Potentialities are different in that although they are present, they do not exist in present things. For us, potentialities have a temporality that is not in the present but, more nearly, in the horizon, which we can understand as futurity. Potentiality is and is not presence, and its ontology cannot be reduced to presentness.

(Munoz, 2009: 99).

Spry's work on 'Utopian performatives of Hope' takes this further when she explains that, "*utopian performatives in autoethnography materialise the "what if" of hopeful futurities*" (2016: 44). It was from reading her eloquent description of the performative autoethnographic-we and its role in giving visions for the future that allowed me to explore further the role of the multiplicities of the Alys-we (introduced in detail in the next chapter - Chapter 4) and the role that writing performatively as well as by performing stories (at conferences and filmed online - see Chapter 9) then I too could create my own utopian performatives of hope for education. These were Spry's inspiring words:

Utopian performatives as autoethnographic labor constitute an autoethnography on the pulses, a redoing retooling renewing, a doing utopia, utopia as a verb, as verve, as sass, as dis and respect, a simultaneous rejection and recuperation of who we can be with Others. The material entanglement of word and body mixed with the transcendent strategies of hope, of "a doing that is in the horizon, a mode of possibility," writes Jose Esteban Munoz (2006: 10) are utopian performatives "because," writes Judith Hamera in her work on utopian performatives in dance, "transcendence has always, ironically, required embodiment" (2004: 203). Utopian performatives respond to Haraway's question, "Who are we?" rather than 'Who am I?' and move us into an embodiment of who we want to be with Others, a hope-filled futurity built with sticks and stones, skin and bones. (Spry, 2016: 96).

3.2.3 Utopianism in Education

Kraftl's argument is that he prefers:

A utopianism that is... grounded in the present, for the very reason that it works from dissonance with the presence, with dis/connection, with the materialities and flows of life-itself, with habits that are spatialised as love and care (and not as static utopian spaces), but in a way that is outward looking and forward looking, and contains a vision of life that is inherent to the version of life that is currently being practised...

(Kraftl, 2013: 234).

This post-human connection to understanding utopianism fits with the methodology of this thesis as non 'static', ever moving nomadic rhizome and with Levitas's (2013) work on seeing utopia as a method¹ rather than an end point. Using Kraftl again in this section is important because his background, from his work exploring '*Geographies of alternative education*' (2013) which mirrors many aspects of my work performing School Tourism, gives gravitas to his explorations of utopianism in education.

It must be recognised the long history of the use of utopian language in education stemming back to Plato (427-347 BC) and his ideas in his book 'The Republic' about education searching for the truth in which interestingly the state should play an active role. Another key influence was that of Rousseau's (1712-1778) book 'Emile' (1762) which followed a central theme that the educator could facilitate the opportunities for learning and preserve the original perfect nature of the child.

¹

Levitas defines 'utopia as method' as:

The core of utopia is the desire for being otherwise, individually and collectively, subjectively and objectively. Its expressions explore and bring to debate the potential contents and contexts of human flourishing. It is thus better understood as a method than a goal - a method elaborated here as the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society.

(Levitas, 2013: xi)

Today there is a growing use of of utopian language in education (as noticed by Kraftl, 2013) for example, “*aspiration, transformation, promise, legacy*” (Kraftl, 2013: 233) has been critiqued by Facer (2016). Facer, argues that the current education system projects present anxieties onto children’s futures. She states that “*futurity is embedded at the heart of the educational process*” (2016: 64) for teachers ask young people what they want to be when they grow up or talk about the impact on their future from their exam results. Her projection is daunting that:

The neoliberal visions of the future that increasingly dominate educational discourse in the public sphere are both partial and destructive and seek to colonise the future from particular standpoints is not a novel insight. (Facer, 2016: 66).

Even the Left, Facer (2016) argues, has called for new stories for the future (see Fielding and Moss, 2010). However, as Kraftl (2013) explains, Fielding and Moss, (2010) are aware that their “*critical task is to map and affirm practices that involve some kind of utopian impulse but which are grounded in real-world practices*” (Kraftl, 2013: 233). Is this similar to what Facer, (2016) proposes of the idea that education can occupy a ‘distinctive temporal moment’?

The moment of the thick present, the moment between past and future. It might be equated to an ecotone or estuary, where river and sea meet, and in which new creatures, novel to both, are created (Odum, 1971). It is neither past nor future, neither river nor sea, but its own distinctive time and space in which anticipatory practices and lived experiences combine and mingle, changing both the past and the future. The challenge is to deepen and enrich the awareness of the rich abundance of that distinctive space and time as a powerful sediment in which new realities can be and are being created. (Facer, 2016: 71).

In terms of this thesis, this ‘powerful sediment’ could be where my edge-ucation sits alongside this ‘estuary’ or ‘ecotone’. But also supports the dialogue that there is a need for real change rather than pre-existing realities. In terms of education it is more than the initially explained definition of edge-ucation,

sharing stories to change the current system, it is about a new system. Gray explains, *“if we want to create a system of education that builds upon children’s natural ways of learning, we can’t do so by tinkering with the current system. We have to start from scratch”* (2016: 61). Facer, extends this further that we *“have to be concerned with continually opening up the possibility of new rather than pre-existing realities“* (2016: 71).

Siebers and Fell (2012) argue for a ‘forward dreaming’ for better futures as, *“things are not what they could be, the central contents of our experience are characterised by being unfinished. We do not yet know what freedom, community, humanity, nature can be”* (Siebers & Fell, 2012: 5). This leads to the question of how is this possible? Amsler (2015) suggests future change is possible through courage, not in isolation but with others, including friends, through networks. This again raises the issue of the collective as the solution over the individual. Facer, (2016) also extrapolates this further arguing that it is about friendship:

That unique relation of fear and trust that enables a true encounter with the futures-facing agency of the other, that enables the moment by moment opening of possibilities that the encounter with the other disclosures - at the centre of its practice.
(Facer, 2016: 74).

Khasnabish and Haiven, (2012) argue for the importance of the ‘radical imagination’ as the *“key to radical social change”* because *“without the ability to project the world as it might otherwise be, we lack the inspiration that motivates resistance”* (2012: 411). Khasnabish and Haiven see, *“the imagination is a collective process rather than an individualised thing”* (2012: 411) further supporting the idea of the role of the community over the individual which this thesis sees is a common dilemma in many of the places that are ‘educating differently’.

Khasnabish and Haiven, (2012), also argue for a 'collaborative praxis' as it is not about the 'I' which builds on Facer's (2016) concept of friendship and the dialogic nature of this argument supports a collective approach to change, supporting the rhizomatic multiplicity of Alys-we in which the search for the 'Ideal School' in Chapter 5-9 have been written. It also highlights the aims of the thesis, as it:

Moves us beyond neoliberal accounts of the imagination as the product of gifted individuals who contribute the fruits of their genius to a "marketplace of ideas." Understanding the imagination as a "dialogic" process allows us to see how we all contribute to the imagination and how the imagination changes us.

(Khasnabish & Haiven, 2012: 411).

The sharing of stories of different possibilities of ways of educating differently could allow educators to use their imagination to think the 'What if?' (Spry, 2016).

Hauskeller (2014) warns of the danger that although utopian dreams have created progress they have also contributed to terror and humanitarian disaster. There is now extensive fiction on dystopias (Orwell, 1949; Huxley, 1932; Attwood, 1985; Collins, 2008; Roth, 2012). Hauskeller's work explores trans-human and post-human understandings of making this world a better place to live. For example, trans-humanists would see this is through already existing or soon to be developed human enhancement technologies, whereas post-humanists refuse to see humans as "*superior species in the natural order*" (Miah, 2008: 72) to animals or machines. For "*the post-humanist post-human is not an entity of an imagined future, but an entity that already exists*" (Hauskeller, 2014: 4).

However, De Meyer (2016) argues that neuroscience supports the idea that educational change does not happen if we as a society continue to choose to

think the same way but if we changed our thinking then change could happen.

This idea of changing thinking helps me develop another interpretation of the term, edge-ucation, as being about potentiality (from Munoz, 2009) and utopian performative of hope (from Spry, 2016).

Conclusion

The understanding of edge-ucation in Chapter 2 is one that accepts that the current 'ideal' does not exist but shares the 'gems' of stories of 'educating differently' from this neoliberal world, it is an edge-ucation that occupies Facer's (2016) 'ecotone' which is similar to Kraftl's conclusions that:

Some alternative learning spaces do more than simply provide 'alternatives' to mainstream education. In addition, across a diverse range of educational 'types', they constitute and provoke reflection about alternative visions and versions of life-itself... Thus, they do not merely challenge (or complement) the predominance of neoliberal thinking in mainstream educational systems, but posit alternatives to neoliberal forms of life writ large... in some places, at some moments, they offer distinct challenges to dominant assumptions we hold about bodily habits and dispositions, about mess, about interpersonal love, and about life-itself.

(Kraftl, 2013: 229).

Building on this the edge-ucation of Chapter 3 is one that also accepts the ideal does not exist at present but hopes for the future and takes guidance from both Munoz (2009) and Spry (2016). Chapter 9 of this thesis was therefore written as a 'Utopian performative of Hope' that by sharing stories then there is the potential of not just sharing current stories of 'educating differently' but that new stories can become reality. The use of the word 'ideal' in this thesis has multiple meanings all iteratively involved in the term edge-ucation - it is describing the perfect 'school' that does not exist now but it potentially can. 'Ideal' has continued to be included in the study because of its evocative nature, as it creates a wide range of discussion and emotions.

Chapter 4 - Meet Alys.

Introduction

By identity, I mean an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others and to myself, the experience of love and suffering - and much, much more. In the midst of that complex field, identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human.

(Palmer, 1998: 13).

Chapter 4 - Meet Alys aims to introduce the identities of the multiple voices of Alys-we that create this rhizomatic thesis. Section 4.1 explores the literature and thinking that supports the approach. Then the following sections cover each of the voices represented within future chapters; some are supported further with an essay or a poem. Not all are explored in depth as voices appear later in the thesis but also because some are louder and need more exploration at this early stage.

4.1 Background and rationale

Plotlines convolute and spiral, lives intertwine, coincidences collide, seemingly random happenings are laced with knots, figure eights, and double loops, designs more intricate than the fringe of a silk rebozo. No, I couldn't make this up. Nobody could make up our lives.

(Cisneros, 2002: 429).

The multiplicity of Alys-we aims to step this thesis away from traditional 'autoethnographic-I' which focusses on the self (see Ellis, 2004) by embodying the many different 'plotlines' (Cisneros, 2002) or voices of Alys and the spaces in-between. This post-human, rhizomatic approach follows Spry's (2016) work on the 'autoethnographic-we' and Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/87) understanding of assemblage. As Spry explains:

For Deleuze we are a constant assemblage, the genesis of Wyatt and Gale's assemblage autoethnography, "the shift this offers away from the individualism of the 'auto' towards the felt dynamism of Deleuze and Guattari's (2009) notion of 'assemblage' with its flow and affect, time, space and place" (Wyatt and Gale, 2013:301). The auto ethnographic "I" is concerned less with identity construction and more with a Bakhtinian (1993) "I-for-the-other" dialogic amalgamation of influences. (Spry, 2016: 80).

By viewing my life as a complexity of selves following Etherington's argument that, "*we are many selves which are constructed and change over time in response to the social contexts of our lives and experiences*" (2002: 222-223), Chapter 4 aims to introduce the reader to the many voices of Alys, the multiplicity of the Alys-we, so that they can tell a story that can be used to "*inspire and encourage others,*" (Blackie, 2016: 374). These voices, "*through the telling and retelling of many stories that contributed to [the multiple] identities*" also make it possible to develop "*a sense of agency*" (Speedy, 2000: 364). This 'agency' (following Barad, 2007) gives strength to School Tourism by performing the search for the 'Ideal School' in multiple selves and in ways beyond-the-body through storytelling.

As I wrote about my visits to different schools/places of learning that I visited, read about educational pedagogy and learnt more about theory and methodology I began to see different voices appear in my writing. Schultz and Ravitch argue that:

People construct professional identities in relation to context and experience and in relation to one another. These identities are not intrinsic or separate from social contexts and interactions; rather they are embodied and enacted in practice. (Schulz and Ravitch, 2013: 37).

The voices that I recognised were: Alys the UK state school teacher, Alys educating differently, Alys and Steiner, Alys the future parent, Alys the PhD student/ theorist, Alys the School Tourist, Alys the Performer, Alys the Van-

Dweller, Alys the edge-Dweller and The Queering of 'Bad-Alys'. I saw myself like Greene, *"my identity has to be perceived as multiple"* because *"neither my self nor my narrative can have...a single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces; and, in any case, I am forever on my way"* (Greene, 1995: 1).

My search into the literature on multiple identities took me to Jung's (1964) work on archetypes and Assagioli's (1965) work on sub-personalities in Psychosynthesis. However, I was troubled by the Jungian approach to create either/or binaries of psychological types, such as *"extraverted or introverted in attitude; to use feeling or thinking as an assessing mode"* (in Bolen, 1984: 10). Bolen's work on 'Goddesses in Everywoman', although inspired by Jung is also inspired by feminist theory, it supports women's ability to *"shift gears"* and go *"from one facet of herself to another, she can shift from one goddess pattern to another"* (Bolen, 1984: 10) so is not stuck in designated Jungian binary. Blackie also explores the role of female archetypes (from Jung) in Celtic mythology arguing that the multiple voices of women are visible as:

Spinners and weavers; we are the ones who spin the threads and weave them into meaning and pattern. Like silkworms, we create those threads of our own substance, pulling the strong, fine fibres out of our hearts and wombs.
(Blackie, 2016: 361).

Bolen (1984) gives a less eloquent but more practical understanding of the role of the multiple voices of women from Jungian philosophy:

The Jungian perspective has made me aware that women are influenced by powerful inner forces, or *archetypes*, which can be personified by Greek goddesses. And the feminist perspective has given me an understanding of how outer forces, or *stereotypes* - the role to which society expects women to conform - reinforce some goddess patterns and repress others. As a result, I see every woman as a "woman-in-between": acted on from within by goddess archetypes and from without by cultural stereotypes.
(Bolen, 1984: 4).

However, again I was troubled by the binary, this time of gender, that Jung (1964), Blackie (2016) and Bolen (1984) all support. I may identify as a woman but I do not see myself as fixed in that identity and do not want my multiplicities to be compromised by that approach. I see all the voices in this thesis as interwoven following Clandinin et al, (2006) that identity is:

Multiple through the various storylines shaping and reshaping the composition of... life,... these storylines, these multiple identity threads, do no exist in isolation from one another or from the broader social and cultural milieu in which...[one] lives.
(Clandinin et al, 2006: 26).

I recognised that there were infinite possibilities of different voices of Alys that could have been included in this thesis, taking guidance from Etherington (2002), who suggested that narrative inquiry could include different viewpoints of the same incident and Mason (2009), whose PhD thesis was written as a dialogue of three different identities. I decided to use the voices that spoke the loudest in my journaling, in my thinking about this work - the voices of Alys-we connected to performing School Tourism, the search for the 'Ideal School' and my life as a van-dweller and Student/Theorist whilst completing this PhD. Following Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska (1999), my voices create a 'patchwork text', one that starts from a story (that of performing School Tourism and 'Searching for the Ideal School') and views the different pieces of writing/poetry written by different multiplicities as part of the 'patchwork text' can *"open up' endings, continue themes, explore contrast, and consider experiential and intellectual origins and alternatives"* (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska, 1999: 65). Therefore, all the voices, in this assemblage or 'patchwork text' are seen as integral within/to the rhizome. The pieces of writing/parts of the assemblage included in Chapters 5-9 could have been written from many of the possible voices but it is the voice that starts, or is key

throughout the piece that will be written as the title so it is clear to the reader where the piece started from.

Section 4.2 will be written as a series of sections of various lengths to introduce the different voices, sometimes as a short piece for clarity of the voice for later in the thesis and other times with an extended essay or poem exploring that multiplicity of Alys-we. Following Pelias:

I wish to be accepted or rejected on the basis of who I understand myself to be. I do not want to live a hidden life.
(Pelias, 2013: 388).

4.2 Meet Alys-we

4.2.1 Alys the UK state school teacher

The essay below gives background into my journey of becoming a UK state-school teacher and why I decided to leave the profession and began looking for alternative life and work options. Although I stopped working full-time as a traditional state-school teacher in 2007 I continued to work part-time as Primary and Special Needs Supply Teacher in Sheffield, Derbyshire and Cumbria until 2014, often for one day at each school, giving me access to a wide range of schools (over 60 different state-funded schools). I retrained in Early Years, gaining my Forest School Leader Level 3 certificate in 2010 and my Early Years Professional Status in 2012. I then worked in several state-funded early years settings as I saw this as somewhere I could combine 'educating differently' with state funding. The voice of the state-school teacher is one that reminds the Alys-we about social inequality, the privileges associated with 'educating differently' and the accessibility of the 'Ideal School'. The voice of 'Alys educating differently' speaks louder and more often within this thesis but 'Alys the UK state-school teacher' is there in the background.

4.2.1.1 Essay on retiring from full-time traditional teaching in 2007

I never wanted to be a teacher, I always saw it as a failure and wanted to do something else. I was well aware of the words of George Bernard Shaw *“those who can, do, those who can’t, teach”* (1903: Maxim 36) and didn’t want to fall into the ‘trap’ but it had always been ‘known’ I would be a teacher from childhood.

I have a younger sister, who followed me through primary school, two years below. She was young for her year and initially struggled with her reading. Family story has it that after once belittling her ability to read I then set about teaching her. We would often play schools and it was thought by my family that I would be a teacher.

Mendus, Journalling - Childhood memories, [Sheffield, November 2015.]

Then years later while living and working in New Zealand, (2001-2003) I was earning some money working in preschools and nurseries and the ‘calling’ returned:

“When you go home you need to go and train to be a teacher,” the Preschool Manager ordered me one day, “you are a natural”.

Mendus, Journalling - Gap year memories, 2001-03 [Sydney, February, 2016].

Even the following year when I returned to the UK I still didn’t want to be a teacher, I wanted to be an Archaeologist (the job I had been doing predominantly in New Zealand) and in a way it was only money that stopped me as I had a place on an MSc in ‘Archaeology and Geographical Information Systems’ to start the same September as I had a place for a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). It was only because I got paid to do teacher training and would have to pay them to do the Masters that I chose teaching. So I did the PGCE with many tears. My lack of caring made it a fun year, I could teach quite easily, was organised and got my work done and played a lot of

rugby for Bath Ladies Rugby Football Club so kept fit and I could cave on the Mendip Hills. Life flowed quite nicely until I had to get a job:

“Alys get a job! Why have you not got a job already? You will get your student loan paid back and get a golden hello (government bonus for teaching a shortage subject) if you teach Science. What is stopping you?”

The voice of my father rang out, when by the end of June in my PGCE year I had not ‘got a job’ and it wasn’t because I couldn’t teach. I kept getting flying colours on my teaching observations. It was because something was stopping me. Something deep down preventing me from entering a profession that I felt was fundamentally flawed, I just couldn’t put my finger on how or what...

Mendus, Autoethnography of my life journalling, [Cumbria, May 2016].

So maybe the truth is that I had always known that it wasn’t ‘right’ but I did end up getting a job at a school in the town where I had studied for my undergraduate degree in Archaeology and I knew that it was in a ‘nice’ part of town and that the students didn’t have to wear uniform. I had always hated uniform:

“It’s Friday choosing day! What would you like to wear to school today Alys?!”

My Mum asked me. There wasn’t even a uniform at my tiny Primary school in the rural Lake District but my Mum liked uniform so she made us wear it every day except for Fridays when she let us choose what we wore... My secondary school had uniform all the way to 18 including new colours and ties (and girls could wear trousers) in the sixth form. I hated it but I didn’t change schools to the neighbouring town which my sister, after me, did.

Mendus, Autoethnography of my childhood journalling, [Sheffield, November 2015].

The day before I got the comprehensive job I had had an interview in a Steiner Waldorf school in Scotland. I’d first come across Steiner Waldorf in January 2002 when living in Christchurch, New Zealand and one of my housemates had gone to the Steiner school so she took me for a visit. I’m not sure that I was very impressed. It was just a school and I was in a phase in my life where I saw myself as an ‘archaeologist’ and not a teacher but the concept of a ‘different’

type of school stayed with me as when I was doing my PGCE I remembered that Steiner school in New Zealand and found one in a nearby town to visit.

It was a wet, January morning and I hurried into the old Georgian building. The entrance hall was bare and much needed some attention. Nestled at the bottom of the stairs was a table filled with knitted animals and other handmade crafts for sale. I thought back to my village and to the Methodist chapel bring-and-buy sales and laughing at the twee handcrafts... I was taken upstairs to a Y6 room except it was called Class 5 and stepped inside. A narrow room with a long blackboard across the back wall, children (in their own clothes) standing behind old wooden school desks. I felt like I had stepped back in time. I perched in the corner and watched as the class sang songs, recited long poems, did a complicated jumping game connected to the times tables, played recorders and said a verse that mentioned God and ended up with their arms crossed against their chests. Weird, but strangely fascinating. I spoke to their teacher at break-time, excited at my new 'find', about how to become a Steiner Teacher. She was exhausted and was leaving the school soon, so knocked me back. She told me she had trained at a school in Gloucestershire and the thought of more training appalled me. I felt I had done enough learning.

Mendus, PGCE notebooks, [Bath, January 2005].

So why hadn't I gone for that job in Scotland? The truth is I wanted to earn more money. At 25 I had never earned money before and the mainstream job would pay me £5000 more and give me a £4000 golden hello after two years if I taught Science. My PGCE was in Middle Years Science so I had the choice of Primary or Secondary for a job and I hadn't enjoyed the end of Primary teaching anyway, too much marking and time spent learning Maths and English facts for the SATs exams that I wasn't inspired to fill my brain with and then the staff:

*"I'm not going to work in a Primary school," I told one of my school friend's mothers,
"as it is full of old women talking about babies, grandchildren and diets." She was a Reception teacher and Deputy Head of an Infant School. It has to be said that that quote has not been forgotten.*

Mendus, Memory of a conversation, April, 2005. [Sheffield, November 2015].

And who I was, and maybe who I am now, is well suited to banter and play and the creativity in how you teach and manage behaviour with teenagers. As I have begun to learn more about Steiner Waldorf education (Rawson and Ritcher, 2000; and see this thesis Chapter 5) it suggests that this is because those

children at end of Primary school need an authoritarian figure to have knowledge, hold clear boundaries and be fair and I aim to manage classes by friendly relationships rather than power and control (behaviourism is also discussed further in Chapter 5).

Going to work in a comprehensive, a state funded 11-18 school, was full of delights with my new colleagues and, especially in the first couple of terms, I would join the other young staff, teachers and support staff, in the local pub. We called it 'period 6' and would see each other in the corridor and ask if they were going to period 6 later. We thought we were hilarious! And we would have a laugh and I would usually be drunk and asleep by 9pm on a Friday. When thinking back with hindsight I wonder, is getting drunk on Friday the only way to cope with a stressful job? I know it is done the country over but is that the point of working? Really? I went less to the pub in my second year of teaching as my life had begun to change focus and I ended the week on the Upper School site with a lower ability group of 15/16 year olds for Science:

"Thank you for turning up. Please settle down,"

I would say as a 15 year old boy wandered into my classroom, cap on back to front, haze of smoke, trousers hanging from his buttocks, pants pulled up to the waist, hoody up. And I would try to teach a group of young people written off by the school. Some were in there as they had real additional learning needs and others because they messed around so much in the higher ability set that they were destroying learning (and the chance for the school to get the much needed number of pupils to a set GCSE grade). I began to realise that it is an art to be able to teach such a chaotic mix and I had to rely on my resilience and quick thinking to get through that hour. It wasn't, as deemed by my department, an easy class relying on those with lower level Scientific knowledge (aka me with an Archaeology degree), but a baptism with fire. I planned about 10 minutes actual work or a short practical and then winged it. I didn't need to give homework which I disliked anyway on three counts; one I had to mark it, two they had to do it in their free time which I think should truly be free time and three they never did it anyway so I had to chase it up and give them detentions (which also seemed pointless to me). I was beginning to see myself as different. The number of things I was unhappy with increasing by the moment.

And then there was that one lesson with the maggots. A hideous GCSE coursework experiment on respiration of maggots. I saw this group once a

week. Friday last lesson and I was a brand new teacher. No teaching assistant and down in a dark out-of-the-way lab. Of course the class were bored and a few boys decided to chuck maggots at the girls. One girl began screaming and hyperventilating. As I sent for some assistance a few boys grabbed the cup of maggots and ran riot around school, chucking maggots into each classroom they could find. Someone from Senior Management appeared and the girl was looked after but all other staff were too busy to help with ensuing maggot disaster.

I turned my attention back to the rest of the class and in the corner one boy was happily munching on a maggot having being bet a pound he wouldn't... I asked, "Why?"

"It's well worth it for a pound," he answered... I drank a lot that night.

Mendus, Memories of being a secondary school Science teacher 2005-07
Journalling, [Sheffield, December 2015].

Even with the youthful energy of my mid-twenties, the constant battles with behaviour and impossible targets and student disinterest in curriculum began to wear on me:

Although I knew that I enjoyed working in education I was really apprehensive about completing a PGCE as I had a gut feeling that I would find the regimental structure of working under the National Curriculum and National Strategies a challenge. Two years into teaching I still find this. I teach mostly lower ability Science and I find behaviour to be poor but attitude to learning and lack of engagement with wanting to learn much more upsetting. So I began to look around at different approaches to teaching.

Mendus, 2006, Excerpt from MA Module 'Learning from the NQT year'
[Sheffield, July 2006].

Speaking to a teaching assistant from the time, she reminded me of how angry I had been which was something I had 'forgotten' when I was brainstorming about this period of my life. Of course a lot of this was my inner issues and challenges coming to the forefront in this job, but it was through writing about setting up the school garden for an action research module for my MA Education that I was able to express and explore my feelings for something different in education:

This feeling of isolation was new to me as I am always driven and put everything into something I feel passionately about... I really cared about creating a pleasant space within the school grounds, about the children who were able to learn new practical and creative skills and about the team of adults that I worked with creating the garden. Also it became very important

to me to bring inclusive outdoor learning as an opportunity for some pupils... The fact that I really cared drove the project forward but also opened my eyes to realise I would be happier working more in the outdoors with troubled youngsters. I was also very aware that this need of mine did not make my project of high priority to others.

Mendus, MA Learning and Teaching assignment, [Sheffield, May 2008].

I did take that love of learning and teaching in the outdoors with me and explored different ways of working in the outdoors once I 'retired.' So, like many new teachers, I left after only two years, following Weale, (2016) who writes in the Guardian newspaper "Of the 21,400 who began teaching in English state schools in 2010, 30% had quit by 2015". I had lots of ideas but no real plan except going on a caving expedition to India the following February and to explore outdoor learning and supply teaching.

I gave a speech when I left, as was customary at the school, but wrote mine as a 'retirement' speech and I received 'retirement' cards from friends. My difference had been recognised by the school Head and he did agree to have a meeting with me about my career:

"The trouble with you Alys is that you are a free-spirit."

And as I recall this memory the word 'trouble' seems so forceful and I am not sure it would have been a word he would have used, yet even if my memory is incorrect, it was that sentiment that I carried with me. And now maybe I wear as a badge of honour.

Mendus, Memory of a conversation, April 2007 [Sheffield, November 2015].

When I 'retired' I was 27, almost 28, on the cusp of my 'Saturn Returns.' This is a reference from astrology where every 27-29 years a person faces a key identity crisis and creation period. For me it was a time of empowerment as I was now relatively solvent, owned a vehicle, and had a professional qualification that I could begin to do what made sense for me and if I truly was that 'free spirit' that my Head had described, I could begin to explore what that meant. I did not believe in the system and I was prepared to go into the unknown rather than stay in a space that made me unhappy. But all the time at

the back of my mind a little voice kept reminding me, what about the children?

Reay (2016) puts this so well:

While teachers are leaving the profession in increasing numbers (Weston, 2013) in despair at this sterile, joyless practice of teaching to the test, children do not have a choice to leave.

(Reay, 2016: 326).

4.2.2 Alys educating differently

This multiplicity covers my own experiences of working in state, independent and home-schooling environments that aimed to be 'educating differently' from traditional approaches. It includes my relationship with Steiner Waldorf education, in registered schools and in using the pedagogical approaches in other settings, although Alys and Steiner has a separate multiplicity as it is still an 'other' voice to the more experienced 'becoming expert' voice of Alys educating differently.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore performing School Tourism and many different places that are 'educating differently' around the world. This voice includes both 'Alys educating differently' as a practitioner and 'Alys educating differently' as an expert in the pedagogical understanding of the different approaches.

This poem encapsulates a nodal-point for 'Alys educating differently' and changes their thinking about how to bring 'play' back into their work with adolescents not just with younger children.

4.2.2.1 On rediscovering Play - A Poem about learning from Par Albam Solvik, Jarna, Sweden.

*So here I was in a high-roofed sun-lit classroom of a hobbit-style cob-built
'renegade' Waldorf school near the sea in Southern Sweden.*

*I was at a summer-school for adults and children where we had total freedom
just like students at their school to join in, observe or leave any workshop that
was happening.*

*I watched the guttural-singing, got stuck into the painting, loved the wild
swimming and raspberry picking but spent most of my time in that big hall
playing.*

*Linda Fryer from the Stables (a Waldorf Inspired Upper School Project) in York
had told me about this place.*

*I was here as I wanted to explore ideas for including risk-taking and play further
in my teaching.*

And in my own life...

*So I found myself balancing on top of three school benches placed on top of
each other*

*My 80-something teacher looking patiently at me
"Jump!" he said*

*My bare-feet wobbled on the treacherous pile
And I tentatively leapt forward*

*I landed deafened by crashing benches
Shaken, I looked at the debris around me
Then back at my teacher.*

"Try again," he said

*My stomach felt sick, my anxiety levels rising, I could hurt myself I thought.
"Do people get hurt?" I whispered.*

"Yes, it is a risk, a few bones get broken most years at this place".

*And for some reason I tentatively re-climbed those benches
Standing tall I took a breath*

*This time I followed the instructions to find the height within myself and jump up
daintily*

*And like cat I landed silently, feet together, gently grounded on the earth
I turned around and saw the benches standing, high, proud and firm.*

I laughed with relief

Realising I had re-found the magic of deep-play.

Mendus, Reflecting on the Summer of 2010, [Chiang Rai, Thailand, December 2016].

4.2.3 Alys and Steiner

The essay in 4.2.1.1 shines a light into my first connection to Steiner education, as my first 'alternative' method to mainstream education that I came intimately connected to it holds a key part to the whole thesis.

My relationship with Steiner Waldorf changes and the effect that it does and does not influence my work at different stages in the last ten years will be visible in the sections of the rhizome. Also my relationship with Anthroposophy (the philosophy behind Steiner Waldorf education) has changed greatly as it was suggested by my Steiner Teacher Trainer Michael in 2006, he said, *"give it 5 years and it will begin to make sense,"* and for me maybe ten years was needed, but the rhizome will show my iterative relationship, one sometimes a little too binary of love and hate, inclusivity in some aspects and repulsion in another. It is also interesting to note that my 'badge of honour' of being a Steiner teacher in some circles invites me, giving me hospitality internationally and other times drives me away. My 'renegade' (my own label) journey as a Steiner teacher influences many sections of my identity – my role as an educator, an edge-dweller, my School Tourism and role as future parent.

Chapter 5 focusses on Steiner Waldorf in more detail.

4.2.4 Alys the future parent

My role as a future parent in the closing of the thesis is becoming more imminent, with the wish and possibility for it to happen. When I 'retired' from teaching in 2007, I was still a relatively long way from thinking I will become a parent, yet by 2008 I decided to run a home education project in Sheffield rather than take a Steiner Class in another town, as you must give an 8 year commitment to that class and I knew I wanted children soon.

These imaginary children of ours are not even born but they have privilege already stamped on their foreheads.

Mendus, Reflections on a conversation with a friend, [Devon, September 2016].

Excerpts from my journal above show awareness of my positionality and this want to be a parent percolates throughout the rhizome as I visit more and more schools and think more deeply about privilege, how I want to parent and in what sort of world I want these future children to be born.

4.2.5 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist

This voice develops throughout the rhizome as I offer different understandings of my embodied experience performing School Tourism. It gives glimpses into my developing role as an 'Early Career Academic' and lenses into how I see truth and knowledge in action. It also includes dialogues between myself and other academics, educators, parents and friends connected to 'Searching for the Ideal School'.

4.2.6 Alys the School Tourist

School Tourism has been explored in detail in Chapter 2.3 and this voice of Alys the School Tourist covers my experience of embodying School Tourism throughout this thesis - it includes the physical school visits, the journalling, interactions and future dialogues.

However, it must be recognised that when I retired from mainstream education in 2007 (see 4.2.1.1) I did not describe myself as being a School Tourist as I had only been in seven schools (including the two I attended as a child).

*Unintentionally I became a school tourist
First in Meghalaya in North East India in 2008, my hosts knowing I was a
teacher presumed/assumed my need to visit Indian schools
And then it became a hobby, an addiction, a curse
The inner coyote in me needed to know
What was out there and
Was it good enough for me?
Did it suit the lens I was looking through?
In my becoming a school tourist
It legitimised my innate curiosity
A search for a 'job for me and school for my future children.'
And my life as
Intentionally, iteratively, itinerant.
A nomadology of van dwelling and school tourism.*

Mendus, Journalling - using poetry as method of inquiry, [Chang-Mai Thailand, December 2016].

4.2.7 Alys the performer

The approaches for this thesis of performing School Tourism and performative autoethnography place Alys-the-performer in a pivotal role influencing all aspects of the methodology. Alys the performer is a poetic voice that adds another aspect to the multiplicities as the poet or storyteller, both within the written format of this thesis and also when performing School Tourism. The idea explored in Chapter 3 from Goffman (1959) of front and back stage conversations and performances in performing School Tourism are seen within this multiplicity. Alys the performer is visible through the on-the-record front-stage conversations that become dialogues and the back-stage conversations as I am shown around the school or taken for a drink afterwards, that are not directly quoted, but influence my thinking and appear in journalling or poems. This voice also covers my role of sharing stories of other places that are 'educating differently' when I am shown around the school and on a professional level when I give performative autoethnographic papers about my work at conferences.

4.2.8 Alys the Van-Dweller

I have owned a van since 2007 as a reaction to waking up in a tent full of water and knowing it was time to be independent when out in the outdoors and always have somewhere dry to keep stuff, to change in and sleep. My passion for the outdoors comes from my childhood growing up in the rural Lake District with the lakes, mountains and crags on my doorstep. One of my main identities until around 2008 was a rock-climber. I went to university in Sheffield in 1998 so I was close to the Peak District for rock-climbing and returned to teach in 2005 again to be close to the rocks. The risks I choose to take may have changed but as I type these words I am parked up by the ocean, waiting impatiently to take my first naked dip of the day. The wilding of my identity and its influences on living close to nature are visible in my nomadic lifestyle.

I bought my second van in Autumn 2011 and since then I have not had my own home, instead being based from the van, sleeping it in sometimes and other times in friends or families homes or at short-term house-sits when in the UK. Every winter since 2013 I have been away for several months, escaping the damp of the UK weather. Since May 2016, in my third van, I have been based almost full-time in the van, now sharing the space with my partner, Bozz, who I met in Melbourne, Australia whilst visiting schools for my PhD in February 2016. Living an itinerant life-style adds another voice to this thesis (as mentioned in Chapter 2) as I write in different places, I look out on an ever-changing landscape and interact with numerous people. Our life is not planned, I have a thesis to complete but our day-to-day is inspired by 'following our highest excitement', an idea from my friend Chloe, so we look at the weather and see what and where draws us next. I am incredibly lucky as the bursary from my 'Freedom to Learn' scholarship has given me relative solvency and freedom to

live this life. I read 'Walden on Wheels' (Ilgunas, 2013) about a Graduate student living on the university campus in his van in the USA to save money but that van stayed put and from descriptions in the book had not been converted into a tiny-house-on-wheels like our van.

It is sometimes difficult for those looking in at my van-dwelling and varied itinerant life to understand how it works, as one friend, working hard in the city in London, described my life as that of 'a trust fund child' as I seem to do whatever I want and travel extensively like I have an endless pot of money. The voice of Alys-the-van-dweller is reminded to share not just the highs but also the challenges, complications and anxieties as well following Ingold:

The wayfarer has to sustain himself, both perceptually and materially, through an active engagement with the country that opens up along is path. (Ingold, 2007: 76).

For example for the van-dweller these questions arise; Where is it safe to park? Where can we wash and go to the toilet? Do we have enough power or WIFI? This poem (4.2.8.1) written in September 2016 illuminates these challenges further.

4.2.8.1 An Ode to the carpark - 13th September 2016.

Sitting in yet another carpark
The life of a gas-station-hippy
Oh! there are pretty views of the breaking waves or the dew dappled grass
But there is also reality
Do we have enough water and gas and power?
Like the rest of Babylon just
A little more in our face and omnipresent
And where to poo?
That was the first question a 6 year old friend of mine asked me on a tour of the
van
"So where's your toilet?"
Of course we are organised, we have our shovel and I secretly read

'How to shit in woods' years ago when working as a shop assistant in a fancy
 outdoor shop in the Lakes
 But it is true, it needs to happen at least once a day, especially with our
 vegetable heavy diet
 And actually how much of an idyll is our life
 We are not really cut off from society as we cannot grow our own food – except
 for a few sprouts by our cooker
 We don't even have solar panels – next year we say
 And the truth is we spend more time in shops, around people in the society we
 try to extradite ourselves from than those house-dwellers we look down on
 Like those textile-wearers on the beach – the other not-like-us who delight in
 our birthday suit to the skies.
 Yet this morning waking, snuggled into a warm embrace, hearing the loud patter
 of heavy rain on the roof I sprang out of bed
 Pulling on my bikini (for common decency) I led the way dodging raindrops
 across the carpark to the dark, treacle-like majesty of the Dart
 And, gingerly at first, then proudly stepping off and into its current floating down
 at speed until caught by an eddy and in to rest
 The cleansing and anointing of the fresh water sending tingles to my toes and
 washing my hair as I swam.
 A run back to the van and happy smiles, fresh coffee, a few strums of a new
 tune on my ukulele and back to it.
 Sitting there like any PhD student up-and-down-the-land, head down, laptop
 open, feet planted (on the floor of the van), working...working-in-an-unusual-
 space but still working.
 Not really edge-dwelling but edge-dancing in and out of the rhizome of babylon.
 And for one-who-does-not-like-to-compromise what is happening here? At times
 van-dwelling is freedom but it is still living in this neoliberal, capitalist world.
 Is it time to stop and be actually a bit different, actually living on the land?
 Changing by doing rather than staring and looking in from the outside?
 "Next year", I hear ringing in my brain, "Still so much to see and do..."
 As this Summer closes and my birthday appears again I know that change is
 happening
 And fast
 This Summer there were two of us in the van
 And maybe soon there will be three.
 I wonder where we will be?
 Mendus, Writing in the van outside Morrisons, [Totnes, Devon, September
 2016].

4.2.9 Alys the edge-dweller

Edge-dwelling is a little-used term in the literature so reading Blackie (2016)
 gave me guidance in recognising Alys-the-edge-dweller as someone who is on

the outside looking in, be it when visiting a school or even within what is deemed by others as an 'alternative' environment. Blackie explains:

We are all edge-dwellers...always been drawn to edges of things, the places where two things collide. Where bog borders riverbank, where meadow merges into forest. Where you stand in the margins of what is behind you and look out across the threshold of the future. The brink of possibilities - will you cross?

(Blackie, 2016: 66).

Wheatley and Frieze (2011) use a similar term to 'edge-dweller', that of 'edge-walkers'. Their work brings deeper understanding to the importance of edge-dwelling in terms of the skills gained and stories shared from looking-in which helps with making the 'potentiality of utopia' (Munoz, 2009) possible. Wheatley and Frieze argue that:

Either we struggle to fix and repair the current system, or we create new alternatives. New alternatives can be created either inside or outside the failing system. But if we choose to walk out and walk on, there are two competing roles we're called upon to play: We have to be thoughtful and compassionate in attending to what's dying - we have to be good hospice workers. And we have to be experimenters, pioneers, **edge-walkers**. Playing these dual roles is never easy, of course, but even to, there are enough people brave enough to do so.

(Wheatley and Frieze, 2011: 10-11) (**Bold my emphasis**).

The multiplicity that is Alys the edge-dweller is also aware of its place in the rhizome as it was argued in my PhD First Year Confirmation that wasn't calling myself an edge-dweller and then using rhizomatic theory contradictory (Dennis, 2015: pers.comm)? This thesis positions Alys the edge-dweller as continually moving between the edge and the centre of the rhizome. Following Braidotti's (2012) idea that, "*the center-margin relation is neither fixed nor unitary, but rather floating and multi-located*" (2012:10).

I suppose it could be seen as a dance where the inner radical in me is always trying to get to the edge but in the rhizomatic analogy I am always being surrounded again. I have noticed this anyway with discussions of how in 'hippy' circles I can be seen as in the middle, accepted for my alternativeness, whereas in other more 'mainstream' groupings even having a ring in my nose marks me out as 'other'. So the edge-dweller and a

rhizome can be friends but in an exhausting, continually testing manner. It is dance. I see my life as dance of positionality, exploring where I sit on edges/boundaries between each rhizome.

Mendus, Journalling in Edge-dwelling, [Cumbria, April 2015].

The following essay gives an insight into one aspect of my 'otherness' as I explore my edge-dwelling and the place in which I grew up, where my parents still live and my extra belongings (that do not fit in the van) are stored. This piece also raises question of: Do I really feel at home anywhere? It also highlights the constant challenge of a rhizomatic edge-dweller. However, I gain hope from Blackie (2016) that as a edge-dweller I can have many special places around the world and can feel connected and at home anywhere where my *"identity has been and is being in some way shaped by that place; having a sense that its stories, its topography, its weather, have formed you - formed your character and your values"* (Blackie, 2016: 281).

4.2.9.1 Going to the theatre, May 5th 2016 (personal reflections and aside information written in italics).

"That would suit you," she said as I updated my Y7 English teacher about my PhD in the foyer of the local theatre, before I took a step back further into my childhood and watched the local amateur dramatics perform a musical about Cumbrian life.

And there he was, let's call him Mr. Smith, playfully acting the comic role with a smile and a glint of mischief in his eyes. My mind was full of flashbacks to the Alps in 1996.

I was on a school whitewater canoeing trip after my GCSEs and he was there in his socks and sandals and ron-hills (running tights). I think my dislike/fetish for ron-hills came from him which was quite disturbing to recognise as I sat there all dolled up in the theatre.

And it wasn't just him in the performance other old teachers were performing,

A history teacher, who once scared our whole class for not wearing our blazers on a hot summers day and made us stand behind our desks before he entered, putting shivers down my spine.

And now I look at him his silver hair hanging long round his face and his friendly grandfatherly doting face and laugh but also shudder slightly as it was his manner that reminded me never to teach like that.

My mind wanders back to my English teacher and fond memories of how she taught me that the first draft is never good enough and gave me my first kumquat.

"What's that?"

We all cried out and squeaked at its tart taste but it inspired us to write poetry.

And the Cumbrian accents of the performance, even though put on for the act, lulled me back to my childhood and the rural idyll of Lakeland and how I have never fitted in. I know I shortened my vowels sometimes (when I am not near my paternal Grandmother) for a level of acceptance.

"I am Cumbrian you know."

But I have spent most of my adult life avoiding this town, this connection to childhood as I think I have changed and am different, am better (?) than those who choose to return and dwell here and yet my Y7 English teacher when I tell her about my PhD and about performing new stories for education does know me when she says,

"That would suit you."

Maybe I am not that different from 1991?

It is hard to understand that direct connection as the Lake District is beautiful and an outdoor lover's paradise. I could climb, sail, swim, walk, canoe to my heart's content but I did not really come back for long. Technically I have lived here for years, so says the electoral roll, as my belongings are stored in my childhood bedroom in my parents' house, but I have been on the road for the last 6 years moving between friends, family, my van and abroad continually searching for home. I argue I don't come back to live in Cumbria as I see myself as,

"I am from the land but not the people."

I think I am too different or alternative for this place and maybe I am?

I worry about schools if I settled and had children. Yes my schooling was local and quaint but I don't want my children going to those schools and it is so rural there is little choice without creating a village uproar and driving long distances to connect with others home educating.

So I avoid the local town or cross the road when I see an old teacher or schoolchild and turn away from my past. I am not sure what I am ashamed of?

And now maybe it is beginning to change because I have the 'respectability' of being a PhD student? It is something honourable and normal that I can tell an old teacher or my first boyfriend's father (yep I bumped into him too last night...).

They don't even need to know much about the subject and actually searching for my 'Ideal School' does not seem to threaten people nor does 'Freedom to Learn', it just seems to excite others. It gives me and my parents a little social standing for the lack of husband and grandchildren, an essence of normality?

I try to think how this makes me feel?

Am I trying to not be such an edge-dweller in these situations or can I not escape from my embodied positionality? After all:

I am wearing a bright red cardigan and red fishnets with a simple blue spotty dress just one of my favourite going out outfits but when people mentioned, "oh how bright you look," I look around to see I am surrounded by a sea of dark colours.

I make a statement unintentionally by being me.

And why is that questioning the normal (as Munoz, 2006) a cause for my reluctance to embrace my heritage?

4.2.10 The Queering of 'Bad-Alys'

'Bad-Alys' follows patterns in my life where I have chosen to step out of the 'normative' way of being:

As a child this covers my exploration of my 'other' identity as 'Julius', a Roman British boy from Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall.

Julius followed my parents home from a visit aged 6 and slept on the floor on his sister's bedroom for weeks.

He makes a bulla to wear and has Alys cut off her long hair and declare that she wants to be/is a boy.

(Mendus, 2017. Section from Paper given at ICQI 2017, USA).

However, I see queering (like Munoz, 2006), as not necessarily connected to gender identity or the fluidity of that, but also an exploration of the 'other' spaces, the 'anti-normative politics' (Wilkinson, 2010), the 'gaps' that this performative autoethnographic piece aims to give a voice. As Wilkinson argues:

This version of queer forms an anti-normative politics that does not just aim to find the 'trouble with normal' but also hopes to create alternatives: it is not just about (de)construction but also (re)construction.

(Wilkinson, 2010: 250).

And why is it called 'Bad-Alys'? It is from a remembering of an old family joke from my mother and sister which would end in a shouting of 'Bad-Alys'.

However, when asked they cannot remember where it came from, but I know its words as they resonate in my soul.

The voice of 'Bad-Alys' will be omnipresent throughout the rhizome. The following sections explore 'Bad-Alys' further, firstly in 4.2.10.1 with a poem titled 'First Rites' and secondly in 4.2.10.2 with a short essay exploring a voice of 'Bad-Alys' in the thesis.

4.2.10.1 'First-Rites' Nine Ladies Stone Circle, Derbyshire, UK, August 2007.

*It's Lammas-time² the trees are awake with a wash of green
The sunlight dapples down between the branches
The resonant power of the stones gains respect
The proud old oak looks on adorned with red ribbons
A remembering
The mining has been stopped by those living on the land, in the treetops they
have
Prevailed
We visit those still living there
Particular, pruned perfect houses perched on the cliff amongst the moss
I am on the edge in my 'normality' at those that are different
Those living with convictions, actioning activism
In awe at my friend for knowing them
And us, we sit at the edge of the stone circle looking in
Eating our hummus and raw sprouted greens on oatcakes
A smoky haze around us as we dwell upon
The day
The time has come for my initiation that leap of faith into
Visually wearing my identity not on my sleeve but on the hair of my head
I've already put the ring in my nose
The next step to my labelling
She rubs my hair, two long loose strands at the back, up and down
Rubbing with force, electricity as the fluff-ball and matted intricate web is
formed
Down and round until the bottom
Two long rats tail/tale of life
Chloe gifts me silver bead from her own dreads
Threading that silver thread onto my hairs my initiation complete
I am here
The veil of anonymity lifted.*

²Beginning of August, Lammas is a Pagan celebration of the harvest.

4.2.10.2 Those Dreadful Days....On wearing/embodying my identity.

An example of the Queering of 'Bad-Alys' can be seen quite simply in how I present myself. Those years when I had a big head of dreadlocks, thick, wild and waist-long, accompanied by my bright clothes, my old white van and my very white skin. What stories of privilege was I portraying without even opening my mouth to my 'posh' Northern accent? What assumptions had I made about who I was and what judgements were made back?

I recall that time doing supply in a middle class primary in the North of Sheffield, and a timid teacher stopped me at break time, looking straight at my hair questioning.

"How can you teach with your hair like that?" she asked. "I would love dreadlocks but I wouldn't be allowed to have them here and teach".

I was a bit bemused and with a wry smile replied, "it doesn't matter what you look like if you can teach".

Mendus, Supply Teaching Journalling, [Cumbria, April 2016].

Which may have been true for a supply teacher but I know I didn't put the ring in my nose until I left a full time teaching contract. I had a small stud when I worked at the comprehensive and actually in 2014 when I worked in Switzerland at an expensive American school, the stud returned. So I do play some games. Actually I've played a lot of games recently with my hair. Once the dreads went I felt I was accepted a lot more by schools/ academics/ society/family. The email from my Grandmother when I sent her a photograph of my newly short hair was to the point,

"Welcome back, my beautiful Alys", it said.

Maybe to many without the dreads I was seen as less threatening but the bright clothes stayed. And as I write I have a fringe and my hair is no longer short but waves down to my shoulders...empowering my feminine maybe? Creating a new impression definitely.

I am leaving out the discussion here of privilege. The privilege to choose to look different in my white skinned, middle class way. There is no mention nor discussion at this point about the cultural mis-appropriation of having dreads on my white body. Spry explores this in her work responding to the critique of her as a white woman with dreads:

But make no mistake, I can always cut them off. Snip the live wire, sever the connection, bury the entrails, hide the roots, stop your conversations with them. These women know that. And for any white body with dreads, no matter who or what or where, that will always constitute the final act of privilege in this social drama of disorder.

But know this in your conversations with them, that snipped, cut, or blurred, they would remain with me like a ghost story, like a misplaced nostalgia, like the story that just won't end.

(Spry, 2016: 143).

My dreads live in a hat on the shelf in my childhood bedroom waiting for something... I am not sure why except that I like to smell them from time to time, bringing me back in touch with the Alys-that-had-dreads, the Alys-that-embodied-a-political-stance clearly questioning and rejecting the current society. Of course that Alys still exists similar to that which Spry argues but now my body tells a different story to a casual observer.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 aimed to give an overview of the voices of the Alys-we included in this thesis. With this understanding of the multiplicity of Alys-we the rhizome of Chapters 5- 9 can be read as an assemblage. The following Chapters build on this new information from Chapter 4 Meet Alys through an assemblage - of multiple voices, poems, observations, vignettes and recounts. In Chapter 5 they aim to give the reader a deeper understanding of Steiner Waldorf education as the multiplicities of Alys-we have experienced it through teaching and performing School Tourism. This assemblage, or 'space of multiplicity'

(Schatzki, 2002) aims to create “*a contingent and constantly metamorphosing mesh of actions, relations, and material orders*” (Denshire & Lee, 2013: 222).

Chapter 5 - With Steiner: Or there and back again

Introduction

Chapter 5 aims to show my relationship with Steiner Waldorf education, particularly through the voices of Alys the PhD Student/Theorist, Alys and Steiner and Alys the School Tourist. Alys the PhD Student/Theorist will be clarifying terms, approaches to the pedagogy and ‘anthroposophy’ (the philosophy behind the approach). Alys and Steiner explores the critiques and challenges of Steiner Waldorf teaching, particularly behaviour management, expansion of Steiner Waldorf Education around the world (with Alys the School Tourist) and then finally exploring the relationship between Steiner Waldorf Education and the edge-ucation in terms of state-funding. Vignettes, poems and play-scripts are used throughout to give a more holistic understanding of Alys-we, and the highs and lows of Steiner Waldorf education in practice.

The chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of Steiner Waldorf education so that the search for the ‘Ideal School’ through performing School Tourism visiting places that are ‘educating differently’ around the world makes sense.

5.1 Why not Waldorf?: A play-script from Malaysia

(This play-script may include terms that do not make sense to those new to Steiner Waldorf education and anthroposophy³, however, they are all explained throughout Chapter 5. It has been included at the beginning to offer a snapshot of why this rhizomatic exploration for the ‘Ideal School’ came about, as although

³Anthroposophy is the name given by Rudolf Steiner to his philosophy which has had a wide-ranging influence including Steiner Waldorf education, Biodynamic agriculture and the Christian Community. Steiner defined anthroposophy as “*a path of knowledge which seeks to unite the spiritual in the human being with the spiritual in the universe*” (Steiner, 1924: 14).

I had found an intriguing way of 'educating differently' with Steiner Waldorf education, it was not enough).

One Thursday evening in December 2016, Bozz, myself and three Senior Waldorf teachers (shown here as X, Y and Z) from Malaysia meet for dinner. It is a couple of days after I joined them for their annual Waldorf teacher training conference and gave a talk about 'Waldorf Schools around the World'. The conversation flows as we devour smelly Durian cheesecake in a low-lit, mahogany-clad restaurant bestowed with ironic colonial splendour.

Y: So Alys, why isn't Waldorf Primary education your ideal?

Alys: Oh, but I do love Waldorf education! I love how beautiful each place I visit is, wherever I am in the world. The walls are painted pink or pastel colours depending on the Grade and there are always natural materials, home-made resources and the most beautiful blackboard drawings. I love how creative the lessons are and I really appreciate the focus on play. I really love Kindergarten, we think we will probably want our children to go to a Waldorf Kindergarten. Don't we, Bozz?

Bozz: Yeah.

X interjects, looking at Alys questioningly.

X: I'm not sure I understand. So why isn't that enough?

Alys: Well, I have a real challenge with the way that some schools and some places can become so dogmatic about anthroposophy (see 5.2.2 What is Anthroposophy?) and how to be a 'Steiner Waldorf teacher' that it becomes almost religious. Other Steiner Waldorf teachers have told me that Steiner said do not write down my talks, but they did, and he said *"Do not follow what I say and make it become a dogma, it must be always changing to meet the children"*

(see Steiner, 1998). I rarely see this followed, which frustrates me. There was one school I was in talks with in the UK where I was going to work with Class 8 to use different learning approaches and autonomy to design a Main Lesson together, but in the end, after all the radical talk from Senior Teachers, they panicked as they felt they would not meet the current, maybe dogmatic, understanding of the UK Waldorf curriculum. It seems that change is really hard in established Waldorf places. I think that is what is so cool for you as newer schools, only being 7 years old you have freshness and energy to question everything. I am really interested in how you have been running an enrichment programme after school for the children in your area.

Z: Yeah it has been great to be able to offer Waldorf to our children but we were just learning everything at the beginning.

Alys, now on a roll, continues on...

Alys: My other challenges with Waldorf schools I have worked in, especially the upper schools, is the poor behaviour and lack of interest by the students which really makes me question if it is relevant for them now. And then I see teachers not able to manage their classes and end up using rewards and punishments, which I know is definitely not what Steiner wanted. I also struggle that most Waldorf schools I visit are fee-paying, so this choice of an 'alternative' education is not available to most children. There are four state-funded Waldorf schools in the UK which is a start but they have to compromise with teaching for government exams. I had a funny experience in October when I spoke to a German teenager who told me that she used to go to a 'normal-Waldorf' school. Wow, I thought, Waldorf just seen as normal.

Laughter around the table.

Alys: And the truth is I am really not sold on single-age classes.

X jumps in.

X: Hang on a minute! You need to have single aged classes as that is linked to anthroposophical understanding of child development. In each age the child is at a different stage and the curriculum is specifically designed to meet that stage.

Alys: Yes, but I think 10 year olds now are different from 10 year olds 100 years ago.

Y murmurs consent.

X: Are they really that different or do we view them differently.... How much understanding of anthroposophical biographical work do you have?

Alys: I understand that Steiner saw life in 7 year cycles and that the first 7 years were early childhood, the second Primary education years (with the class teacher) and then the final 7 years from 14 to 21 were the questioning and developing as an adult stage. I know that at 37 I am in the middle of my 35-42 stage and it is meant to be a significant year. I liked the session you two led on Tuesday morning linking the development/focus of each grade and the Waldorf curriculum.

Z: Yes, we thought that would be helpful for everyone to understand the anthroposophical understanding of the child alongside the history of Malaysia and the current euro-centric Waldorf curriculum.

Alys: I found it a really helpful reminder of what Steiner suggested were the key themes for each grade. It made me think about how in the UK there are a few class teachers I have met who haven't followed the 'yellow book' (Rawson and Ritcher, 2000 - which is the UK interpretation of the Waldorf curriculum) directly, particularly when it comes to telling 'Old Testament' stories in Grade 3.

X: That is interesting. We had a long look at that one when trying to decide what to suggest in Malaysia but we felt Grade 3 need a strong, authoritarian figure and that those bible stories are perfect for that.

Alys struggles a bit to find the right words.

Alys: Maybe... but I am still not sure as I do not feel the old testament are the only stories that can be told and I feel there must be other stories out there that are neither Christian nor patriarchal. That's actually an issue of mine throughout the Waldorf curriculum. Yes, I know it is about archetypes but even from Grade 1 I think it is paramount to choose Fairy Tales that are not about rape and control of defenceless, beautiful women. I am a feminist and I think Waldorf education can be brought up to speed with the current times.

Alys pauses to breathe and to decide if it is an appropriate moment to share her real feelings...

Alys: So... I think I realise that actually my big problem is the whole curriculum and that it comes from anthroposophy.

All eyes are on Alys. This is a Waldorf teacher speaking out against anthroposophy after all.

Alys: I don't believe in Steiner's laying out of epochs and the role of Atlantis in our history. And yes, I know I understand Steiner's views on the seven year cycles of child development. I like 7 year cycles. They make sense to me even as an adult. It is just that I think multi-age learning makes more sense as it is like the real world. Even as an adult I am going through 7 year cycles alongside other people at other stages and we learn from each other. I know this contradicts 'pure' Waldorf education and puts me in a tricky position. It could be the real answer to why I never took a class through...

In the slightly stunned aftermath someone changes the focus slightly.

Y: What are teachers like in the schools that you have visited?

Alys: Oh, totally varied... Some teachers are creative and fun and their children love attending their classes. But I've seen some people who are very anthroposophical and have taken lots of extra training courses but cannot manage with the day-to-day holding of a class so they resort to behaviourism. It seems to be very subjective and it is hard to get teachers. It is why I often get asked, I think, when I visit schools if I am after a job!

Z: We have a real challenge here getting teachers too and keeping them as we can't pay them much, they have to have another earner in their family.

Alys: It is a really demanding job to be a Waldorf teacher and I think you need to have not just an understanding of anthroposophy and the Waldorf curriculum, but lots of other talents such as being able to sing and draw and memorise poems off by heart. That is all before actually teaching and holding a class. Sadly, one thing I often observe which upsets me is that if the Class Teacher does not like Maths or has challenges with understanding grammar, then often the majority of their class will share these issues. Having the same teacher for seven years is tricky and some teachers are actually better with the younger or older grades. I did work at a school in the UK where teachers taught grades 1-5/6 and then different teachers took 6/7-8.

X: We have talked about that too. We have also had two teachers for one class. We did this so that the class would have each Main Lesson in a different main language and that seems to work well.

Z: It also works to support newer teachers as a lot of our teachers started out as interested mothers. But lack of training is a tricky one. If we become recognised by the government then we must employ qualified teachers.

Alys: I did state training first and it was really helpful and I think there is a lot that Steiner Waldorf could learn from mainstream. To be a Steiner Waldorf teacher, I think it is not just anthroposophy but learning pedagogy as well and mainstream can be good at engaging students with group work or meeting different learning styles. In Waldorf classrooms I see lots of didactic teaching with the teacher at the front and the whole class producing very similar work and teachers using behaviour/reward charts as a means to manage behaviour, which really frustrates me. I suppose this could be a lack of 'proper' training or/and the art of choosing the right person to be a class teacher.

Y: But even after all this you still visit Steiner schools looking for the 'gems' for your PhD?

Alys: Yeah, I cannot deny that I am very Steiner really and I am influenced by anthroposophy in parts of my understanding of education and life. It's just that I am thinking that schooling with a set curriculum, particularly one based on a philosopher's ideas from 100 years ago, is not what I think of as my ideal.

The dinner finishes, we take a group photo and walk off chatting into the steamy heat of the evening.

5.2 Alys and Steiner - Alys and Steiner Waldorf education

Steiner Waldorf Education, was the first 'alternative' that I found to traditional education. I describe my initial contact in the essay in Chapter 4 (4.2.1.1).

My Steiner Resume...

I trained part-time as a Steiner Waldorf class teacher (for children 7-14 years old) from 2006-2008 on the North of England Steiner Teacher Training course based at York Steiner School, Michael House School near Derby, Lancaster Steiner School and Botton Village Camphill community in North Yorkshire.

I ran a Steiner-inspired group for home-educated 5-8 year olds in Sheffield and Derbyshire for the school year 2008/09 - one day outside in nature in the Peak District and two days in an old school building in Sheffield.

From September 2010 - January 2012 I ran a Steiner Parent and Child group in Sheffield for 0-3s and their parent or carer. I also ran monthly outdoor parent and child groups for 0-8s in local parks.

From July 2011 - July 2017 I have run a week long Parent and Child group with my friend and colleague Kath at Lifeways family festival at Emerson College (UK Steiner Training College), Forest Row.

I completed an Upper School Steiner Waldorf training year (Stables Project, York, 2010/11) and gave main lessons to teenagers in geography, biology and PE at Steiner Waldorf Upper Schools around the UK - Brighton Steiner School, Norwich, Stables Project York and Hereford Steiner Academy (a state-funded Steiner Waldorf school) between January 2010 and May 2014.

I completed (10) different Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten training courses (between 2007-2013) and used these approaches in my Parent and Child groups and mainstream Early Years teaching (I completed my Early Years Professional Status, Level 6 in 2012) and Special schools (supply teaching 2009-2015).

Since 2002 I have visited over 50 Steiner Waldorf schools or kindergartens in 14 countries.

Mendus, Journalling about Steiner, [Cornwall, July 2017].

5.2.1 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - What is Steiner Waldorf education?

5.2.1.1 Steiner Waldorf education

Steiner Waldorf education is based on the work of the Austrian educator, Rudolf Steiner, who recognised children interact with the world and learn in distinctly different ways at different ages.

The Steiner curriculum teaches subjects in ways that correspond to the developmental stage of the child. The Steiner approach follows 95% of

countries around the world in delaying formal learning until the age of six, and by the age of 11, students are often academically ahead of their peers. (Avison, 2015: 4).

Emil Molt opened the first school inspired by the work of Dr. Rudolf Steiner, (1861-1925), at his Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany in 1919. This school opened just after the First World War as Molt was influenced by Steiner's work. Clouder and Rawson (2003) explain that:

The Waldorf School was founded out of the passionate desire to create an education that would enable the individual to become not only a balanced and healthy person but one capable of making a meaningful and socially responsible contribution to society. (Clouder and Rawson, 2003: 126).

Throughout this thesis I will be using the term 'Steiner Waldorf' for clarification because in some countries (particularly Germany and the USA) they use the term 'Waldorf' as the first school in Stuttgart was called 'die Waldorfschule' after the factory, but other places use the term 'Steiner school' after Rudolf Steiner (particularly the UK and Australia).

Steiner Waldorf Education began to spread around the world and by 1925 the first English speaking school opened in Forest Row, East Sussex, UK and in 1928 the first in the USA opened in New York (Baldwin, 2009). Waldorf education has since spread around the world with over 1,200 Steiner schools worldwide and 2,000 Early Years settings in a total of 60 different countries (Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, n.d.). Clouder and Rawson explain, "*what all Steiner Waldorf Schools have in common is an educational approach which is radically child-centred and is based on the on-going study of the developing human being*" (2003: 18). Baldwin extends this arguing, "*a balanced education for the 'whole child' [is] one which would engage the child's feeling and willing, as well as thinking, and would leave his or her spiritual nature acknowledged, but free*" (2009: 329). As Ashley, (2009) explains, Steiner Waldorf education

meets the 'dominance of willing' (control of limbs) from 0-7 years, then the 'dominance of feeling' (an intense aesthetic sense) from 7-14 years, and next the 'dominance of thinking' (the unfolding of rationality) from 14-21 years.

Clouder and Rawson argue that what makes Steiner Waldorf education different from traditional education is that:

The items presented are inspired by an age-specific curriculum. Almost any age of child could in theory perform a play based on Norse mythology. In a Steiner Waldorf School this would belong to a class of ten year olds because within the overall context of the curriculum the Norse myths represent themes and evoke a mood specifically relevant to this age group. Likewise, Martin Luther King's speech expresses the impassioned idealism of fifteen years olds in a way that the story of Thor's hammer would not. Ten year olds, on the other hand, lack the emerging sense of burning injustice and asserted identity that King's words express. The point we wish to make here is that the teachers have chosen material and presented it in such a way that the differing age groups can engage in a particular and appropriate manner. (Clouder and Rawson, 2003: 15-16).

5.2.1.2 Kindergarten (3-6 years)

Steiner Waldorf education has a particular understanding of child-development that influences the whole pedagogy. For example, during Kindergarten (3-6 year olds) the focus is the 'world is good' and "*focus is on mastering physical skills rather than abstract intellectual ones*" (Clouder and Rawson, 2003: 46). Steiner Waldorf kindergarten teachers are trained to be worthy of imitation and to keep a tidy and beautiful classroom and garden (see Nichol, 2016). It is not until after the second dentition (adult teeth forming) that formal learning begins (Ashley, 2009). Masters also explains that Steiner Waldorf education posits the danger of damage to children if they begin formal learning too early which he describes as "*before the life forces have completed their function*" (2005: 21) which is shown by the second dentition.

Vignette 1. Alys the Performer: A poem about a Steiner Kindergarten through the imagined eyes of a five year old - A poem written after a 5 week placement as a Kindergarten Assistant in 2012, UK.

*Kindergarten children know who their teachers are
They know their classroom and garden
Where the best hidey-places are and where the fairies play.
They are secure in the daily rhythm
The internal breathing in and out of the day
The days of the week known by the wholesome food for snack
Bread day follows porridge day follows soup day...
Secure in the knowing
We come in and get busy with our own play...
With the handmade dollies in the home corner
Or cooking up the conkers to make a feast
Or transporting the same conkers in a wooden cart
Or tying a silk around our shoulders becoming a character from a fairy tale...
The older ones often have special weaving or sewing tasks to do
I look forward to being a big one making a hobby-horse to ride into Class One.
For now I can play or join in a craft or help with snack
I float in 'deep-play' for there is time to be...
Until
"It's time to tidy away", my teachers sings and we all imitate and tidy our space.
Some children need more reminding or guidance than others...
But our teachers don't speak very much, they definitely don't interrupt our
play...
Once tidy, we hear our teacher sing,
"Come and join in my small circle"
And we come and join in.
Sometimes newcomers struggle and watch from the edges
But soon they see how much fun we have singing and reciting poems about the
seasons and the elementals
Or one of our teachers holds them tight if they are upset
It really is a cocoon of warmth.
We finish our circle lying peacefully like sleeping lions on the polished wooden
floor
Who will lead us to the snack table today?
I lie as still as still can be... Will I be chosen?
We follow the leader to the table and all sit around like one big family of 16!
We sing thanks to the world for the food we will eat and our teacher lights a
candle
We collectively breathe out.
A moment of silence broken by our bellies rumbling
Our teacher asks each of us what we would like to eat*

*We wait patiently for our steaming crockery bowl of soup
The helper carries it round
Over eating we chat and share stories and news.
The table is cleared and the helpers stay in to wash up our bowls and glasses
The rest of us attempt to put on our over-trousers and zip up our jackets,
Pull on our wellies and hats and scarves and head out into the garden to play.
There's a pond full of weeds and frogspawn and we search for frogs
There is planting to be done and leaves to be swept or trees to climb and dens
to make.
We play and the teachers are there but I don't remember what they are doing
They appear when I need them
They help sort things out when we fall out with each other
They redirect someone's hands into doing good work like digging if they are
fighting
And they always say, "you may do this..." which sounds so inviting
"You may sit here" they say
When I was sure I wanted to sit on the chair my friend had found
And I follow their lead.
I follow their voice as I am in this flow of childhood
"Everybody follow, follow..." I hear and I follow the trail of children like the Pied
Piper out of garden and back to our classroom.
The room is tidy and reordered after snack
The little chairs in a circle around a table full of lumpy shapes and covered with
a beautiful blue silk cloth.
Excitedly I pull off my outdoor clothes and once reminded hang them on my peg
I rush to find a seat in the middle if I can
And urge the others to hurry up and sit down
A bell rings
Peace descends
The candle is lit.
"Come with me to story land..." my teacher sings
She lifts the blue silk with a slight of her hand
And at once we are all spellbound and lost in the magic of
Storyland...
I get to snuff the candle out today
Contented we sing goodbye
I love my teacher.
Coats on, shoes on, bags found we are reunited with our families and the
outside world.*

5.2.1.3 Lower School (7-14 years)

The class teacher years (also called the Lower School) from 7-14 emphasise that the 'world is beautiful' and the task of the class teacher during this time is to represent the "*authority who represents the world to the child*" (Ashley, 2009: 211). Each class in the Lower School has their own class teacher who stays with the class over the 8 year journey and takes their 'main lesson' for around two hours each morning, where they study one topic in depth for a series of 3-4 weeks. A key element is that the "*Class is like a family*" (Clouder and Rawson, 2003: 28) as the "*children are taught in age groups with their peers in undifferentiated classes*" (Ibid) for the eight-year class teacher period.

Vignette 2. Alys the School Tourist: An observation of a Steiner Class 1/2 (7-9 year olds) Main-Lesson February 2016 in Australia.

The class room was stunning, large and airy with a feel that everything has been placed in that position very consciously. There are several black boards on wheels at the front that can be moved around, a home corner and a book corner, craft shelves at the edges.

At 8.15am the children line up outside and sing the 'Good morning' song. The teacher welcomed each child by shaking the child's hand and making eye contact as they entered the room. Each child has a hand-made desk and there are 19 children in the class (9 Class 1, 10 Class 2). Each child has a sheepskin (called a "lambie") on their seat so that they are more comfortable. The desks are on a curve on each side of the room with Class 1 and 2 separated and a circular rug in the centre in front of the teacher's desk.

After the good morning circle the movement routines became more complex with crossing the midline exercises, followed by a variety of speech exercises and some tongue twisters for Class 2.

The main lesson continued with recall. The Class Teacher asked different children to share different parts of the story (told the day before) and made sure no one told too much so there was time and space for all of the class. After retelling the story she told them they were going to act out a play of the story that she had. They loved acting it out although they got pretty excited and had to be calmed down many times and warned that maybe they need to finish it tomorrow. One boy decided he would be a dove as he didn't want to be any of the characters. There was a beautifully serious discussion about the difference between gnomes (friendly) and dwarves (often unkind or mischievous).

Once sitting down and main lesson books handed out they were led through a guided drawing of a bear from which a yellow capital B was drawn around the outside. Class 2 added Bs to the corners of their pages.

They then all came into the middle, bringing their lambies, for the next story. The story was told very quietly so that I was straining to hear at times but I could see the attention of the whole class almost all super engaged and drinking in the story.

At the end of main lesson they came together for a verse before going to sit outside on the big table on the veranda for morning tea. A blessing was sung then they all got out their lunch-boxes and chatted whilst they ate. Their lunches were healthy, packed with exotic fruits – no crisps or chocolate. After morning tea they play outside. Class 1/2 are not allowed to play ball games as it prevents them from imaginative play.

5.2.1.4 Upper School (14+)

The Upper School is different from the Class Teacher years as it is not until 14 years old in Steiner Waldorf education that young people are seen to be able to make judgements or form independent concepts (Ashley, 2009) and teaching changes to include more discussion. There is a curriculum for students up until the end of Class 12 (18 years old). Many Waldorf schools also take the government exams so it can be a challenge to combine both the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and the exams from a specific country (see Randoll & Peters, 2015). Some schools (I have visited two in the UK) are adopting the New Zealand Steiner School Certificate as a way of formally accrediting the Steiner Waldorf curriculum (see Steiner Education Development Trust, 2017). Two other Steiner schools that I have visited in the UK only follow the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and create their own portfolios of their work which they use to gain entry into higher education or work. I visited one Steiner Waldorf school in Australia which had adopted the International Baccalaureate (a school leaving qualification that is internationally recognised for university entrance).

Vignette 3. Alys Educating Differently: Reflections on teaching Upper School Geography.

What it was like for me to be a Steiner Waldorf Upper School teacher?

And from the first instant I walked into the classroom I had fun and respect from that group of eighteen 14-16 year olds. Some of the students were exchanges from Germany and France with little English so I had to think about differentiation, but really I was thinking a lot more about how I was teaching. I had answered an advert on the American website of Waldorf Today requesting

a three week main lesson teacher for Geography. I had spent the month before solidly planning what I was going to do, searching the internet for ideas and resources and trying to find exciting, engaging and different activities and lessons. I also needed to think of some games and poems and that was the trickiest; would teenagers really want to sing or recite poetry? And no, they didn't really, but they liked the movement and concentration games. It was first time I had taught teenagers something that wasn't going to be examined and it was incredibly empowering to see how beautiful their books were and the effort they put in at home to complete the main lesson on top of their GCSE studies. Most were really into completing book work and virtually all seemed to enjoy the lessons. I used the science lab and accidentally set off the smoke alarms when using a Bunsen burner to demonstrate a volcano. So instead we had a bonfire outside and we made convection currents with golden syrup in a tin can. It was fun. And at the end the students made me a card, said thank you and bought me some chocolates. I was touched and speechless. I left realising that sometimes I really could teach and the work could be fun.

Attending the teachers' meeting was tricky. I've never been a lover of meetings, I've often seen them as a waste of time, but I was fascinated by the religious/Steiner verse and some study of his writings as well as the time for child study, thinking deeply and meditating on particular children. There was a woman who always liked to play devil's advocate and when I went in her room she was teaching the class about Atlantis as if it was true. I was shocked in many ways how much doctrine there seemed to be in Steiner.

Mendus, 'Memories from my first experience of teaching in a Steiner Waldorf Upper School, 2010', [Sydney, February 2016].

Vignette 4. A conversation between a school administrator in Australia and myself about Steiner Waldorf Upper schools in the 21st Century.

Alys: As an upper school teacher I have noticed a lot of teenagers not engaged in the current Steiner Waldorf curriculum and feel young people are growing up earlier than in 1920s when it was designed. I also wonder about waiting for so long to have access to technology. What are your thoughts?

Administrator: It is down to the teacher. The Teacher needs to set the appropriate work; appropriate to the age the children are as designated by the Steiner Waldorf curriculum which is designed to assist healthy growth for their age group. Therefore, teachers should read what Steiner said himself, not just the interpretations from the curriculums. But in terms of computers it is essential to wait until the Upper School. Here we do teach Computing in the Upper School (14+) but in Class 7 (12/13 year olds) it is too early as who is the authority, the teacher or the computer? It should be the teacher, so if you want to show an image print it out and pass it around, do not project it. Think about what does research mean with Class 7 – doing it alone is overwhelming. Give a printed handout.

Alys: This is interesting as I visit many schools now that are really questioning the role of the teacher and looking more at democratic participation of students. Do you think this could be part of the future of Steiner Waldorf teaching?

Administrator: No, in Steiner Waldorf the lessons are teacher directed as the teacher is NOT a facilitator. It is about what you are carrying in you, what is living in you and what and how you bring it to the children. The role of the teacher is essential. It follows that if the teacher meets the need of the child then they engage appropriately. There is no choice given but if they question a task and ask “Why do it?” then the Teacher’s reply is “Because it is worthwhile

for your development” ...Nearly everything that you learn in a Steiner Waldorf school is so that you can develop an ability to think and make connections. This is why it is not democratic, nor could be, as if students do not have the knowledge to make decisions, which I believe they do not until they have finished the Waldorf school, it creates a false sense of participation and a want to please the adult...

Mendus, A play-script written from notes from a conversation in Australia in February 2016, [Cornwall, July 2017].

5.2.1.5 Role of the teacher

In 2006 when I trained to be a Steiner Waldorf class teacher the first question that my tutor asked our group was “Who are you? Who are you that walks into the classroom? and What do you bring with you already?”

I was shocked and excited as no-one had ever asked me such questions when I did my traditional state teacher training in 2004.

Mendus, Steiner Journalling, [October 2006, Sheffield].

Parker Palmer runs a programme with an Anthroposophical impulse for teachers called the ‘Courage to Teach’ and a central tenet to his work is to remind teachers and teacher trainers that:

Seldom, if ever, do we ask the “who” question - who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form - or deform- the way I relate to my students, my subject, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which teaching comes?

(Palmer, 1998: 4).

Steiner Waldorf education has high expectations of the skills and abilities of its teachers.

Teachers are asked to not become ‘stuck’ but the expectations are high to be able to draw, sing, play an instrument, tell stories as well as plan and teach lessons. As Ashley argues:

A Steiner/Waldorf teacher needs quite a degree of personal artistic accomplishment. He must be able, for example, to produce beautiful blackboard drawings. Above all, he must be a good storyteller. (Ashley, 2009: 211).

Steiner (1919a) in his address to the first teachers of the new Waldorf school said that:

We dare not simply be educators; we must be people of culture in the highest sense of the world. We must have a living interest in everything happening today, otherwise we will be bad teachers for this school. (Steiner, 1919a: 31).

Clouder and Rawson describe the Steiner Waldorf teacher as the *“role model, authority, facilitator, referee, confessor and, when the children are young, their conscience. In short the teacher represents social, moral and ethical values”* (2003: 28). Linda Fryer, my tutor on my Steiner Waldorf Upper School training advises teachers in her book to be *“loveable! Be vulnerable, be human, be tragic and comic when you can and it feels good to be so - be firm, but please be real”* (2016: i).

Some misconceptions arise with the use of the term ‘educating towards freedom’ (see Steiner, 1909) in Steiner Waldorf education that could be understood to mean that the children are free to direct their own learning (as in a democratic school or unschooling). However, this is not the case as Carlgren quoted in Ashley (2009) explains:

Steiner/Waldorf schools have, as their ultimate goal, the development of fully free human beings, but they operate from the postulate that freedom does not exist simply by virtue of an arbitrary declaration of human rights. For Steiner/Waldorf schools, freedom cannot be a method of education but must be the end result to of it (Carlgren, 1972). (Ashley, 2009: 209).

Therefore, Steiner Waldorf education is very different from democratic schools or unschooling (both defined in Chapter 6) as it has an established *“child-centred and developmental curriculum”* which is taught by a teacher as it is

seen that the *“teacher provides the best conditions and nourishment for the child and the curriculum provides the substance for the psychological and spiritual development”* (Clouder and Rawson, 2003: 30) which in turn, Steiner Waldorf schools believe, leads towards freedom.

Teachers plan their lessons to include space for breathing in and out as well as a chance for students to sleep on the new knowledge presented in one lesson before they work with it the following day - as Clouder and Rawson point out that, *“working actively with the process of remembering and forgetting is a unique feature of Steiner Waldorf education”* (2003: 29). Teachers are also expected to carry out ‘inner work’ as it is believed to cause educational reform (Palmer, 1998) and lead to a deeper understanding of the children in the class from meditating on their behaviour (Romero, 2015; Clouder and Rawson, 2003; Steiner, 1921).

The high expectations of abilities and skills of the teacher raises a question of the danger of there being no time left for the teacher to be ‘free’. This can mean that teachers choose to follow what has been done before. Boland, (2017) argues if Steiner Waldorf education:

Is not lived, it can become a mere handing on of traditions, ever more poorly understood and empty, saying the right words, complying to a series of norms to be thought of as ‘a good Waldorf teacher’ (Denjean, 2014).
(Boland, 2017: 52-53).

This raises the danger that Steiner Waldorf education can become rigid or dogmatic in its approaches which Boland believes *“runs fundamentally counter to the impulse which Steiner initiated”* (2017: 53) and suggests that is why there is impulse for change and a refocus of Steiner Waldorf education (see Osswald, 2017; Boland, 2017).

5.2.2 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - What is anthroposophy?

Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge which seeks to unite the spiritual in the human being with the spiritual in the universe.

(Steiner, 1924: 14).

Anthroposophy or 'Spiritual Science' is the name given by Steiner to his philosophy which has had a wide-ranging influence including Steiner Waldorf education, Biodynamic agriculture and the Christian Community. As Edmonds explains:

The word 'anthroposophy' dates back to 1742 or possibly earlier. Composed of the words anthropoid and sophia the Oxford Dictionary gives its meaning as 'knowledge of the nature of man' or simply as 'human wisdom'.

(Edmonds, 2005: 2).

Steiner's anthroposophy is complex but aims to understand the human being and discusses the role of the ego (self), astral, etheric (body) aspects of the human (see Steiner, 1909; Edmonds, 2005). Key aspects that influence the thinking behind Steiner Waldorf education are the three-fold nature of humanity (thinking, feeling and willing or head, heart and hands), reincarnation (including a belief that children choose their families connected to karma), the importance of sleep (at night your astral body works with the angels to process your life journey - or new learning) and an understanding of different epochs of time and their influences on humanity - including a 'belief in Atlantis' (Edmonds, 2005: 94). As Edmonds explains:

Anthroposophy thus goes far beyond a conception of the world and the cosmos to become a way of life that fully penetrates all aspects of our everyday existence in will, feeling, and thought, and in every practical sphere of work.

(Edmonds, 2005: 181).

Steiner Waldorf schools do not teach anthroposophy to the children, although the teachers themselves teach with/from an understanding of anthroposophy.

As Steiner himself explains:

You absolutely do not need to be afraid that we are trying to make this school into one that represents a particular philosophy, or that we intend to drum any anthroposophical or other dogmas into the children. That is not what we have in mind. Anyone who says that we are trying to teach the children specifically anthroposophical convictions is not telling the truth. Rather, we are trying to develop an art of education on the basis of what Anthroposophy means to us...how to teach the children something, can only result from a thorough, profound and loving understanding of the human being. This is what is meant to work and to prevail in our Waldorf School. (Steiner, 1996: 79).

Ashley explains this further, saying the teachers are *“charged with the sacred task of helping the child’s threefold being (body, soul and spirit) to incarnate”* (Ashley, 2009: 210). Ashley continues to raise the issue that this concept of *“helping a child to incarnate in the world out of a previous spiritual existence... would be problematic for many secular teachers (and parents) in state schools”* (Ashley, 2009: 210). Although Steiner (1919a) has argued anthroposophy is not taught in Steiner Waldorf schools and Masters (2005) argues that *“anthroposophy is not a religion”* (2005: 43), its influence is visible in the curriculum and day-to-day teaching, which has been critiqued by opponents of Steiner Waldorf education (see Snell, n.d; Lewis, 2012). This is why I have argued in the past (Mendus, 2007: unpublished) in an MA Module ‘Using Steiner Waldorf methods to teach light to Y8 in a state-school’ that you do not need to be an anthroposophist to use ‘Steiner Waldorf methods’. However, this seems to be a controversial opinion as Lissau, (2005) explains that Steiner wanted to create a *“new art of education”* that was not a method and argues that those who talk about the ‘waldorf-method-education’ have *“committed a twofold betrayal of Steiner. They divorced the work from the man who inspired it, and they began to establish a new tyranny: “this is the way things are done*

here,” (Lissau, 2005: 115). Despite this critique that once a method is followed it can become a ‘tyranny’, I have observed that others have become dogmatic or even rigid in their understanding of Steiner Waldorf pedagogy even though Steiner himself warned, *“We cannot afford to become rigid, we have to become broad-minded. One cannot run a Waldorf school and rely on finding support if one becomes narrow-minded and rigid...”* (Steiner, 1998: 168).

However, although during my Steiner teacher training course we read several books of Rudolf Steiner’s we did not cover anthroposophy in depth, that was left for personal development, and as I was not part of a larger school it took me longer than others to find out about some of the more ‘esoteric’ aspects. This poem captures the occasion when I first found out about the ‘elementals’ (such as gnomes/fairies), a realm of beings that exists under the earth, where humans are on the earth and the angels in the heavens above (see Steiner, 1919b).

Vignette 5. Alys and Steiner - When Kath and I found out about the Elementals...

*Stunned in disbelief as the conversation darted around the circle
Kath and I were ensconced in the womb-like Kindergarten
In York Steiner school
It had been a long week and long journey to get here
Friday night
A bowl of soup, some home-made bread and a lot of head-talk
And in the warmth of the space quite easy to drift off
But not tonight
“There are three realms of beings,” the experienced Waldorf Teacher told us
I listened on as I had a respectful space for this Teacher
She had, after all, told me off for my dirty finger nails
“A kindergarten teacher shows care for her whole body down to her fingernails!”
“The angelic realm, the human realm and then the elemental realm”
She calmly drew a diagram for us and passed it round.
I studied the faces in the group
All so serious...accepting?
Then mouths opened and stories flew about their own sightings of elementals.*

*Under the tiny child-sized table, our knees knocking together I pinched
Kath's knee*

HARD.

What was going on?

We didn't dare look at each other, for fear of fits of giggles erupting ...

*"There are four types of elementals: the gnomes in the Earth, the sylphs in the
Air, the salamanders in Fire and the Undines by the Water," she continued.*

Later...

In the car driving to Kath's parents in Leeds we had time

(Once we finished convulsing with laughter)

We stopped to think

*I love gnomes (Kath was not so sure...) and I tell stories about gnomes all the
time*

But that these gnomes were real, not just from fairy tales?

And NO ONE had questioned the idea...out loud??

Kath and I definitely were not brave enough to say anything.

The following week

Back at the Steiner Waldorf school where I was teaching I asked

"Did you know about the elementals?"

A wry smile and a "yes"

My look of shock and frustration was met with

*"Just think of them as that piece of grass that manages to defy the tarmac and
peek through"*

And that left me placated for a while.

But still struggling with disbelief.

*Why had no-one told me before, on my Steiner training four years earlier
maybe?*

But no...

*The Alys-now in 2010 could hear this new idea, and find her way to understand
it, Alys-then of 2006 probably could not.*

*And Alys-now in 2016, faraway in Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand has little
hand-knitted gnomes in her bag.*

Tongue-in-cheek or subconsciously accepting?

Mendus, Poem about a memory from 2010, [Thailand, December 2016].

Vignette 6. A play-script from a conversation between myself and a Steiner Waldorf class teacher in Australia and Kindergarten teacher in the UK about 'inner work' and the influences of anthroposophy on their teaching and lives.

I think about the role of the teacher particularly the idea of 'what you are carrying in you' and ask the Steiner Class teacher about the impact of 'inner work' for her.

Alys: What is the role of inner work for you?

Class Teacher: My own spiritual development has influenced my work as a Class Teacher. By following the inner work and training that Steiner wrote about (see Romero, 2015) I feel that by taking this into my life I have been enabled to aim to be fully conscious with the children in the classroom. This idea is similar to Buddhism as it is easier to be fully conscious if you have a regular practice.

Alys: I was wondering if parents know much about the role of inner work and anthroposophy and how that influences your teaching?

Class Teacher: I think parents need to know about the four-fold child (the controlled will, the head, the heart and the hands). That the approach is of beauty, imagination and truth and that the curriculum is there to support this. For example, it is not just painting on Mondays but painting with blue to calm the whole class and make them ready to learn after the weekend.

Alys: Yeah I get that...it makes sense and I am sure it makes sense to parents. It doesn't seem threatening. What are your thoughts Kindergarten teacher?

Kindergarten Teacher: I think to really 'get' the influences of anthroposophy or the restraints of the indications that Steiner actually gave then you need to be teaching in the system for years. If you worked for many years in a Steiner school you would see how through the evolution of consciousness children receive fairy tales like medicine but not so much if they have been given images

to the fairy tales. So the misogynistic side of the fairy tales imprints if they have seen Disney cartoons (which many children have, even in Steiner schools) or even books with a thin white princess and a dashing buff prince but in their heads when they hear these things, it is their definition of beauty, often what their parents look like. I know that many teachers use fairytales from different countries because the names aren't 'English' and the children don't know if they are male or female.

Alys: It is funny that you mention that it takes 'time' to understand anthroposophy as that is exactly what I was told when I was doing my training and I was constantly questioning anthroposophy. How are you both 'getting' anthroposophy?

Class Teacher: Well I see Steiner education is not about 'dropping the lens' of anthroposophy but about being aware of the contradictions. It is about looking, considering and seeing, NOT saying "*Steiner said..*". For example, the teacher needs to step out of their personality and relearn what temperaments are (Steiner defined four temperaments in people as choleric, sanguine, melancholic and phlegmatic - see Steiner, 1919c), and know their own dominant one and aim to use all four consciously and explain to parents that Steiner education does not need them necessarily to be an anthroposophist but they need to be aware that the education is rooted in Anthroposophy.

Kindergarten Teacher: And for me well...I may not 'believe' in angels (I do), but when my child can tell me a full conversation she had with her angel explaining why she was born... Then something can go from the 'shelf' (put it aside for a while) to resonating -which is not belief- easily. I have seen the reasoning and thinking behind anthroposophy's indications through my children and through nature more than anything and that has been my gift.

Mendus, A play-script written from notes from a conversation in Australia in February 2016 and a social media conversation when I was in Thailand in December 2016, [Cornwall, July 2017].

5.2.3 What are the main critiques of Steiner Waldorf education?

An important critique is that Steiner Waldorf schools are old-fashioned in their pedagogy and could learn from traditional schooling and other forms of alternative education (Ashley, 2009). Ashley recognised that, *“art instruction observed in our study was actually very formal”* (2009: 217) and that:

There is undoubtedly a tension between Steiner’s view that children go through stages, such as copying stage of development, and the currently enthusiastic reception that has been given to such ideas as Gardner’s multiple intelligence or notion of catering for individual learning styles. (Ashley, 2009: 217).

Other research into Steiner Waldorf education by Randoll and Peters suggests that *“according to students, lessons – even in class 8 – all tend to be teacher dominated too often, while opportunities for group work or forms of self-motivated study are fairly rare”* (2015: 41). Boland’s work unpicking euro-centrism in Waldorf education (2014, 2015) found others criticising Steiner Waldorf education for not moving with the times.

To Bast, *“there is much within Waldorf education ... which is hermetically closed to things other than “Steinerish’ thoughts and processes,” it is a “normative education” and to a degree “even fundamentalist” in its disinclination to critique its founder (quoted in Frielingsdorf, 2012: 111). Ullrich calls it “self-institutionalising” and describes the pedagogy as “antiquated” (Ullrich, 2008: 167 & 165), while acknowledging that the approach is in many ways successful. Speaking out of her experience of Waldorf schools in the United States and Brazil, da Souza comments that the Waldorf curriculum “privileges a certain body of knowledge (it is visibly Eurocentric) and neglects important cultural, economical, and political issues” (2012). (Boland, 2015: 192-193).*

Other critiques raised by Ashley's (2009) work uncovered children being held back by the Class Teacher teaching to the lowest ability in the class, also the lack of screens until the end of the Lower School has been described as a "*fundamentalist tendency*" (Ashley, 2009: 222). There are also challenges to the developmentalism approach, which is similar to Piaget (1972), that children develop similarly at the same age, as well as the patriarchal influences on the curriculum which were uncovered by Golden's (1997) three year ethnographic study. My reflections below show my own challenges with the use of patriarchal fairy-tales:

"As the sisters escaped up the golden thread into the sky the man grabbed the legs of the youngest sister so she could not escape. He kept her as his wife and they had four children..." the storyteller said as she spun a tale to a group on a Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten course.

I was not happy.

That is an understatement.

I was fuming inside.

So angry that I raised my hand,

"I could not tell that story to children. I am a feminist. That story is about abduction, rape and no consent. There must be other stories out there?"

"It is about archetypes" the tutor replied.

"Not the sort of archetypes I want to share with young children" I retorted.

And ever since I have spent long hours searching for feminist stories and ones from around the world that do not continue the old patriarchal tales. It is a reason now that I am even more nervous about who teaches in Steiner Waldorf schools - do they have this awareness to choose stories with care?

Mendus, Reflections on Steiner Kindergarten training, June 2012, [Cornwall, July 2017].

Following Boland, (2017) I too argue that a 'Waldorf 2.0' is needed that includes "*decolonisation theory, and elements of education for social justice*" (Boland, 2017: 59) but also unpicks the patriarchy and gender-normativity. The following section (5.3) explores 'Steiner Waldorf education around the World' and the current challenges of euro-centrism, another challenge and critique of current Waldorf education practices (see Boland, 2014; Boland, 2015; Boland 2017; Hoffmann, 2016; Boland and Demirbag, forthcoming).

5.3 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - Steiner Waldorf education around the world.

This gradual expansion has not come without questions and challenges, specifically around the degree to which the accepted curriculum is Eurocentric and to what degree the values of Waldorf education are European/Western values. This impression is shared by both critics and supporters of Waldorf education alike.

(Boland, 2017: 54/55).

Although I accept that since completing my Steiner Waldorf teacher training (2008) I have become much more spiritual, particularly following the Celtic wheel of the year and exploring eastern practices such as tantra, yoga and meditation, I am not, however, a Christian nor do I believe in 'God', so learning about the 'Christ impulse' (literally meant to educate with love towards freedom) and the Christian (even if esoteric Christian) influences on Steiner Waldorf education made me uncomfortable to accept the approaches on face value. The following Vignette 7, (created by me from two different conversations, one with a school administrator in Australia and another with a Kindergarten teacher in the UK) aims to show a conversation I had about the role of Christianity in Steiner Waldorf education.

Vignette 7. A conversation between a School Administrator in Australia, myself and a Kindergarten teacher in the UK about the role of Christianity in Steiner Waldorf education.

Alys: I was excited to hear that there is a specific Steiner Waldorf curriculum for Australia as I often worry about it being too 'euro-centric'. How is it different here?

Administrator: Well the festivals should be globally focussed. They make sense in both hemispheres as they are based on 'Christology' and show spiritual battles, not just the breathing in and out of the earth.... And for example the stories that are told do not need to be 'euro-centric' it is the quality of the

telling and choice of a story that connects to the consciousness of the child. However 'Christo-centric' underpins the philosophy of anthroposophy. That Christ was incarnated and it is a battle of dark and light. It needs to be there irrespective of culture. For example, in Class 3 by telling a Creation Story it meets the 9 year old child's 'rubicon' and its associated challenges... the abandoned, insecure, creation, rules, journey, spiritual leader - shown so well in Genesis/ Moses.

Alys: OK, but what about those people and cultures that do not want to tell bible stories. I know I often chose not to.

Administrator: It is also important to question the dislike by some Steiner teachers/communities to not tell Bible stories as by doing so they are rejecting their own cultural heritage, and to accept that Christianity has had a positive impact on the West – for example abolition of slavery and role of women.

I wonder if this is really relevant here and is this just a view through a lens of privilege and not just euro-centrism but Christ-centricism and begin to see this Administrator as an OWM (Old White Man with privilege), a term I introduced in Chapter 2.

(The Kindergarten teacher interjects).

Kindergarten Teacher: Careful! I am finding your words isolating, and not the wording I have been exposed to which is inclusive and non-threatening, particularly when it comes to using the name Christ. I have found that the schools go deeply into the evolution of spirit and that takes them into many major religions and their beliefs, which get recognition if there are students in the class that have that spiritual path or not. I think more than anything I can see the heart space and THAT is the Christ energy that everyone talks about. I think that if you were to study Steiner's theory on the universal human, he was

trying to illustrate that we are looking at the energetic Christ-ness and its unfolding nature within us all, but that we should not get caught up in the names of things within the schools, but rather the meaning behind them. In my own teacher education I have had mentors say to me that the role of the festival is to be beyond words, which if one was to participate in an advent spiral you can feel it is bigger than the name 'advent'...

Mendus, A play-script written from notes from a conversation in Australia in February 2016 and a social media conversation when I was in Thailand in December 2016, [Cornwall July 2017].

In 2008 I realised that for me to want to continue in Steiner Waldorf education, I needed to explore this challenge of euro-centrism further by visiting schools away from Europe. So in the spring of 2008 I travelled overland from Asia back to where I was living in Sheffield, UK and during this journey I spent time with different Steiner Waldorf communities in Kathmandu, Nepal then Chengdu, China and finally Irkutsk, Russia. I have included a short vignette from one of the schools I visited to give a flavour to the experience.

Vignette 8. Kathmandu, Nepal, March 2008.

The back streets of Kathmandu are busy with rickshaws and taxis and animals and people and horns beeping and loud music blaring. But Mark and I, fresh from our trek around Annapurna, braved it on push bikes, following directions scribbled on a scrap of paper towards the Waldorf School which had been set up for orphaned Tibetan Children and then had grown as other Nepalese families wanted Waldorf education for their children. As soon as I walked into the Kindergarten I felt a sense of peace, not just the circular

room, or the soft pink furnishing but seeing in the centre of their nature table a Buddha and a small statue of a Hindu deity. I could breathe again, Waldorf could meet the country in which it inhabited. I was also able to buy a couple of books about using Tibetan and Nepalese culture in Waldorf Kindergarten with examples of Ring-times and Storytelling ideas with animals such as Elephants that the children knew about. I was able to leave with a sense of hope.

Mendus, Travel journal, [Kathmandu, Nepal, 2008].

With hindsight, I recognise this as one of my first overseas conscious School Tourism journeys. I was looking for evidence of ‘euro-centricism’ (see Hoffman, 2016; Boland, 2015) which I didn't see in that school in Kathmandu in 2008, just influences of ‘glocalism’ (Patel and Lynch, 2013), a merger of global and local perspectives on Steiner Waldorf education. However, when I visited another Steiner Waldorf project in Kathmandu in 2010 I did see strong Christian and German influences explained further by Hoffmann (2016):

Almost 100 years ago, Waldorf Schools started out as schools with a strong Christian heritage, located in European countries. Today, there are schools on every inhabited continent of the world. Many of these schools were founded with European support concerning finances, materials, teacher training and curricular content. The latter also included Eurocentric Waldorf content and corresponding Waldorf traditions. These were often directly adopted rather than adapted or metamorphosed to match the local situation. In addition to traditional Waldorf content, this transfer also included traditional European Waldorf festivals, although local nature and seasons, as well as culture, often diverged considerably from those of their European origin. (Hoffmann, 2016: 89).

My School Tourism has now taken me to over 50 Waldorf schools in 14 different countries, not all of them in Europe, and although Clouder and Rawson explain that Steiner Waldorf education is still relevant as it *“aims to develop the universal in the human being, qualities that do not vary in essence over centuries or different cultural settings”* (2003: 138), I think care needs to be

taken into how that is manifested in the classroom as it is *“not a programme that can always be dogmatically applied everywhere”* (Clouder and Rawson, 2003: 138). The words of Aonghus Gordon (in Houghman, 2012) resonated with my concerns that the spread of Steiner Waldorf education around the world could be compared to a type of ‘colonisation’ or religious ‘mission’. Gordon explained that:

There are many different levels of colonialism, and not only the economic model but also the spiritual mode, and it would be imperative in any school right now, in my view, to actually do its own audit of the time and place. (Gordon, quoted in Houghton, 2012: 70).

It really pains me to use a quote from Aonghus Gordon⁴ in this thesis but I feel his views about colonisation are key to this debate about euro-centrism. However, Gordon is one of the first OWM’s that I came across in my journey exploring Steiner Waldorf and then in ‘educating differently’. For many years I struggled to establish Steiner inspired education in Sheffield and felt I was continually overlooked by Freeman College (part of Aonghus Gordon’s colleges the UK) for being too challenging and not manipulative enough.

Mendus, Journalling about living on the site of Freeman College, Sheffield 2009-2011, [Cornwall, June 2017].

This leads me to think the same question that Boland asked, *“is it time to speak of the need to de-colonize Steiner education?”* (Boland, 2016: 5), as following Boland’s (2014) useful analogy (when talking about country and culture specific Steiner Waldorf education for New Zealand), that you cannot:

Stick wings on a caterpillar and call it a butterfly. There has to be metamorphosis. We need the ‘traditional’, inherited, Eurocentric caterpillar to metamorphose into a contemporary New Zealand butterfly. (Boland, 2014: 8).

⁴ Aonghus Gordon is the founder of the Ruskin Mill Trust that operates several colleges focussing on crafts and the outdoors for people with special needs. The work is inspired by the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, John Ruskin and William Morris. Freeman College is situated in Sheffield and for three years I rented a cottage from the local anthroposophical society on the grounds of one of the sites of Freeman College. During this time I met with Aonghus Gordon and others at Freeman College, trying to gain permission to use spare buildings and the grounds for Steiner Waldorf education initiatives in Sheffield but to no avail.

Therefore, I think for authentic Steiner Waldorf education around the world it is not about copying the euro-centric ideals but about a complete metamorphosis. This links directly back to what Steiner explained was the connection between anthroposophy and Steiner Waldorf education as *“we want to transform what we can gain through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction ... We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse”* (1919a: 30-31). However, as Boland in response argues that in Steiner Waldorf education today, *“we are really good at practicing teaching, but I believe we are not so good at critiquing it through discourse”* (2016: 3) and this is the challenge for what Waldorf 2.0 could become (see Boland, 2017). For example, Hoffman argues that to liberate countries from the *“weight of European influences”* they need to create *“new Waldorf festivals in accordance with local conditions”* (Hoffman, 2016: 102) but it is the *“school communities liberating attitude”* (Hoffman, 2016: 102) that is needed for change. New research at the Honolulu Waldorf School shows some schools actively exploring their own identity by attempting to *“eliminate Eurocentrism from Waldorf education and to decolonise Steiner education”* (Boland and Demirbag, Forthcoming: 29).

In December 2016 I gave a talk at the Malaysian Steiner Waldorf teachers conference about Steiner Waldorf School Tourism - this vignette explores the *“school communities... attitude”* (Hoffman, 2016: 102) to thinking about how the Steiner Waldorf curriculum can meet their students.

Vignette 9. Making Steiner Waldorf education Malaysian.

I had mentioned to my hosts right from the beginning of my visit that I am looking at what makes each school special, the “gems” that I can see especially as I visit Waldorf schools around the world. I am interested in how they have made Waldorf education their own and how they have looked at the anthroposophy and used that to influence their own curriculum/festivals rather than using European/Australian Waldorf approaches.

One of the first discussions of the day was the most helpful for me as it was about how do you make Waldorf curriculum suitable for Malaysian children? They did not have any real answers in the meeting except that the Orang Asli stories were seen to be more like fables than fairy stories, so suitable for Grade 2, and that they did not have their own fairy tales. We asked our translator more about this dilemma and I mentioned that I knew of some teachers who had chosen not to tell Old Testament stories in Grade 3 but had found other stories about good and evil. However, our translator said that it was important that these were stories about one God and then in the next Grade it became multiple gods.

At one Steiner Waldorf school in Malaysia we learnt that in Grade 4 they do the Chinese creation stories and also that in Grade 1 fairy tales are told at the end of the day, but as they are long and complex they are not used to draw the letters from but are a working story. For example, the children may have been on a trip to a mountain and the teacher will talk about the trip and the letter M will come from remembering the mountain. At this school they began with Chinese characters – simple ones that could be connected to stories of their origin. Then one part symbols and later by 3rd grade two part words. Bahasa Malaysia and English are all introduced in Grade 1 including writing.

Mendus, Reflections from the Waldorf Teachers Conference, [Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, December 2016].

I found this discussion about continuing to use Grimm's fairy tales fascinating (see before my concern about certain patriarchal and gender-normative stereotypes in some fairy tales) and the discussion of what to include in other countries' Waldorf curriculums also appears in the literature. For example Boland, explains the situation in New Zealand that:

Many of us will have had conversations over the years around the suitability of Grimm's fairy stories in a New Zealand setting, whether or not to teach Norse myths, where in the curriculum to teach New Zealand history before the European explorers (or indeed, whether to ...).
(Boland, 2014: 8).

Another challenge I recognise with the 'euro-centric' vision is that not all European countries are the same. A key difference with the UK and the rest of Europe is the young formal school starting age of 4, so culturally Steiner Waldorf schools that start formal learning at 7 are controversial in the UK. Whereas in Scandinavia they do not start until 6 or 7, therefore this is not an

'othering' issue. From my School Tourism another aspect I have recognised as different on mainland Europe is the response to risk-taking. The following Vignette explores my time with ten year olds in rural in Norway.

Vignette 10. Risk-taking or just play? Norway 2008.

Some of the children were using saws to chop up the wood that they had found. However, most of them were climbing up the rock and jumping off. The rock was about 2.5 metres tall. I watched the students approach the challenge with trepidation, deciding if they were ready to try the jump or not. I also noticed that none of the adults had suggested jumping nor were they there to help the children jump down but they were there at the bottom. I asked about the approach, thinking about the risk-assessment, liability insurance and parental consent I would need to allow such activity in my Forest School sessions in the UK.

"Well if they think they are ready to try then we support them but do not help them physically. We want the children to learn to calculate risks for themselves."

"Don't children hurt themselves?" I asked.

"Yes sometimes, but that is part of childhood..."

Mendus, MA research journal, [Aurland, Norway, 2008].

5.4 Alys Educating Differently - The Shadow of Behaviourism

The following section of the thesis aims to explore through three different vignettes my experiences of behaviour management that I observed whilst performing School Tourism. The first in a UK state funded Steiner Waldorf school, the second from an observation of a Steiner Waldorf stream classroom

in a state-funded primary school in Australia and the final one influenced from my work as a supply-teacher in UK primary schools. This section is important for this thesis as how behaviour is managed in schools, something that I explored for my MA Teaching and Learning thesis (Mendus, 2012), influenced my dissatisfaction of traditional schooling as well as my realisation that Waldorf education as it currently exists was not my 'ideal'. This aspect of my positionality affected the multiplicity of the Alys-we as they searched for the 'Ideal School' around the world.

5.4.1 Alys the School Tourist - Three vignettes giving examples of 'managing behaviour'

Vignette 11. 'Acorn 1, 2, 3'

It was a sunny day and the golden light was glinting off the windows of the newly built Steiner school. Crowds of excited children and interested parents throng around waiting to get a chance to have a look in their children's classrooms. Beauty is a core factor of Steiner Waldorf Education with natural wood furniture and finishing, pastel colours, fresh flowers and carefully drawn blackboard pictures.

I was accompanying my friend's daughter who is in the Kindergarten at the school and her eyes were bright with excitement, wonder and joy, to see what the big children do. She led me through all the classrooms at high speed. However, even though I know the school and have worked there as a supply teacher in the past, something had changed...

On the back wall across from the blackboard visible to the whole room a beautifully drawn acorn was placed in the Class 1 (UK Year 2) room. It was

surrounded by wooden clothes pegs. Each peg had a child's name and coming down from the acorn were the numbers 1, 2 and 3.

"What's that?" I asked another friend who has a son in the class.

"It's a behaviour chart," she said, "and if they get to number 3 the teacher will talk to their parents."

I stood there shocked. Sick in the pit in my stomach. I had found Steiner Education as my first alternative, a way of educating children differently, with love and respect. Here, in this beautiful held space of Class 1, that illusion had been shattered.

Mendus, A response to a Steiner School open-day, [Herefordshire, May 2015].

Vignette 12. "You can't sit there!"

When I came in I sat on a little chair by the door so I felt I was out of the way as I observed the class but as I sat down I heard a child's voice saying,

"You can't sit there! It is the step..."

I was a little taken aback but continued to sit there until there was a chance to walk around the classroom.

I saw a sign on the wall which was about behaviour management which I later saw was used throughout school (in the traditional as well as the Steiner Waldorf classrooms); a three step approach – after a warning the next step was quiet time on the chair in the room, then moved into another classroom and then a more serious consequence I think.

I haven't seen a step approach in a classroom before, only in early childhood settings and it made me think about the impact of visible behaviour management techniques on children's self esteem.

Mendus, An observation from a Steiner Stream Class in a Mainstream Primary in Australia, [Cumbria, March, 2016].

Vignette 13. Red on the traffic light means no playtime.

“Settle down children,

In your carpet places so I can do the register.”

(Voice projected, raised somewhat)

“Before I count to three..”

1...

“Oooh well done Ellie, here’s a sticker for you, what lovely sitting”.

2...

“And well done Charlie thank you for ignoring the distractions, a sticker for you too”.

3...

“Robert! Robert!... why is it always you I am waiting for? I’m moving you down the traffic light to amber for not following instructions...that 5 minutes off your playtime”.

Mendus, A poem to show the language used as a teachers completes the morning register in a typical state Primary School in the UK (between 2004-2016), [Cumbria, March 2016].

5.4.2 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - A Response to Vignette 11, 12 & 13

Parker et al argue that *“the behaviourist paradigm is strongly engrained in English schools and much of the educational world”* (2016: 464). For example, in England current government policies explicitly endorse the use of rewards

and sanctions to control behaviour (Department for Education, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). Parker et al argue that the use of behaviourism is to:

Reinforce a traditional view that children's behaviour should be managed through a system of sanctions and rewards in order to improve their classroom performance and promote pro-social behaviour.
(Parker et al, 2016: 464).

Behaviourism stems back to the 19th century and to Pavlov's (1927) experiments with training dogs. The long term emotional impact was not explored as it was not deemed to be important for animals. However, Kozol argues that visual behaviour charts as described in Vignette 11 rely on 'shaming and humiliation' in front of others and have been used in some schools for many years (Kozol, 2006) even though the emotional impact on children was not investigated until more recently, where some research has shown negative emotional health issues in children (Nesbit and Philpott, 2002; Shumba, 2002; McEachern *et al*, 2008). However, as the literature shows (Chaltain, 2010; Bettinger, 2011), behaviourism is effective as a short-term fix to make children abide by the rules and expectations of the teacher, so the approach has continued to be used.

As a teacher and supply teacher, I have observed many state-funded primary schools in the UK in the last twelve years supporting the use of rewards over punishments (see Steer Report, 2005), with the heavy use of stickers and saying 'Good girl/boy' and 'Well done' all the time. Alfie Kohn's (1999) work 'Punished by Rewards' and his essays online are very helpful in explaining the challenges of rewards and grading. He explains that rewarding gives, "*temporary compliance. They buy us obedience*", (Kohn, 1999: 161). The use of the stickers in the primary classroom (see Vignette 13 above) is an example of

'buying obedience' which does mean that the teacher can get on with their job of teaching the whole class if students are listening.

As I observed in the Waldorf classroom described in Vignette 11, the school policy (at that time - it has since changed to a social justice approach) was to use visible behaviour charts for 'unacceptable' behaviour:

I feel that these grade the children visibly in front of the whole class. I see this as behaviour manipulated by public humiliation (Kozol, 2006). Those children who are usually pegged up around the 'acorn' and one day end up on 1, 2 or 3 will not forget that day. Speak to an adult about their memories from their schooldays and unjust behaviour management sticks. But the shame and the disappointment seen in the teacher in their behaviour can 'bully' them back to behave. I feel they are behaving because it is painful/shameful to not behave (Kozol, 2006). This is not building the strength and resilience to behave so that the teacher can teach and they can learn and do fun and amazing things.

Mendus, Journalling about behaviourism, [Herefordshire, May 2015].

Deci, Koestner and Ryan's work on Self Determination Theory (2001) and Adler's (1930) approaches to instil Intrinsic Motivation in students argue against visible behaviour charts and for relationship building. Steiner class teachers really know their children (as they work with the same group over many years) and if behaviour is recognised as communication (Dreikurs, 1972), then it could be argued that something is not being met of these children's needs. Some argue that 'routine', as research has shown in Early Years is fundamental in supporting strong boundaries (Tickell, 2011), but there are still some children for whom school and the daily routine are too much. Parker et al asked "*but what happens when it does not work?*" (2016: 464). These children challenge the peace in the classroom and prevent learning taking place as the teacher spends so much time and energy placating them and the teacher wants solutions. The 1,2,3 step behaviour process gives a tool for getting rid of the low level unacceptable behaviour from most of the students but those children that were not 'fitting' in the classroom are still on 2 or 3 each day. The teacher has a tool

now to say, “if you do that again then I will move you down a step” and reiterate the consequence.

But is this just manipulation? A power dynamic? Hierarchy? And the child in many cases still behaves ‘unacceptably’ or creates an inner defiance to the system and teacher. Not a love for learning, a neediness develops. The teacher is acting out of desperation with the lack of alternative skills to handle the class (Benbenishty et al, 2002).

Mendus, Journalling about behaviourism, [Herefordshire, May 2015].

My reflections in my journalling have been also seen in the literature where behaviourism has been described as ‘inflexible’ and ‘one-size-fits-all’ (Harold and Concoran 2013; Hart, 2010) as well as Kennedy and Kennedy (2004) suggesting that something different alongside behaviourism is needed that focusses more on attachment based strategies and links back to be aware of the emotional impact (mentioned above).

5.4.3 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - A call for change in Steiner Waldorf education.

Following the earlier discussion on a plea for Waldorf 2.0 (see Boland, 2017) and the experiences shown in Vignettes 11, 12 and 13, I am left wondering how this Waldorf 2.0 can come about:

If the 1, 2, 3 system and the ‘step’ (from Vignettes 5.5. and 5.6) are publicly humiliating students (see Kozol, 2006), causing many to behave to save being shamed and is still not working for all students, then why is it being used? This is surely not in keeping with Waldorf education wanting to educate with love, respect and in view of the whole child (Steiner, 1932)? What else can be done?

Mendus, Journalling about behaviourism, [Luang Prabang, Laos, December 2016].

As explored earlier, through inner-work the Steiner Class Teacher has a deep inner wisdom of the children in their class and of their individual needs (Armstrong, 2000, Romero, 2015). However, this takes time as it involves ‘Child study’ (where the college of teachers focus on a student and hold them in their

thoughts to help the child with a challenge they are facing), as well as communication with the child to find out what is going on for them. Teachers can also learn new skills in how to communicate with students such as Non Violent Communication (Rosenberg, 2005). Or they can learn from Steiner Waldorf approaches to curative storytelling as a way of supporting acceptable behaviours (see Mellon, 2013; Perrow, 2008, 2012), already often used in Kindergartens.

I have read books by Nancy Mellon and Susan Perrow and attended a workshop run by Susan in London on 'Curative storytelling' and I have grown as a storyteller. I knew I had enjoyed telling stories to the home-ed group (which I ran from 2008-2009) but I had found the longer and more complicated tales harder to remember. Curative storytelling follows the idea that a behaviour could be supported by telling a story that covered the issue in a slightly separated way so instead of having children talking about problem (for example biting, not sharing) it can be removed to talking animals or gnomes having adventures and learning from them. It can also be used with teenagers and adults.

Mendus, Journalling - reflections on being a storyteller, [Laos, December 2016].

The following Vignette shows an example of using curative storytelling to support the emotional wellbeing of unaccompanied minors whilst part of a Steiner Waldorf Emergency Pedagogy intervention with refugees on Lesbos, Greece in October 2015.

Vignette 14. Using storytelling with refugees on Lesbos, Greece.

It is a wet afternoon and there is a clatter of chairs as the group settle in a circle around me. Syrian boys and young men 11-18 years old, housed in makeshift 'porta cabins' on the island of Lesbos, waiting to be escorted to Athens. They are the unaccompanied minors: the young people sent alone or with siblings to make the journey overland to Europe to gain asylum for their family. And I am at this moment the Storyteller. I speak slowly as my story is being translated into Arabic.

(A yellow cloth is on the floor, a handmade felt bird perches on the cloth). This is a story about a bird.

The weather was getting cooler and the bird knew it would soon be time to head south to warmer climes. So it said goodbye to its friends and family and

had something to eat. Then it set off on its journey flying up high above the golden plains, soon leaving them far behind and flying over the open sea.

(I pull back the yellow cloth to reveal blue cloth underneath).

It wasn't long until a storm picked up which blew the bird sideways.

(I make blowing noises and the bird visibly moves sideways).

The bird flew out of the wind and then the rains came.

(I waft a blue silk over the bird puppet at this point).

The bird flies out of the rainstorm and is now tired and hungry and a long way from home. Despondently the bird flies on. At the same time a little bird is flying along and sees the bird and says,

“Hello Bird! Where are you going? Why are you looking so sad?”

The bird replies, “I am tired and hungry and looking for somewhere warm to live...”

“Follow me,” said the little bird. And the bird did. Up and over. Round and down.

(I pull away the blue cloth to reveal a green cloth below).

Until green land was in view with bushes and flowers and buzzing bees. The birds landed. Looked around and lived happily ever after.

Therapeutic storytelling using animals or fantasy to delve into much deeper and challenging topics aims to help heal or guide the inner being of a young person. My work of this kind has been inspired by Susan Perrow (2008, 2012) and it was through emails with her, a workshop that I ran in Athens prior to Lesbos, and my colleagues on the island that the bird story was created. I tell it as a puppet show with handmade felted birds and coloured cloths, simple, symbolic and giving a beautiful, visual experience for those who do not understand English. It is meant to be about a migratory bird but no one I spoke to in my two weeks on Lesbos in October 2015 said they planned to return home to Syria. They are on a journey (an exodus?) for a new life with a future for their children. To these unaccompanied minors I wanted to give some beauty, hope, a glimmer of what it is to be a child. They have experienced so much. They are living as men.

(Mendus, 2016a: 73-74).

However, these new techniques do not mean that it will cause instant acceptable behaviour and with large classes of 26 different individuals it is not an easy task and does not always work. I think it actually takes the discussion further and makes me question the current Waldorf Curriculum, not the anthroposophical understanding of the child that wants the teacher to educate with love but the actual WHAT they are teaching and the HOW they present that to the class. Where is the space for self-determination and autonomous learning in Waldorf Education and are the challenges that are visible in behaviour in Waldorf Schools a response to the children-of-todays needs not being met? Is Waldorf 2.0 actually possible or are these challenges too great?

Mendus, Journalling about behaviourism, [Luang Prabang, Laos, December 2016].

I recognise that the positionality of the multiplicity of Alys and Steiner and Alys

Educating Differently within this thesis is in a similar privileged position to that of

Boland when he explains that *“I am currently in the privileged position of working ‘outside’ Waldorf education, while having an insider’s knowledge. It simultaneously gives insight as well as distance and objectivity”* (2017: 5). It was with this insight (of someone with knowledge and experience of Steiner Waldorf education), that I was initially ‘Searching for the Ideal School’ around the world, as I felt that the Waldorf 2.0 would be already out there or I would find its equivalent with another pedagogy.

5.5 Steiner Waldorf education and the edge-ucation

Throughout this Chapter I have explored my relationship with Steiner Waldorf education and my continual questioning of certain approaches of the pedagogy and of anthroposophy with a clear search for 21st Century Waldorf education or, as Boland (2017) calls it, Waldorf 2.0. Before focussing on this PhD and more so on School Tourism I was passionate about ways that more people - other than those who pay or know about it already - could have access to elements of Steiner Waldorf education and other approaches to ‘educating differently’. This section explores something that I originally called ‘blended pedagogy’, which I defined as places where different pedagogical approaches are used in the same place (although the term has been used by others to define using a mix of face-to-face and online learning, see Bonk and Graham, 2008). I would now see this as one understanding of the edge-ucation where ‘gems’ (influenced by MacLure’s concept of ‘data-glow’, 2010, 2013b) in one approach, here from Steiner Waldorf, are used in other (mostly) state-funded or partially state-funded environments. This section also mentions the relatively recent increase in state-funding of some Waldorf settings, particularly in the USA and UK.

The following section is a poem sharing my journey into Steiner Waldorf education with my colleague and friend Kath.

5.5.1 Alys Educating Differently - The Alys and Kath poem.

We met tidying up the hall
Her husband stepping over other parents who were ignoring the mess
As he put coloured silks in baskets
And I determinedly sang "Time to tidy away"
Hoping the children, if not the parents, would imitate.
I was running an outdoor group for older home educated children
And Kath ending up running the indoor under 3s group
A Steiner inspired education initiative.
There was no school or kindergarten and we both were frustrated teachers
Wanting change.
The village playgroup gave homework!
Brainstorming ideas of new settings, of helpful parents and outdoor learning
Until
The village playgroup was offered to Kath
She took it - felt like karma, the universe meeting our wishes
But it's not that easy mate!
The village googled 'Rudolf Steiner'
And got scared
Very, very, scared
I backed away, sad, sick and lonely.
Kath determinedly persevered, transforming from the inside
OFSTED arrived and left gobsmacked at the
OUTSTANDING setting they left behind
The village's ears perked up, the school began to listen.
And I began tentatively to appear back on the scene
Together we planned ways to blend new pedagogies
The EYFS and Forest Schools
Woodland Wednesdays soon became Forest Fridays
Up on the hill on a beautiful site with its very own teepee
Bringing Waldorf to 3 and 4 year olds in mainstream was very possible
We took Steiner Kindergarten enrichment courses
Our friendship deepened
And I began a new Parent and Child group
The Children's Garden
With policies, detailed plans and insurance
And a nice cup of tea for each adult as they arrived.
As a respite to working with the system, each summer we went to

Steiner-land
To Lifeways Family festival in Forest Row.
At first ensconced in the yurt I made
We ran our parent and child group and parenting course
Discussions, real craft and exploring our model of storytelling
"The world is good".
Enriched we returned to the 'real world'
Grass-roots or inside the system we could make real change
Kath, then Alys gained the Early Years Professional Status
A government qualification to manage early years
Now becoming experts in the lexicon
Clever to convince the change as best practice not being 'Steiner'
We had our own lingo and lines
TNVS (That's not very Steiner) we whispered,
Or WWSS (What would Steiner Say) we giggled,
Especially on days we wore black!
And say we were not anthroposophists but the truth is others say we are
Deep down, inside
We work from our hearts to the children's through love.
Our real challenge was when I ran the neighbouring village preschool
Kath helped mentoring change
We wrote training on how active literacy transformed children's ability to learn to
read
Have you gone to the dark side? I hear you question?
No just back to that lexicon
Let the children have a home corner, uninterrupted play, oral storytelling and
ring time
Yes you can breathe a sigh of relief
That is the same as Waldorf Kindergarten model?
Exactly
And I got GOOD from OFSTED after a week in the job!
But the truth was it was not enough for me
I was still struggling with the compromise in mainstream - even blended early
years
I wanted formal learning to start later
And still loving the Steiner Kindergarten
My wanderlust took me out exploring what else is out there in education in this
world
And Kath had a gap year too skiing in the United States
She returned refreshed for a new challenge
We still continued our annual homeopathic drop of Steiner Waldorf magic at
Lifeways
But we always had a niggling feeling about social inequality and
What about those 4 and 5 year olds?

What about children not from a nice middle class rural village?
 Can we blend pedagogy elsewhere?
 Once I began searching for what was out there I couldn't stop
 I couldn't compromise again
 And Kath took over a mainstream inner city Early Years department
 What is the healthiest way to get 5 year olds reading and writing and ready for
 Year 1?
 Not do it and let them play is my facetious reply!
 But I am talking with privilege
 And Kath sees the four year olds who do not know how to play but who are part
 of the system that will write them off if they cannot keep up
 And from the inside transcends the challenge
 Scaffolds and develops their play
 And creatively inspired now by many (not just Steiner) approaches
 Lets them love learning
 I go in and observe and see their delight in new letters and numbers
 And how calm the environment Kath has created is, and the role so clear of oral
 storytelling and imagination
 And smile, appropriate methods to meet the children, their families, this area,
 this school and skills for their lives.
 Kath now wonders about the sweet spot for formal learning?
 Is it 5.5 for some children and not 7 as we so strongly believed
 As Steiner says??
 Mendus, Reflections on our shared experiences, [Sheffield, November 2015].

5.5.2 'Blended – Pedagogy'

In 2006 when I began my Steiner Teacher Training I was teaching Science to 11-16 years in an inner city school in Sheffield, UK. At that point, I was clear there was a set division between Steiner Waldorf Pedagogy and Anthroposophy so I felt it was quite straightforward to use Steiner Waldorf Methods as a research project to teach some of my Y8 students the topic of 'Light' - we used a three day rhythm, created our own main lesson books and the home-work was to research and present biographies of famous scientists (see Mendus, 2007, unpublished MA Action-Research module). At the time I argued that "I agree with Jelinek and Sun (2003) that many good aspects can be used in mainstream that do not need the teacher to have an understanding of anthroposophy" (Mendus, 2007, unpublished).

Mendus, Reflections on using Steiner Waldorf approaches in mainstream teaching, [Vietnam, January 2017].

However, with hindsight I recognise that there are challenges of bringing new pedagogies into an established system such as the English state education with its set policies, curricula, school inspection procedures and expectations that

mean that certain compromises need to be undertaken, different language used to explain key terms.

“Its all about the lexicon,” Kath explained.

“Just tell them about the daily routine of the children in your nursery and they will nod their heads and understand...but if you talk about your daily rhythm in your Kindergarten it might trigger them...”

Mendus, Conversation with Kath, 2010 [Sheffield, 2015].

From discussions with Kath and from looking at the strengths and challenges of both the state system and the Steiner Waldorf system, I could begin to see that there were possibilities of change for the ‘teacher’ already working in mainstream as they could ‘blend pedagogies’. This could in turn suit both the children and their needs in their class but also the teacher’s own pedagogical understanding of child development, learning, and potentially of anthroposophy. I was aware that these ‘blended pedagogies’ incorporate all other experiences and knowledge of other teaching approaches and other pedagogies as well so in some cases it is easier not to say directly which pedagogical approach is being used to avoid criticism from ardent followers of that method. For example, in the quote below from a document that Kath and I wrote for a training course of Early Years Practitioners in Derbyshire about the changes we had made in our preschools (mostly inspired by our experiences and training from Steiner Waldorf education) we did not mention it in the whole document but focussed on how our approaches would make the role of the Teacher easier:

The approach that our preschools have developed is thoroughly researched, and draws on a number of pedagogical approaches to best practice. Its beauty, however, lies in how simple it is to deliver. The child-led independent play allows practitioners the time to watch, listen and learn about the children’s development and understanding, whilst the adult-led times involve a minimal amount of planning and preparation once basic resources are collected. The results are a staff with reduced paperwork, and children with the skills and experiences they need to help them make the most of their early years in school.

(Bransby & Mendus, 2012: 2).

5.5.3 Funding of Steiner Waldorf education

Steiner education is state funded in most European countries as well as in Australia and New Zealand. In the UK there are currently four state-funded Steiner Academies. The rest are privately funded but aspire to make their education available to as wide a community as possible.

(Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, 2017).

In the UK these 4 state-funded Steiner Waldorf schools were established as part of the academies/free school programme beginning with the opening of Steiner Academy Hereford in 2009. The remaining 31 schools are funded privately. Many of the schools have fees which are lower than other small private schools and they have sliding scales of fees connected to income with discounted or free places for children of staff. However, this in turn reflects the wages which are much lower than those working as Teachers in the state or private sector.

For example, my wage when I worked short term as a teacher at one of the state funded Waldorf schools was £23 000 pro rata whereas had I been working in a state school, as I have been qualified and working for over 6 years, my wages would have been over £30 000 pro rata. However, the staff at this school were very pleased with the new wages as they had been working for £16 000 per year. I had a friend working at one of the very small Steiner schools and she was earning £11 000 for a full time job where she was also part of the management team. This was not enough money to rent accommodation and eat during term time, let alone have any money for going away for school holidays.

Mendus, Reflections on being a Steiner Waldorf teacher, [Laos, December 2016].

An example of Steiner Waldorf education from Australia is the option of a Steiner Waldorf stream within a mainstream school - so families could choose what type of education they wanted for their children.

I was shown into the first part of the school for younger children and it was just as it had been described to me – a corridor with main stream classrooms on one side and Steiner inspired classrooms on the other. The Steiner classrooms having wooden tables and blackboards, 'lambies' (sheep-skins) on seats, natural resources and pastel coloured curtains, with few things on the walls whereas the mainstream classrooms, across the hall, have

interactive white boards and bright coloured desks and lots of displays on the walls and hanging across the ceiling.

Mendus, School Tourism notes from Melbourne March 2016, [In the air flying between Singapore and London, March 2016].

I was fascinated by how the teachers in the Steiner Waldorf stream were adapting certain approaches to fit more into a traditional school.

I spoke to a class teacher about Steiner and Mainstream and how I was fascinated by how they could learn from each other. When it was transition time – moving between working at desks and sitting on the floor for morning tea, the teacher used her laptop to play a piece of music that the class immediately recognised was their clearing up song. They got on with the task without the teacher needing to say anything. The class teacher explained that she had been singing a song to signal this change but the challenge with singing is that often many of the children have questions for her that she cannot answer if she is singing so with the music playing she is more available for the children. I was impressed by this logic and how thinking from the outside had still kept the character of transitions without a teacher ‘telling’ or raising their voice and music but made the teacher more available for the children.

Mendus, School Tourism notes from Melbourne March 2016, [In the air flying between Singapore and London, March 2016].

However, this was not as inclusive as I first hoped when I found out about it as one school I visited had 30% Indigenous children on its books and none attended the Steiner stream. Although this could have been by choice I was made aware by teachers that it was also connected to the fact that parents were asked to contribute to the Steiner stream - so although cheaper than a private Steiner Waldorf school it was not accessible to those with no money to pay for education.

My visit showed me the possibilities of combining many different approaches in the classroom yet still having one school and playing together at break times helped to show this whole school connection and the importance given for all children (including the Steiner streams) to learn indigenous history, culture and language. In terms of Steiner education being part of a state school, it was obvious that certain changes had to be made such as the visible learning outcomes and objectives and whole school behaviour systems, however I wasn't in the room long enough to know if these impacted on the class. They may have actually focussed the class in terms of knowing where their learning was heading and held the class with known boundaries. And in terms of Steiner's influence on Mainstream, hearing about some of the beautiful Steiner festivals such as lantern walk being

celebrated by the whole school seemed great and yet I wondered if there was more that could be shared?

Mendus, School Tourism notes from Melbourne March 2016, [In the air flying between Singapore and London, March 2016].

In the USA there are now Waldorf Charter schools which are similar to the UK Steiner Academies which do not ask for tuition fees and are often in areas of social deprivation (see Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, 2015). I visited a state-funded Steiner Waldorf inspired Kindergarten in Rhode Island, USA in March 2013 (see Mendus, 2013a). The NOVA institute in the USA was set up in 2000 to use Waldorf approaches in public education by running retreats and teacher training courses (see NOVA, n.d.). I saw the founder Jack Petrash give a key-note address at the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America conference at Emerson Waldorf School, Chapel Hill, North Carolina in March 2013 and it is interesting to see how the main message from his talk linked back to the 'inner work' of the teacher discussed earlier in the chapter.

Conclusion: Alys the PhD Student/Theorist making sense of becoming a School Tourist and why is this still not enough?

Even with the possibilities explored in Section 5.4 of Steiner Waldorf edge-education it was still not enough for the Alys-we 'Searching for the Ideal School'. As a compromise within the current world, the explorations of bringing Steiner Waldorf approaches to more mainstream settings met my want for access to choice of education to more people, but the fundamental cry out for a Waldorf 2.0 (see Boland, 2017) still has not been met.

My continual challenges with Steiner Waldorf education that I have explored in this Chapter and will continue to explore, since 2006 when I began my Steiner Waldorf teacher training are: euro-centricism, Christ-centricism, aspects of anthroposophy, some schools using behaviourism, certain dogmatism, that they

are mostly fee-paying, mostly didactic teaching and single-age classes with a set curriculum.

The dialogue continues as I am not sure if even Waldorf 2.0 could address all of my challenges and thereby put forward an 'Ideal School' particularly my challenge with single-aged classes. However, I realise that when I resist single-age classes that I create an either/or binary which my thesis has aimed to be beyond and not stuck in definite binaries. So I leave 'single-age classes' as a curiosity of mine as other approaches are available that might not conflict completely with the anthroposophical understanding of child development.

Although I may explore and critique Steiner Waldorf education, I gave this chapter the title 'There and Back Again' (the other name for Tolkien's, 1937 book 'The Hobbit') because it was my first alternative and I really explored its pedagogy with children from 0-16 in Steiner Waldorf schools and in mainstream before putting it aside to look for what else was out there. But I came back, time and time again, a continual iterative relationship and now as I finish this thesis one of my first jobs is to lecture on the MA Steiner Waldorf education in Norway and when asked I still think that I would love for our future children to attend a Steiner Waldorf kindergarten.

There are many 'gems' that I take from Steiner Waldorf education: the beauty, reverence and magic of childhood, the care and rhythms in the daily routine, the beautiful crafts and quiet confidence of the children and the space to be themselves. The realisation that whatever Steiner Waldorf school I am in, wherever in the world it is located, I feel at home, in the pastel colours, connection to nature and the smell of linseed rubbed into the wood.

The next chapter of this thesis will explore performing School Tourism which has taken me to 23 countries and over 178 schools (see Appendix for full list of

visits) that in some way were 'educating differently'. The particular focus of Chapter 6 are those using 'other' than Steiner Waldorf and traditional self-labelled approaches to 'educating differently' as I was now 'Searching for the Ideal School' around the world. I did continue to visit Waldorf schools to see their relationships to anthroposophy and euro-centrism, but also for an element of 'home-coming' as I felt a security in their similar warm environments.

Chapter 6 'Sea of Stories'⁵ - "Oh! The places you'll go!"⁶

6.1 Alys the School Tourist - Using School Tourism to explore 'educating differently' in practice

In January 2013 I found myself on the East Coast of USA with a couple of months left on my visa:

What would I do? One of my new friends who heard that I was interested in alternative education asked me why wasn't I visiting schools? So I began to wonder? Why am I not visiting schools? I wasn't really sure what type of schools I wanted to visit...I didn't even know which key words to search for so started with 'progressive'.

Mendus, Journalling, [Newton, MA, USA, April 2013].

From January to March 2013 I visited 14 different schools/home education groups/places 'educating differently' in USA which I wrote up in an article for the journal 'Other Education' (Mendus, 2013a). Once I returned to the UK I continued my School Tourism, visiting large independent progressive schools and others inspired by alternate philosophies such as Krishnamurti, democratic education and to a conference on radical education at Tamera in Portugal. These experiences in 'educating differently' influenced my work choices and I spent a half-term teaching in the Upper School of a state funded Steiner Waldorf school in the UK before a term teaching at a progressive American semester school for 12-14 year olds in Switzerland.

Once starting the PhD from September 2014, performing School Tourism has been characterised by occasional visits followed by more in-depth school visits in certain areas or countries. There are examples of solo-visits, working on a project within a school, group visits, and consulting. Important single visits will be explored as examples within Chapters 6 and 7, but here I will give focus to the multiple visits.

⁵From the title of a favourite childhood book by *Salman Rushdie*, (1990).

⁶A title of a Dr. Seuss book, (1990).

In January 2015, I visited two schools in Switzerland spending several days in each, then in June 2015 I visited many different places 'educating differently' in the South West of England spending a half-day in each. After working for Die Freunde, (a German Steiner Waldorf charity), as a storyteller with refugees on Lesbos, Greece in October 2015 my school visits changed focus back to Steiner Waldorf schools where I was also giving a talk on my experiences to the teenagers.

I designed a research trip to Australia and Bali for February/March 2016. I attended a week-long educators course in Bali, spent a week observing a friend who had trained to be a Steiner Waldorf teacher with me in the UK and is now working in Australia and then spent another two weeks visiting places for a half day or full day that are 'educating differently' (including autonomous, democratic, Reggio Emilia, holistic and Steiner Waldorf).

In Autumn 2016 I spent ten days at the Tamera community in Portugal exploring community based and Montessori education as well as a half-day visit to Florescer home-education project in Lisbon. After Portugal, recognising that I did not understand Montessori education, I planned a couple of visits to a Children's Garden (3-6s) and a home school project for 6-12s in Scotland.

In March 2017, I spent 10 days working at Leysin American School (one that I had visited in 2015), this time working with the Middle School Students on their own projects into their 'Ideal School'. I came in as the 'expert' giving ideas and suggestions and observing the use of the eduScrum approach for Project Based Learning in action. The Middle School students made posters of their work and presented them at a conference where I gave a talk on 'Searching for the Ideal School'. The project was written up and published (Magnuson & Mendus, 2017).

In May 2017 my journey exploring performing School Tourism took a new direction when I joined Professor Michael Kamen (who had seen me give a paper at a conference in Plymouth in March 2017) and three of his pre-service teachers from Southwestern University, Texas on a week visiting schools in New York, USA. We visited charter schools, independent and state-funded schools covering many ways of 'educating differently' as well as continuing to explore what it meant to visit schools particularly for the identity of pre-service teachers. This experience is being written into a forthcoming article.

In June I was asked for the first time to use my experiences of visiting so many schools to visit a British school in Germany as a consultant. I then continued this visit to the Netherlands to visit Willy Wijnands the founder of eduScrum and watch the project based learning approach in his school and also to visit De Ruimte democratic school using the sociocratic⁷ method. This was my last planned School Tourism trip during my PhD.

A table of school visits and locations can be viewed in the Appendix.

6.1.1 Overview of the fieldwork

Since 2013, performing School Tourism and my life have become inseparable. For example, visiting a particular school or place of learning has directed the route we have driven the van and the journeys we take in some cases, in others we have found ourselves in one area of the country/world and so decide to visit schools nearby. However, it is not always such a tidy, defined approach as sometimes School Tourism is carefully calculated and organised, particularly visiting several schools in one area over a few days asking these questions:

When is the best day/time to visit a particular school?

⁷ Sociocracy is an approach to decision making where the group reaches mutual consent rather than consensus (Buck and Villines 2007).

What exactly do I want to observe? (for example a school meeting in a democratic school).

This involves careful logistics by 'Alys the School Tourist' to combine flexibility with timings and knowing safe places to stay/park the van. Reflecting on performing School Tourism within this thesis shows some one-off school visits as well as several concentrated periods visiting several schools in a short space of time. Following Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) concept of 'lines of flight' these accelerated School Tourism journeys seem to get faster and faster by the number of schools that are visited, possibly through recommendations from schools to visit other places nearby (described as snowball sampling, see Morgan, 2008) or through the focussed logistics of '*this is the time to visit schools*' so School Tourism efficiency occurs. There are also key, 'nodal points' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987) when I got to visit much dreamed about schools - for example the democratic school Summerhill in the UK or The Green School on Bali, Indonesia. I am also aware that many schools that were established to be 'educating differently' only had a short life-span so I will never be able to physically visit those schools, however, I have been able to hear stories from people who attended and worked at those schools, giving me ideas of possibilities that have happened in the past. I have not included those stories directly in this thesis as I want it to be about the embodied experience of performing School Tourism.

6.1.2 Self-labelled others

Throughout 'Searching for the Ideal School' I have continued to be exposed to and then explore many different terms for the many diverse approaches to 'educating differently'. I have tried to not label schools myself but to be authentic

to each place's own choice to label or not label their approach. This is incredibly complex (see Martin's 2002, PhD research into alternatives in education as having similar challenges) as there are many intra-actions (Barad, 2007) between the terms, philosophies and pedagogies that I notice through visiting so many places. I am aware that the schools may not be familiar with the other terms or ideas and I aim to not become too judgmental.

The following sections of this chapter are divided into different ways of 'educating differently' where the different voices of the multiplicity of Alys-we 'Searching for the Ideal School' intra-act (see Barad, 2007) with School Tourism. Schools self-labelling as progressive or democratic had a large role in my School Tourism within this thesis so they are explored in detail whereas terms less dominant in this experience of School Tourism such as innovative, human-scale and holistic are defined with an example to support a deeper understanding of where my School Tourism took me. Project Based Learning appears at the end of 'Section 6.3 Progressive education' as although it is not the approach to learning within all progressive schools it is an approach that has been said to have its roots in progressive education philosophy (Pecore, 2015). Krishnamurti is included as an example in Section 6.5, Reggio Emilia is mentioned in Section 6.4 and in more detailed example given as a 'gem' in Chapter 7. Montessori is explored after progressive and democratic education in Section 6.5 to position it temporally as I explored the approach after the majority of my exploration into other approaches of 'educating differently'.

Home education does not have a separate section as it has featured throughout my experiences. In the UK, home education under the act of 'educating otherwise' (Education Act, 1996) is one of the loop-holes in a now very structured education system. Families can each define what 'educating

otherwise' means to that family. Some families I have visited are influenced by a particular pedagogy (such as Steiner Waldorf or Montessori) and others follow unschooling (explained in more depth in Section 6.4). None of the families that I visit are 'home' all the time, mostly socialising/learning with other home educating families and attending groups. I visited several different home-education groups again influenced by certain pedagogies (particularly democratic) as this is another loophole in the law that allows for 'unofficial' schools to be set up part-time.

Another point of interest is that I am a qualified Forest Schools Leader (see Knight, 2013) and outdoor instructor. I worked in a range of outdoor settings until I began my PhD studies in 2014 (including Forest School sessions with Early Years Settings, leading teenagers on three different overseas expeditions for a month - Borneo, Guyana and Costa Rica, outdoor instructing at a centre for people with special needs - climbing, canoeing, willow crafts and running a training course in blended Steiner Waldorf and Forest School approaches for home-educated families). This passion of mine for outdoor learning and the environment is evident in the essay in Section 4.2.1.1 and has influenced some schools/places of learning that I visited during the PhD years (2014-2017).

However, I have been aware that I have lost sight of my deep connection to nature and outdoor learning (even as a van-dweller) as I have spent more time in my head, thinking and unpicking definitions and ideas for the 'Ideal School'. I also realise that I fundamentally had issues with the more clinical version of 'Forest Schools' currently operating in the UK (with excessive rules and health and safety considerations) and this put me back out there 'Searching for the Ideal School'. I return to consider my relationship with outdoor learning and the bigger-picture in Section 8.5.

6.2 Different terms used for 'educating differently' - Innovative, Human-Scale and Holistic.

I explored the challenges with the use of the term 'alternative education' in Chapter 3 and argued for the use of 'educating differently' within this thesis. However, I have visited schools that self-label as 'holistic', 'human-scale' and 'innovative' and have explored them briefly in this section.

The term 'Innovative Schools' (see Giles and Hargreaves, 2006; Kamen and Shepherd, 2013) has been used to cover multiple schools that are 'educating differently'. I joined Professor Michael Kamen on his Spring Semester course visiting 'Innovative schools' in New York in May 2017. From discussing this term with Kamen (2017: pers.comm) I came to the understanding that he was using 'innovative schools' as an over-reaching term to encompass all types of schools that were different from traditional education (as explored in Chapter 3) as we visited democratic, state funded, independently funded, charter schools, after-school programmes and progressive schools.

Human-scale schools have been bracketed with progressive education (although progressive schools can be larger scale) for their challenge to the "*assembly line metaphor*" (Wallace, 2009: 34). Human-scale schools organisation (founded in 1985 in England) was inspired by Schumacher's book 'Small is Beautiful' (1973). The guiding principle, "*small communities, where students learn with a limited number of teachers that know them well*" (Wallace, 2009: 34), has many similarities with the progressive movement (see Section 6.3) but uses slightly different language such as 'whole-person' rather than 'child-centred'. Similarities such as students are involved in the "*learning arrangements*" and "*organisation of the school*" (Wallace, 2009: 36), but the core difference is the philosophy of size (see Schumacher, 1973). Wallace

(2009) explains that human-scale schools are effective for communities of less than 250-300 individuals. Some state-schools have approached this by having schools-within-schools such as Stantonbury Campus, near Milton Keynes (Wallace, 2009; Fielding and Moss, 2010) and I have visited two independent small-schools in the SW England. Forbes and Martin (2004) recognise that many alternative schools are human-scale schools by default and could easily be included in this definition:

My Primary school education was in a tiny rural school in the mid-80s, with two other children that same age as me and the numbers in the whole school for 4-11 year olds fluctuating between 18-40 children. It was too small and claustrophobic for me. We mostly were split by a divider into an Infants and a Juniors section but when the school was very tiny we only had one teacher. I brought this with me when I became a teacher and was very nervous about schools and classes being “too small” which is something I observed in many of the newer Steiner Waldorf schools that I visited.
Mendus, Reflections on my own education, [Sheffield, November 2016].

‘Holistic education’ Miller (2000) argues:

Aims to call forth from people an intrinsic reverence for life and a passionate love of learning...through direct engagement with the environment. Holistic education nurtures a sense of wonder.
(Miller, 2000).

Forbes and Martin’s exploration of ‘Holistic Education’ aimed to explore what they describe as *‘beyond the obvious - e.g. Waldorf, Democratic’* (2004: 3). This is interesting as this suggests that Forbes and Martin place Waldorf and democratic in the same ‘box’.

I visited several schools that would not define themselves as Steiner Waldorf (even if they were inspired by Steiner Waldorf) but felt ‘holistic’ was a more accurate term as it allowed them choice to create a mix of different ways of ‘educating differently’.
Mendus, Journalling in Blended Approaches, [Sheffield, November, 2015].

However, they do go on to argue that the number of places that label themselves ‘holistic’ has *“dramatically increased as parents, students, and*

educators feel that an alternative to mainstream education is needed” (Forbes and Martin, 2004: 3).

6.3 Progressive Education

6.3.1 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist questions “What is progressive Education?”

Defining progressive education has many challenges (similar to exploring alternative education in Chapter 3) because of its long history of use since the end of the 19th century and the way that for some it defines a specific type of education whereas for others it can be the overarching term for multiple types and approaches to education (particularly those that are child-centred and different from traditional education). Maher (2001) highlights the challenge that by offering “*another “regime of truth”*” (2001: 14) progressive education could be seen as the ‘only’ answer. The following definition from Bruce (2013) is helpful as it incorporates many aspects of progressive education:

Progressive education is a pedagogical movement that emphasizes student-centered learning experiences and that incorporates aspects such as learning by doing, valuing diversity, integrated curriculum, problem solving, critical thinking, collaborative learning, social responsibility, democracy, and lifelong learning. An important feature is the situation of learning within social, community, or political contexts, which more broadly links progressive education with efforts today by some educators who actively promote critical pedagogy and democratic education. Recently, core progressive ideas appear in the social justice youth development model. (Bruce, 2013: 10).

Progressive schools focus on the how to teach and often question traditional educations assumptions of hierarchy and gender divisions. For example, teachers are often referred to by first names rather than Mr or Miss, there is not a uniform, they are coeducational and are not following a religious approach.

Mendus, Conversation describing progressive schools to a teacher 2013, [Farnham, July 2013].

It is worth mentioning key influential theorists and educationalists. In the US, progressive education is often recognised as beginning after the 1870 child-

centred reform act (Bruce, 2013) and continues in the work by Dewey (1859 – 1952). In France, Freinet’s (1896-1966) work influenced the ‘Ecole Moderne’ focussing on social activism and in Italy the work by Malaguzzi (1920-1994) influenced the whole town of Reggio Emilia to transform its early childhood education to include working with professional artists. In Brazil, the work of Freire, engaging the political with power of pedagogical, influenced great changes in education and social reform (1970). Pestalozzi’s (1746–1827) work in Switzerland supported children following their interests and Little (2013) argues that it was Pestalozzi’s work that focussed progressive education on a child-centred approach. Dewey (1900) also supported a child-centred approach where the child *“could work independently and learn through direct experience...in a classroom encouraging children to be self-directed”* (in Little, 2013: 92).

6.3.2 Alys the School Tourist in 2013 - Flavours of self-labelled progressive schools

Vignette 1. Rural Vermont

Having got over the initial impression of the austere nature of the buildings and atmosphere, I was introduced to a very grounded and down to earth school community. A strong ethos and vision of service and practical crafts alongside excellent academic achievement seemed to me tricky to manage. However, as this was a boarding school, service tasks such as the 5.30am milking shift or 7am making- breakfast responsibility was easily made a part of the curricula experience.

This High school—incredibly expensive to attend—seemed to allow for and encourage self-regulation of its students. Perhaps on account of this attitude, every person, staff or student, appeared to see it as a real privilege to be at the school. For new staff and recent graduates, training in ‘progressive education’ was available to gain a more in- depth understanding of the approaches in cooperation at the school; distinct from three other progressive schools in New England.

Students at the school were involved in the way the school ran by doing daily chores; they also took advantage of the range of opportunities and choice they had in their extra-curricula options: from cross country skiing to pottery to ballet to blacksmithing... Every academic lesson I observed engaged

students in a variety of ways from a cross-curricular project based approach: to the environment and farming in Grade 9 (Y10), to controversial debates around the U.S. Constitution, to creative use of computers to check students' work as they compose essays in English. What really made this school special in my eyes was the inclusive nature of its community. Students come from all over the U.S. and the world for 1-4 years. Every Thursday morning the whole school meets for half an hour and sings. Sings at the top of their voices. Everyone joining in; everyone smiling.
(Mendus, 2013a: 128).

Vignette 2. UK: Reflections on school visits

Pedagogically teaching and learning was exciting. I saw different, conscious and cutting edge approaches with focus on personal learning with a real respect for the community and for the environment. Teachers were more often facilitators or mentors than standing at the front teaching didactically. One school had designed its own comparable courses to state qualifications that included more depth and creativity. They did however continue the state exams in key subjects such as Maths, English and Sciences as they did not want their students to leave without their cultural expectations and passports to higher education. The middle school department at the same school had free periods within the time table for children to direct their own learning - they could do their homework, or read a book, or have a music lesson or play. Another progressive school carried out an annual project with their Y8 students where they built houses and created a village for a week where they had to cook, sleep and decide on activities to do with each other and solve any problems. One of my friends attended this school as a child and he said this Village Project was a transformative childhood experience.

Mendus, Reflections on progressive education in UK from 2013, [London, 2015].

6.3.3 Alys the School Tourist asks - What makes a 21st century progressive school progressive?

Vignette 1 and 2 from the USA and UK show expensive, exclusive schools with a history of self-labelling themselves as progressive schools long after the term was 'fashionable' and directly influencing state-funded education (see Little, 2013). This is important to be aware of as Little & Ellison argue that some progressive schools are "embarrassed to use the P word" (2015: 196-197), so what makes a 21st century progressive school?

My reflections from visiting big traditional independent progressive schools in the UK have left me feeling that although the building, teaching, creativity are impressive there seems to be a level of being historically progressive in their ethos rather than innovatively progressive now. When I asked members of senior management why this was they suggested there is an impact from

parent choice. They like the no uniform, friendly relationships with staff and pupils, focus on outdoor work, the arts but want their children to still get top exams results and get into top universities. And when they are paying high fee levels it is hard for these established schools to argue. Compared to a regular school these places are 'radical' but still not enough for me and definitely not the 'common school.'

Mendus, Blogpost, The concept of compromise in Education is a key area of my interest, November 2013, [Cumbria, October 2013].

It is also worth noting that a school principal (2013) shared with me on a school visit that the high-fees mean that the relationship with the parents is interesting in terms of parents-as-consumers and that although a school may have progressive roots it can be compromised by the fear of parents/society for their children to leave school without top grades in high-stakes-tests.

I realised that the established progressive schools that I had visited were impossible to be separated from privilege. This educational opportunity was not available for all children or teachers. But as a School Tourist I recognise the value of visiting such expensive schools as it has allowed me to experience what can be possible if there are no issues with costs. It also allowed me to network as two big progressive schools I visited in the US had close contacts with two schools in the UK which I visited on my return to the UK and one had a contact for a school in Switzerland.

Mendus, Journalling about progressive education, [Switzerland, 2017].

Bruce (2013) argues that progressive educators have concentrated on teaching students for the now as the future is not known, skills such as critical thinking are taught so the students have the skills to be *"best positioned to solve the unforeseen problems they are certain to encounter in the future"* (2013: 11).

Following Little's (2013) acknowledgment that 21st century progressive schools have *"commitment to social justice, and the promotion of diversity and equity"* (2013: 94) I was unsure if this was true in terms of the students that attend. I was aware that it was part of the pedagogy and philosophy but the high-fees from the first self-labelled progressive schools that I had visited excluded those who do not have the money. However, I found an exception to this rule in a progressive school for 4-13 year olds in Manhattan (which I visited in May,

2017), which has a long-established progressive primary and middle school in New York City which has attempted to live its aim for both 'social justice and sustainability' that Little and Ellison (2015), call for 21st century progressive schools to strive for.

6.3.4 Alys the School Tourist in 2017 - Flavours of self-labelled progressive schools

Vignette 3. Elementary/middle progressive school, Manhattan.

This progressive school in Manhattan has a farm upstate that students visit throughout the year and a strong focus on social justice and accessibility with a sliding scale for tuition connected directly to each families' income. This meant that each classroom felt more inclusive in terms of socio-economic background and more multi-cultural.

The classrooms felt like they fostered many progressive approaches such as small classrooms, use of natural wooden materials, block corners, desks together rather than in rows and carpet space in the lower grades and more discussion based classrooms in the older grades who sat around tables or in a circle.

The school emerged from the civil rights movement as a lab school for integration within New York and the founders had initially hoped that schools would be desegregated within ten years. The new school had to be independent to allow for this desegregation. After three years the notion of equal voice was questioned because the fees were making it not equal so over 39 meetings they created their particular approach to tuition. It is very complicated but its principle is similar to a tithe where every family pays the same percentage of their income and there are some discounts available such as more than one child or

household to support. The idea is that each family has had to make an equal sacrifice to send their child to the school. They have thought about applying to become a charter school but they realised that being truly independent of curriculum and community was more important than the money - also as a charter is a lottery it would not create such a balanced school. The continual question is *“How to strive towards equity in New York City when it is so polarised?”*

Although I was happy to visit a progressive school that was attempting to challenge the privilege created by many progressive schools of high-fees that prevent many children from attending I would still argue that the tithe approach may still not be fair. For example if every family pays 10% of their income it will have a very different effect to a rich family where 10% of a large income is not very much compared to 10% of a family income on the poverty line. I know that they had 39 meetings when the school was young to define this approach but I wonder if it is something that could be regularly looked at to check that the school continues to meet its aims of striving towards equity?

Mendus, School Observations, New York. Friday 12th May 2017, [Uphall, Scotland, May 2017].

6.3.5 Alys Educating Differently - Project Based Learning

Influences from progressive education are visible in a whole range of schools, such as the use of wonder (from Duckworth, 1987) or those teachers trained at Bank Street College in New York (established by Sprague Mitchell, 1878–1967) or Meier’s work in transforming state-funded schools in the US (2002). Another influence on pedagogy is into Project Based Learning. I visited several places using this approach and that is why there is a designated section within progressive education.

Project Based Learning has been defined by Patton as:

Students designing, planning, and carrying out an extended project that produces a publicly-exhibited output such as a product, publication, or presentation. It is related to enquiry-based learning (also known as inquiry-based learning), and problem-based learning.

(Patton, 2012: 13).

I have noticed that how the Project Based Learning (PBL) is carried out is different in each school that I have visited and that there are several dominant models - such as High Tech High and Expeditionary Learning (explored in Vignette 4 and 5 below) and eduScrum (explored further in Chapter 7). I was unable to visit High Tech High in San Diego, USA but I did visit a school inspired by the approach in the UK.

Vignette 4. PBL and other High Tech High influences in a UK state secondary school

This school impressed me by its ability to play the system and float under the radar. Set in a small northern town, realising that GCSEs are currency to get to college but they in themselves do not make a whole person or a school community. Uniform is worn, teachers are mostly Sir or Miss but no fuss is made to enforce dress code. Behaviour is mostly managed by creating positive relationships using Deci, Koestner and Ryan's work on Self Determination Theory (2001) to develop intrinsic motivation for learning. Teaching in KS3 (11-14 year olds) is through cross curricula project based learning plus key subject lessons. Teachers collaborate and team-teach and the recent extension was designed to avoid having corridors and create large open-plan learning areas to facilitate group learning. I was so impressed by this set up and the vision of management, the belief in teacher teaching and learning development that I went for an interview for a short term job. I thought I had found an example of the Fielding and Moss (2010) Utopia here in the UK. My interview lesson was fun I did worm charming but the interview did not go well once onto my ethics... It transpired I was too radical for the most 'radical common school' I had found in the UK (I didn't believe in homework for example...) For the short term though I think I could have compromised, I would have gained from a few months within the system that used PBL and the National Curriculum. It made me think about why although it was offering in my opinion a much better education than a regular comprehensive school it was not 'radical' enough for me. KS4 (14-16 year olds) returns to its exams and grades focus, there is still homework, uniforms and hierarchy. It still felt like school.

Realising this began to scare me maybe I didn't believe in the concept of school?

Mendus, Blog Post: The concept of compromise in Education is a key area of my interest, [Herefordshire, November 2013].

Vignette 5. Ron Berger and Expeditionary Learning

Ron Berger, a Massachusetts Elementary school teacher who developed his own version of Project Based Learning in his state-school wrote a book (2003) on *'An Ethic of Excellence'* which influenced my thinking about education in 2013 when I began performing School Tourism in earnest. Berger argues that in his public school classroom he was able to create a *"culture of excellence"* (2003: 6) where all students were able to produce publishable work, through an *"ethic of quality as opposed to quantity"* (Berger, 2003: 152) and working with real life projects then drafting, and redrafting and through practising these key skills students develop. An example of Berger's work that I often share when I visit schools interested in PBL is a you-tube video called 'Austin's Butterfly' (Berger, 2012) where a kindergarten student is given continual advice on his drawing of a butterfly, so that it becomes so transformed in detail and quality that the image is printed on a post-card and sold across the state.

Berger's work has now grown to inspire an organisation called Expeditionary Learning which combined the ethos of Outward Bound (begun by Kurt Hahn in 1941) and Project Based Learning. In September 2014, the XP Free school opened in Doncaster, UK following this approach. Here are some reflections from my visit to an EL school in the USA in 2013.

The kindergarten children were exploring dog sleds and had their teacher sitting on a mat attached to a rope with many handles and were dragging her through the main corridor of the school as I was shown round! Grade 1 were in the process of taking apart everyday machines, so their room was full of computer and old TV parts. The science lab had a large rabbit hopping around and several 'pet monitors' in there checking on its well-being at break time.

(Mendus, 2013a: 109).

6.3.6 Alys the edge-dweller - on feeling uncomfortable realising I am too radical for what I have seen.

My otherness begins to be highlighted as I realise that even within the progressive education movement I have not found my home. I am excited by the focus on intrinsic motivation and less time and energy on behaviourism as well as seeing teachers teach varied, creative and pedagogically progressive lessons. However, I feel I am alone. I am definitely too radical for what I see.

Mendus, Blog post about attending A New Earth Needs New Schools at Tamera Global Ecovillage Community, October, 2013.

I asked, "Are we being radical enough? Why are we still using the term 'school?' If a new world needs new schools then why are we compromising with the old system why are we not revising education?"

I was asked what was my vision? I spoke of my dream for community learning, beautiful eco buildings (like the yurt I built in 2011) with access to nature and adults with passion for their lives.

A flurry of people came to talk to me because I had just asked a question on many people's minds. Teresa Mendes, from Lisbon, Manager of the Florescer project, a home school support group talked to me of her passion for alternative education, her MA in Progressive Education and her choice to home educate her daughter as no radical school was available. Together we decided to lead a workshop looking at 'Utopias for Education, ideas of how they could be practically implemented and networking across Portugal.'

Our workshop felt very insightful for me as it highlighted the challenges of visioning for a utopian, radical school with a group of 'alternative' educators with themselves holding differing views on what is radical, from unschooling to formal but alternative approaches like Steiner Waldorf, to not being upset by the concept of grades and homework to an abhorrent objection. Also cultural issues appeared, quite 'English' issues like the young school starting age and uniform were not important to others as they start school later and don't wear uniform in their country. Lucky really that we were not trying to create a new dogma of one alternative school fits all. It made me want to visit more schools and to carry on this visioning discussion with others.

Mendus, Blog post, [Hereford, November 2013].

6.3.7 Progressive education and democracy

It is important to be aware that Gribble sees:

Progressive education...[as] an old label for what is now called democratic education. The name had to change when everyone who wanted to change anything in the traditional system began to use the word "progressive", and in time it lost any specific meaning.

(Gribble, 2012: online).

It is interesting what Gribble (2012) raises about the challenge of too many people using the word 'progressive' for anything other than traditional education as it mirrors my own dilemmas with definition of terms. This again highlights the confusion that using a catch-all term creates particularly in terms of misunderstanding and grouping 'approaches' together that are only similar in the way that they are different than traditional education. So by continuing to put democratic and progressive as an 'or' as Gribble (2012) does in the quote below it could be seen that they both the same. Gribble argues that:

Progressive or democratic education has, as its fundamental elements, respect for and trust in the individual child. This entails equal status for children and adults, who must share responsibility for the running of their schools, and freedom for children to decide how they will spend their time. (Gribble, 2012).

There are similarities in the definition of progressive education from Bruce (2013) and Gribble (2012) that they both start from the individual child but there are some key differences particularly in the role of adults and children and it could be argued in their understanding of what is 'democracy'. I continue to see the use of 'educating differently' as beneficial here as it covers all of these ideas whereas it can be argued that those that self-label as places that have progressive education have a different approach than those that are using democratic education and it would be contradictory to be clumped together. However, this does not mean I am ignoring the emancipatory roots of progressive education remembering as Bruce argues to see "*schools as microcosms of democratic institutions*" (2013: 8). Many progressive schools that I visited as well as the literature (Bruce, 2013; Little, 2013) report the influence of democracy on the set up of the school through school councils, representatives, hiring of staff and other opportunities for student voice. However, democratic schools take a step further and Hecht, (2010) explains

that it was after the formation of the International Democratic Education

Conferences (1997) that:

Many schools changed their definition. Schools which had formerly defined themselves as “open” or “alternative” changed their names, adopting the democratic viewpoint. Changing their names was significant, because language can determine new content and ways of thinking. The use of the concept “democratic education” enabled a clearer framework of thinking about the structure and management of a school, as opposed to the educational discourse which had had the ambiguous “free” or “open” at its centre.

(Hecht, 2010: 328).

In my journey ‘Searching for the Ideal School’ these issues that arose over the use of the word ‘democracy’ began to fascinate me and following Waks (2013) I too began to think about “*what vision of democracy is suitable for the global network era?*” (Waks, 2013: 80). This drew me to visit as many schools that self-label as democratic as possible, particularly in the UK and then as I travelled around the world.

6.4 Democratic education

6.4.1 Alys the school tourist - my first democratic school visit.

This blog post explores my first impressions of this and explores the lens in which I was looking through at schools that I visited in the autumn of 2013.

Vignette 6. My first democratic school visit.

Questions were already burning in my head.

If children could choose would they actually go to lessons?

What was the meeting like?

What would it be like to teach here?

We were shown round by two older students who seemed so content to attend this school, confident with the visitors, describing the fun games they played as a whole school, the subjects they loved and an aura of being happy now and ready for the world. They showed us the accommodation areas and classroom space for the under tens, the 10-13s and then where the older students could have lessons in specific subject classrooms as well as access to a recording

studio, technology/common room and a sunny art room. They explained students could sign up for classes but the key element throughout the school was that each child gets to continually choose how they spend their time. It is optional to attend lessons. Teachers are also available for one for one work. We asked our guides if they went to lessons. One who started the school at 11 said for the first couple of years he began going to lessons and then he didn't but after a couple of years he realised he really liked Maths and inspired to learn began to go to lessons and has already done several GCSEs. The other explained how when she arrived at 9 that to begin with she felt a little bored until she began to realise all the things she could choose to do with her time. As we toured around the younger children seemed busy in their outdoor play and in their chess games. Someone asked if children had to get up but it was explained that everyone needs to get up except Sundays and they could stay in their rooms but there was rule 'no screens before 3' so they couldn't be spending their day gaming but no-one would stop them drawing or reading or whatever else they wanted to be doing in their rooms.

At the question and answer session one teacher described the current UK system as having an, 'Obsessive compulsive curriculum disorder' and how here they were honest with how many GCSEs really were needed for college 4 rather than 10 which many students in the UK take. They aimed to create a place where students could understand and be comfortable with themselves emotionally, were able to learn, were in an environment without fear of failure and being able to understand and to live with others, and academically go into any vein that suits them.

Wow what a radical school. Still going after over 90 years. So where do I fit with this approach? This is the first time I have visited a truly democratic school. I was really interested to hear about the younger children and how many of them really just played and it made me question Primary education with its set curriculum and made me wonder about not just pushing the importance of play for only under 7s but under 10s or actually all children. I am now even more fascinated by democratic education and keen to observe and learn more about other approaches in different settings and with different ages.

Mendus, Avoiding obsessive compulsive curriculum disorder Blogpost [Hereford, November 3, 2013].

6.4.2 What is democratic education?

Stronach and Piper argue that Summerhill school is, "*the oldest child democracy in the world*" (2009: 49) and that it fulfils Dewey's aim for democracy as "*a democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience*" (Dewey, 1966: 125).

A.S. Neill the founder of Summerhill defined the school as:

Summerhill today is essentially what it was when founded in 1921. Self-government for the pupils and staff, freedom to go to lessons or stay away,

freedom to play for days or weeks or years if necessary, freedom from any indoctrination whether religious or moral or political, freedom from character moulding.

(Neill, 1960: 9).

Others inspired by Neill's work (such as Hecht, 2010, Greenberg, 1995) established their own schools based on similar democratic ideals from Dewey (1966) but with slightly different focus to each other. It is interesting to recognise that both Hecht and Greenberg performed their own School Tourism. The impact of the School Tourism is seen in practice in the 'Democratic School of Hedera' (see Hecht, 2010) as after Hecht visited Summerhill he was aware of the importance for him to work with parents and to create a day school (contradictory to A.S. Neill's ideas) but decided to introduce a school meeting and after his visit to Greenberg's Sudbury Valley School, in the third year of his school, he decided to get rid of classes altogether.

Hecht's (2010) work from Israel has a series of key goals including "*education towards human respect and dignity*" (2010: 44) as well as "*clarity (knowing the required process for changing rules in the school) and transparency (knowing about the present activity in the democratic frameworks)*" (Hecht, 2010: 195).

Hecht argues that:

The democratic process seeks to release the child from those 80% of subjects apparently important to life (whose?), and to enable students to acquire learning tools which will help them to obtain any knowledge that is important to them.

(Hecht, 2010: 166).

Hecht explains that they struggled to find a name for their new school. They were not sure if it was "*experimental, open, free, innovative, humanist...*" (2010: 41) but they chose 'democratic' because they "*realised that democracy was a way of life, a way in whose framework we had chosen to live*" (Ibid) which links back to the aims of Dewey (1966).

Greenberg established the Sudbury Valley School in USA in 1968 and the Sudbury 'method' of democratic education has spread around the world with over forty schools in twelve countries. Gray (2015) describes what makes a Sudbury Valley School:

The basic premise of the school's educational philosophy is that each person is responsible for his or her own education. The school establishes no curriculum, gives no tests, and does not rank or in other ways evaluate the students.

(Gray, 2015: 90).

Also students need to be 'certified' to use expensive/potentially dangerous equipment - computers, kitchens, wood working tools. If they want a diploma from the school they must "*prepare and defend a thesis explaining why they are ready to graduate and how they have prepared themselves for responsible adult life outside of the school*" (Gray, 2015: 90) which is then reviewed by someone outside of school.

I tried so hard to visit Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts, first in 2013 and again in 2017 trying to get access through all my contacts I had gained through my School Tourism but to no avail. I did receive a generic email saying 'no visitors allowed'. In May 2017 whilst staying with a friend near the school we did a drive by in the pouring rain and looked in from the outside - it could easily be argued that I was becoming a School tourist addict... I managed to organise a visit for the Tallgrass Sudbury School in Chicago in May 2017 so my stories included later in this section come from that visit. Although it is not the 'original' school it was built using the framework from the original as they have franchised a handbook (Greenberg & Sadofsky, 2008) to set up and run similar Sudbury Model Schools. I have always puzzled over this idea of 'franchised democratic schools' and saw an analogy with the joke of an 'anarchists club'. However, this 'How to set up a Sudbury democratic school' could be the reason why this approach has spread quickly around the world and in some places (explained later in this section) becomes the dominant model and understanding of what it is to be a democratic school.

Mendus, Journalling on the frustration of Sudbury School Tourism, [Uphall, Scotland, May, 2017].

6.4.3 Alys the School Tourist - Different places that call themselves democratic...

Vignette 7. Tallgrass Sudbury School, Chicago, May 2017.

The motto of the school, *“because life is not standardised”*, made me smile as I walked up the stairs, which displayed lots of art work and felt welcoming.

The room was light and airy and had a large table with a couple of young people and one staff member chatting about key questions which one young person was reading aloud. I sat down and listened. I looked around the room and saw a student at the signing in table. All students must attend school for five hours a day, for five days a week with a loose sign in time between 9-11am. I arrived about 9:30am when only a few had arrived and watched the rest of the students straggle in until just after 11. They can go off site but they must be back for 3pm chores. I was interested in the off site regulations - ranging from Zone 0-4. Two younger girls appeared with a bag of sweets and announced they were off to their secret hideout (which one of the Staff members had recently been allowed to visit). They signed out and went off to their place. It was explained to me that they had recently been allowed into the next Zone which meant that they were in the local area beyond the school ‘grounds’.

The ‘adult’ in me watched them go off with a bag of sweets on their own into the neighbourhood. I was not sure if I was delighted at this real freedom or petrified for their teeth or safety! I felt honoured to see how the Sudbury approach works with younger students as I had never seen such freedom being allowed in a ‘school’ before. Later in the morning they texted the Staff member who knew where the den was to invite her to join them and to tell her they had run out of sweets!! She went off to meet them.

Most of the students seem to be busy with something - gaming, chatting, phones, drawing, playing in the big room, or going off site on adventures. One seemed a bit lost so I asked what he was up to and he explained he was a bit bored as he had forgotten his tablet. Although I had been observing him during the morning, once he ran through with a water gun and another time I went into the large room and he had been playing a creative game and there was building materials all over the space.

As I looked across the detritus of the previous game, spread across the room, I was reminded of a concept from the conference I had attended in Champaign-Urbana about 'Slowness' and I wondered if this was an example of 'slow-education', (Holt, 2002; Harrison-Greaves, 2016) not as in 'not bright' but as in takes time, happens when least expected, and is present in the now.

I left around 1pm happy to feel that I had really embodied a Sudbury school and how different it felt to many of the other democratic schools that I had visited. I think this was down to the role of the adult - it felt more like a Youth Worker - than that of a teacher and the freedom to go off site for even the youngest students (once the competence test is passed).

6.4.4 What makes these democratic schools different from other schools 'educating differently'?

Although these democratic schools, similar to the progressive schools are child-centred they take a further step, as Neill (1960) explains, a child should live their own life not what parent or educator wants as *"all this interference and guidance on the part of adults only produces a generation of robots"* (Neill, 1960: 27). Neill's argument is supported by others that argue that forced guidance is destructive to children (Greenberg, 2014) and that teenagers are as

competent as adults (Epstein, 2007). Hartkamp (2016) continues further to ask *“How are children supposed to learn to participate in a democracy if they grow up in a dictatorial environment from their fourth until their eighteenth year?”* (Hartkamp, 2015: 67).

Gray (2009, 2016) draws on research of children in hunter-gatherer communities to argue that children have the ability to educate themselves. Sudbury Valley School, he explains, uses this approach in their school, even though *“it’s called a “school”, but it doesn’t provide “schooling”*” (2016: 52). (The challenge of terms such as school and schooling are discussed in Chapter 7).

Fundamentally, Sudbury Valley is a democratic community in which young people pursue their own interests. The students, who range in age from 4 to about 18, are continuously free to do what they want, as long as they don’t break any of the school rules. The rules, which are created democratically by students and staff at the weekly School Meeting, have nothing to do with learning; they have to do with keeping peace and order and are enforced by a judicial system modelled after that of our larger society. The school operates on a per-student budget less than half that of the surrounding public schools, and it accepts essentially all students whose parents agree to enrol them. So this is not elite education. (Gray, 2016: 52).

A key aspect of democratic education is that it is not coercive (children are not made to do something that they do not agree with). Research by Moravec and Cobo (2011) suggests that 80% of learning is invisible. Holzman (1997) explains that:

The learning that goes on at Sudbury Valley (and Greenberg is certain that learning - lots of it - does go on there) does not fit the accepted (knowledge based) conception of learning. (Holzman, 1997: 96).

Neill argues that learning should come but *“after play...And learning should not be deliberately seasoned with play to make it palatable”* (1960: 38). Whereas Hecht argues that *“Play is learning”* (Hecht, 2010: 67) and Greenberg (1995) separates ‘play and talk’ as what children and adolescents want to do with their

time. Montessori education (explored within Section 6.4) has been critiqued by Neill because it is “a system of directed play, [it] is an artificial way of making the child learn by doing. It has nothing creative about it” (Neill, 1960: 37). Gray also makes the differential of democratic from Montessori as even though they “may use methods more in line with children’s natural ways of learning than do typical traditional schools...teachers still run the show” (2015: 88).

Another difference with democratic schools is that they do not follow Piaget’s (1896-1980) idea of child-development that particular subjects or formal learning needs to begin at a set age. Greenberg argues that “mixed ages is its [democratic education’s] secret weapon” (1987: 96). It has been argued that age segregation is an artefact of modern times that has no educative value (Gray 2011; Gray and Feldman 2004). Hecht, (2010) questions single-age grouping:

One of the problems of mixed ages is how it can be resolved with the stages of mental development according to Jean Piaget. Piaget divides the qualities of thought into several stages that develop at different ages, stages which would seem to require division by age. But also in accordance with his claim, the stage of formal thinking (for example) occurs at around age 12, with statistic deviation allowing for a range of 2-3 years in either direction, i.e. between age 10 and age 14. This means that there is not necessarily difference in thinking between a child in fourth grade and one in tenth grade. The attempt of the conservative system to determine single- year divisions, seemingly based on cognitive skills, has not been supported, as far as I know, by any research information. The claim that cognitive skills grow in one-year spurts, at a uniform pace for all of the same age, is not grounded in any research. In fact, the division into grades is merely a simple organizational tradition. Why aren’t the children divided by two-year groups - or half year groups? There is no real reason. (Hecht, 2010: 182).

Mixed-age learning was something that drew me to investigate democratic education further as it was one of the challenges that arose for me with Steiner Waldorf education, which has similar single-age classes based on a curriculum

that presumes similar uniform yearly growth to Piaget critiqued by Hecht, (2010) above.

6.4.5 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - The argument for why democratic education works.

Hecht's (2010) extrapolation of 'pluralistic learning' which he describes as the learning behind what occurs in a democratic school has helped me understand my challenges with traditional education and possibly with other ways of 'educating differently' other than democratic approaches in a new way. Hecht's idea is explained simply, if you draw *"a big blob to symbolise the world of knowledge and within it is a tiny square to represent the curriculum designed by different countries that children should know"* (Hecht, 2010: 96) then it is easy to visualise how much potential knowledge is capped and controlled by using a curriculum. As this *"square ideology"* (Hecht, 2010: 102) controls and compares people against their understanding of what is designated as knowledge within the 'square'. However Hecht argues that the aim of democratic education is to encourage people to *"step outside 'the square'"* (Hecht, 2010: 104). This stepping out of the square creates pluralistic learning where *"students are filled with faith in their own capabilities...and are involved in processes of flow on their journey to realise their goals"* (Hecht, 2010: 138) as well as once:

People discover their own uniqueness...they discover that they are living in a society made up of unique individuals and because most of the tasks they have to deal with are multi-disciplinary, it is easier in a society of this kind to find people who possess the skills that they lack in order to create a winning team.

(Hecht, 2010: 141).

It is this 'winning team' that Hecht (2010) argues is the main outcome of pluralistic learning which therefore creates a democratic culture.

I realise that any approach (even those that are 'educating differently') that imposes a curriculum is creating its own 'square' even if that is a different or bigger square to one created by state education or for high-stakes tests

which in turn limits the possibility of knowledge and the growth of pluralistic learning. Steiner Waldorf is another curriculum so another square.

Mendus, Journalling Stanmer Park, [Brighton, August 2017].

6.4.6 Alys educating differently - What is the role of the teacher in democratic education?

In democratic schools the adults are not called teachers but their role is re-
visioned as a facilitator or mentor. In Sudbury Valley Schools the adults are
called 'staff members'. Gray (2015) explains why:

The staff members do not call themselves "teachers", because they recognise that students learn more from one another, and from their own play and exploration, than they do from the adult school members. The staff members are subject to the same school rules as are students, and when they are accused of violating a rule, they are tried in the same way. Nobody is above the law.

(Gray, 2015: 90).

Throughout my journey of 'Searching for the Ideal School' I have been fascinated by pedagogy, particular the 'how' to teach a lesson. I think this is why I was first drawn to progressive education after Steiner Waldorf as the 'how' is a key focus. As a School Tourist visiting democratic schools, I was surprised that once a child chose to attend a lesson then the teaching that I observed was mostly of a traditional text-book based or didactic style which was very different from the new pedagogical approaches seen in progressive schools such as including different learning styles (Kolb, 1984) and multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) or project based learning (see Section 6.3). However, my experiences are similar to Holzman's description of her observations at Sudbury Valley School which she describes as a *"rejection or negation of pedagogy [more] than a positive creation of a new educational method"* (Holzman, 1997: 101). Further reading shows that Neill also drew to attention that:

We have no new methods of teaching, because we do not consider that teaching in itself matters very much. Whether a school has or has not a special method for teaching long division is of no significance, for long division is of no importance except for the child who wants to learn it. And the child who wants to learn long division will learn it no matter how it is taught. (Neill, 1960: 21).

However, Hecht (2010) argues that the 'learning experience' is different from traditional education as the class is not focussed on if a new concept is going to be in a test or if they will be set an assignment on something. Hecht describes "*a different kind of class discourse, critical in its character, deriving from curiosity and interest*" (2010: 59) arises instead. However, some democratic schools that I visited (particularly in the UK) were very focussed on high-stakes tests and the classes may have had aspects of "*curiosity and interest*" but were mostly concentrated on how to pass the exam. In contrast, at De Ruimte democratic school in the Netherlands, although the classroom set up could be seen to look like 'school', even if small, human-scale schooling, some of the staff members were also interested in pedagogy which this piece of journaling from my school visit shows.

One of the approaches of the younger years was connected to some research by the staff members into the time it can really take to learn. The 6-12 year olds Maths curriculum, for example, is possible in three months, not over 6 years. The children know this so when they are ready to learn maths they can agree to a three month, three times a week with homework/work to do between classes programme to cover all the maths in the curriculum and then choose to stop or to keep going with extension work or move to a higher level. This concept interested me as I felt it is something that is worth reflecting on for mainstream education - if it is possible to do 6 years work in three months then if schools could trust the children to decide when they are ready it would not need to be forced/coerced upon them when they are not ready or interested.

Mendus, Journaling from visit to De Ruimte, Netherlands June 2017, [Oslo, Norway, June 2017].

I have never taught in a democratic school and when I first visited one in 2013 I was unsure if I ever would be able to work at one. For me, planning creative lessons, was what I really loved about being a teacher and not knowing how many students would turn up I know had really annoyed me when I ran a home-education support group. With hindsight I see myself

'schooled' as a teacher, able to talk-the-talk and teach from the government stated script. I was fascinated to visit my friend who I had trained to be a teacher with and who had worked in the same school for 12 years and realise I was observing outstanding government teaching in her and her colleagues lessons following a script very similar to one that we were trained in and knowing I could do it was satisfying but this did not negate the feeling in my stomach that it was not the way to educate. I would never happily be a 'traditional' teacher again. I knew I could also teach 'progressively' meeting different learning styles and using multiple approaches including group and project based learning to meet the students but could I really let go of control of 'my' classroom?.... Gribble (2015, pers.comm) explained to me that often in democratic schools the new staff needed to be 'deschooled' (Illich, 1970) themselves before they could become effective staff in this new environment.

Mendus, Journalling - Alys though the ideal school looking glass, [Uphall, November, 2016].

6.4.7 Alys educating differently - What is self-governance? -

Democracy-in-action?

Neill (1960) explains that at Summerhill not everything is covered by the governance of the students as the menu, bills, administration and hiring of teachers is organised by the principal (A.S.Neill himself, then his daughter Zoe Readhead and now more often by her son Henry Readhead).

The Neill-Readhead dynasty at Summerhill school has concerned me as I can see tradition preventing true democracy in action.

Mendus, Journalling about democratic education, [Finland, June 2016].

Neill argues that:

The school that has no self-government should not be called a progressive school. It is a compromise school. You cannot have freedom unless children feel completely free to govern their own social life. When there is a boss, there is no real freedom.

(Neill, 1960: 59).

This quote causes two problems: first the challenge again with the use of 'progressive' but the temporality of the statement must be recognised that this was used in 1960 when the term 'democratic' education was not in general use.

The second challenge is that there was "a boss" who was A.S.Neill - it may

have been a very free school but fundamentally the adults were in charge, particularly with the day-to-day running of the school.

I heard criticisms of Summerhill (at IDEC, 2016) by Sudbury enthusiasts for not really being democratic because at Sudbury schools self-governance takes a further step to include everything as everybody, staff and children, are all equal...

My gut feelings help me understand my positionality further questioning the role of the adult in learning. I disagree with the Sudbury 'democratic' model that children, even as young as 4, are equal to adults. I feel there is a role of adults in children's learning and growing to become adults themselves but not the current didactic teaching role that I see in many schools that I visit.

One particular skill I think that adults can share is in how to communicate effectively and compassionately. I feel this needs to be modelled by people with experience of this approach which could be older children/teenagers and adults. I saw this effectively modelled in a team work skills session at Koonwarra Village school in Victoria, Australia in February 2016 (Mendus, 2016b).

Mendus, Journaling on democratic education, [Cornwall, September 2016].

6.4.8 Alys the School Tourist - Observation of meetings...

One of the defining factors of democratic schools is the hosting of whole school meetings (Neill, 1960) to decide on all aspects of the school life. I have had the opportunity to observe several of these in different settings. This poem Vignette 8 and the writing below Vignette 9 explore my observations, feelings and reactions from observing these meetings.

Vignette 8. UK school meeting

A boy of about ten stands up and addresses the meeting,

"I am bringing up Billy as he keeps banging the bedroom door."

The Chair taking all incidents seriously replies

"Have you asked him to stop?"

"Yes, loads of time but he keeps doing it. I want him to be fined."

"Billy, is this true?" asks the Chair.

Billy hides under the table looking uncomfortable but refrains from speaking.

Someone else raises his hand and looking at Billy says

"I've heard him slam the door too I think he should be fined."

The Chair looks back at the boy making the complaint.

"What do you think a jobs fine or money fine?"

The first boy looks a bit uncomfortable himself now and mumbles

"Money fine its not that big a deal..."

"Oh but it must be you brought it up here... Anyone have anything else to add??

Right let's have a vote. Who agrees with 50p off Billy's pocket money?"

Hands are slowly raised around the room.

"Well, that settles it," the Chair concludes.

"50p fine for Billy... what's next on the agenda?"

I am sitting here shocked at what looks like to me 'behaviourism' in action in front of my eyes and that no one in the audience seems at all upset - a radical school 'normalised' to behaviourism?

Mendus, An observation of a meeting at a UK democratic school, [Cumbria, October 2013].

Stronach and Piper's (2009) research into whole-school meetings at Summerhill recognised the use of sanctions and a deeply complex web of interrelations.

They argue:

Summerhill school has invisible boundaries, powerful inspections, binding agreements, and redemptive rituals, as well as a set of public punishments that prompt and enact acceptable ways to live together. These all act as an "outside-in" pressure that frames and disciplines interactions while

developing identities and relationships, yet always with the possibility of change or resistance.

(Stronach and Piper, 2009: 54).

Neill however does not see the meeting as using rewards and punishments but one that differentiates between 'freedom' and 'licence' arguing that "*in the disciplined home, the children have no rights. In the spoiled home, they have all the rights. The proper home is one in which children and adults have equal rights. And the same applies to school*" (1960: 105). Neill (1960) argues that punishment is morality and through having set rules (Stronach and Piper recorded 174 laws at Summerhill in 2005) and the school meeting to sort out misdemeanours then this is not punishment.

Vignette 9. Another school meeting

At a different democratic school I observe an interesting meeting which has a special focus to decide if an excluded boy can return to the school or must be permanently expelled. The boy turned up at the meeting and asked the meeting if he could return to school one day a week to go to his technology classes as he got on well with the teacher. The accused then left the room whilst the discussion began.

It seemed that those students who shout the loudest got to control and manipulate the discussion. A few adults spoke up saying that his behaviour had been unacceptable and that he was not the sort of student that the school wanted and that they would only be able to support his return if he could agree to obeying school rules and accept if he broke one again then he must leave. And one girl, did speak up trying to get those who had been bullied to voice their opinions but not surprisingly to me as an observer they did not.

The vote passed that he could return one day a week. At lunch there were whispers about those who had been bullied being devastated that he would return and there were grunts of complaints amongst the adults.

I am puzzled, trying to step away from my traditional hierarchical view of school procedures and thinking about the long term effects of expelling children from school and how some of the children saw potential in their peer.

Mendus, An observation of a meeting at a UK democratic school, December, 2014, [Cumbria, December 2014].

I am still aware when writing this thesis about child protection and protecting the other child from being bullied and feeling safe in their school environment and maybe that is the role of the adult in the institution of school?

It is also the level of surveillance noted by Stronach and Piper (2009) noted at Summerhill and also at Sudbury schools that caused me concern. When speaking to a staff member at a Sudbury school in the USA she mentioned that students do say, *"I will bring you up"* if someone has obviously broken an agreed rule - such as tidying up. However, it is not deemed necessary to point out to someone that they have broken a rule, it is also perfectly ok to write the infringement on a piece of paper and put it into the file/box for the Judicial Council to work with the following day. The concept that everybody is equal and everybody is able to be 'brought up' for breaking a rule brought shivers running down my spine. I was not sure if I could live, let alone work, in such an environment. However, I do live in the UK with a long list of laws with serious penalties if I break one. Yet I know if I do choose to break (a minor) one I can do it without getting into trouble, whereas in a small school community I do not think there would be anywhere to hide. Thinking with Klaus:

Intimacy is an interesting issue in regards to Summerhill. There are not many private spaces, for pupils or staff, and so one is constantly implicated in everybody else's daily life.

(Klaus, 2016: 35).

I am also worried that I would not agree with all of the rules anyway, so I would feel they are arbitrary - what sort of 'adult' would I be in that community who does not support many of the rules agreed by the community? I began to realise that this particular method of democracy of rules, meeting and fining at Summerhill and again (although slightly different) in Sudbury school was not my preferred understanding of democracy.

Mendus, Journalling about democracy, [Brighton, August, 2017].

The issues arising in meetings could be seen to follow Neill's description that the "*perennial problem that can never be solved...[is] the problem of the individual vs. the community*" (1960: 60). Neill argues that by using self-government within a school it creates people "*who are at once individuals and community persons*" (Neill, 1960: 11). Hecht agrees that:

The future development of democratic education is concerned with the balance between social thinking and individual thinking, as, alongside individual goals, we see more social or community-orientated goals.

(Hecht, 2010: 196).

However, I reiterate again that I am still left wondering about the role of safeguarding and where the role of the adult lies and can self-governance in this approach keep every child safe?

6.4.9 A discussion with an experienced democratic educator.

Alys: What do you think is the aim of democratic education?

Democratic educator: The aim is not to coerce children into learning a set thing like they do in Montessori where there is always a set outcome to the task.

I think that coerced learning can be even more dangerous than explicit didactic teaching.

Alys: I have just returned from the International Democratic Education Conference in Finland and I have begun to realise that there are many different versions of what is a democratic school for example the differences between Sudbury and Summerhill... Some Sudbury people I heard argue that Summerhill is not a democratic school but one that uses democratic approaches... And then I get stuck on all the rules at both of them!

Democratic educator: That is an interesting question. From my experience at Summerhill I actually told the new teachers to look at all the rules and only be a stickler to a particular rule if it really meant something to you – for example stopping the children from hanging out on the fire escape is only worth bringing up at a meeting if it makes you feel unsafe seeing children there...

Alys: Now that is an interesting approach which I hadn't thought about before. But what about those people who are pedants??

Democratic educator: Well the culture is designed to prevent people from being like that.

Alys: Really, how?

Democratic educator: Well if someone keeps bringing people up for breaking the slightest rule then they become unpopular and eventually they stop.

...I am wondering now about the popularity contest that is going on here and wonder about the point of rules that are not strictly adhered to as well as in the example of the fire escape different people will have different levels of risk and safety. So much is left to the personal interpretation and how 'fair' is that within such a 'democratic' system??

6.4.10 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - What is democratic education's understanding of democracy? Part 1

I have had challenges with some democratic school models as their definition of 'democratic' creates a school that although all students and adults have a voice, they are residing within an environment of rules. In these schools I have seen behaviourism being enacted in the sanctions (such as the fine in Vignette 8) and in my opinion it is because the students have not come across other models of communicating so were repeating cultural norms. However, as the school was run by choosing to attend classes or not it would be difficult to make a change if the young people did not want to attend sessions on new methods of communication.

Mendus, Journalling on democratic education, [Cornwall, September 2016].

Through performing School Tourism I have (by August, 2017) visited 4 democratic schools in the UK, 2 in Australia, 3 in the USA and 1 in the Netherlands. Section 6.3 has explored key approaches of democratic education, however, as I visit more schools particularly those choosing not to follow the dominant Summerhill or Sudbury tradition, I keep getting glimpses into different understandings of what 'democracy' means to each democratic school. I offer two examples in the Vignettes 10 and 11 that offer 'gems' for new understandings of democratic education. Vignette 11 from the Netherlands is a different method of self-governance and Vignette 12 from New York, USA really troubles Social Justice in action.

Vignette 10. De Ruimte, Soest, Netherlands.

Law in the Netherlands means that school is compulsory and home-education is illegal. Although they are able to run a democratic school it has not been an easy experience to convince the government that their approaches are justified. An impact of this law is that students must attend school for a certain number of hours each week and they must turn up before 10am unless they phone school in advance. De Ruimte, also has its own understanding of what is democratic education and they aim to create a community built around 'consent' rather than consensus, the method used in Sudbury schools.

We spent time in was the daily meeting room where a core group of students and a staff member meet each day to discuss any issues that have arisen. There are about 23 different meeting groups that students can chose to be part of, plus the weekly whole school meeting. I was interested to hear that actually not that many students, particularly not younger students, attend the weekly meeting and that it is mostly the adults. When I asked why, I learnt that as students could be part of small meeting group that was more relevant to them they felt that their voice was already being heard and that they would only come if it was an important subject. For example, there are meeting groups for money, hiring staff, new students, keeping the internet and computers in order, looking after the animals, the time table, caring for the environment, fundraising and the school shop (where they can earn some money), computer gaming... and then each age group has a weekly meeting as well. All meetings have agendas so people know what is going on and can pick and chose which sections of the meeting they attend.

Consent means that all people involved in the meeting consent to the final outcome. It is not about a vote which could lead to 6 people voting for something and 4 against but it would still happen as the greater number had voted for it even if it could affect the lives of the other 4. With consent all would accept and be happy with the outcome. This does mean that meetings take a long time and the student who showed us round admitted that it can be a bit frustrating sometimes. She also told us that she had joined the school because she had been bullied at her previous (regular state) school and that bullying is less likely to happen at De Ruimte as issues are recognised and talked about. However, due to consent approaches it was interesting to hear about how the original philosophy is at risk of being changed - for example, for a while there

was a teacher keen to have more Sudbury-style approaches in the school and he managed to convince a group of students to run a Judicial Council (JC), as well as the daily meetings that through consent organised everyday challenges rather than JC's deciding on the consequences of a person's actions for them and voted by consensus. The staff member and group of students involved in this approach have now moved on from De Ruimte but it seemed to have caused some challenges in identity over the last few years.

It made me wonder more about freedom, how it was exciting that this was an example that the school could get stuck in a rut and that the approaches were always being challenged, it also made me aware about the power of popularity in democratic schools - if someone has a loud and pervasive voice then they can change the future of the school. It also made me think about having some set foundations on which the school was built on and I felt that consent rather than consensus was one of them and felt sad that this strain had been on the community for 3 years and there had not been a chance to say – NO! We are a consent school, if you want consensus you are welcome to go elsewhere. It also made me more wary about the Sudbury model as it rises to become a dominant force in the democratic education movement and is giving the impression that Sudbury is the 'only' way to educate democratically and I disagree.

Mendus, Journalling about De Ruimte, [June 2017, Oslo, Norway].

6.4.11 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - What is democratic education's understanding of democracy? Part 2

I realised that using consent rather than consensus as a way of understanding democratic governance within a school was not only a 'gem' in my search for the 'Ideal School' but that challenges with the consensus approach had also been explored by other theorists (St.Pierre, 2016). St.Pierre explains that:

I have come to believe that the romance of using rational dialogue to "talk across differences" to reach understanding and consensus (e.g., Habermas, 1981/1984) is just that, a romance and a cheat. In fact, consensus—too often a power move in which those who disagree are silenced—can disappear difference, diversity. For that reason, Lyotard (1979/1984) wrote that dissensus, not consensus is the motor of democracy.

(St.Pierre, 2016: 7).

The consent approach has spread within the Netherlands and there are now four schools using this approach. A filmmaker is making a movie on sociocratic schools in the Netherlands called the 'Wondering School' and it will be interesting to watch the effect this has on the culture of other schools (including consensus based democratic schools).

Vignette 11. Embodied social justice in action, New York.

The walls were decorated with students work and with signs reminding students of their active participation in their democratic schools, for example - *"We need to hear you"* and *"Do you want someone else to call the meeting for you?"* or *"Anyone can call a meeting at any time"* However, although it was possible to call a meeting at any time, when we asked it was quite rare except for one particular semester when one student was finding the school challenging. There are also mediation guidelines on the walls suggesting to use these approaches to solve problems rather than directly going to a School Meeting.

One of the major themes of the school is Social Justice. Outside the upper elementary classrooms was a display about 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. The children had written their reflections on the book - one wrote *"We noticed there were not any black people and the Oompa Loompas ideas seemed racist because they are orange and dancing around and singing..."* Another wrote *"We noticed that the Oompa Loompas reminded me of slaves because they had to work and work and work and they were not being paid fairly..."* Alongside the display were definitions of key social justice terms - poverty, privilege and entitlement. Inside this classroom was a vocabulary sheet that showed evidence from a discussion about gender and around the classroom was an alphabet of inclusive language. In another classroom there

was a poster display on Marches, Boycotts and Rallies and in another signs for 'LGBTQ+ allies group' for students 12 and up. There was also signs for workshops for White Parents on 'The Role of White XXX Parents in Anti-Racist Work'.

6.4.12 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - democratic education and the 'Ideal School'

Hecht, (2010) and Gray, (2015) argue that democratic education is the education of choice for the future. Vignette 13 below shares an experience from Alys the edge-dweller at the International Democratic Education Conference in Finland where, when running a workshop on the 'Ideal School', many people voiced opinions that they had already found it with democratic education.

Vignette 12. Alys the edge-dweller - "Where was the singing?" On not feeling 'at home' at the International Democratic Education Conference!

After attending the International Democratic Education Conference in Finland in June 2016 I was fascinated by my strong reaction to Sudbury and my inner frustration that I felt that the Sudbury-ites were blinded by their view that Sudbury is the answer. When I led my session on "*What is the 'Ideal School?'*" I saw that some of my groups were controlled by people using the 'Sudbury' method of talking which is very different from usual group work discussion. In a Sudbury meeting, there is a chair and each person raises their hand if they wish to speak and their name is put on a list. The discussion follows those who are on the list rather than the natural flow of conversation as people must wait their turn to speak. I have observed this in a large meeting and although it felt slightly disjointed I could see it as a method that allowed people to have a voice. However, in a group of 7/8 people sitting around a table it was painful to watch

as it became dictated by the person who had decided they were the chair of the group rather than a free-flow of voices and ideas about the topic of the ideal school. Another group having a more 'traditional' group discussion had many opposing views, which I had hoped, but at the same time had one person write 'Sudbury' on their sheet as they felt that was the answer. Another person came in and once hearing what the session was about smiled at me and told me their school was the 'Ideal School' and headed out the door. The joy of an open space session meant that the other 'Sudbury' people who chose to stay in the room chose to be there and offer their input into the group - either to listen to what others had to say on the ideal school or as missionaries of Sudbury? The truth is I felt lonely at IDEC at times, surprised that the people I had hoped to connect to somehow were too busy with meetings, or energetically realised quite quickly that I wasn't a Sudbury-ite after all. Max Hope made a comment that I was at home here - maybe more so than the British Educational Research Association conference in 2014 with its traditional papers about mainstream education, but without the daily singing and crafts of a Steiner conference I was still a bit lost and not fully 'at home'.

In Israel, Hecht (2010) has worked hard to democratise public education. The International Democratic Education Conference was held in Israel in 2017 and if I had attended I would have had the opportunity to visit state funded democratic schools (as so far all that I have visited are privately funded). However, although I chose not to attend because of the political situation I am aware that by not physically visiting these schools I do have 'gaps' of embodied School Tourism experiences within this thesis.

Hecht suggests that democratic education for all is not “*an unattainable utopia*” (2010: 319) but common sense for “*a democratic country which adopts the goals of democratic education*” (Ibid).

Gray (2015) supports this further claiming:

I predict that fifty years from now, if not sooner, the Sudbury Valley model will be featured in every standard textbook of education and will be adopted, with variation, by many if not all public school systems. In fifty years, I predict, educators will see today’s approach to schooling as a barbaric relic of the past.

(Gray, 2015: 88).

They both argue for a shift in societies viewpoint. Gray sees this as relatively straight forward, “*When adults see that coercive schooling isn’t necessary for success in the culture, they will find it hard not to choose freedom for their kids, and the kids themselves will demand it*” (2015: 233). In my journaling below I show my challenges with these ideas in August 2016 and later in this section my journaling from August 2017 shows how my thinking has moved again:

And why am I back at the edge, not jumping for this evocative option of children roaming and playing in these (inter)nationwide ‘Sudbury model’ schools? I am aware that, like the example of Steiner Waldorf, once a system spreads there are major chances of it becoming dogmatic. But more so, it is the self-management through rules and meetings that I am unsure about, not autonomous learning. Democratic schools are still schools, still institutions and I realise that I am challenged by institutions. Maybe unschooling is the answer?

Mendus, Journalling on democratic education, [Devon, August, 2016].

6.4.13 Alys educating differently – Unschooling

Democratic home-education has been called unschooling (Holt, 1967) or autonomous home education (Pattison and Thomas, 2016). Gray describes this approach:

These are people who officially register as homeschoolers but whose parents allow them to direct their own education. The parents do not give set lessons or tests or prescribe a curriculum but do provide an environment that facilitates learning and helps connect their children to a larger community. Unschooling is also often referred to as “life-learning,” in line with the view that most learning occurs incidentally, as one engages in everyday life, and that most learning occurs most effectively when person has a real-life need or desire for that knowledge or skill.
(Gray, 2016: 54).

Following this idea that unschooling covers learning in all aspects of family life then it is interesting to note that Pattison and Thomas’s research shows that *“with home educating families ...often what is being learnt and how it is being learnt cannot be identified with any degree of clarity”* (2016: 136). It is therefore not surprising that Gray and Riley’s (2013), work explains that parents in unschooling families often have to go through a “deschooling” phase in which they consciously learn to stop worrying about their children’s progress and learn, instead, to enjoy and interact with their children as they might with anyone they love and respect.

The role of the parents to choose/allow/know about unschooling or to send their child to a democratic school arises here and Gray (2015) argues there are different types of parents with ‘trustful’ being the most compatible with unschooling. Gray defines trustful parenting as:

Trustful parents today understand that today’s successful adults, likewise, are assertive and independent and that children today should be so trained - “trained” not by directing them, but by allowing them to guide their own development and make their own discoveries about the world.
(Gray, 2015: 210).

Warning bells begin to ring for me when I read about ‘trustful parents’ as I often find myself in a challenging position with unschooling families - on one side thinking that this approach to learning is the future and on the other side

being presented by wild and sometimes quite rude children. I remember a Forest School session I was running in 2009 one Easter time where my group of home-educated children had been making nests in the woods. We went off to have a snack and story and magically chocolate eggs had appeared in the nests. One child (from an unschooling family) had decided not to join the group that morning but once hearing that there were chocolate eggs she had a massive tantrum and would not give up until her mother asked me to give her chocolate! This reminded me about the importance of boundaries for children and that following unschooling approaches needs to be within a held, safe environment with clear boundaries. I know of some families that have family meetings and use sociocratic approaches but total licence does not make pleasant children to spend time around.

Mendus, Journalling about unschooling, [Cornwall, September 2017].

6.4.14 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - Reflections on democratic Education.

This next piece of journalling shows how my thinking has moved again in terms of democratic education and provides a link to ideas explored in Chapters 8 and 10.

A year later I still do not think that democratic education is my 'Ideal School' because of the understanding by many (not all - I think here about how I liked the sociocratic methods at De Ruimte) of what is democracy? Yet I also realise that it is more than this. It is not only what is democracy but also why is democracy so special? It feels like after three years focussing on this topic I can begin to have an out-of-body experience, a body-without-organs to think with Deleuze and Guattari (1980/87) and begin to look more at the 'bigger' picture. Some scientists and environmentalists are beginning to understand where we are now in the history of the Earth differently calling this time the 'anthropocene'⁸, the time/epoch of humanity (see Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2017). This thesis is looking at the world with a post-human lens. I am now wondering about a post-human understanding of education/learning in the anthropocene which is not stuck viewing 'democracy' (and democratic education) as the way of the future but thinks with post-humanism. This dilemma will be explored further in Chapter 8 and in the Conclusion Chapter 10 of this thesis.

Mendus, Journalling on democratic education, [Sussex, August, 2017].

⁸ The anthropocene (see Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2017) is the proposed name for the new geological epoch differentiated by the "overwhelming human influence upon the earth" (Grusin, 2017: vii).

6.5 Montessori

6.5.1 Alys and Steiner - the view of Montessori - (*my thoughts are indented and in italics throughout*).

“Ugh, Montessori, that is even worse than mainstream” is a comment friends and I have used in the past.

As a person heavily embedded within the Steiner Waldorf educational approach it was easy to become dogmatic in my ‘othering’ of other educational approaches particularly Montessori. Our voices (myself and close Steiner Waldorf inspired friends) were made up from fleeting visits to the local Montessori nursery or friend’s reports from their children about how there isn’t free play which is seen in Steiner or Mainstream Early Years education.

My daughter, one friend told me, went and picked up the beautiful wooden blocks and began to pretend that one was a telephone, only to be redirected to putting the blocks on top of each other to build a tower. Horrified, we did not send her to that nursery.

What my friend had observed here (I later learnt from reading more Montessori and observing a nursery) was that the children are free to choose from a large range of ‘age-appropriate’ set activities that all have a learning objective that the child is encouraged to attempt and once finished tidy away before moving on, mostly solitarily to their next chosen activity. Montessori wrote about the ‘Absorbent mind’ (1949) recognising that children absorb information from their environment and so the classroom is designed *“where a child can learn to read, write and calculate in the same natural way as learning to walk or talk”* (Wolf, 1995: 1) and where the hand is the chief teacher of the child.

“Steiner and Montessori are the same thing, right?” is a comment I would regularly hear.

Annoyed I would always reply they are as about as different as you can get, they are just lumped together as the known-about alternatives to traditional schooling.

I once heard a great comparison - just imagine it is 1919, the First World War has just ended and there needs to be deep healing in Europe. Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner meet up to discuss education for the future of Germany and Italy.

“What the Italian people need,” Montessori said, “is order and structure, they have heart and play.”

What the German people need,” Steiner replied, “is heart and play, they have order and structure.”

Creating this binary of ordered Montessori education with its set activities in comparison to play based Steiner with its free-flow of play was not helpful to my lens of looking for the ‘Ideal School’ and it prevented me from possibly incorporating some of the Montessori approaches into the heavily Steiner influenced lens that I was looking out into the world. It also prevented me from truly realising that I was already influenced by aspects of Montessori educational methods and others visible in Montessori such as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). One of the Montessori approaches I had used in Early Years was from teaching independence as children are encouraged to put on their own coats, tie their shoes and close buckles, to pour water or milk into a cup.

6.5.2 Alys the School Tourist - Blended examples

Vignette 14. Krishnamurti and Montessori, UK

Early in my school tourism in 2013 I visited a blended school that was for 5-11 year olds based on the teachings of Krishnamurti (1953) on educating the whole person by freeing themselves from any conditioning, with Montessori (explored in more detail throughout this section 6.4).

I wrote a recount of my visit for the parenting magazine Juno some of which is in the excerpt below:

The child-led free-flow learning was a new progressive approach for me within a school environment... I was impressed to see how the teacher was able to oversee that each child was following a balanced curriculum and how older children helped the younger ones, for example, with writing the date. The real child led element made me step out of my comfort zone of 'Teacher' to become 'Facilitator'.

I thought about what it would be like to be a new teacher here? The key thing I recognised was the strength of the community of the school seen in the relationships between staff, students and parents. It was one based on an ethos of respect, and not using rewards and punishments to engage students in learning or activities. Quite often a child would be playing alone outside and then come in to rejoin the group or continue with their chosen activity. The magic in this approach seemed to be the creative "how"? That the teacher held the space or taught the lesson in such an interesting or engaging way to different learning styles or needs that allowed the child autonomy to be involved or to step out into their own space when needed. (Mendus, 2013b: 14-15).

It is interesting to read my awkwardness in the teacher relinquishing their power and my questioning of the teacher having the role to enable the student to follow a 'balanced' curriculum. However, as Goertz (2001) explains a balanced curriculum happens for a child in a Montessori classroom if there is a correctly prepared environment which is inviting, attractive and not cluttered. However, there is a key role for the teacher (who Montessori called "directress") in that:

She demonstrates the correct use of materials as they are individually chosen by the children. She carefully watches the progress of each child and keeps a record of his work with the materials. She is trained to recognise periods of readiness. Sometimes she must divert a child who chooses material which is beyond his ability; at other times she must encourage a child who is hesitant. Whenever a child makes a mistake, she refrains, if possible, from intervening and allows him to discover his own error through further manipulation of the self-correcting material. This procedure follows Dr. Montessori's principle that a child learns through experience.

(Wolf, 1995: 8).

I feel with hindsight there is a level of ignorance on my part, an inability to see, or to ask further questions about the approach as visiting the school very strongly through the eyes of a Steiner Waldorf and Mainstream teacher prevented me for many years from exploring Montessori education further.

Since then I have become aware of the strength of Montessori methods in the teaching of Mathematics allowing students to really understand number and to allow a student to continue with a subject for as far as they can take it intrinsically extending their learning. I observed a maths session in a Montessori Primary home-education group in the UK in November 2016 and I am beginning to see the real possibility in the resources.

I enjoyed seeing how the maths resources made learning 'times by 10' much more real and concrete than purely abstract. There is a real difference between learning a rule that when you times by ten you add a 0 on the end, or physically getting out the number cubes and making the shapes. Also there was real sense and order of where to place the blocks that was the same method used as when writing down a sum. I also observed the children doing the sum with the blocks on the mat and at the same time writing them onto a sheet. These sheets also were colour coded for the Thousands Hundreds Tens and Units columns which are the same throughout really establishing continuity. There was still a possibility for mistakes if a child rushed with counting but if they took time, which I felt the Montessori approach suggests, then they had the scope to really love and understand number.

Mendus, Montessori 6-12 year old home-education group observation, November 2016, [Uphall, November 2016].

Vignette 15. Community based Montessori, Portugal

As I began to extrapolate Montessori Early Childhood Education from their Primary education and began to see some strengths in the Primary classroom. I also observed a multi-lingual blended Montessori classroom in an eco-village community in Portugal, that was trying to combine Portuguese, German and English into the teaching.

The natural wooden tables were placed in a semi circle, in the middle of the yurt was a candle and few beautiful crystals and treasures which burnt for the time of the class. On the other side the two teachers worked together to hold the lesson. The teachers spoke to each other in English and to the children in their own native language. The lesson was about the water cycle and they were shown the results of an experiment with a glass bowl, water and cling film. The children joined in, encouraged to speak in Portuguese. The task of the lesson was to draw the water cycle on paper/for some in their workbooks and to label it in Portuguese.

I was impressed by the beautiful environment and the attempt to be trilingual but there was a level of authenticity missing as I knew that the children were being taught Portuguese through necessity to pass a government exam rather than a want by the local, mostly German speaking, community. Interestingly what I observed was the Portuguese children learning German, not the German children learning Portuguese, as German was the language of play and interaction.

6.5.3 The Queering of 'Bad-Alys' - accepting the shadow; observing Montessori with new eyes.

I recognise that these blended examples were not really helping me to understand the Montessori method. One of my oldest friends is a keen proponent of Montessori Education, her children are educated in Montessori and she has trained as a Montessori Primary teacher so I contacted her about visiting her Primary project and her children's Early Years. I knew how well respected and experienced the teachers at the Early Years were and I felt that would help me position myself within Montessori education.

As soon as I entered the door I felt like I had stepped into a magical place

with a swing, and hiding places, a little house and leaves waiting to be swept up.

I was pleased I had asked what the etiquette for observing in a Montessori setting was so that I felt secure just sitting and watching. Sometimes when I observe I float around and ask questions and help children, but to get a real feel of such a well-established Montessori environment I really wanted to just watch. The children had been trained that visitors just watch so they didn't come up and ask who I was, they go on with their work. Luckily, I asked what to do if they asked or tried to engage me and was told to tell them that they had work to do, as did I; watching was my work.

And then I sat for three hours, totally spellbound by the hive of activity. For the first hour, most children were in their own self-directed bubble. As I was new to the environment it took me a little while to see how much was actually going on. Each child is in charge of their own learning and the teachers have provided a learning environment rich with activities that Montessori's research suggested are needed for the 3-6 year old child. I was able to observe how cleverly designed each activity seemed to be and I was not surprised to learn that each activity (on a child accessible tray), carefully laid out on shelves around the room, had a learning objective/outcome.

As I watched I was fascinated by the most popular activities which included ways to explore fine motor skills as well as understanding basic scientific approaches, for example a tray with two china bowls, one with a little water in it and a sponge. The adults in the room will demonstrate a tray's activity to the children either alone or in groups so they know the learning activity of each tray - however this is not done in a traditional mainstream approach of spelling out why and how you are doing it but often non-verbally through

demonstration and then copied via imitation. Another popular activity was again two containers, one with blue liquid (food dye in water) and a pipette. This one from the expressions on the children's faces seemed to be incredibly satisfying.

I learned later that having these separate activities can prove to be controversial with other non-Montessori settings as it is often asked why cannot the children combine these activities as that would be fun? However, the idea is to learn the separate, concrete skills and then to move on and that when outside there are water and sand trays where they could combine the skills they have expertly learnt inside.

Behind the science shelves was a larger space which when I arrived a small group of children were trying to build a very tall tower using two sets of blocks (brown and pale pink), they were using a chair to get to the top and had to ask an adult to put the final block on the top.

I learnt later that they were actually combining two different learning activities together here following their own experiment which is normally allowed after they have completed the single activities. Soon this activity felt complete to the children so they tidied it away and moved on.

One thing that fascinated me was the quiet, studious environment that was created and it felt that especially for the first hour there were barely any voices as the children were working alone. Adults, I observed, only spoke when needed to and then only in low tones. Even when things went wrong, no disturbance or raised voices occurred. For example, a child dropped a container full of small items all over the floor and after a moment of silence the child breathed, put down what they were carrying and began to pick up the small pieces. They were soon joined by an adult and other children helped if they

were passing. There was no issue made of what was happening. Occasionally one of the younger children raised their voices or felt a bit impatient about waiting for an activity and an adult would be there and calmly sit the child down, talk through what was happening and redirect.

After pick up time I had a good walk around the classroom to see all the beautiful resources in more details and to have further chats with the teachers. One thing that I had been wondering about was why there was no 'home corner' in the room and it was explained to me that actually within a Montessori Children's House the whole space is the home-corner and the children get to experience living and using a real home rather than a pretend one.

When I left, I wrote an extensive inspired write-up on the Children's Garden concluding:

I had a really nourishing morning and it was such an honour to see such a careful and high quality example of Montessori education. I wondered where my own journey in my search for the ideal school would have taken me if I had seen them as my first alternative?

And my final question still leaves me troubled. Montessori I saw for many years as the shadow side to my journey within Steiner Waldorf education and my search for the 'Ideal School' and here after watching such a carefully planned, presented and articulated example of Montessori education I was wondering where my journey would have gone if I had found Montessori first? However, I think my love of unstructured play, fairy tales, home corners and creativity may have never matched up directly with Montessori and there was a feeling of a memory of the Team-Teach (see Hayden and Pike, 2004) approach for autistic children in Special Needs Schools in which I have taught. There was an aspect of silent little robots in a beautiful space that I know does not sit happily with me.

However, I am now able to see many of the strengths in the approach particularly in the Maths resources and the independence skills that I have been talking to teacher colleagues about incorporating some into their mainstream schools.

Conclusion

This chapter has shared stories from performing School Tourism both alone and with others for my PhD research. This chapter was divided into 'self labelled' sections by the schools/places of learning that I visited that were 'educating differently'. However, even within the self-labelled sections of 'progressive' and 'democratic' education there were many different iterations of the definition of the idea/approach which seemed to have changed over time.

One aim of this thesis was not to generalise or create a defined 'type' even from the self-labelled schools and although 'gems' examples from the edge-ucation have arisen in the stories shared from Chapter 6 they cannot be listed together as collective 'gems' for that approach. For example, in Section 6.3, I argued that my challenge was accessibility as most (not all) that I visited charged very high fees and still focussed on high-stakes-tests. This was not all progressive schools, just from my experience of performing School Tourism. However, what was important here was the influence that had on the schools that I visited next and what criteria (even if hidden) I was looking for.

I recognise that Project Based Learning has continued to be a theme of interest (since 2013) as it can connect people of all ages from the school to the wider community and ends up with a final professional, 'real' product. I am also impressed by places that engage with social justice, diversity and inclusivity not tokenistically but with a fully engaged approach even more than first name terms and no uniform.

Mendus, Reflections on progressive education, [Cornwall, September 2017].

Democratic education I found even harder to position and this chapter explored my journey of observing different approaches to 'democratic' from the original 'Summerhill' school in the UK to other versions of democratic school and home-education projects in the UK and abroad including a visit to a 'Sudbury' model school which is becoming one of the dominant approaches. This chapter explored my challenges with the Sudbury understanding of democracy (shown by examples of school meetings in different democratic schools) and then gives an example of De Ruimte in the Netherlands that is using sociocracy (an approach that reaches mutual consent rather than consensus see Buck and Villines, 2007). From my experience of democratic education I realised that I resonate with Hecht's (2010) suggestion for 'pluralistic learning' and stepping outside of a government/curriculum designed 'square' of knowledge, aware that many places that I visited limit the possibilities of learning. I also realised from this chapter that I still have not found my home and wonder if unschooling, could be a future possibility as a self-designed approach to learning.

The final section explored Montessori as another well-known approach to 'educating differently' and I recognised that I was visiting many schools/places of learning that were blending their approaches. I explored my relationship with Montessori through the mindset of originally being a Steiner Waldorf teacher and then actively explored visits in places using Montessori from early childhood to teens. I was left impressed by the maths resources and the accessibility of activities to increase independence and dexterity but missing the creative imaginative play. Chapter 7 will take this discussion further and give specific examples of 'gems' from performing School Tourism; suggesting hope for teachers choosing to make changes in their classrooms or whole schools.

Chapter 7 - The oxymoron

Introduction

Chapter 7 focuses on the oxymoron of the 'Ideal School'. By highlighting the epiphany within performing School Tourism that the 'Ideal does not exist' after visiting the Green School, Bali in February 2016, I attempt to explore the terms 'school' and 'schooling' realising that for this thesis 'school/schooling is not the answer'. I then redefine the 'gems' that I have observed from performing School Tourism around the world and give examples of the edge-ucation - ideas that could be shared with parents and those working in education to help them to be able to think differently about education and to offer examples of hope within the current neoliberal world.

7.1 The Queering of 'Bad-Alys' - The Green School epiphany poem

The Green School is a 'holistic' international school on the island of Bali in Indonesia. describing itself as the:

Green School educates for sustainability through community-integrated, entrepreneurial learning in a wall-less, natural environment. Our holistic, student-guided approach inspires and empowers us to be green leaders. (Green School, 2017, online).

As a school that is 'educating differently' it has become famous and I am often asked if I have visited the 'Green School'. I found out there was an 'Educators Course' called 'Wall-less-ness' the last week of February 2016 so I organised my School Tourism research trip to Australia around the course. This poem covers my experience and how that visit became a nodal point of the thesis.

*The heat hangs heavy, creating a wall around me, coating me in lethargy
 And I am meant to be in a school of wall-less-ness
 Sweat drips, monsoon rains flow
 Rich greens of the paddy fields, wild dogs running by
 So much going on in this strange cocoon
 And why am I suffocating in this beauty?*

*We laugh in the icy pool and put the world to rights even discussing Deleuze in
 the darkness!*

*And then we are rushed on to the next episode, to eat more food.
 The food is delicious but why am I feeling like Hansel fattened to distract me?
 What is really going on here?
 A few weeks later I read my notes and I am confused.
 So confused I share them with others.
 For on paper this place is amazing, free thinkers creating free thinkers, such
 passion and love for humanity, sustainability, Gaia.
 But back there I cried with grief as something was missing.
 The money, the energy, my drive to get me there and to not fall in love was a
 shock.
 “You always see the bad in everything....”
 But do I?
 And yet here there were many gems, true elements of MacClure’s (2010) Data
 Glow
 But it wasn’t enough.
 I chastise myself for deep down I know there never will be enough.
 My views and ideals are mine alone but...
 I can learn to take a step back and see beauty and not jump to conclusions.
 Or maybe just own my stuff and work out what are my compromises?
 And then accept me, the place, for somewhere on my journey.
 See it as another nodal point?
 A clarification that it is societal change that I am after and that education for
 sustainability for those privileged few who attend this school is not a bad thing
 after all...
 Just not enough.*

7.2 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - The oxymoron of ‘The Ideal School’

*“What do you mean when you say the ideal school?”
 I know what you are all thinking.
 As it was Jane Speedy who sat there, stuck, throughout my whole
 presentation.
 “What is Alys on about when she says the ideal school
 Isn’t that an oxymoron?!”
 Mendus, ICQI Paper University of Illinois, [Urbana, USA, May 19th 2017].*

An oxymoron is defined by the Oxford dictionary as *“a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction”* (Oxford University Press, 2017). This epiphany at the Green School began to re-sculpt this thesis as I came to realise that the ‘ideal’ that I was searching for does not currently exist in its complete form. Following Harris *“Why school at all?”* (2014: 70) and Gatto *“Do we really need school?”* (2009: xv), made me question if ‘school’ and ‘schooling’ were the correct terms to be using?

It has been argued that for some the term ‘school’ covers not just the approaches to teaching but also the building itself and the cultural expectations of the use of that space (Horton and Kraftl, 2014). For example, Horton and Kraftl, see space as a social construction rather than an observable reality and argue *“that space and place exist only in relation to society with their meaning and significance only taking shape when examined in terms of the social interactions that occur within them”* (2014: 308). So ‘school’ as a social construction meets the cultural expectations of a set time and place. In the UK, it could be argued that this has continued since the 1870 Education Act, but also I argue that it is time for the domination of the word ‘school’ to end.

Gray (2015) argues that traditional ‘schooling’ and other methods of progressive/alternative education are like prison because *“in school, as in adult prisons, the inmates are told exactly what they must do and are punished for failure to comply”* (Gray, 2015: 68), he feels that democratic education is the exception to the rule. Hecht (2010) also argues for a new education system (away from traditional education) and found democratic education to be his answer. Hecht (2010) searched for a:

New interpretation of the concept of “school”..[where] The purpose of a school, after its redefinition, would be to develop in the child the power to choose and create the reality in which he wishes to live, and the ability to see today’s reality as multi-faceted and multi-purposed.

(Hecht, 2010: 40).

However, I struggle with a redefinition of the word 'school' as there is a danger of many misconceptions by using the same term again and I ask why use the word 'school' at all?

Mendus, Journalling on school, [Wolverton, August, 2017].

I am aware that this opinion could alienate me from other academics/theorists interested in 'educating differently' as Kraftl argues that few people, even those critiquing traditional education, are "*completely anti-school*" (2013: 114). However, Kraftl continues to argue they may not be anti-school but they may still want to 'de-school' spaces (from seeing school as a "*uniform space, characterised by particular smells, rhythms, dress, forms of behaviour and architecture (school uniforms, classrooms, corridors)*" (Kraftl, 2013: 238). The idea of 'deschooling' originated from Illich (1971) who wrote that we need to 'deschool society', explaining that we have been "*schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence*" (Illich, 1971: 1). Illich argues that resistance to deschooling society is because it "*separates learning from social control*" (1971: 19). This supports the view that a major purpose of full-time compulsory schooling is about power:

Classroom attendance removes children from the everyday world of Western culture and plunges them into an environment far more primitive, magical, and deadly serious... (The) ritual of schooling itself constitutes such a hidden curriculum.

(Illich, 1971: 32).

However, as Martin, explains "*the term "school" may also be a misnomer*" (2002), but that she chooses to continue to use the term as it can be viewed generically to imply "*those places where people gather intentionally to learn (with no implications of what, why, or how)*" (Martin, 2002).

I am left feeling strongly that school in itself is not the word for the future of learning and that I too want to 'deschool' the system but that I am not just anti 'school' but anti-institutionalisation of education (see Schaub, 2010).

Mendus, Journalling on School, [Wolverton, August 2017].

I wonder if continuing to use 'school' as a term can mean that in these 'schools' that 'schooling' occurs? However, from conversations with adults at several democratic schools that I visited they argued that they may be 'schools' but they are not 'schooling' the students. Pattison and Thomas (2016) raise awareness that schooling is:

The dominant experience of childhood and that this schooling is a major, if not the main, means of our orientation towards adult life. Disseminated through this common experience is a cultural, practical, working definition of what childhood is, what education is, and what it means to learn. (Pattison and Thomas, 2016: 132).

By questioning the use of the term 'school' and 'schooling' following Holzman's (1997) argument that schooling is "*completely outmoded and counterproductive*" (Holzman, 1997: 99) it could still be argued that I am questioning current societies embedded understanding of education and learning which is controversial and triggering for many people. However following Gray's (2015) argument that :

One of the tragedies of our system of schooling is that it teaches students that life is a series of hoops that one must get through, by one means or another, and that success lies in others' judgements rather than in real, self-satisfying accomplishments. (Gray, 2015: 75).

Then following Gray (2015) what children need is "*less schooling and more freedom*" (2015: 20) and not just another term (than 'school'/'schooling') but another way of looking at learning.

“I do not think school or schooling is the answer so I have been using the term ‘educating differently’ in my thesis”, I explained to Phoebe Tickell when she interviewed me for NetworkedU⁹.

“Interesting”, replied Phoebe, “I have stopped using the term ‘education’ and only use ‘learning’ instead”.

“I wonder if ‘learning differently’ would be a better term than ‘educating differently’?” I replied.

Mendus, Interview about my PhD, [Cornwall, July 2017].

I found a quote by Harris (2014) which seemed to support Tickell’s use of the word ‘learning’ over ‘education’:

In fact, the very way we understand the relationship underpinning “to educate” may be obsolete. Not only through the rapid advancement of digital and online technologies, but also due to the evolution of global communities and information movements overall, the notion of ‘learning’ is perhaps a better or more accurate way of describing a contemporary acquisition of knowledge than is ‘educating.’ Does anyone really educate anymore? For that matter, did we ever? To save, to educate, to empower - verbs all charmingly out of date to a 21st-century palate.

(Harris, 2014: 70).

This left me wondering what is the difference between the definitions of ‘learning’ (is this something you do by/to yourself?) and ‘education’ (is this something being drawn out of you...is this by others??).

Mendus, Journalling on School, [Wolverton, August 2017].

Smyth (2016) argues that learning is a political act which *“brings us into conversation with [the] idea that learning is a social, psychic and emotional investment”* (2016: 391). However, Biesta, (2006) and Burbules, (2013) argue that learning is not yet education:

They [Biesta and Burbules] argue that framing educational issues solely in terms of learning is a mistake. For example, teaching is more than just causing some learning to occur.

(Joldersma, 2016: 89).

Burbules continues to say that education is more than mastery, or preparation for work/adulthood but the:

⁹ NetworkedU is an organisation that connects people with visions and way of educating for the future. This interview can be found at the following link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGkLdogNH0c>

Bringing about a certain kind of person, a person who acts in certain ways, cares about certain things, and can be dependably expected to enact his or her learning in a certain manner.

(Bubules, 2013: 162-163).

Biesta (2013) called this “learnification” which Noaparast defines as “a dominant trend in which every educational activity is reduced to the activity on the student side, namely learning” (Noaparast, 2016: 347).

Whilst giving a presentation on ‘Searching for the Ideal School’ at a British School in Germany I realised that none of the teachers were referring to the children as pupils or students anymore, the term they were using was ‘learners’.

Mendus, Journalling about European School Tourism trip June 2017, [Oslo, June 2017].

Is this learning vs education debate similar to intelligence (knowing things) vs wisdom (knowing how to use the things you know)? So if learning differently is then understood as something that you do to yourself and this thesis has been exploring predominately imparting the knowledge and skills of life and the pedagogies by which that can occur, then ‘educating differently’ seems to be a more fitting term. However, continuing to explore ‘learning’ and where and how that occurs is also important.

Mendus, Journalling about Schooling, [Wolverton, August 2017].

7.3 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - Looking at School Tourism with a new light - What can the ‘gems’ actually mean, do they and can they bring hope?

If ‘School’ and ‘Schooling’ are not the terms to be used and the ‘Ideal does not exist’ where does this position the thesis?

Mendus, Journalling about Schooling August 2017, [Wolverton, August 2017].

It could be to follow Peim's (2016) claim that we might begin to envision a future that does not see “education as the essential and essentializing grounds of personal and collective fulfilment” (2016: 156). Or Singer’s argument that the “innovative experiences usually begin at the margins of the state school system” (2016: 212) which reminded me to think about the ‘gems’ that I had seen in performing School Tourism in a new way (also see Robinson, 2015).

For example, by sharing stories of the ‘gems’ from one

system/teacher/approach with another then more people have access to ideas and in turn can choose to be creative and implement them in numerous ways beyond their current understanding. This idea of finding and sharing 'gems' is mirrored in Smyth's (2016) argument that:

Given that we are unlikely to produce any meaningful change in schools as long as current neoliberal top-down policy approaches continue to prevail and exacerbate inequality we need to look elsewhere for exemplars of how bottom-up approaches may enable alternatives to surface.
(Smyth, 2016: 396-7).

Gray (2015) makes suggestions for what could be improved in education:

Reducing the amount of time that children must spend at school, reducing homework, and increasing recesses - to levels comparable to the norm of decades ago - would help, but it would not solve the problem.
(Gray, 2015: 84).

However, it is not the aim of this thesis to make a list of characteristics of the 'Ideal School' as this would change the whole focus to be a subjective rubric based quasi-quantitative study not the post-qualitative rhizomatic approach it aims to follow. Through sharing stories of the the edge-ucation then 'gems' that are out there in different schools/places of learning that I have visited through performing School Tourism from 2008 until 2017 can potentially influence change. Also creating a new school that combines all the 'gems' is not the aim of this thesis as I am aware that all the 'gems' together could contradict each other in some ways and they are all temporal. They are temporal because a 'gem' is for (and from) a specific time and place, country and educational setting and they are often not generic concepts or approaches.

It must also be made clear that the 'gems' are a compromise as they are what in my opinion shines in this specific time, mostly in neoliberal countries around the world but not the answer as I am now aware that in the current world the 'Ideal School' does not exist. In section 7.2 I argue that 'school' and 'schooling'

are not the answer then following this it could be extrapolated that home-education is the only current possibility as it would provide full autonomy to the family (in UK law). Unfortunately, conclusions such as home-education/‘educating otherwise’ being the answer to ‘Searching for the Ideal School’ raises the challenge of reinforcing ongoing inequalities (Johnston et al, 2008), with Seo’s (2009) argument that home-schooling is for the middle-classes.

Is my conclusion supporting home-education due to my own middle-class privilege that I can choose to make the privileged choice to step outside the system?

Mendus, Thoughts on privilege, [Suffolk, August, 2017].

On the other hand, I could follow Peim (2016) and un-think education as the solution and step away from exploring what is already out there in terms of education and look at the bigger picture. Peim argues that:

Educational redeemers who have wished to transform education by offering a more free, more enlightened, “more sensitive to the needs of the individual” or the “community” vision of education have missed the ontological point... (Peim, 2016: 146).

The persistence of Peim’s (2016) voice that there are many ways of thinking differently helps me begin to look at this thesis on a larger scale. I am aware that:

Both education in general and its paradigm institution, the school, have largely been “unthought” categories that, in their unquestioned positive status, have been taken to be essential components of any good or productive future. (Peim, 2016: 148).

However, recent work on understanding our current epoch renames it (perhaps narcissistically) as the anthropocene (see Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2017) - the time of the humans. Looking at the much larger picture of ‘educating differently’ within the anthropocene has made me begin to explore and think further of

stories of hope towards the future of education, asking much larger questions than the 'Ideal School' towards Peim's (2016) argument is education the solution? These questions are explored later in Section 8.5.

In conclusion, even though I am well aware that the concept of the 'Ideal School' is an oxymoron, I recognise that through performing School Tourism I have embodied many different 'gems' and ways of 'educating differently' even within this mostly neoliberal world.

7.4 Alys the School Tourist - Practical examples of edge-ucation

This thesis is filled with stories and examples that for some people could be 'gems' and inspire change. In Chapter 5, I shared examples from the Steiner Waldorf world, particularly from blended-approaches. In Chapter 6, I shared stories with possible 'gems' from progressive, democratic, Montessori and other approaches. However, in this section I have chosen to focus on two areas of examples from the edge-ucation that could inspire change for teachers/staff working within the current constraints of traditional, mainstream education. Section 7.4.1 'Using autonomous approaches with a set curriculum' is one of hope as it gives examples of places that are able to use more autonomous approaches even when there is a set curriculum in place. The second section 7.4.2 'Teachers offering alternative pedagogies' gives examples of how even just one teacher can make a difference in how they teach in their classroom supporting grass-roots changes. These examples from the edge-ucation are not the only 'gems' or even the shiniest 'gems' but practical examples of hope from my experience of performing School Tourism for this thesis. They are included to show the potentiality of change to the reader.

7.4.1 Using autonomous approaches with a set curriculum

7.4.1.1 eduScrum, Netherlands

Ashram College is a large public school for 12-18 year olds in the western Netherlands. The students come from a wide range of backgrounds, they wear their own clothes and call the teachers by their first names. One of the teachers Willy Wijnands created the eduScrum (eduScrum, 2012) pedagogical approach which he uses in his Chemistry classes. He learnt about how Scrum was being used in business and thought how that could be possible in teaching. Spending one day in the school helped me observe several classes using the approach for both the core Chemistry curriculum and for self-designed Chemistry based projects.

*First thoughts on eduScrum - it really can be used for anything...
To be sitting there in a complex Chemistry lesson on moles
And they have used eduScrum for that
Made me think differently
I had seen it as a tool for project based learning
But here it was being used as a tool for curriculum based learning
Group autonomous learning.
Mendus, Journalling on the Netherlands, [Amsterdam, June 2017].*

The students sit in their groups around tables and the first thing they do is to pick up their big chart and pin it on the walls of the classroom. A large A0 sheet is used to guide the eduScrum with columns of what is to be done, what is being worked on and what is complete. There are also agreed (by the group with possible influence of teacher such as achieve a particular exam grade) the success criteria (called in eduScrum the DOD - Definition of Done) and the happiness criteria (the DOF - Definition of Fun) and a Burn Chart (diagram of how much work has been completed). By filling in the Burn Chart and keeping it visible the teacher is able to see if they are doing too much or not enough. For

this Chemistry project the target was to get a 6.7 on the test but also in one groups DoD included working together and enjoying the experience.

I left feeling that I had observed another key example of my edge-ucation, a gem, in terms of educating differently, bringing more autonomy and group skills into public education. I was also aware with a theme that often arises, that of the individual and the collective and from my reflections at the beginning of this piece I saw eduScrum as 'group autonomous learning' trying to step away from the binary of an alternative approach being neither purely individual nor purely for the collective as there were aspects of both. Also in terms of the role of the teacher - when eduScrum is used for a set curriculum, in this case Chemistry, then Willy was still the expert and 'teacher' at times and then 'Scrum Master' or 'Mentor' at others.

Mendus, Journalling on the Netherlands, [Amsterdam, June 2017].

7.4.1.2 Florescer (translation: to flower, flourishing) Home-Education

support group Lisbon, Portugal.

An interview with co-founder Teresa Mendes.

Teresa and I met at the 'A New Earth Needs New Schools' conference at the Eco-village Tamera in Southern Portugal in October 2013. I returned to stay with her and visit her home-education project in Lisbon in October 2016. This section of the interview is included to show how Florescer has been able to be influenced by a broad 'blended-pedagogy' of 'educating differently' whilst creating links with the local community centre and forest and covering the state-imposed curriculum.

Alys: Tell me more about Florescer?

Teresa: Florescer is not a school it is a tutoring centre for home-educated children. The adults who work there are called by their first names and see themselves as facilitators or tutors not teachers. In Portugal all children must take exams in all subjects at 10, 12 and 15. It does not matter where or how you are educated each child must take and pass the exams in Maths and Portuguese to be able to progress to the next grade. This effects home-educated children. So Florescer although free in the how it educates must

follow the state curriculum so that the children can take and hopefully pass the tests.

Alys: That sounds like a real challenge how do you make it as creative and autonomous as possible?

Teresa: This has been really tricky as there is a very broad curriculum so it is hard to cover all of the subject matter. Self-autonomy is one of the key areas of Florescer, so the partner of one of the other founders works in IT and he has designed an App. The idea of the App is that each child has the whole curriculum that needs to be covered broken down into manageable chunks and can show each week that they have worked on different areas and given evidence for meeting that objective – this could be by completing a project or pages in a work book and they tick a box so that it changes colour when they think it is completed and then one of the adults checks this and ticks it so that it changes colour again. It also gives a visual way for the child and adult to see where there are larger holes in the children's learning and what they may need to spend more time on.

Soon it was time to go to the forest. Outside the Florescer building is a car parking area, a few shops and round the corner (all on pavement) was a community building and beautiful park. As we walk through the park we continue chatting.

Alys: How do you start each morning?

Teresa: Each morning starts at 9am with a circle which lasts about half an hour and when the weather is nice we do it outside and sometimes members of the community join in. The circle begins with meditation and then is more or less directed by the interests of the children they may play a game, sing songs, or do

some timetables. In a way this is similar to the beginning of a day in a Steiner school main lesson but with more democratic elements.

As we walked through the park other people using the park said hello and recognised the children.

Alys: What do the local people think about Florescer?

Teresa: We are well respected as one of our main aims is to be really part of the community. For example, the local community centre was needing some love so the Florescer group and others in the community repainted the building and brought natural resources into the space. The building was transformed and is now full of different community activities from yoga and wellbeing to martial arts and a community cafe and guerrilla knitting groups. We have a permanent room there which was set up very similarly to a Steiner kindergarten with simple toys, a calm beautiful space and a nature table and rocking chair for storytelling. A group for younger children and their parents runs here daily and they meet the older children in the park or the woods for lunch. You will notice when we get there that the older children enjoy coming to the younger children's room and playing with the toys and dressing up materials so there is much cross over between the groups.

After visiting the community centre we go into the woods and as the children play we continue our conversation...

Alys: What has happened to the interest for a group of alternative educators in Portugal since 2013? (See Section 6.3.6 about when this group was established).

Teresa: A network of alternative schools/projects has been set up with 16 different partners, including Tamera, with the agreement of the overlying principles of 'Autonomy' and 'Integral'.

Alys: What do you mean by 'integral?' I ask as it does not make sense directly translated into English. Do you mean holistic?

Teresa: No, we are avoiding the term 'holistic' as it is not always taken seriously and seen too 'hippy.' And in practice not all the projects agree with each other as each has their own focus and this in itself has caused some challenges for the network however it is thriving and other groups of people interested in 'educating differently' are finding out about us.

Alys: Ok, so I have been puzzling over something you said earlier and I am bit confused. If the children only need to pass Portuguese and Maths then maybe the rest of the state curriculum could be ignored and they could make a more creative curriculum?

Teresa: Yes, this would be a great idea but we are not in a position to be able to do this as part of our role is to be an exemplar of doing things differently and as we are in the middle of Lisbon we are not able to be under the radar. We have met the former Education minister and are featured in newspapers and we really want to make educational change so at present we must meet the curriculum but show it can be taught/achieved in a more autonomous way.

Alys: I understand that makes sense. What other approaches influence your work?

Teresa: I did my Master's thesis on Ecole d'Ponte near Porto in Portugal which was the school set up by Jose Pacheco. It was a radical democratic state school but since Jose Pacheco has gone to live in Brazil and has started a more radical school over there then unfortunately his school in Portugal has had to make changes to fit the mainstream system, including becoming part of a super-school – lots of high schools joining together. (Colleague) Teresa and I

went to visit Jose Pacheco's new school in Brazil last year and it was really inspiring to see a school not controlled by the state and able to meet his vision.

Alys: I remember when you met me that you have been over to Brockwood Park School in Hampshire is that influencing your work here?

Teresa: Yes, I am very influenced by my experiences of Krishnamurti's work and my visit to Inwoods and Brockwood Park school. For example, Krishnamurti's view is that it is not the pedagogy of a school that is important but that the adults in the school are doing personal spiritual developmental work on themselves. And 'Flourishing' is what Krishnamurti suggested would be a good name for a new school – one that is flourishing... So Florescer is a mix of many different pedagogical approaches – Steiner, Montessori, democratic, Krishnamurti, community based learning underpinned by staff who are continuing to do work on themselves.

Writing this several months later, now on a beach in Thailand, I reread my notes and reflect is this also part of my edge-ucation? An 'Ideal School' is not just about finding 'gems', pedagogical ways to work within the current system, but also about the adults doing work on themselves. This idea might need to be reworded to all people in the school doing inner work to prevent a hierarchy between adults and children. Or perhaps it really is for adults with their life experiences so far - particularly if they are using certain pedagogical approaches - to step into the question I was asked when I trained to be a Steiner Waldorf teacher. "Who are you that walks into the classroom? And what stories do you bring with you?"

Mendus, Reflections on the edge-ucation, [Thailand, February, 2017].

7.4.1.3 Koonwarra Village School, Victoria, Australia.

Koonwarra Village School is included here as an example of a new school (established 2012) where autonomous learning and a state-curriculum can co-exist symbiotically.

At Koonwarra Village School, the students have learning contracts where they are in control of a great proportion of their own time. They must reach agreed learning goals each week as well as attend focus groups with children of a similar 'ability level' – regardless of age – on particular subjects, thereby ensuring they meet the requirements of the Victoria State

Curriculum. All students are aware of their level and progression, which is similar to the expectations in UK schools. This approach is underpinned by John Hattie's (2008) work on Visible Learning in terms of clearly displayed learning intentions and outcomes. (Mendus, 2016b: 385).

Koonwarra Village School is a clear example of my edge-ucation, a school polishing its 'gems'; there is freedom for students to learn autonomously, even when they must follow the local state curriculum. Another aspect that interested me was how even within a traditional school environment they challenged the traditional role of the teacher.

Koonwarra Village School is different from many mainstream schools that I have visited as the school views the 'teacher' as a 'mentor' helping with the learning process. Sarah was getting the group of nine children to think about skills needed for inquiry-based learning by introducing a group work activity. The children split into two smaller groups and one group chose to work outside. It was really interesting to see the children visibly grow as learners as the group inside realised that by not writing anything down they forgot their ideas. The group working outside realised (with a little help) that their group dynamics had been challenging, as they had not sat in a circle, but at different levels and distances from each other, thus making it easier for one person to take over or another to remain silent. (Mendus, 2016b: 387).

Koonwarra Village School has been critiqued as 'not a democratic school' by self-labelled democratic schools, however, I saw real strength in the way the school scaffolded self-autonomy in the Upper Primary room with the development of skills in Working Together:

Teaching group work skills seemed like a really sensible idea as it made me think about the line between self-actualised learning (Maslow, 1943)¹⁰ and democratic learning (Neill, 1960; Greenberg, 1995), understood in this context as child-centred learning. At some 'democratic' schools that I have visited, the idea of offering a formal lesson on developing a particular skill, such as inquiry or group-based skills, might be seen to contradict the philosophy; this is because the students might not have suggested this lesson or even chosen to attend it. I know that democratic education can be implemented in many ways, but I am wondering if by giving the students the skills to work effectively in groups, it could be seen as actually being more

¹⁰ Self-actualised learning is the top level of the pyramid that is often drawn to show the sequential levels of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. The level of self actualised learning can be achieved when all basic and mental needs are fulfilled and therefore the "actualisation" of the full personal potential can occur.

democratic as they are then able to make a choice to use those skills, thereby achieving a higher level of self- actualisation and freedom. (Mendus, 2016b: 387).

7.4.1.4 A state-primary school, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Usually I find out about schools by searches on the internet or through word of mouth but this school I found myself by my curiosity of looking over the school fence at the piles of wood and other outdoor play equipment in the school garden. I contacted the school directly and visited a few days later.

The school is over 100 years old and has always had a progressive history adapting to the children in the area – there were lots of Greek migrant families. I have been working at the school only a couple of years and it is inspired by many approaches so does not want to be known as that Reggio school... Also it is first name terms to all including the principal and no uniform.

Mendus, Journalling on School Visit, [Melbourne, Australia, February 2016].

I am excited I have never been into a primary school that uses the Reggio Emilia approach throughout and readily accept an offer for a tour of the school.

The first room was an open-plan classroom - a combined Y1/2/3 space.

Three classrooms had been knocked together to create a more open plan learning space for 66 children and 3 teachers working together as a team with a lead for each group. The space was divided into areas with a stage, tiered seating, small group tables, little cubby spaces for small group work, book corners. The time table on the wall was very different from a typical primary school as it included time like ILT (independent learning time) and Curiosita which was arts based subjects and Italian and music. It also included Inquiry as the whole class were involved in Inquiry based projects. Philosophy was a taught subject as was 'Earn and Learn' where they ran small businesses. On the wall were lots of ideas of everything they knew about a subject before they did their inquiry project. Teacher's work and

writing was not visible on the walls. All things put on the walls are there consciously and from the children's work.

We then went on to have a detailed look at the Kindergarten which was beautifully set out with veg growing in planters outside. Letters hanging and drawn beautifully. Lots of different cubby areas. A central area with sofas for sharing books and displaying home-made books. A well-equipped art space with displays of the children's art as well as photos and information on how projects were made. Lots of books were available to take home including books written by the children. The young children are encouraged to see themselves as an author and 'write' books and the spelling is not corrected at this stage just 'published' sometimes a 'translation' was written underneath. There was an area for the project. So far a small papier-mache volcano had been built and some cotton wool clouds were hanging in the sky. The next area had a light box and was for quiet and reflective manipulation of the resources, then a home corner with lots of space and small tables and chairs as well as wooden kitchen equipment. The next space had shelves of maths resources and a large carpet area for getting them out to manipulate them.

I was feeling really impressed by how a state-funded school could choose to change the classroom layout and learning environment and create a very different atmosphere for more independent learning. Once I saw on the wall in the Kindergarten a display of drawings of butterflies and a link to the youtube video of 'Austin's Butterfly' by Ron Berger (2011). I was really impressed as I was seeing in action Ron Berger's work (2003) on "*the first draft is not the completed project*".

I had a chance to chat to some of the staff in the 4/5/6 classroom.

They told me that the school had two rights and two responsibilities and that made it possible for learning to occur.

Right to learn.

Right to be safe.

Personal Responsibility to look after yourself to be the best you can.

Community Responsibility to make the community work.

The Principal and I returned to her office and I asked her more about the school golden rules and about a sign she had on her door which really promoted inclusion including gender inclusion.

'Faith. Culture. Gender. Race. Ability. Sexuality. Age. XXX Welcomes You.'

A poster reads on the wall. Above the words are a picture of legs showing all sorts of shoes and clothes including religious dress.

This school shows edge-ucational 'gems' by transforming its environment, timetable, role of adults and whole community for learning even though it still must offer the state curriculum. It shows real effort at inclusion, including gender-inclusion, aiming to meet the needs of all student and staff. It also attempts to step out of the dialogue of privilege as this state funded school has a wide catchment of socio-economic backgrounds and nationalities.

7.4.2 Teachers 'educating differently' within a traditonal setting.

7.4.2.1 Blended approaches in a UK mainstream Reception (4/5 year olds) class

This is offered to show the challenges as well as the possibilities of using blended approaches to 'educating differently' within an inner-city state funded school in the UK.

In 2015 Kath had a new project to lead a Foundation Stage at an inner-city school in Sheffield. She was hoping to be inspired by Steiner Waldorf, other alternatives and 'best practice' as much as possible. One of the biggest challenges in redesigning the classroom was the interactive whiteboard.

Pride of place, slap bang in the centre of the room and Kath had an idea. We wet-felted a board cover for each room. It was great project and they hang beautifully in each classroom. Luckily each class is called after a tree so we felted the tree and made covers for each season for all three rooms.

Over the Summer I help her as she guts the rooms. The environment is another key area for both Kath and me. She has a small budget and after getting rid of three skips worth of stuff there is space in each room for a sofa, different lights, natural toys and a simplified home corner. It is school policy to have colour-coded board displaying work and so we made beautiful frames and paint them pastel colours. Kath gets plants and a sets up a nature table. We paint a blackboard along the wall for practicing letters and find suitable picture books. We discuss ideas and approaches I have seen on my travels that may be relevant here. We struggle with the idea of teaching such young children to read and I remember the use of 'The Picture Exchange Communication System' (PECS) books (Bondy & Frost, 1994) in special needs schools I have worked in and Kath makes them so the children can 'read' the songs and stories as the term progresses.

Yet it actually ends up being a lot harder than either of us anticipated. The school environment can be changed but the home life cannot. These new children in general came from very different backgrounds than the parent and child groups or early years setting we had worked in so far. I observed one day and saw how few children at 4 could actually put one foot in front of the other as

they walked down steps. They just didn't have the gross motor skills and they also didn't know how to do imaginative play. It really needed to be scaffolded. And 30 children is too many. They have to fit into the school expectations of sitting on the carpet and lining up quietly. It took time and energy and made the task of getting these children to the government expected levels of literacy and numeracy by the time they enter Y1 even harder. Of course, as the term progressed they got used to the daily routines and expectations and more imaginative play happened. The outside space was too small and dark and needed drastic changes. I went in one morning with some sticks and potato peelers and ran a mini forest school activity which went down well but there is little free play time when focus groups need to happen. Kath is working on a project to get funding to transform the outside space which will really enrich the environment. But it is just so much work. She works over 70 hour weeks and yes the Senior Management are supportive but it just doesn't seem sustainable to me. Kath ended up with a bad back at Christmas and couldn't enjoy the holiday. Now that isn't fair.

Of course, mainstream education needs people like Kath who are prepared to put that work in, can manage their staff to make changes, and are working using different methods in mainstream. This is a fantastic example of 'educating differently' in an area of low socio-economic background. However, it is hard work and still very constrained by government expectations, school and society, league tables and grading young children. It has made Kath an amazing manager and drawn on her creative skills to meet all the pressures and expectations and in my view improve the 'education' of the children in her school. BUT, I don't want to do that. Is the truth that I am selfish or work-shy? I just think that it is too many compromises for me and I search for something

else to put my energy into... For now I am fascinated by how to teach literacy to young children and the importance of outdoor learning and free play. So as I visit schools I always have in mind Kath in her Reception class thinking "What could be shared?"

7.4.2.2 Running an 'Ideal School' project with Middle School Students, Leysin American School, Switzerland.

Dr Paul Magnuson runs the Leysin American School research faculty (LASER) where I have worked twice during my PhD as a visiting scholar. Leysin American School is an exclusive academic international boarding school which focusses on International Baccalaureate for its 9-12 Grade students. The younger students (7/8 Grade) are part of an innovative Middle School programme. Knowing about my research Magnuson devised a project on the 'Ideal School' where groups of middle schoolers, using eduScrum approach (explained in 7.5.1.1) were given the challenge of:

Presenting their ideal schools in a poster session at a conference... to which all of our seventh through tenth graders would come as well as some students and faculty members from other schools. We also told them that an expert in ideal schools, Alys, would arrive in the last weeks of the project to give feedback on the students' ideal schools based on her many school visits across the world.

(Magnuson & Mendus, 2017: 51)

I have given talks about my journey 'Searching for the Ideal School' around the world to undergraduate students at Plymouth university and post-graduates at the University of Hull and it often leads to fascinating discussions, especially when I ask them to design their 'Ideal School'. Running a similar concept with young people currently in school was a fascinating experience and I hoped would reveal authentic opinions from children in 2017.

However, following Hughes's work on 'imagining otherwise' which argues "*how could young people possibly imagine a school with no classrooms or even walls if they have no knowledge or experience of it?*" (2015: 239) I worked with the middle schoolers for two weeks and tried very hard to offer them lots of radical stories of 'educating differently' to hopefully allow them the opportunity to be brave with their ideas. However, I recognised that it was still a school project and that the system is hierarchical with students predisposed to please the teacher. So it was not surprising that:

On the surface it appeared that four out of the six schools seemed very similar to LAS [Leysin American School], which on the one hand was a credit to the current system, but on the other hand raised questions of how seriously the students had taken up the challenge to design their own 'Ideal School'. However, once Alys began to get to know the students she was able to dig further and extrapolate what made each school unique. (Magnuson & Mendus, 2017: 51).

I used my approach of looking for 'gems' from performing School Tourism with the poster presentations from each of the schools that the students designed and in my talk about 'Searching for the Ideal School' I found examples internationally that had similarities to the group's ideal. Reflecting on the project in class the students gave their own suggestions of changes that could occur in their current school that would make it more 'ideal' for them. One student gave an interesting opinion on what is 'school':

There was unanimous support for their Ideal School having classes, although Alys had repeatedly emphasised that the Ideal School does not need to be in a building nor even have a time-table, sharing with students notions about "Democratic Education". One sceptical student responded: "Our ideal school would have classes because without classes the school isn't a school" (Magnuson & Mendus, 2017: 52).

This was a fascinating project to be involved with and I recognised that although the students came from 14 different countries that the costs of attending this school also add another level of privilege and background to the opinions of

these students on what is 'school'. I think it opens up many possibilities of entering into 'Ideal School' projects with other students around the world. I worked as an advisor for the 'Dream your School' project run in Brighton, UK in February 2017 which worked with state-funded schools on a similar concept. If children are encouraged to question the status-quo from a young age then change is more likely to be possible.

Conclusion

This chapter liberates the thesis from the constraints of 'Searching for the Ideal School' by accepting the oxymoron that the 'ideal' does not exist now. From this place of liberation it allows new understanding of how performing School Tourism has allowed the 'gems' within the current neoliberal world to glow and offers some examples of places that are practically re-patterning the understanding of what is education through their own grass-roots changes to the system, particularly through exploring autonomous approaches within a set-curriculum as well as examples of independent teachers striving for change. However, in Chapter 8 a further step is taken exploring the shadow sides of performing School Tourism as well as taking a leap to begin to understand the rhizome of the multiplicities of Alys-we and the 'Ideal School' on a larger more global scale.

Chapter 8 - The Shadow side of performing School Tourism

Introduction

Continuing the performative autoethnographic-we style in which this thesis has been written, through story, poems and reflection, from the multiplicities of Alys-we, Chapter 8 aims to explore the shadow side (the challenges) that arose from performing School Tourism. The aim of this chapter is to discuss issues that arose so that others engaging in School Tourism are aware of the potential conflicts. Towards the end of the chapter the thesis takes a step from exploring the specific focus of the 'Ideal School' towards the greater impact that performing School Tourism could have in a wider context.

8.1 The Queering of 'Bad-Alys' - The dangers of pedestals - the Green School, Bali and then Tamera, Portugal...

I had wanted to visit the Green School since it was founded in 2008 and had been following its progress and changes in pedagogical ideals online. I was passionate about sustainability and excited to read about how this influenced the curriculum.

From attending the week at the Green School I learnt that the main aim of the Green School is, 'Learning something of value to the world now.' This was explained as being important as it is not the traditional approach of learning now for the future – to get a good job, or go to a good University but learning for the world not for the individual. The curriculum in the Primary school is organised into three frames - the Integral Frame (the Thematic Lessons), the Instructional Frame (the Proficiency lessons) and the Experiential Frame (practical lessons). For example a topic on Bamboo would include eating it, building with it and making watches from it.

Mendus, Journalling about the Green School February 2016, [Melbourne, March 2016].

As the poem in section 6.1 shows, realising that the Green School was not my ideal was upsetting.

I found it hard to cope with the level of privilege - for example each classroom has two equal teachers however the Indonesian teacher is paid ten times less than the international teacher. Or how there are scholarship children but they were pointed out to us as we were shown round which felt like the old approach in the UK to have separate (and very obvious) lists of children on free-school-meals. Of course there were 'gems', the confident and innovative presentations by students about their businesses and projects which showed the authentic importance given to entrepreneurship for sustainability. The fact that the high-school focussed on entrepreneurship over high-stakes-tests excited me as it felt like a new vision for the future. However, with reflection the push of the individual to succeed in business is yet another aspect of neoliberalism and potentially not as radical as I first thought.

Mendus, Journalling about the Green School February 2016, [Melbourne, March 2016].

With hindsight, it is fascinating to realise that the Green School was also the product of neoliberalism. It was too easy for me before I visited to put its sustainable curriculum and lack of high-stakes-testing on a pedestal as my 'ideal' and to see it as very different from the traditional, mainstream neoliberal schools which I had earlier critiqued. For example, when Fielding and Moss describe how the neoliberal system requires a very particular 'subject' that needs to be trained from a very young age, one that is "*flexible, competitive, entrepreneurial, choice-loving and autonomous, able to thrive in markets*" (2010: 23) they could be describing very key aspects of the Green School curriculum of 'entrepreneurship for sustainability'.

My experience at the Green School did not just bring me awareness that the 'Ideal does not exist', it also reminded me to regulate my behaviour and not put somewhere that I have not physically seen on a pedestal as the 'answer'. This again supports the concept of embodied School Tourism, you can read as much as you can about a school or educational philosophy but it is not until you spend time in a particular place and think deeply about the cultural/societal impact, is it possible to begin to know what is going on. My passion for the environment, sustainability and outdoor learning had rose-tinted my understanding about the

Green School until I was able to spend a week at the school. I had been compelled, I realised, by very clever marketing that it was more innovative and radical that it was in practice.

I was greatly disappointed to observe the use of worksheets in the Kindergarten and even though the primary classrooms may have been beautifully constructed out of bamboo, the classroom layout and approaches seemed very similar to what I have worked in and observed in UK state-schools. The middle-school seemed more progressive as it began to use entrepreneurship and projects which were extended into the high-school. Mendus, Journalling about the Green School February 2016, [Melbourne, March 2016].

However, I had naively as a School Tourist presumed that this school would be the answer to my search for the 'Ideal School' - creating a story in my head that the Green School would be a place that combined innovative pedagogy, self autonomy and sustainability - and when it did not deliver I was heart-broken.

Even though teachers that we met explained that attending the Green School "*inspires creativity and living outside the box*" the continual gut feeling that this school was hiding things from those of us on the 'Educators Course' made me wary and ill at ease. If performing School Tourism can be viewed as a feeling journey then my visit to the Green School was very evocative of feeling ill.

What has frustrated me in this PhD research is that although I learnt from the Green School to refocus my whole thesis, I did not learn the lesson to refrain from putting places that are 'educating differently' on a pedestal. After realising that the Green School was not the answer I moved my pedestal to believe that the Tamera community in Portugal would be the answer instead.

I feel ill-at-ease to realise that possibly I am a greater part of the neoliberal machine than I think I am. For example, my thesis continues to return to see 'choice' as important factor in education. Maybe this is part of performing School Tourism, thinking like a 'tourist' or 'nomad', moving on to a better place or what they think is better...this putting on a pedestal...thinking there is always somewhere else in the distance...new options or choice? However, it could also be seen as post-modern, not neoliberal, to be looking

at choice and inclusivity, not on a selfish, individual scale, but as part of a bigger picture...

Mendus, Journalling on neoliberalism, [Granada, Spain, September 2017].

I had been impressed by the use of renewable technology and permaculture from a visit there in October 2013 and over the summer of 2016 I completed an online course about all of the Tamera approaches and philosophies. A few warning bells began to ring about fixed opinions on gender and sexuality that I had not had satisfactory answers to in online discussions but I was so sure that sustainability, community living and a place where people can speak their truth and live in 'love free from fear' whilst working towards 'world peace' seemed like a possible answer to if not the 'Ideal School', an ideal place to live and bring up children. How wrong could I be?

Vignette 1. Alys the future parent - Being triggered at Tamera.

Tamera, Tamera, who are you Tamera?

With your green lush trees, your tranquil ponds and

Visions of free love, yet not free love, one of love without fear.

And love without fear however you word it is difficult to manifest.

Today we learnt of the role of the father and it is radical yet still tinged with the patriarchy Tamera, we hear, detests.

The father in his caravan surrounded by men, the mother in another surrounded by women and the small children elsewhere in a yurt with other adults.

Is this just progressive twist on the 'own bedroom' or is this relinquishing power/ deep intimacy with that young child?

And I wonder and ponder deeply on why this triggers me?

The concept that it is my needs too being met co-sleeping and spending a large amount of time with my child? Or the fact that the father rarely has a main caregiver role for the child, yes they can sleep together in one of the parent's caravans but it is the mother, the feeder who stays with other women.

It seems gender plays a fundamental role in Tamera, deep rooted divides that supposedly bring power, they talk about the age and the uprise of the feminine power but what about those that are gender-fluid? What about those that are neither male nor female? And what about Alys-Julius, the Roman boy from Vindolanda? Is he not welcome here?

Of course on one side it is a radical experiment in family and community but what about the consent from the young children to be the topic of their parents' 'research?'

Children go to a creche and then Kindergarten and the main carer gives outside this time may not even be their parents. The two 4.5 year olds in the solar village who sleep in the yurt (the spare room?) with other adults during the week doing the nightly routine. Is this a boarding school experience? Or a children's home? A rehash of the kibbutz? Or something new? Their parents are around but busy with their lives or other children.

There is something freeing for the parent to have their own space and time to work in the community and to connect to different lovers and people. There is also freedom for the child from a very young age to connect to chosen adults, people they energetically resonate with, to be adoptive parents.

I suppose one of my challenges is how controversial this all is to a Steiner person like myself.

If a child has chosen their parents and then you ship them off to other care givers have you dislodged their karma? Or is it just the giving birth that was your main role in the child's life? I think about the other care givers and what skills do they have in looking after children and if one of my major criticisms of more traditional approaches to early childhood is the lack of skills and understanding of child development and pedagogy how do I know these

other people caring for the child have the skills I want in someone other than me caring for my child?

And I realise I am digging into the territory of Alys the future parent, which reminds me of the unofficial title for my thesis, 'a job for me and a school for my future children'. I recognise it makes sense if all of my thesis is about turning my life and society upside down then I also need to question the nuclear family.

I am after living in community I find it fascinating and rewarding and think that the nuclear family is an old fashioned view of society.

However, I want to bring my children up with my partner surrounded by supportive people not suffocated by them. I realise that I am an individual and a radical community with many rules just makes me want to rebel not conform.

8.1.1 Alys the School-Tourist - learning from the Green School and Tamera

As a PhD student living on a student bursary I live well in our van with just enough money to travel and visit schools around the world. I have my own ethics that I do not pay to visit schools but ask and if they say yes then visit and then send a write-up about my visit which the school can choose to share in school newsletters. Both the Green School and Tamera were exceptions to this rule and it is interesting to reflect how much on a pedestal I had positioned the outcome. For both, I joined an expensive week long course; at the Green School the 'educators course' and at Tamera, even though I had been in extensive discussion with the school teachers I was asked to join their Introduction week to (similar to the Green School) be taught about the philosophies and approaches of Tamera before I could visit the school. I was challenged by the dichotomy between what could be seen on the surface as a

utopian way of living and a sense of fear that most of the other people on the course had become totally brainwashed and happy to give over more money to volunteer and perpetuate what we had come to realise was a 'cult' (see Bartlett, 2017, a recount from a journalist who was also visiting Tamera on the same course in October 2016).

The ingrained patriarchy in the old white man living on the hill where followers met daily for 'God Spot' (their term) to read his writings and discuss his words and the importance in the Old White Women (referred to as the 'Fascist Matriarchy' by a long-term volunteer we met) running the 'Forum' where everything is discussed and agreed including who will be future parents and what work will be done.

Mendus, Writing during siesta time - On realising it was a cult... [In Tamera, Portugal, October 2016].

Even when I was on the introduction week it took a lot of negotiation to actually be allowed to spend two mornings in the classrooms the following week and I learnt they almost never have visitors in the Place for the Children.

With reflection, paying for School Tourism makes the performance closer connected to actual tourism - a buying in of a service not usually part of your life. Being aware of the different interactions and power structures that are put in place (even if hidden) once money is added to the equation is interesting and I hope that in my future School Tourism if I choose to pay to visit a school that I am also aware of the imbalance and avoid putting a particular school/place of learning on a pedestal.

8.2 Alys the School Tourist standing up to the patriarchy

The following poem explores the first time that through performing School Tourism that I needed to stand up to my host and leave before the visit was over. This experience highlighted white-privilege, patriarchy and a patronising attitude in action. For the School Tourist, it shares an example that not every school visit plays out as expected and that the School Tourist is temporally

engaged in the visit not always as a placid observer but as a political being -
sharing stories but also being responsible to stand-up for their own rights and
others as they would in their day-to-day life if they were abused.

*“You need search no longer” he says
“For we are the ‘Ideal School’”.*
*And something inside me clenches
And my hackles rise
What is going on here?
The ‘Ideal School’ is an oxymoron!*
*The tour of the school shows classes so silent the doors can be left open into
the hall
For no one is disturbed
By the silence of ‘Obedience’.
Our guides, so happy to be here,
So passionate about learning and achieving
Futures destined to academic High-Schools.
I felt proud of our guides
Knowing little about their lives except the stories told on the website
Children from families of ‘lowest income and highest values’
Later, I dared to ask the Principal about ‘values’
How did I know I would agitate the
HORNETS NEST?
B U Z Z ZZZZZ ZZZZZ ZZZZ ZZZZZZZZ
Accusations and theories about me and my life followed...
“Doctorate students this...”
“Your Professors that....”
“I’ve never had anyone not be impressed EVER.....”
My attempts to interrupt stopped with sarcasm
“You will never hear but maybe you don’t want to...
“You want my answer to write your thesis...”
How can this man make such judgements about me?
He knows nothing about me at all.
Heart racing, anxious tension
(Whilst in the background bloody strong incense is burning and itching my eyes
and throat)
He does not know that my whole thesis is about a feeling journey...
I hate being patronised.
I sat there lost
Feeling stripped bare
Violated even...
Later he mentions ‘kindness’ as a value and ‘loyal’ and ‘hardworking’ and
‘agile’...*

*“Thank you” I say
“Thank you, that was what I was looking for earlier.”
He continues to talk more, answering questions, waffling on and I find myself
writing
OWM on my page in front of me
Wow an (old) white man in action!
True privilege, arrogance...
I mentioned I felt uncomfortable
He said, “not my problem”
I said, “my emotions are my own, so I shall leave...”
And now in the lobby I sit
Shocked.... Alone...
Thinking about all the schools I have visited
I have never had to leave before.
Across from me a 12 year old girl is ringing her parents
A teacher and receptionist beside her
“Mom, I lied to my teacher,” she explains in a small voice
My stomach tightens at the shame.
Our guide had just agreed this was his
‘Ideal School’
“REALLY?” I shout silently inside.
And it is not for me in my position of privilege to judge
Knowing that for one of our guides the opportunities from this school are likely
to have transformed his life.
Yet the OWM in charge speaks sarcastically and judgementally to visitors
Which makes me cry out at this hypocrisy.
Mendus, Poem written in the school lobby, [New York, May 2017].*

8.3 Alys the School Tourist - Sharing School Tourism with others

Most of the School Tourism that has occurred within this thesis was carried out alone which was mostly down to the solo journey of the PhD but not (as argued in Chapter 2) the definition of School Tourism. Had I been allowed to visit Brazil in November 2014 then potentially this thesis may have taken a very different angle looking at School Tourism fundamentally being a collective rather than individual experience. Meeting Michael Kamen in March 2017 and being invited to join him and three students from Texas to visit schools in New York in May

2017 gave me an opportunity to share my School Tourism performances with others. It was an exciting and formative experience.

Vignette 2. First thoughts on group School Tourism

Tired

T I R E D

But exhilarated

*The buzz of visiting places and talking to passionate adults
Watching the students wonder (like me) at the examples we are seeing*

Proud of their questions

Worried I am talking too much, asking too much...

I am not so self conscious when I am on my own.

*I have justified myself already and it is easier to disappear into the sea of
children*

To observe and chat and watch

Yet the camaraderie of the group

The recap coffee with Michael

Helps me see the bigger picture

Refocusses me on the gems when I get lost by my annoyances

Why uniform I whine... when you were doing so well in being radical

Blinded by my own issues

But with the group I need to justify myself or be gently reminded

To stop bitching and finding fault in every place I visit

And I see my writing changes, my memories change

*No longer sitting recalling every move in great detail as if painting a picture of
my shadow following me around the schools*

Now focussing on the key points

The possible gems, the things I will take away.

*And as I go to bed exhausted, jet lagged, invigorated from feeling truly helpful
and knowledgeable*

I wonder what the students will write about tomorrow's schools

And will we get to embody our visits enough to step away from judging

*Or was David Gribble right - you do need to spend several days at each school
to embody an approach?*

*Or are you just a greedy tourist eating your fill and never getting to the good
part in the middle?*

Can school-tourists window shop successfully?

Sleep is calling

Rest my achey feet, catch up on my sleep

Ready for tomorrow's schools.

Mendus, First thoughts on group School Tourism, [New York, May 9th 2017]

Throughout the week of group School Tourism I did notice differences; for example, there were too many of us to go on the same schedule in each school so we gathered different impressions of teachers and classrooms and as we all carry our own stories and visions of 'education' our personal journeys were all different. However, it was making time to recap and share our stories orally and in written form that I realised a much deeper version of School Tourism occurs. As in the Vignette 2 above I recognised that I had to become more accountable for my opinions and feelings and think more objectively without losing my individual gut instincts. The week after New York, I carried out some independent School Tourism visits and I felt a little lost and lonely without having colleagues to discuss and reflect on the experience. However, it reminded me to think again with Braidotti (2012) that even if I was carrying out these later school visits alone, I was not alone, but part of a wider network. Reflecting back on Goffman's (1959) idea of front and back stage conversations, I realise that group School Tourism does provide a level of hierarchies. Michael worked very hard to make sure that I was introduced not as one of his students but as a peer, but I was aware that unfortunately often cultural norms defer to the older man as the 'expert' and I realised that I was not always allowed the more personal and deep and open conversations that often happen when I visit places alone.

A paper is being written on the outcomes of this week visiting schools in New York on the developing teacher identities of the three pre-service teachers that accompanied us. It has been fascinating and eye-opening to read about key themes emerging such as why use grading and questioning the use of titles and hierarchies for teachers (e.g. 'Miss' rather than 'Alys') and their thoughts on what approaches from 'educating differently' they can bring into the public-

schools in which they will work. Working on this paper has shown me the potential importance in including performing School Tourism within teacher training programmes or early career development to show possibilities of 'educating differently' and allow teachers to find their own 'gems' which they could use in their classrooms. The key thing here is that through School Tourism change could happen in education on grass-roots level that begins to create momentum for new understandings.

It is important to realise the role of the inner journey of the School Tourist, in making these changes to education. For example:

As I learn more about different ideas and approaches to 'educating differently' I recognise a challenge is the ability to see exactly what is happening in a school visit without being blinded by lack of understanding of a pedagogical approach or too much comparison to other schools visited (or own childhood experiences). I wonder when is the time to visit schools? Do pre-service teachers need to learn about different pedagogies first so that they have a deeper insight or is a raw, 'untrained' eye as helpful and insightful when performing School Tourism?

Mendus, Journalling on the inner journey of School Tourism, [Cornwall, September 2017].

Romero's (2015) description of the effect of inner work (inspired by Rudolf Steiner's work on anthroposophy) could be used to understand how performing School Tourism affects the inner being of the School Tourist. This inner journey influences the School Tourist as they choose to share stories of places that are 'educating differently' or for pre-service teachers to be part of their 'becoming' teacher identities and approaches to their classrooms and teaching. Romero explains that:

Behind all that appears to the senses is an activity creating a movement, rhythm, or pulse that we experience in our inner life. We no longer perceive only the outer form of a thing, but also experience its effects on our soul. These effects arise as an inner movement. What creates this inner changing, streaming within, is not our reaction of liking or not liking what is observed; rather, it is the activity unseen by the eye that lives in the thing itself. (Romero, 2015: 14).

8.4 Alys the state-school teacher - I am no longer a teacher...

Section 8.3 shared experiences from group School Tourism and how for the pre-service teachers it was one way of shaping their emerging teacher identity. However, this section looks at how School Tourism for me initially shaped my teacher identity but later on led me to question my role as a teacher and left me a little lost about my future career.

So what is my role as the adult in the classroom? Is that the correct vocabulary?

Am I a teacher? A mentor? A facilitator? A friend? In 2014 I wrote in my journal:

“Am I researching myself out of a career as a teacher, into one where I can stop acting when I am with the children and be myself and share the learning journey, the trials and tribulations, sometimes presenting material or supporting training on communication and life skills and other times just being present to support a child in their independent investigations? Could this work in mainstream schools? Could this work in my utopian school?”

Mendus, Journalling about teaching, [Cumbria, 14th December 2014].

And now I look back at Alys the Educator in 2014 and realise that Alys is no longer wanting to even be called a teacher in 2017. As I currently travel in South East Asia it often comes up in conversation with people I meet that I am a teacher and they ask what age I am working with and we smile and I am ‘accepted’ by the local community.

In one remote village in Laos, after a visit to the local high school and an attempt to teach some English to the 17 year olds, Bozz and I were revered with children clasping their hands together and bowing low when they saw us walk by them on the street. It felt really strange. The unusual mix of cultural respect for a ‘teacher’ an ‘elder’, but also a sense of fraud. I am not a teacher. I do not want to stand at the front of 50 young people and make them recall after me words from a textbook. And take a step away from here to any other ‘classroom’ I have visited around the world. I do not want to be the ‘learned’ one, inputting knowledge, gaining some sort of power trip. I also have come to a conclusion that although I like children and young people I do not want to spend my whole time with one small group I strive for greater variety in my life. Post-PhD Alys does not choose to be a School Teacher. This does not mean I do not want to give talks or run workshops or share stories with people of all ages it just has allowed me to realise that my future is not as a school teacher.

Mendus, Am I a school teacher? [Cambodia, February 2017].

*For I am seriously considering unschooling, world schooling
Unchained from the need to be part of an established school*

We can live anywhere.

As I am no longer defining myself as a teacher

Having researched myself out of a job.

The queering of my existence now legitimises my life

So does the mobilities paradigm as it supports my nomadology

My performing School Tourism approach to understanding

The world is my oyster

It allows me to breathe and realise our itinerant life is just fine.

Mendus, Rejected section from the ICQI 2017 performance paper, [Uphall, May 2017].

8.5 Alys the PhD Student/Theorist - Discussing the big-picture

It has been easy to get sucked into the minute details, arguing one pedagogy against another and what has ended up being many words of this thesis one definition against another to avoid the stifling boundaries of a binary. However, I know that life is more than this and the fun of being a PhD student has been to explore the details, to be free to follow my nomadology as a School Tourist but also to remind the Alys-we that it is not all about Alys. That Alys-we is rhizomatically part of the Earth-we: the multiplicity of voices on this Earth, human and non human that is calling out for a 'New Story' (see Berry, 1978).

Mendus, Reflecting on the PhD process, [Cornwall, September 2017].

Section 8.5 weaves story with theory and description of how attending the Dark Mountain Weekend, at Embercombe community in Devon in September 2016 (Section 8.5.1) influenced the dialogue of my thesis by reminding me to connect to the post-human influences on this thesis and to step away from being too focussed on the detail of 'types' of school/schooling and to question not just 'education' but the relationship of humanity and the natural world. In Section 8.5.2 I explore further the role of performing School Tourism in this 'New Story' (Berry, 1978).

8.5.1 Alys the edge-dweller - Learning from the Dark Mountain weekend, September 2016, Embercombe, Devon

(my thoughts are indented in italics).

The stars shone brightly. The shooting stars dropped out the sky leaving luminesce traces of their stories in the sky. In the half light of the stars, my friends, Dan, Annie and I stood mesmerised by the stars surrounded by the heaving boughs of the orchard. I wandered off to scrump some apples soon the tangy juice of harvest was whetting my lips and dripping onto my chin. We all wondered and wandered at our very existence in this universe. The conversation ebbed and flowed along the lines of the stories we had heard, the assumptions and critiques of the event, our own budding research and dreams for society and our life as three friends.

Here I was at the 'Dark Mountain Gathering Basecamp', a weekend for people interested in the Dark Mountain Project:

The Dark Mountain Project is a network of writers, artists and thinkers who have stopped believing the stories our civilisation tells itself. We see that the world is entering an age of ecological collapse, material contraction and social and political unravelling, and we want our cultural responses to reflect this reality rather than denying it.

(The Dark Mountain Project, 2017).

The people at the Dark Mountain weekend felt like a mix of lives lived in different cities and rural places across the land, except that the room was white, ghostly white. The hues of the bodies, covered in oil sliding around in workshops at other alternative gatherings that I attended this summer of alabaster white, through pale browns to deep chocolate hues to almost black were not represented here. They are in other alternative events I attend, so where were their voices this weekend?

It made me feel uneasy, like a strange gathering of 'otherness' in our gathering of inclusivity.

One keynote speaker was David Abram (1996, 2011) who spoke of our connection with all living beings and the interconnectedness of all life on this planet, yet we were an under-represented example of the human species. Were we stuck in that bubble that Dan worried about, “*not really making any change?*”

However, I believe, as the main storytellers Martin Shaw and David Abram and others suggested, that the power of the story is not just in the telling but in the ripple effect that happens next as the words, the archetypes, permeate down in to my soul unearthing and processing ideas and hidden ‘gems’ buried deep down under the rocks.

The analogy of Bozz cave-digging in Somerset with Annie’s parents, Alice and Tony at the same time on Sunday, unearthing rocks and debris trapped in the mouth of the cave. Liberating the pieces blocking access to the underworld and carefully and manually as a team, a community, lifting and carrying and winching them back to the surface.

Part of me felt belittled in the awe of the great storyteller, I wanted him to be my teacher. How can I tell stories as well as him? Or is that really what I am aspiring to be, to be like Martin Shaw?

Then I am back looking up at Martin Shaw (for I am on a cushion on the floor) and my brain is trying to question the concept of hero worshipping and hierarchy and yes, it is another OWM up there.

Mendus, Section from the paper presented at ICQI, May 2017 (included in full in Chapter 9).

Chatting to Dan and Annie as we enjoyed the “*alchemy that can happen when you honour the spaces that open in-between*” (Strang, 2016) all the talks, workshops and performances of the weekend helped me ground myself in the

mix of “*creative responses to this era of converging crises*” (Strang, 2016). At one stage we found ourselves talking disgruntledly about ‘Brexit’ and I share stories about the democratic schools that I have visited telling them that I find the consensus approach really scary and it reminds me about how I feel that a step beyond the current version of democracy is needed. If the ‘Brexit and Trump-era’ could be seen as a move towards post-democracy (Crouch, 2004) then I am looking for a post-post-democracy (or what Mason, 2015, calls Post Capitalism) or something else entirely?

At the end of one of the sessions titled the ‘Education for the Future’ I went and found Dan and the truth was we were both a bit disappointed as there was no mention in the discussion about current teachers who are working under the radar for change. Which reminded me of the role of the ‘gems’ I had unearthed in places ‘educating differently’ in this thesis. Or others who work so hard doing as they are told and maybe if they were ‘told’ something else then real change could occur?

On Sunday morning another OWM steps up onto the most awaited stage, the audience squeezed into the hall, all waiting expectantly. This time it was a wild looking man with big glasses perched on his nose and his body moving theatrically like a puppet on a string. I have known about David Abram’s work since 2007. Abram’s first book (1996) comes from his PhD and it weaves a chapter of creative, eloquent story illustrating his arguments with a more theoretical chapter throughout. His second book (2011) strongly argues the importance of oral language as a contact between oneself and others:

Oral language gusts through us - our sounded phrases borne by the same air that nourishes the cedars and swells the cumulus clouds. Laid out and immobilised on the flat surface, our words tend to forget that they are sustained by this windswept earth; they begin to imagine that their primary task is to provide a *representation* of the world (as though they were outside of, and not really a *part of*, this world).

(Abram, 2011: 11).

I put my hand up and asked *“If we are looking at the future of education then do we need to look at the relationship between the current focus on the written word and literacy and oral cultures?”*

Abram replied in detail, explaining in his organisation AWE (Association of Wild Ethics) that it was of *“ECOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE TO RESTORE ORAL CULTURE”*. He argued that instead of reading bedtime stories parents should be telling stories with gestures and these stories should be told to children in the correct seasons in the place on the land that the story is from with an accompanying dance and music. He reiterated that not all stories should be written down as he had argued earlier that it changes the connection to a place once the ‘spell of spelling’ has taken over. He finished by reminding the audience, *“DO NOT WRITE ALL STORIES DOWN!”*

I sat there wondering if by writing down a story or experience then it becomes positioned temporally and spatially. In terms of performing School Tourism, maybe I need to recognise the importance of the oral sharing of stories (or even the unspoken embodied stories that come from the feeling journey of actually being in each ‘school’ environment) as being as important or even more important than my written observations?

8.5.2 Alys-we performing School-Tourism for the ‘New Story’

The anthropocene (see Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2017) is the proposed name for the new geological epoch differentiated by the *“overwhelming human influence*

upon the earth" (Grusin, 2017: vii). Following Grusin who argues, "*that humans must now be understood as climatological or geological forces on the planet that operate just as nonhumans would, independent of human will, belief, or desires*" (Grusin, 2015: vii). Therefore, placing performing School Tourism temporally and spatially within the anthropocene gives it agency (Barad, 2007), a role to intra-act (Barad, 2007) with the multiplicities of the Earth-we. This then follows Abram (2011) who argued for the importance of sharing oral stories on the collective consciousness (linked here to those from performing School Tourism) and St.Pierre (2014) who argues that the language that matters is spoken and heard. As Abram explained:

The journey from one ecosystem into another is precisely a journey from one state of mind into another, different, state. From one mode of awareness, flavoured by salt and the glint of sunlight on waves, to an altered, inland awareness wherein the cries of those gulls become only a vague, half-remembered dream.

(Abram, 2011: 139).

Other understandings of the anthropocene have concentrated on the effects of climate change (Klein, 2014) and the ongoing possibility of the 'sixth-extinction' (Kolbert, 2014). However, Kingsnorth (2017) (one of the founders of the Dark Mountain Project) is concerned that the over focus on sustainability has disconnected the focus on wild places for their own sake which he is calling 'dark ecology'. Kingsnorth, like others (Macy and Johnstone, 2012; Ploktin, 2008) are searching (like this thesis) for new ways forward towards what some are calling the 'New Story' (Berry, 1978; New Story Hub, 2017).

Macy and Johnstone (2012) argue that we need to engage in what they call the 'Great Turning' (2012: 26). Their work suggests by engaging with 'Active Hope' and an inner journey, a mutually reinforcing - self and world connection can happen (what I am understanding as the Earth-we) but this needs "*compassion*

and insight into radical interconnectivity” (Macy & Johnstone, 2012: 102). My connection to inner work has iteratively moved throughout this thesis from its central tenet in Steiner Waldorf education and anthroposophy and its growing role as an aspect of performing School Tourism. Here again in my understandings towards the ‘New Story’ the conscious inner work (Macy & Johnstone, 2012) is also connected to the more-than-human psyche of the collective awareness (Abram, 2011), again seen here as the Earth-we. I see resonance in performing School Tourism with Abram’s (2011) idea that as we travel we connect to the psyche of the land/place (or school) which impacts our own self awareness and even if we stay in one place then the collective shifts of awareness impact everyone through *“delicate changes unfolding in the local mind-scape, changes that imperceptible - but inevitably - affect our emotions, our thoughts, and our actions”* (Abram, 2011: 139).

So through sharing stories from the edge-ucation, those ‘gems’ can have a ripple-effect of changing the world’s imagination or psyche (Abram, 2011) - the Earth-we. Abram (2011) also argues for educators (or, I argue, for all people) to share stories from the land so to be *“renewing the sensory craft of listening, and the sensuous art of storytelling”* (Abram, 2011: 288) to becoming part of *“a fresh perception [which] is slowly shaping itself - a clarified encounter between the human animal and its elemental habitat”* (Abram, 2011: 299). Ploktin (2008) also argues for an education that supports each individual becoming part of the greater earth community (becoming part of the world’s psyche or Earth-we). He still argues for the need of learning the basics (literacy, numeracy) but questions the need of formal compulsory secondary education beyond that which is self-designed. By returning here to the questions raised by Peim (2016), to unthink education as the solution, reminds me that education as we know will change in

the 'New Story' as the greater collective consciousness of the Earth-we rhizomatically interacts with the post-human anthropocene.

Conclusion

Chapter 8 has explored the challenges that have arisen during this thesis performing School Tourism of putting places yet-to-be-visited on a pedestal, the responsibility of the School Tourist to remove themselves from an unhealthy visit, the different performances and experiences that occur when visiting schools alone or in a group, when you pay for a visit or it is free, and the unexpected result (for the author) from performing School Tourism and realising that the 'ideal' does not exist, that they no longer wanted to be a 'teacher' and finally the role of School Tourism in the bigger picture beyond the Alys-we to the consciousness of the Earth-we. It is important to reflect that throughout the exploration of the 'shadow side' the emotional, feeling journey of the School Tourist is ever-present.

In Chapter 9 the performance paper that was created from this thesis is presented as a transcript (with a link to the you-tube video) and then reflected upon in a Coda.

Chapter 9 - Stories of Hope.

Introduction

As part of performing School Tourism, this thesis has not only been written in a performative autoethnographic style, (the poems, dialogues, voices of Alys-we and journalling), it has also generated a piece of performative autoethnography that has been performed as a paper at two conferences. The first as part of the Post-Human stream at the Beyond Words conference at the University of Plymouth in March 2017. The paper was then refined and refocussed and presented again (and filmed) in a Deleuze panel at the International Conference of Qualitative Inquiry in Champaign-Urbana at the University of Illinois, USA on 19th May 2017. Section 9.1 is an exact copy of the paper given and section 9.2 is a Coda (see Spry, 2011) reflecting on the experience. The performance (Mendus, 2017) can be watched on youtube (https://youtu.be/Z8owyJfMS_A).

9.1 Paper transcript:

'Searching for the Ideal School' - A Rhizomatic edge-ucation.

Good morning. I am Alys Mendus a final year PhD student at the University of Hull on a Scholarship in Freedom to Learn.

The 'Ideal School'

"What do you mean when you say the 'Ideal school?'"

I know what you are all thinking.

As it was Jane Speedy who sat there, stuck, throughout my whole presentation.

"What is Alys on about when she says the ideal school"

Isn't that an oxymoron?!"

And so it is...

And that is why this is more a presentation on who the fuck is Alys-we?

About the multiplicities of Alys that make up me.

I will lower my shields and invite you to join me to peer through the looking glass at Alys.

Today I will introduce you to snapshots from the rhizome

At the interconnected web of my thoughts

Allowing you to meet four nodal Alys's.

Alys-the-edgedweller in a hand-woven garland. **Shows garland.**

Alys-the-school tourist in an Australian stockman's hat. **Shows hat.**

Alys-the-educator in a 1920s hat. **Shows hat.**

Alys-the-van-living-PhD-student with a flower in her hair. **Shows flower.**

Although many of these pieces began being written in one voice of Alys they are all iteratively related so that many voices of Alys can be heard.

For they are all part of the rhizomatic nomadology of my life, through performing School Tourism, searching for the ideal school around the world,

Showing glimpses into the complex web of the assemblage/ethnography or my autoethnographic-we.

And it is through the lens of 'Bad-Alys' towards a queering of the Alys-we that I offer this rhizomatic storytelling of different possibilities.

Aiming that my embodiment of these stories can act as a 'utopian performative of hope' towards societal change.

But what is **The Queering of 'Bad-Alys'**, and who is **'Bad-Alys'**?

'Bad-Alys' follows patterns in my life where I have chosen to step out of the 'normative' way of being.

As a child this covers my exploration of my 'other' identity as 'Julius', a Roman British boy from Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall.

Julius followed my parents home from a visit aged 6 and slept on the floor on his sister's bedroom for weeks.

He makes a bulla to wear and has Alys cut off her long hair and declare that she wants to be/is a boy.

However, I see queering (like Munoz), as not necessarily connected to gender identity or the fluidity of that, but also an exploration of the 'other' spaces the 'gaps' that this performative autoethnographic piece aims to give a voice.

The voice of 'Bad-Alys' will be omnipresent throughout the rhizome.

But what is a School-Tourist?

Performing School-Tourism allows me to understand my embodied journey, using Crouch's (2005) idea that tourism is a 'seductive encounter' and Bauman's (2011) concept that tourists are 'consumers' has helped me position my work.

I visit schools and observe, sometimes I teach or share a story of other schools that I have visited, but mostly I consume... I take photos, think and reflect on what I have (in my opinion) observed and add those thoughts and assumptions to my 'bag-of-tricks' of knowledge about places educating differently.

A mention of another school to visit and off the Tourist takes on another journey...

We live in a van, my home is constantly moving, my life is also that of a 'Vagabond' which Bauman describes as, *"they won't stay in one place for long"* (2011: 22).

And we don't...

But is this not fundamentally about privilege?

To 'pick and choose' as a vagabond school tourist.

I may be on a low-income but I am not destitute or homeless.

Just choosing (at present) to live an itinerant life

I know it means I have more disposable income, and freedom than renting a physically fixed room in a house.

The van dweller as

The journey(wo)man-vagabond-School Tourist.

And the audience should not feel sorry for the van-dweller as this is an activist choice, a place of privilege to resist the normativity of fixed-home-dwelling.

Other theorists have seen Bauman's 'vagabond' or 'tourist' as the 'nomad' (Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari).

The journey of a 'School Tourist' (the vagabond/tourist/nomad) is not linear, it twists and turns, sometimes returning to a 'home' location and other times not.

An unsettled dialogue between an ever-changing-peripheral and its centre.

Rhizomatic theory influences the nomadology of School Tourism as it aims to step away from using the habit of "I" (1991: 105).

For example in the chapter, the "Rhizome", Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) suggested: *"To reach not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I"* (1980/87: 3).

The rhizomatic movements between the subjects that visit schools, the multiplicities of the subjects themselves, the physical and intellectual schools, etc are all intra-acting with each other (Barad, 2007) there is no singular 'I'. But 'performing School Tourism' differs here from the nomadism argued by Braidotti (2012) and Bauman (2011).

Braidotti argues that, "Not all nomads are world travellers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat.

Consciousness-raising and the subversion of set conventions define the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling." (Braidotti, 2012: 24.)

Where I argue that it is '*the literal act of travelling*' that is essential for 'school tourism' as it is an embodied spatial practice.

I recognise that it is possible to use the internet to visit school websites, watch documentaries on particular schools or read articles to be 'visiting' the schools abstractly however this is not school tourism as it misses the emotional aspect of the practice (Zemblyas, 2003).

It is also the 'visit' itself which could be seen as a 'nodal point' as Gale explains, "*where the latencies of emergence become manifest in nodal points in the flows of possibilities of each new rhizomatic encounter*" (2014: 2).

Let us hear from **Alys the-School-Tourist talking about the edge-ucational 'gems'...** **Puts stockman's hat on.**

It took a while to come to me

For a moment of clarity in the ever-spinning-rhizome of my life.

To realise that no one school exists in this moment that is my ideal school....

I had seen 'Ideal' as achievable, realistic

As a cup-half-full kind of person

Full of Bloch's concepts of hope...

Not like the inaccessible Foucaultian utopia

The Ideal School was out there...somewhere

My school-tourism has taken me to over 150 schools in 19 countries

And yet I am left with a bitter taste in my mouth as I cannot find my ideal.

Feeling sad at being accused of being negative about society

Realising that the ideal cannot exist in this neoliberal world.

Then I remember who I am

Some have described me as free-spirit and others as a coyote

So by cartwheeling these concepts of contempt

I can be smiling

Smiling as I begin to see the hidden gems sparkle.

There are hints at the possibility of change in all but the darkest examples of education.

My edge-ucation.

My edge-ucation of hope.

Like a lot of my research – I see the spectrum of Queer Theory making sense here.

"The 'I' has no story of its own that is not the story of relation," (Butler, 2005: 8).

A need for levels of the individual but with access to community and collective learning, moving away from comparison, grading and hierarchy.

It again moves away from the binary -

The search for the ideal school is a long way away from the binary of which is better; alternative education or mainstream.

Thinking I am looking for my 'gems' (MacLure, 2010, 2013b) in the visits gives me hope.

And realising that these 'gems' are my edge-ucation fills me with delight.

The dialogue can continue.

These schools I visit around the world may to varying degrees aim to 'educate differently' but they are still pulled and pushed by the reality of neoliberalism.

For example, Koonwarra in Australia excited me as its 'gems' really glowed, Showing that even within the constraints of a set curriculum, self-autonomous learning is possible.

Or the home education support centre Florescer in Lisbon, Portugal with its learning App is meeting the curriculum in a modern autonomous way.

And other places are out there,

Glowing with 'gems',

Filling this edge-ucational space,

And the search for the ideal has given me

Some stories of hope but still under the shadow of now.

Takes stockman's hat off.

Let us continue with **Alys the van-dwelling-PhD-student...**

Puts flower in hair.

There are some days in the PhD life when it just makes sense

I'm in the back of our van perched on the bed, snuggled up against some sheepskins, my bare knees squeezed under a beautiful piece of reclaimed oak that is my desk. My laptop open and pile of books beside me.

The cars are rushing by on the road outside but I am stopped here.

Bozz is gently breathing...snoring slightly? As he sleeps behind me. My coffee waits in its little enamel cup waiting to be cool enough to drink and I lick the last remnants of croissant and home made strawberry jam from my lips and smile.

Outside the sun is dappling through the trees in the sheltered spot we found to park our van last night and my heart beats faster as I remember why we chose to stop here.

We are by Cley Hill in Wiltshire and a few hundred metres up the track is a large field of wheat with the most fabulous crop circle.

I'd never been to a crop circle before yesterday although I have dreamed of the day and yes I have been on cropcircles.com to follow the patterns over the years but yesterday it all changed.

We walked up the hill first, not wanting to spoil our surprise with sideways glances back to the circle and it was worth the effort to stand and look down with that birds-eye view at the sunflower shape cut deep in the wheat below.

We knew we wanted to go to it. It felt like an impulse pulling our beings into the centre so we found a gap in the fence and followed the farmers' tractor cuts in the wheat all the way to the middle. Bozz was taking a video as we approached the centre and watching back and hearing the visible intake of air as we saw how the sheafs were lying in different ways and layers and the patterns, we knew that we were somewhere special.

I lay on the ground and looked up at the blue summery sky and the puffy clouds and wondered how this had appeared? I smiled at Bozz behind the video camera and said my classic line, "*This is essential for the PhD!*", which I often say when life is amazing.

And then this morning at first light we crept back and with the hope of the new day hanging over the field and red shepherds warning clouds we lay together in

the middle of that crop circle celebrating our love for each other and the transformative energy of the unknown.

Takes flower out.

And now let us meet **Alys the edge-dweller exploring privilege.**

Puts garland on.

I am going to tell you a story about privilege.

I'm at the Dark Mountain Weekend, an event that was held in the South West of the UK last September. I am in the main hall about to listen to the well respected storyteller Martin Shaw.

From my viewpoint, on a cushion on the floor, I look up in awe at Martin Shaw.

The thought that I am here worshipping flits across my mind and I think about gender, status and hierarchy and realise, "*yes, it is another OWM up there.*"

An OWM is my term of 2016, an 'Old White Man' yet it is seemingly age-ist and sex-ist. It is intimately connected to assumptions of privilege and entitlement and theoretically linked to Braidotti's work on phallogentrism.

It is a thing that has come into my life as I explore myself as an edge-dweller; someone interested in alternative ways of living and educating that I have come across this hierarchy and presence of the OWM.

There is a sense of privilege, ownership of a project, school or concept and a confidence in their body. It is an embodiment of OWM-ness that scares me.

As I tell my friends about my OWM complex we also wonder about OWW (old white women). One of my friends had heard something on Women's Hour on Radio 4 in the UK about the role of older women in society, about how in every species except for humans and killer whales the females die when they are no longer fertile rather than go through the menopause.

Maybe this is important to reflect on? If woman are 'designed' not to die but to transform then maybe there is a special role or respect needed for these women?

Even with my terms of OWM and OWW I know that one of my 'utopias' for future community living and learning environments has people of ALL ages living together.

However, I do not like hierarchies where a younger person's voice is not heard. It is something that I struggled with when we visited Tamera, a Global Eco village community which included a school in Portugal. They communicate and solve challenges using something called, 'Forum' which is led by someone valued by the community who had lived there for 10-15 years.

This frustrated me and maybe I am too arrogant and/or impatient and I think my voice is valid and that I have skills to hold a group. But I do not agree that only 'elders' are able to hold spaces.

I realise that it is not just my OWM and OWW complex that is an issue here but it is a deeper connection to power and control or as teacher and expert in democratic education, David Gribble says the real challenges of education are conformity and obedience. Not just for students but all the adults involved in the system as well.

Takes garland off.

And finally Alys-the-educator speaks out...

Puts 1920s hat on.

Who is Alys-we?

My positionality posits me away from the others

The others being regular teachers

Often people like me who did well in school

But for some reason I just don't fit

The Queering of 'Bad-Alys' justifies this

Yet still I have entered a hierarchical career

How when I thought I was an anarchist?

Is there hope for me?

For teaching?

For education?

I think the future is not teaching

Learning yes, but not teaching

Mentoring, and freedom for intrinsic self-autonomous learning

Away from narrow testing structures and lives deemed failures at such a young age

Alys-we peers through the looking glass

Searching for beauty, and calm learning environments

With adults that share life skills promoting democracy, free thinking and passion for life

And caring for each other

Innovative, flexible, practical thinkers

Learning from Ken Robinson (2015) and bringing creativity back to the heart of learning

And time in nature to just be

To play at all ages

*Something that is inclusive and courageous to meet all beings needs
Unpicking privileges of age, gender, sexuality, ability, ethnicity
Not just stepping away but revolutionising old-thinking, it even questions current
alternatives
For it is a spectrum of education, a radical non binary approach
That draws on the current strengths, the gems, but dreams for the future
For the visions of the not-yet-thought
Made possible by giving young people the freedom to fly.
And to de-school teachers and de-school the system
And chuck out not just the word school
But the institution itself
For there is no ideal school
As school is not the answer.*

Take off 1920s hat.

Thank you.

Mendus, Paper presented in the Deleuze 1 panel, [Champaign-Urbana, USA, May 19th 2017].

9.2 Coda

Giving the first version of the paper in March 2017 at the University of Plymouth, UK went well - it was a small encouraging crowd and two of the academics who had chosen to be in the room have been supporting my work since my first year, particularly with ideas of theory and scale. With reflection I realised that I had been the only performance paper with no slides in the post-human stream, which had surprised me as I had expected many different performances, but my point of reference was the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI) in

Illinois, not the UK.

After attending ICQI in 2015 I knew I wanted to return to give the performance paper evolving from my thesis in May 2017. The paper that I presented (printed in Section 9.1) evolved from the paper in Plymouth. In writing this piece I wanted to present several voices from the multiplicity of Alys-we giving voices connected to a 'Searching for the Ideal School' - A Rhizomatic edge-ucation. The greatest challenge was that I only had 15 minutes (I had had 30 minutes in Plymouth) so not only did I need to cut the paper, I needed to add more focus as it was not until April that I realised the strength of performing School Tourism which was not just as a voice from the multiplicity of Alys-we, but its own separate contribution to knowledge. For a long time I thought this paper would evolve from four separate stories/poems into a dialogue of voices showing the iterative complexity and intra-action. However, performing this visually at a conference as a part of a panel with four other papers made me reconsider and decide to perform the different voices visually through different 'hats' not metaphorically like de Bono's (1985) six thinking hats but actual visibly different identities, such as a 'flower' for the 'van dwelling PhD student' or an Australian stockman's hat for the 'School Tourist', so the audience know which multiplicity of Alys is speaking.

Editing is a skill that I am developing within this thesis. It was tricky to initially reflect on the piece in Plymouth; hearing feedback that I needed to include more examples from my edge-ucation so writing new verses to a poem and then to realise I need to cut them again to save time when already in the USA, as I hear from my panel-chair that the presentations are now 14 minutes long.

On Friday 17th May, my presentation went well, I felt confident and the paper flowed but it wasn't the experience I had been dreaming about as practicalities

had intertwined. I had not been able to include my paper on a panel with other people I knew under a loose theme, which meant that my work had ended up not in an autoethnography special interest group as I had hoped, but in a more theoretical Deleuzian group. It was also 9:30 in the morning at the other end of the quad from the main building so none of my friends ended up attending, so I did not have my 'groupies' that supported me in Plymouth, but I carried that experience with me. My paper was in the middle of four very theoretical and different papers - one on photocopying, another on pathways across parks and another on activism - but all presented with slides and by reading a detailed paper. I stood out like an anomaly. I just went for it, knowing that at ICQI anything is allowed and that I was developing my own style.

Throughout the summer of 2017 since giving the paper at ICQI in May I have returned to the script in Section 9.1, wondering if I had grasped what I was trying to share or if I should/could rewrite it all as a multiple voiced script as it only currently covers five clear voices and, as Chapter 4 shows, there are many voices of Alys-we involved in this thesis.

It was only re-reading this piece now that I realise that Steiner is not mentioned! Was it not a 'gem' and not a focus when writing this piece? Surely in the future it needs to be added somewhere?

Mendus, Reflections on ICQI performance piece, [Suffolk, August, 2017].

I am aware that I am also thinking with Gale (2015, pers.comm) that the point of the rhizome is that there are many stories, which are always changing to meet the audience, the time and space and wondering how to approach this multiple stories concept? Or perhaps I should have been following Ingold's idea of "a zone of entanglement - this meshwork of interwoven lines - there are no insides or outsides, only openings and ways through" (Ingold, 2007: 103). I am also pulled by the idea that I see performative autoethnography as a means of

sharing new ideas and I was driven to write, perform, film and then share my work so that more people could access stories about 'educating differently' which they may then use in their work with children. However, I realise that the paper at Beyond Words and ICQI did and does have a role in sharing these stories - I was invited to New York for a week's School Tourism off the back of the paper in Plymouth - but that they are still engaging with a more theoretical and academic focussed audience. I also realise that through performing School Tourism I am continually sharing stories from the edge-ucation about 'educating differently' or about stories of hope towards societal change with differing audiences from friends, colleagues, children, teachers, parents, other adults in schools that I meet. The stories move beyond the oral telling, the visual paper presentation or film on youtube, so that the paper in Section 9.1 had a role to play in focussing my thoughts and clearly offering multiple viewpoints because the stories that are shared from physical School Tourism may present less critical voices or be temporally spatially situated. Following Blackie's idea that:

We must shake off these false skins we've cloaked ourselves in; we must let the old die to make room for the new. We must be willing to detach from who we have been, what we have become, before we can discover who we are really meant to be and what our work is in the world.

(Blackie, 2016: 93).

As this thesis heads to a close I also realise that other voices of Alys-we are emerging and need to be heard and some may need to be let go of so that the stories can change. For example, I will no longer be Alys the PhD Student/Theorist but Dr. Alys and, I hope, no longer Alys the future parent but Alys the parent and hopefully I will not need to be Alys the traditional, mainstream teacher again (but I doubt I can be now as I bring so many stories with me even if I step foot into a traditional mainstream classroom). So instead of re-writing the performance piece that lived in a particular temporality in my

PhD journey, I offer this section to be added to the end of the paper in Section 9.1 through the voice of 'ecological-Alys' from the term 'ecological self' introduced by Arne Naess (2008) described as the "*wider sense of identity that arises when our self-interest includes the natural world*" (Macy & Johnstone, 2012: 94). Macy and Johnstone explain further that:

When we include the natural world, we are brought into a much larger story of who and what we are. Recognising ourselves as part of the living body of Earth opens us to a great source of strength...The understanding that we are an intrinsic part of the living Earth lies at the heart of indigenous belief systems around the world.
(Macy & Johnstone, 2012: 94)

9.2.1 Addendum - The rhizome is global 'ecological- Alys' speaks...

*Alys-we imagines themselves now perched up on the ridge of a Cumbrian fell
side*

Their home-land

Feeling the hard stone and springy moss beneath their body

Breathing deep and

Sending a golden-thread into a deeper consciousness

Whilst glancing down the valley

*Looking at the light skimming across the lake and pulling their attention to the
horizon*

As the sun is beginning to rise

For this morning is midsummer - the longest day...

*Looking up Alys-we realises they are surrounded collectively marvelling in the
sunrise.*

Remembering that the School Tourist is not alone.

*Let us position then performing School Tourism temporally and spatially within
the epoch of the 'anthropocene'*

Knowing this again is a human construct

And the wild-places and the nonhuman need to be able to speak

What may have started as the embodied rhizome of the Alys-we

Has 'motion and emotion' (Sheller, 2004a)

*The stories from the edge-ucation that are shared have agency - they move
beyond the teller*

They intra-act with others and others and others

Moving onto a global scale

The Earth-we

*A compassionate, collective inner journey of radical interconnectivity (Macy &
Johnstone, 2012)*

A more-than-human psyche of the collective awareness (Abram, 2011)

*Where local then global mind-scapes can change through the rhizome of
The Earth-we.*

Daring to unthink education as the solution (Peim, 2016)

*As the greater collective consciousness of the Earth-we rhizomatically interacts
with the post-human anthropocene.*

Stepping into a 'New Story' (Berry, 1978)

As the dazzling rays of the sun-light bring hope for a new day.

Chapter 10 - Conclusion

10.1 Overview of thesis

This thesis has explored the autoethnographic-we of the multiplicities of Alys-we 'Searching for the Ideal School' by performing School Tourism in schools/places of learning that aim to be 'educating differently'. The term is explained in detail in Chapter 3 as an attempt to unpick the binary between the current use of alternative and/or traditional education.

In Chapter 4, the multiplicities of Alys-we were shared to give deeper understanding of the voices intra-acting within the rhizome. For example from initial voices as a frustrated traditional state-school teacher, through to Steiner Waldorf in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5, shared my love of the environment, music and creativity in Steiner Waldorf but also my frustration with elements of it being a patriarchal and euro-centric approach and finished with a call out for Steiner Waldorf 2.0 (Boland, 2016). I launched intently into my role performing School Tourism aware of my frustrations with high-stakes testing, behaviourism and hierarchy.

In Chapter 6, I explored in depth approaches to 'educating differently' that I had visited which by September 2017 is over 178 schools/places of learning in 23 countries. My frustration that the places I visit may begin to explore the 'how' they teach (often in progressive, innovative, holistic, human-scale) but that it is not radical enough for the Alys-we in terms of hierarchies and accessibility (often fee-paying). I explore student voice further particularly through democratic education and realise that the current dominant voice of consensus based democracy is not my ideal (preferring a new approach of consent-based democracy now being used in some schools in the Netherlands). I explore other

pedagogies (Montessori, Krishnamurti, Reggio Emilia, Forest Schools) and find particular 'gems', but I am not enamoured by all elements of these approaches. By Chapter 7, I have recognised that 'Ideal School' is an oxymoron and that it is not possible in our current world. By iteratively looking at the places I had visited I was able to explore the edge-ucation (explored further below in Section 10.2.2) and find 'gems' that could be shared as stories of places in our current world that are 'educating differently'.

Chapter 8 explores the challenges of using performing School Tourism in this thesis and makes suggestions for future use in further School Tourism.

Chapter 9 shares, and then explores the stories that I told 'professionally' from my doctoral research at two academic conferences in 2017.

10.2 Contributions to knowledge

A contribution to knowledge that this thesis aims to give is the role of performing School Tourism as an approach to sharing stories of 'educating differently' around the world. Through performing School Tourism the edge-ucation was developed, looking at the 'gems' that can be shared as stories creating a ripple-effect to change as well as the role of the rhizome towards a queering of not just the current educational approaches (including 'educating differently'), but towards the potentiality of new stories.

This thesis has developed performing School Tourism as an embodied approach, a feeling journey, that connects the 'School Tourist' with the more-than-human world of ways of 'educating differently'. Through the performance of the travelling to, inhabiting the space of the visit and then travelling from creates new understandings of what is possible and implants new stories and potentially non-normative views of education and learning. The School Tourist then has a political choice to share these stories with others, to act on their own learning from the experience they had with their own family or in schools/places of learning in which they work or to keep quiet. The multiplicities of Alys-we that wrote this thesis are also present in all School Tourists - not the same multiplicities but their own multiplicities that too are part of their own rhizome that intra-connects with other School

Tourists and people and the natural world. For we are all part of a larger network. School Tourism could work with other places/things other than 'schools'...

Mendus, Journalling on the contribution to knowledge, [Suffolk, August, 2017].

Conceptually this 'live method' (Back and Puwar, 2012) of performing School Tourism rhizomatically intertwines many theoretical approaches. It recognises the importance of relationality from the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2006); it uses Baumann's (2011) work on 'vagabonds, tourists and nomads' to argue that the School Tourist can perform all, one or none of his categories at any time; it combines this with Zembylas's work (2003) on the importance of emotion in research (linking performing School Tourism back to its autoethnographic roots); alongside Deleuzian (1980/87) thought on a nomadology; with Braidotti's (2012) work on 'nomadic inquiry' and Barad's (2007) ideas on feminist new materialisms to look at research differently.

This new conceptual framework of performing School Tourism does expand on some of Braidotti's and Bauman's (2011) views on 'travel'/nomadic inquiry where they argue for virtual and not physical 'travelling' (Braidotti, 2012). However, conceptually performing School Tourism argues that it is the corporeal visit that is essential for performing School Tourism as it is the felt, emotional journey and performance (drawing here again from Zembylas, 2003) that is essential not just the 'virtual' visit.

All these theories combined create a conceptual framework of Performing School Tourism as a mobile method, an ever moving rhizomatic dance between periphery and centre (Braidotti, 2012; hooks, 1984). Although, this thesis is not directly challenging the work of these theorists it offers something new by com-

binning and stretching their ideas to develop the ever-moving conceptual framework of performing School Tourism.

10.2.1 Performing School-Tourism

With hindsight it can be seen that key aspects of School Tourism are starting out of curiosity (Stagl, 2012) of ‘What is currently out there in education?’ The School Tourist decides to take a journey to visit places. This is influenced by the mobilities paradigm (Sheller, 2011; Sheller, 2014; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2000; Urry, 2002; Urry & Larsen, 2011) as well as there being a key spatial and temporal nature to the approach which is very “*live*” (Back & Puwar, 2012).

The van-dwelling nature of my life was key to this thesis as it helped me see the connections to nomadology (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/87) and nomadic subject (Braidotti, 2012) that allowed me to develop School Tourism further - rhizomatically seen as an unsettled dialogue between the ever-changing-peripheral and its centre (Braidotti, 2012). As School Tourism is one of my contributions to knowledge, I am well aware that being a van-dweller and a School Tourist are not self-reliant on each other. My being a van-dweller at the time of developing this approach gave me the funds and flexibility to understand the approach, but they are not mutually exclusive.

The School Tourist can be seen as becoming a ‘Cultural Broker’ (Giroux, 2005) through sharing stories that have the potentiality to make change by filling a gap in the understanding of approaches to ‘educating differently’. This is the ‘potentiality’ of School Tourism, but the corporeal spatial practice of School Tourism, the ‘*literal act of travelling*’ (Braidotti, 2012) somewhere and then not just observing with your eyes but emotionally (Zemblyas, 2003) by “*physically walking or seeing or touching or hearing or smelling a place*’ (Urry, 2007: 261) is

very much present in the now. Sharing stories from the embodied experience is part of the future where as embodying the feeling journey within the school is very much about the present.

The visit itself can be seen as a nodal point on the rhizome from which through sharing stories or changing your own approaches change can spread throughout the rhizome to unknown (beyond the self) ends. Sharing stories can also be seen as a political act (Freire, 1970; Labonte, 2011; Spry, 2011) as giving new ideas thereby can enable others to be mobilised for change. The visit and all aspects of School Tourism can be seen as a performance (see Gingrich-Philbrook, 2014; Adler, 1989; Goffman, 1959).

School Tourist continues to be the term used, although this thesis has discredited the word 'school' and is cautious about the word 'tourist'. However, because it is the tourist "*gaze*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011) that observes these places 'educating differently' and not the inspector with a set rubric of what makes a school 'ideal' as that is not the agenda anymore, the word tourist continues to make sense. It is the ripple-effect that sharing stories from School Tourism creates rather than top-down enforced changes from a School Inspector. The term 'tourism' must only be used with care and with an awareness of its level of privilege and the colonialist history that accompanies it. Although there are shadow sides of School Tourism that arose throughout this thesis such as: hierarchy, patriarchy, dangers of volun-tourism, colonialism, strengths and weaknesses of group and solo visits, the need for 'inner work', the effect of paying to visit schools, the challenges of putting not-yet-visited places on pedestals as well as practical discussions on what counts as a school visit, I feel that School Tourism is not a one-off approach isolated within this thesis but something that can be used by others, parts of it already are being

explored by others without using the term 'School Tourism'. For example (all mentioned earlier in this thesis) - Edu on Tour, Michael Kamen's undergraduate course on 'Innovative School's, and Hecht (2010) and Greenberg's own observations of other democratic schools which they write about influencing the direction of their own schools.

However, as I am exploring this thesis through a rhizome I recognise that School Tourism is part of that network and through realising that the 'Ideal School' does not exist currently, I did begin to look at the aspect of 'School Tourism' of 'gems' in the places that I visited so I could begin to see the edge-ucation. The edge-ucation and School Tourism combined add greater depth to my contribution to knowledge. Following Braidotti (2012), I see performing School Tourism and the edge-ucation as a 'road sign', something that *"enacts an intervention on the social imaginary that perceives philosophy as the rational discourse of a dominant, masculine, Eurocentric subject"* (Braidotti, 2010: 15).

The power of the 'gems' is that each person involved in School Tourism will have different 'gems' that effect them and choose to share as stories.

10.2.2 Edge-ucation - the 'gems'

The 'gems' from the edge-ucation can be seen as stories from places that are 'educating differently' to show examples of approaches that can make changes to what is seen as traditional educational practice. The concept of edge-ucation developed out of the term that I first used called 'blended pedagogy' which I defined as places where different pedagogical approaches are used in the same place. I would now see this as one understanding of the edge-ucation where 'gems' (influenced by MacLure's concept of 'data-glow', 2010, 2013b) in one approach, such as Steiner Waldorf, are used in other (mostly) state-funded

or partially state-funded environments (see Chapters 5 and 6). 'Gems' follow Kraftl, (2013), Fielding and Moss, (2010) in that they "*involve some kind of utopian impulse but which are grounded in real-world practices*" (Kraftl, 2013: 233) so are then possibly usable in other settings. For example, ways of bringing more autonomy and student voice to a place that must use a set curriculum, or high-stakes testing. These 'gems' can be used in private or state-funded places and are a way of making changes even within the current neoliberal paradigm.

An extension of the 'gems' concept is that these 'gems' have potentiality (Munoz, 2009), through the utopian performative of hope (Spry, 2016), to make real changes in what is education in the future. I argue that although 'Ideal School' may be an oxymoron, the concept of 'ideal' liberates me to begin to think differently and through performing School Tourism and beginning to see some 'gems', others too can also begin to think differently. If School Tourism is an embodied feeling journey and as Munoz argued "*utopia is about a politics of emotion*" (2009: 97), then through sharing these stories of 'gems' a ripple-effect of change can potentially happen - as once a story has been shared it lives its own life beyond the teller and it is unknown who will hear this story, how they will react and what will happen, there is just the potential that it can create change. Spry's (2016) development of the performative autoethnographic-we comes into play here not just from the multiplicities of the Alys-we but the multiplicities of other School Tourists and also those lives we interact within the schools that we visit as well as the multiplicities of the stories themselves as part of the Earth-we, so that the edge-ucation is influenced by post-humanism as these multiplicities are part of the ever moving rhizome.

However, I agree with those who argue that recreating the current system, or even looking for hope in the present system that potentially will create a ripple effect for change is not enough, a new approach is needed. Gray (2015) argued that we need to start from scratch but following De Meyer's (2016) work in neuroscience it is more than starting from scratch that is needed as unless the way that society thinks changes then long term change can not happen.

As I end this thesis I am exploring this aspect of edge-ucation further, reading more about the anthropocene and thinking about post-human understandings of education in the future. This is work I will continue once this thesis is completed.

However, I recognise the role and potential impact of the stories from the edge-ucation leading to change, following Blackie:

Stories matter, you see. They're not just entertainment - stories matter because humans are narrative creatures. Its not simply that we like to tell stories, and to listen to them: its that narrative is hard-wired into us...We make sense of the world and fashion our identities through the sharing and passing on of stories. And so the stories we tell ourselves about the world and our place in it, and the stories that are told to us by others about the world and our place in it, shape not just our own lives, but the world around us. The cultural narrative is the culture.

(Blackie, 2016: 13).

10.3 Further work

As I read the completed thesis I ponder on the multiplicities of the Alys-we, wondering if I used the 'right' voices as I aimed to flesh out the stories and opinions from the assemblage of rhizomatically 'Searching for the Ideal School'. I take heed of the concept that each school visit, each voice has a temporal and spatial dynamic, its own nodal point, blossoming above the rhizome, sharing an opinion and then dying and composting back into the 'patch-work text' (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska, 1999). However, I realise that sometimes, some voices are louder than others, and I recognise that although a hierarchy could

be seen to be created as they are all inter-connected voices of the Alys-we, it just suggests a more dominant multiplicity at that time and place. This means that this whole thesis could be re-written in alternative voices of Alys-we and giving priority to these alternative voices may have created a very different performative autoethnographic-we. By combining the performance piece as well as writing the thesis in a performative style, I attempted to make the ideas and concepts more accessible to the reader or viewer. However, theoretically this thesis is quite complex and I realise from talking to parents and those working in education that what they would like to glean from this thesis is much more practical. With hindsight, I see that a lot of the language and concepts, even in my poems, assume a level of knowledge in terms of pedagogy and theory. Post-PhD, I think making new YouTube videos about different educational approaches and writing a book that explores performing School Tourism could be helpful so that more people can access stories from my thesis and beyond.

“So what school do you advise us to send our kids to then?”

Is a question I get regularly asked. And for anyone who has read my whole thesis they will know that there is no ‘Ideal School’ as school is not the answer! But I can’t say that to an expectant friend keen for some advice. I’m meant to be the expert after all... I can offer some of my own thoughts for my future children that I still like Steiner Kindergarten and collective home education/ unschooling but for many people asking me for advice that isn’t what they are looking for. So I have sat with this, followed my own recommendations of inner work, and realised that performing School Tourism hasn’t just been for me to learn about what schools/ places of learning are out there or for pre-service teachers/ current teachers to gain stories to share about ‘educating differently’, it is also for parents and children. Anyone can be a School Tourist. So I suggest to the enquirer that performing their own School Tourism is the answer. It does not even need to be about ‘educating differently’, it is about their own inner journey, the embodied feelings they get from visiting schools. So find out what is on offer in your area, what is your budget, beliefs and then visit places and see what feels right for your children and family. Of course this still assumes a level of privilege and social capital¹¹ to not send your children by default to the local

¹¹ I use the term ‘Social Capital’ here to referring to the critical Bourdieu (1986) understanding that social capital can be used practically to produce or reproduce inequality, demonstrating for instance how people gain access to powerful positions through the direct and indirect employment of social connections and, in this piece of journaling, the ability to know that other schools are available.

state-school but for those asking I am beginning to have some answers and for those not aware then maybe that is one of my post-PhD projects? A choose your own adventure book: Performing School Tourism to find a job or a school for your children?

Mendus, Journaling on being asked for school recommendations, [Cornwall, September 2017].

Running performing School Tourism with school groups, trainee teachers, in-service teachers and other interested adults to allow other people the opportunity to expand their knowledge and identity as an educator or what is possible currently in education could speed up the ripple-effect to change the current system. This would be a political mission knowing that most people's experience and understanding of what is a 'school' is from their own childhood experiences which if they attended a traditional school is a narrow place to project education for the future from. I am in talks with Michael Kamen about further School Tourism courses for his students.

Through attending the ICQI conference in Illinois in 2015 I joined the network of UK based academics interested in collaborative inquiry and collective biography work and attended a writing retreat at Hawkwood College in September 2015 where we 'talked, wrote, read aloud' (see Davies and Gannon, 2006) along the theme of 'pocket's' and then crafted our own pockets as well. Through Davina Kirkpatrick (2017) I became aware of arts-based-research (Lawrence, 2015) and realised that performative autoethnography had released my voice and joy of performing that arts-based-research could incorporate my creativity as well. I plan to work with Kirkpatrick to create an art piece using coloured threads to connect my journeys travelled throughout performing School Tourism in my van in the UK and then around the world from September 2014 - September 2017.

I hope to present future papers on performing School Tourism to inspire others and of course I will continue to visit schools to see new 'gems' whilst exploring how to make a new story possible for future generations.

10.4 Back in the van

Late Summer and again we find ourselves parked up in the van on one of our favourite beaches

This one in South Devon

The wanderings of this nomadology migrating (?) drawing us back to magical places

A free park up across the road from a (pebbly) naturist beach

A quiet woodland behind

With picnic-tables - where I now sit and type

Gently shaded from the sporadic rays of sun

Snacking collectively on a tub of recently-picked blackberries

Sat expectantly in the centre of the table

And contemplate

What next?

I scratch my head, watch the wind gently blow through the upper limbs of the ash tree overhead

And shiver slightly

The seasons are beginning to change

And the thesis is virtually finished

I smile as I realise I feel like I am only just waking up

Waking up to the cusp of thinking

Thinking beyond my body, beyond current understandings of this world

And realise that I have changed, grown, fallen deeply in love

The multiplicities of the Alys-we dance, co-presently and recreate new Alys's

Whilst letting other Alys's go

I end as I began.

Performing School Tourism as an identity or way of life

But with more depth, more insight, allowing the temporality of the embodied,

feeling journey

To infiltrate into my inner being.

Relief gently diffracts through the Alys-we, knowing the 'Ideal School' does not

exist

Rhizomatically freeing the Alys-we from the label of 'teacher'

Continuing the Queering of Bad-Alys

To bravely explore the complexity of the 'anthropocene' and wonder about the

future

Knowing that sharing stories from the edge-ucation - the 'gems' in the places

'educating differently' has the potentiality of a ripple effect for change.

And as the Alys-we drives off in the van on their next journey

They hope others performing School Tourism will think with Blackie (2016) to:

Pass your wisdom on. Think about telling your own story. No one experiences life as you do: you have a unique story, a unique set of experiences, a unique way of seeing the world. Tell that story; use it to inspire and encourage others.

(Blackie, 2016: 374).

And the stories from the Earth-we can be the change.

APPENDIX - SCHOOL VISITS LIST

#	Date and length of visit	State/ Independent	Type of engagement Teaching T Student S Visit V Course C	Extra Info - self labelled approach	Country (Each new country numbered)
1	Sept 1984- July 1991	S	S	Local village Primary School	England (1)
2	September 1991 - July 1998	S	S	Secondary School in local town.	England
3	January 2002	I	V	Steiner Waldorf	New Zealand (2)
4	Oct-Dec 2003	I	T	Boarding Prep School.	England
5	July 2004	Unknown	V	Rural schools in the interior of Guyana.	Guyana (3)
6	Oct-Dec 2004, April- June 2005	S	T	Middle School. Teaching Placement Y6-8 Science	England
7	1 day Jan 2005.	I	V	Steiner Waldorf.	England
8	Feb-March 2005	S	T	Teaching Placement Y5/6	England
9	June 2005 1 day.	I	V	Steiner Waldorf job interview	Scotland (4)
10	Sept 2005- Aug 2007	S	T	Teacher KS3/4 Science	England
11	March 2006. 1 day.	S	V	Secondary school	England
12	April 2006 1 day.	S	V	Secondary school	England
13 (4)	Monthly weekend courses for NESTT 2006-08	I	C/V	North of England Steiner Training (NESTT) venues. (4 schools).	England
17	Day visit Easter 2007	S	V	Primary	Sweden (5)
61 (44)	Sept 2007 - Sept 2013	S	T	Day to day Primary Supply Teacher EYFS-Y6. (44 schools)	England
66 (5)	Sept 2007- Sept 2013	S	T	Day to day Supply Teacher in Special Schools (5 schools)	England
67	Nov/Dec 2007 Jan 2008.	S	T	Long term supply Teacher in Inclusion Unit KS 4	England
70 (3)	February 2008, 1 day to each school.	I	V	Visits to three schools - two independent, one for street children.	India (6)

71	Day visit March 2008.	Donations	V	Steiner Waldorf Boarding and Primary.	Nepal (7)
72	Spent 5 days. April 2008.	I	V	Steiner Waldorf School and Kindergarten	China (8)
73	April 2008. Day visit.	I	V	Steiner Waldorf. Watch Class 5 play.	Russia (9)
74	July 2008 1 week Easter 2010 1 week August 2017 2 days.	I	V	Steiner Waldorf.	England
75	September 2008 - June 2009.	I	T	Steiner Waldorf/Forest School Home Educated group for 5-7s 3 days a week.	England
76	Jan 2009 1 day.	I	V	Steiner Waldorf.	Austria (10)
77	Easter 2009,	I	V	Steiner Waldorf Easter conference and day cour- ses.	England
78	3 days June 2009.	S	V	Rural primary school..	Norway (11)
79	3 days. July 2009.	Un- known	V	Rural school, Borneo.	Malaysia (12)
80	Day visit Sept 2009	S	V	Steiner Waldorf Spend day in Class 1/2.	Ireland (13)
81	2009 two day visits Sept and Oct.	I	V	Yurt-based part-time school.	England
82	2 day visit 2009 Teacher 8 weeks Octo- ber - Decem- ber 2013, 2 weeks May 2014. Talk on Les- bos Novem- ber 2015.	S	T	Steiner Waldorf School.	England
83	Day Visit Oct 2009. Teach 3 weeks May 2011.	I/S	V T C	Steiner Waldorf inspired Upper School. One year fortnightly Upper School training course 2010/11.	England
84	November 2009 - April 2015.	S	T	Long term supply Teacher Special Needs School for 5-19 year olds.	England

85	January 2010 (3 weeks) February 2011 (3 weeks) March/April 2012 (5 weeks)	I	T	Steiner Waldorf Teaching Main Lessons for Class 7-10 students (12-16 year olds). Assisting in Kindergarten	England
86	February 2010. 1 day.	Un-known	V/T	Rural local school.	India
87	March 2010 1 day.	I	V	Steiner Waldorf Clinic, Kindergarten and workshop.	Nepal
90 (3)	March/April 2010 3 days.	I	V	3 Steiner Waldorf schools. Observe lessons from Kindergarten to Upper School	Scotland
91	Day visit June 2010	S	V	Steiner Waldorf.	Norway
92	Week visit June 2010	S	V	Folkschool.	Norway
93	Day visit June 2010	S	V	Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten.	Norway
94	Day visit June 2010	S	V	Steiner Waldorf Job interview	Ireland
100 (6)	From May/June 2011 1 day for each visit.	I	V C	Steiner Waldorf Early Years training. (6 Kindergarten visits)	England
101	July 2011 - July 2017 (1 week per year for 7 years)	I	T	Run the Parent and child group at the annual Steiner Waldorf family festival. Based at a Steiner Waldorf College.	England
102	Sept/Oct 2012 (5 weeks)	I	T	Steiner Waldorf Upper School	England
103	Oct – December 2012.	S	T	Manager and Teacher Nursery (2-5s). Using Steiner/Forest Schools in Mainstream.	England
104	Jan 2013 stayed one week.	I	V	Progressive Boarding High school.	USA (14)
105	March 2013 3 days.	I	V T	Steiner Waldorf School Volunteer one morning in Kindergarten.	USA
106	3 days March 2013.	I	C	Attend Steiner Waldorf regional conference.	USA
107	1 day March 2013	I	V	Steiner Waldorf home kindergarten.	USA
108	Feb 2013. Day visit.	S	V	Expeditionary Learning Charter School.	USA
109	Feb 2013. Day visit.	I	V	Yurt-based Waldorf/Art of Mentoring Woodland Home Education Support	USA

				school and community.	
110	March 2013. Visited again May 2017.	I	V	Progressive School with teacher training college.	USA
111	March 2013. 1 DAY.	I	V	Progressive school and Early Years.	USA
112	Day visit April 2013.	S	V	Multicultural, state-funded, Steiner Waldorf kindergarten.	USA
113	Day visit April 2013.	I	V	Outdoor Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten.	USA
114	Day visit April 2013	I	V	Steiner Waldorf High School.	USA
115	1 day. April 2013.	S	V	Taking wild animals to work with children with behavioural and additional needs.	USA
116	2 Day initial visit April 2013. Follow up visit one day May 2013.	I	V	Progressive day and boarding school. First to Upper School then Early Years and Middle.	England
117	April 2013. Day visit.	I	V	Krishnamurti and Montessori inspired Primary.	England
118	Afternoon visit. April 2013.	I	V	Boarding 14-18.	England
119	April 2013. Day visit.	I	V	Progressive school.	England
120	May 2103. Afternoon visit.	I	V	12-16 Project Human Scale.	England
127 (7)	June/July/September 2013.	S	T	Supply teaching in Primary Schools (7 schools)	England
128	2 days. Visit and job interview. June 2013.	S	V/T	Team teaching, Project Based Learning mainstream school.	England
129	October 2013. 1day.	I	V	Democratic Boarding School. Open day.	England
130	Jan – April 2014.	I	T	Teacher Boarding Semester school for 12-14 year olds.	Switzerland (15)
131	May 2014 Day visit	I	V	Steiner Waldorf observe Class 1/2	Wales (16)
	September 2014- December 2017 PHD STUDENT			SCHOOLS FROM HERE ON AS PART OF PHD STUDIES.	

132	1 day Visit December 2014.	I	V	Democratic Day school.	England
133	Day visit De- cember 2014.	I	V	Alternative Further Educa- tion, residential Masters programmes.	England
134	Week visit Jan 2015. 10 days March 2017. Week Octo- ber 2017	I	V T	IB International Boarding School - Researcher in Residence. Visiting Scholar working on 'Ideal School' project with middle school. Lecturing on Innovative Schools course for Interna- tional teachers.	Switzerland
135	Feb 2015. 3 day visit.	I	V	Progressive bilingual boarding school	Switzerland
136	June 2015. 1 day visit.	I	V	Human scale, progressive primary school.	England
137	June 2015. 1 day visit.	I	V	Steiner, Montessori and Forest School inspired yurt based Early Years/ lower Primary School.	England
138	June 2015. 1 day visit.	I	V	Human Scale Small Sec- ondary School.	England
139	Between June 2015 - December 2015.	S	V	Steiner Waldorf school. 4 visits to same class (12-14 year olds).	England
140	From July 2015 - August 2017	I	V	Steiner Waldorf School. 4 visits (Early Years - Upper School)	England.
141	July 2015 - November 2017	S	V/T	Support Early Years Lead implement alternative prac- tices in mainstream. (7 day visits).	England
142	October 2015 (2 weeks)	I	T	Using Steiner Waldorf methods with refugees.	Greece (17)
	NOVEMBER 2015			GAINED ETHICAL AP- PROVAL FOR STUDY.	
143	November 2015. 1 day.	I	V	Progressive Secondary school.	England
144	Feb 2016. 1 day.	I	V	Democratic Primary School.	Australia (18)
145	Feb 2016. 1 day.	I	V	5-18 school. Steiner/alter- native inspired progressive school.	Australia
146	Feb 2016. 1 day and overnight.	I/S	V	5-12 Primary School Democratic Human Scale School.	Australia

147	Feb 2016. 1 day.	S	V	5-12 Primary - Reggio Emilia Inspired.	Australia
149 (2)	February 2016. 2 days.	I	V	2 independent Steiner Waldorf schools for Kindergarten to High School.	Australia
150	February 2016 1 week	I	V	Steiner Waldorf Primary school Class 1/2 (7-9 year olds).	Australia
151	Feb 2016. 10 days.	I	C/V	Attended the Educators Course. Holistic, sustainability and entrepreneurship School, Bali.	Indonesia (19)
152	February 2016 1 day	S	V	Steiner Waldorf state funded stream in a mainstream school.	Australia.``````
153	1 day visit. June 2016.	I	V	Primary Home Ed Forest/Democratic part-time school.	England
154	1 day. October 2016.	I	V	Autonomous/Krishnamurti inspired community Home Ed.	Portugal (20)
155	October 2016. 2 days in school, 12 days in the community.	I	V	Community home-ed school - Montessori and community philosophy Birth - 18 years. Trilingual German/English/Portuguese.	Portugal
156	Nov 2016. Open Day.	I	V	KS3 Home Ed Democratic, Buddhist.	England
157	Nov 2016. 1 day.	I	V	Montessori Nursery 3-6 years.	Scotland
158	Nov 2016. 1 day.	I	V	Montessori Primary Home Education.	Scotland
159	December 2016 3 days.	I	V/T	Give a talk on Steiner Wadlorf education around the world. Visit 2 schools.	Malaysia.
160	December 2016 1 day	Unknown	T	Village School. 17/18 year olds.	Laos (21)
161	April 2017 2 days	I	V	Steiner Waldorf School Kindergarten to Grade 12.	Scotland.
162	May 2017. 1 day. GROUP.	S	V	Charter School.	USA
163	May 2017. 1 day. GROUP.	I	V	Democratic, human scale, 2-10 year olds.	USA
164	May 2017. 1 day. GROUP.	S	V	Public High School using Inquiry based teaching.	USA
165	May 2017. 1 day. GROUP.	I	V	Middle School with assisted places.	USA

166	May 2017. 1 day. GROUP.	I	V	Democratic School with strong Social Justice focus	USA
167	1 2hour session. May 2017. GROUP.	I	V	Using performance in teaching English to non native speakers. College.	USA
168	May 2017. 1 day. GROUP.	S	V	Sugata Mitra inspired SOLE lab in a Public School.	USA
169	May 2017. 1 day. GROUP.	I	V	Youth Project.	USA
170	May 2017. 1 day. GROUP.	I	V	Progressive school with sliding scale fees.	USA
171	May 2017. GROUP. 1 session.	I	V	Museum education.	USA
172	1 hour. May 2017.	I	V	A drive-by looking in from the outside as no visitors allowed... Democratic school.	USA
173	May 2017. 1 day.	S	V	"Gifted" public school.	USA
174	May 2017. 1 day.	I	V	Sudbury method Democratic School.	USA
175	1 day. June 2017.	I	V/T	British International School. Consulting.	Germany (22)
176	1 day. June 2017.	S	V	School using EduScrum.	Netherlands (23)
177	June 2017. 1 day.	I	V	Democratic school using sociocratic methods	Netherlands
178	October 2017 1 day visit	I	V	Steiner Waldorf Visit upper school.	England
178 SCHOOLS					23 COUNTRIES

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