



FOREST OF IMAGINATION

Impact Case Study

ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the impact of Forest of Imagination's engagement with visiting school groups, exploring the value that participants ascribe to their experiences. The research investigates how an outdoors, arts-based approach to environmental education fosters creativity, agency and nature connection in children through immersive and interactive workshops.

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Introduction

1.1 Overview

Forest of Imagination (FOI) is an annual contemporary arts and design event that transforms familiar locations to inspire visitors' creativity and foster a sense of connection to nature within urban settings. Described by its organisers as 'open to all' and 'actively inclusive', FOI invites wide audiences including schools, families, and individuals of all ages to participate through group visits, artist workshops and 'creative co-enquiries' (Grant and Hay, 2024).

This study evaluates the impact of FOI 2024's offer for schools, with a focus on the value that young participants ascribe to their FOI experiences. FOI aims to stimulate and nurture creativity, curiosity, nature connection and a sense of exploration and agency among young visitors through immersive, interactive environments and creative play. This research therefore seeks to investigate the value of an arts-based approach to fostering creativity, agency and nature connection in children.

1.2 Context

This year Forest of Imagination took place over 5 days in June at The Holburne Museum and Gardens on the northern edge of the city centre of Bath. Organised around the theme 'Biodiversity Ring: A Million Small Acts', 2024's FOI marked the eleventh iteration of an annual event that seeks to 're-imagine a familiar space to highlight the importance of nature and imagination in all our lives' (Grant and Hay, 2024). According to FOI's model of engagement, visitors are invited to share in and contribute to a set of creative interventions that highlight the role that all can play in addressing the ecological emergency. FOI 2024 comprised a series of experiential installations co-designed in partnership with architects, educators, designers, curators, community groups and artists working in visual and performance disciplines. Innate to the design of these installations are processes by which they are animated through interactive performances and engagements including workshops designed for participating school groups.

FOI invites local state-funded schools to participate and has an ongoing relationship with St John's Foundation, one of the UK's oldest charities, that aims to maximise its impact for visiting school groups. Through its Primary Empowerment Programme (PEP), St John's Foundation supports seven primary schools in Bath and North East Somerset which host 40% of the region's most under-served primary age children. The PEP seeks to narrow the attainment gap by following a holistic approach, providing these schools with resources and opportunities to enhance educational outcomes (St John's Foundation, 2024). Schools enrolled in the PEP programme receive priority booking at FOI and benefit from artist visits to the school in advance of attending the event. In this way FOI contributes to efforts to reduce both the attainment gap and the enrichment gap, defined as 'disparities in access to enrichment opportunities' (Stephens, 2022 p.222) for local children.

FOI and the affiliated research organisation House of Imagination (HOI) draw inspiration from the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach in their aim to explore the potential of creative and arts-based interventions in environmental education. In brief, the pedagogical strategies developed in Reggio Emilia focus on child-centred principles that foreground the rights of children and their innate capacity and potential for learning. Informed by the work of Vygotsky, the Reggio Emilia Approach recognises the social and cultural dynamics of learning in which children co-create experiences 'to which they are capable of attributing sense and meaning' (Reggio Children, 2024). This child-centred philosophy recognises the myriad ways in which children think, learn, create and express themselves, emphasising the importance of participation and recognition of the child as a co-constructor of knowledge. The Reggio Emilia approach can therefore be understood as a holistic pedagogy, and this emphasis extends beyond the child and the community of the classroom to include a consideration of the environment within which learning takes place.

While the Reggio Emilia approach provides a valuable foundation emphasising child-centred principles and the role of the environment in learning, House of Imagination has developed its own distinct 'creative and reflective pedagogy' (Hay, 2024 p.403) that aims to position creativity,

curiosity, and wonder as core drivers of children's engagement with learning. This creative pedagogy positions children as co-researchers with an innate capacity for exploration, experimentation and meaning making. As a signature project of HOI, FOI departs from the standardised models of curriculum planning that dominate in formal education settings where prescriptive lesson planning targets narrowly defined outcomes. Rather, FOI seeks to provide open-ended, immersive environments that stimulate children's curiosity and allow them to lead their own learning through play and collaborative inquiry. For Hay (2024), the role of the educator in this model is to facilitate processes of discovery and to honour children's perspectives and ideas. FOI also prioritises opportunities for children to encounter and interact with contemporary works of art and their creators in order to democratise access to the art world and nurture children's own sense of self identity as artists. Key characteristics of FOI's 'creative pedagogy' include a focus on open-ended activities, multi-modal learning, and the use of the city itself as a 'campus for learning' (Hay, 2022 p.45). Rather than a prescriptive curriculum, FOI embraces an emergent, responsive model that allows children to follow their fascinations and engage in collaborative exploration (Hay, 2022).

FOI also emphasises the importance of connecting children with nature as a means of fostering creativity, agency, and a sense of environmental stewardship. By providing opportunities for sensory engagement, embodied learning, and emotional resonance with the natural world, FOI aims to cultivate a biophilic disposition in young participants - one characterised by a sense of both affinity with and shared responsibility for the living systems upon which we all depend (Hay and Amondson, 2024). In this way FOI resonates with the work of Richard Louv who coined the term 'nature-deficit disorder' to describe the human and environmental cost of children's increasing alienation from nature. According to Louv (2005), children who lack exposure to nature are more vulnerable to a range of physical, mental and emotional challenges. His work has contributed to a movement that advocates for reconnecting children with nature through new practices in formal and informal education as well as urban planning.

FOI is informed by a creative methodology of co-inquiry. The event is conceived as an action research project that engages children, young people and their teachers with practitioners in the fields of art, design and architecture. Together this community of practice explore questions in a spirit of playfulness and experimentation. Within this framework children's responses and experiences are documented through observations, video and photography and analysed by an educational research practitioner embedded in the FOI context since the project's inception over a decade ago.

It is important therefore to distinguish this impact study as a separate piece of analytical work that seeks to provide an additional, external perspective on the impact of FOI. Whilst aspects of methodology (notably field observations and an emphasis on capturing and representing the responses and perspectives of participating children) are shared across these two studies, the positionality of the researchers and their relationship to FOI are distinct, as are the paradigms of action research adopted by those working within FOI and that of educational ethnography, which informs this research. The present study, whilst benefitting from FOI organisers' generosity of access and assistance in coordination, was conducted independently of FOI's internal evaluation processes.

Research Design

2.1 Research objective and questions

This study sets out to explore the significance and interpretations that young people attach to their event experiences at the Forest of Imagination. These aims are addressed through two research questions:

What value and meanings do children ascribe to their experiences of participating in the Forest of Imagination schools' programme events?

How does participation in Forest of Imagination as part of the schools' programme influence children's sense of their own creativity, agency and connection to nature?

2.2 Methodological approach and rationale

The research design is informed by ethnographic approaches, aiming to make sense of a real-world social setting and its situated social dynamics and behaviours from the inside by 'privileging the perspectives of the people involved' (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p.xiii).

Ethnography has gained popularity in studies of educational and arts practice settings in recent years because it provides a dynamic and adaptable toolkit for qualitative research across disciplinary borders (Poveda, Thomson and Ferro, 2018). Ethnographic research allows for 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of the setting under investigation and accommodates an exploration of the wider meanings of education beyond traditional classroom settings. In addition, it offers significant investigative potential for exploring the social dynamics of educational settings in ways that are sensitive to the subjectivity of participants. This study takes an interpretive approach, representing events through observational fieldnotes that are unavoidably filtered through the perspective of the observer. Observations are supplemented with focus group interviews and a follow-up elicitation task that aim to capture the perspectives of participating children more directly. Through this triangulation of methods, I attempt to render the experiences and sense-making processes of young participants visible through detailed

accounts of how arts-based, ecologically themed educational practices are enacted and experienced in a local setting.

2.3 Research methods

This study employs three qualitative data collection methods to explore young people's experiences at the Forest of Imagination (FOI) event:

Observations were conducted by the researcher as an observer-as-participant in an ethnographic mode. These observations were recorded through field notes to capture the situated actions and behaviours of participants, independent of their ability to verbalise their intentions. Transcribed field notes are provided in appendix 6.1.

Small, informal, and interactive focus group discussions were conducted on-site with children immediately after their participation in workshops. These were semi-structured using question prompts that directly address the research questions to capture the original insights, perspectives, meanings, values, and perceptions articulated by participating children. The interview schedule and full transcripts of the conversations are provided in appendix 6.2.

These on-site methods were supplemented by an optional follow-up activity designed to complement FOI's participatory, arts-based approach. Class teachers were provided with a package of blank postcards, activity guidelines and a stamped addressed envelope to support them to introduce the task in class and return the results to the researcher. The activity invited children to illustrate a blank postcard and write a brief message on the reverse in response to their FOI visit. This method was designed to elicit young participants' perspectives through playful engagement, incorporating language-based and visual methods, aiming to capture salient memories and responses and reveal the aspects of their experience that children prioritise. The activity guidelines and a summary of responses is provided in appendix 6.3.

2.4 Research participants

Research participants were recruited purposively from the school groups that had arranged to attend the event as part of the FOI schools' programme. Children aged 5-14 attended the event in 17 groups from 12 schools with approximately 30 pupils in each group accompanied by class teachers and teaching assistants. All but one of the schools supported by the St John's Foundation Primary Empowerment Programme (PEP) visited the event. Observations took place in group settings while classes participated in creative workshops organised by FOI. One focus group took place during the lunch break on Thursday 27th June with a group of three children nominated by their class teacher. A second focus group took place on Friday 28th June with a group of four children, also nominated by their teacher, at the end of their visit as they waited on the front lawn for their return transport. The follow-up activity took place in the classroom setting back at school with a class teacher facilitating the activity and the researcher not present. This stage of the research was contingent on class teachers opting in to provide class time for the activity and returning completed postcards. Three sets of postcards were returned to the researcher within two weeks of the end of the event.

2.5 Ethical considerations

This study acknowledges the complex ethical concerns arising from including children in social research, particularly the power dynamics that may disadvantage young participants or make them vulnerable to coercion. To address these issues, a robust ethical framework was implemented in accordance with the Bath Spa University research ethics approval process. Participation in the study was informed and entirely voluntary, with parents and carers receiving information and consent forms between 1 and 2 weeks prior to the event. Consent was requested on an opt-in basis for each child, with parents retaining the right to withdraw consent without consequences. Teachers collected signed consent forms and submitted them to FOI organisers on arrival at the event space. FOI organisers then communicated with the researcher to confirm which school groups had returned consent forms. In groups where consent forms were returned but some children were opted out of participating in research, these individuals

were given a coloured sticker to wear in coordination with FOI's existing consent procedures (a different coloured sticker was already in use by FOI to identify children opted out of on-site photography and filming).

Recognising that children may feel tested or pressured in research settings to give 'correct' responses, the researcher endeavoured to create a relaxed and non-judgmental environment. Before data was gathered, children were informed about the research activities in age-appropriate language and asked for verbal assent, with the option to withdraw. To ensure respect and sensitivity towards young participants, not only during data collection but also in the analysis and writing up of research findings, strict anonymity and confidentiality measures were maintained, with no names of individuals recorded and schools referred to by numbers. The research design prioritised unobtrusive and playful methods that aligned with the participatory ethos of FOI, aiming to minimise any sense for the participants of being tested. Finally, in the interest of transparency and reciprocity, the findings of this study will be shared with teachers and parents in an accessible format via the FOI school's network and the FOI website, acknowledging the valuable contributions of the young participants while preserving their anonymity.

Findings

3.1 Summary of event visitation and data collection

Forest of Imagination 2024 engaged a wide range of visitors, from invited school groups to returning families who visit every year and members of the public discovering the event for the first time. This section provides an overview of visitation as part of the FOI schools programme, with full visitation figures expected to be reported by the event organisers as part of their internal evaluation process. The summary provided in table 1 below outlines the reach of the event via school visits, and the extent of data gathered in this research.

Table 1 Summary of visitation and data collection

Category	Total Number
Workshops coordinated by FOI	
Number of schools attended	9
Number of classes attended	9
Number of pupils attended	262
Number of home-educated pupils attended	3
Workshops coordinated by The Egg	
Number of schools attended	6
Number of classes attended	8
Number of pupils attended	241
Data Collected	
Number of consent forms received	73 from 5 schools
Number of workshop observations conducted	6 with 4 schools and 1 home educated group
Number of focus group interviews conducted	2 with 2 schools
Number of postcards received	29 from 3 schools

The disparity between the reach of FOI and the data collected can be attributed to several factors, namely: access, consent, time constraints and the return of postcards by class teachers. Access to visiting school groups was constrained by the fact that one event space at FOI 2024 was coordinated by The Egg Theatre, and this research was not incorporated into their programming. My research activities were coordinated with the FOI schools programme, and I

was unable to observe or distribute consent forms for the groups visiting FOI with The Egg. Visitation figures are reported separately in table 1 above for school groups attending workshops coordinated by FOI directly and by The Egg. Some schools visited both categories of workshop, with 12 schools participating in total. Access to visiting pupils was further limited by the number of school groups returning consent forms. Although participant information leaflets and consent forms were distributed to all school groups coordinating visits through FOI directly, a total of 5 groups submitted consent forms on arrival at the event, which meant that the remaining groups were excluded from the research. Next, the synchronous programming of workshops and in-person nature of the observations and focus groups limited the researcher's ability to observe all available groups. Although pupils visited in classes of around 30, these were subdivided on arrival into smaller groups that participated in synchronous workshops. The researcher opted to prioritise school groups that were attending FOI as members of the St John's Foundation Primary Empowerment Programme (PEP) and observed subdivided groups where the greatest number of pupils had returned consent forms. Finally, the design of the 'postcard to a friend' task as an optional follow-up activity to be completed in class time after the event meant that not all of the supplied postcards were returned.

3.2 Observation findings

This section of the report discusses the findings developed through the analysis of three observed workshops, all of which were conducted with PEP schools. Additional observations were conducted with a non-PEP school and a small group of home-educated children. Thematic analysis was performed on all field observations, but a detailed summary of workshop proceedings and findings are presented for three observations to avoid repetition due to saturation. Field notes for all observations are included in appendix 6.1.

3.2.1 Observation 1, Tinkertrees



Figure 1. The Tinkertrees structure, located in the secret garden.

Two facilitators, Andrew Amondson and Daniel Part, greeted a group of 9 year 6 pupils (aged 10-11) from school 1 on the front lawn of the Holburne Museum. They introduced themselves, with Daniel leading a conversation with the children about his work as a tree surgeon. This covered the theme of the symbiotic relationship between humans and trees, highlighting how trees improve the quality of life for people in cities, and how arborists help trees to adapt to an urban landscape. Daniel then invited the children to a game of hide and seek and they counted down as he left the group. Next, Andrew led the group in a contemplative activity, asking the children to reflect on the feeling of boredom and inviting them to find an 'unnoticed thing' in their immediate surroundings and spend a minute in quiet contemplation of their chosen item.

After asking for their reflections on their experience he invited them to begin exploring the FOI site in search of Daniel.

The group began this transition stage of the workshop by walking past the museum, with Andrew falling back to follow the children who were allowed to pursue their curiosity in an exploration of some of the FOI installations. Led by their senses, the group first arrived at the sound installation Empath Machine, where they expressed surprise and excitement regarding the novelty of music issuing from a tree. Soon they were drawn to the nearby Bath Community Kitchen (BCK) installation where they expressed curiosity about the source of an inviting smell of cooking. Here Rob, a facilitator with BCK engaged the group in a brief conversation about the source of the smell and invited them to return and attend a BCK workshop later. Next, on Andrew's prompting, the children resumed their search for Daniel, exploring the bushes and trees on the perimeter of the museum's garden until they found and followed a narrow dirt path through the trees and into the 'Secret Garden'.

Here the children expressed delight at finding not only Daniel, but the Tinkertrees workshop area with its improvised structure made of branches (see figure 1 above) that had been engineered to fit together through a system of drilled holes and whittled ends. Daniel encouraged the children to explore an array of different tree branches, and to examine their properties before Andrew introduced the activity of 'tinkering' as a playful and open-ended way of 'trying' and making. The children appeared excited to tinker with the wood and enjoyed selecting branches, using tools to adapt them and working alone and collaboratively to iterate and build on the Tinkertrees structure. The children appeared absorbed in each stage of the activity, showing keen interest in the properties of the different pieces of wood, the operation of the tools (assisted by the facilitators) and the development of the structure. In addition to attaching their branches, the children engaged with the structure in other ways, peeling bark in decorative patterns, hanging wood shavings and twigs on branches, spinning and swinging branches that were mobile, and crawling or lying beneath the structure.

With around five minutes of the session remaining, Andrew invited the children to explore another area of the secret garden: a small glade of trees that had been rigged with a sprinkler system by the artist Matthew Leece as part of his interactive installation 'What can we learn from a drip?' The children expressed surprise and delight as they entered the space, which was cool, shaded and fragrant with forest smells. The artist had positioned leaves made out of a mirror-like material in some of the tree branches to channel the flow of water, and stainless steel bowls on tree stumps to catch the drips with varying degrees of resonance. The children were quick to engage with the space by lifting and lowering the bowls to hear the different sounds they made, raising their hands to feel the spraying water, spinning around, jumping and waving their hands above their heads. After several minutes of undirected and open-ended play in this area, Andrew and Daniel closed the session by thanking the children for their participation and encouraging them to "stay playful!" and "enjoy tinkering!"

Thematic coding of the field notes highlighted that each stage of the session included an emphasis on sensory awareness, exploration and stimulation. During the opening and transition stages, the young participants were encouraged to pay attention to the sensations in their bodies brought about by being bored and allowed to follow their senses as part of the game of hide and seek to explore the FOI site and detect Daniel's location. This indicates some alignment with Hay's (2024 p.403) description of FOI's creative pedagogy that positions creativity, curiosity, and wonder as core drivers of children's engagement. It seems probable that the initial stage of contemplative practice and focused attention encouraged the children to be present, aware of their surroundings and observant of their embodied responses to the site's sensory stimuli. Without the direction of facilitators, they spontaneously followed their curiosity around novel sounds and smells to find areas of the site that interested them. This structuring of the workshop also appeared to sensitise the children to sensory stimulation of the tinkering session where touch, sight and smell also figured prominently in the hands-on making activities with the children exploring the properties of materials and tools. Similarly, sound, touch and embodied responses to the novel environment figured prominently in their enjoyment of the 'What can we learn from a drip?' installation. By stimulating sensory exploration and providing

open-ended environments, the workshop appeared to cultivate a sense of wonder and disposition for discovery in the participants.

Another notable theme that emerged from the coding process is hands-on creative play. This theme intersected with the sensory theme in its focus on embodiment and the experiential character of the workshop where children were encouraged to explore, discover, experiment and build in open-ended and playful ways. Incorporating a game of hide and seek into the workshop fostered intrinsic motivation in the children to discover the site and invested them with autonomy to follow their curiosity and lead the transitional stage of the workshop themselves. These observations seem to resonate with Hay's (2022) emphasis on the role of child-directed play, agency, and collaborative inquiry within FOI's 'creative pedagogy' framework. The participants exhibited creative imagination in their meaning making, for example when two girls shared with each other how their twigs 'felt like a friend' following the contemplative exercise. Participants also demonstrated a sense of confidence and enjoyment of invention in the hands-on tinkering session, helping each other to fit the branches together and create a large, collaborative structure that could remain balanced and feature pleasingly decorative and mobile elements.

Both the sensory and creative play themes figured prominently in coding of the children's speech and observed responses which exhibited curiosity, surprise, fascination and enjoyment. They heard music, smelled cooking, touched and manipulated different types of wood and tools, and interacted with water in the sensory drip installation. This multi-sensory, experiential approach fostered responses that exhibited curiosity and fascination with discovery. Eagerly exploring and engaging with their surroundings, the children appeared to enjoy a sense of agency as they actively followed their senses and raised questions in pursuit of new information. Overall, the children were observed to value their experience as novel, fun and exciting. They demonstrated enthusiasm for discovery when exploring the site and finding the secret garden, fascination and enjoyment when examining, selecting and modifying their

branches as part of the tinkering activity, and absorption in the sensory play stimulated by the drip installation.

Further to these themes, the coding of the content of the facilitators' speech revealed an emphasis on environmental topics developed through their discussion of the role of trees in an urban landscape, the habitats provided by both living trees and dead wood, and the importance of sustainable practices. The facilitators also fostered a sense of nature connection through this theme and their invitation to the children to explore 'unnoticed' elements in their environment and examine the properties of different types of wood.

3.2.2 Observation 2, Climate Spa

The Climate SPA is a space intended for children to devise activities that help adults to overcome apathy and ignorance and face up to the climate crisis. The temporary structure where the session takes place, along with the content of the workshop itself both expand on a storybook that had already been shared with the visiting class through an artist visit to the school before the event opening. The story provides a framework for the session, with both the architecture of the learning environment and the content of the workshop operating as an extension of the story and serving to embed the participants within its overarching narrative. The book is personalised, directly addressing 'the people of Bath' and centres on the character of Kay, who embarks on an adventure aboard a 'magical tree balloon' engineered by her father. The magic vehicle combines a silken hot air balloon with a magic tree grown from a seed sown on the day of Kay's birth. Aboard the tree balloon, Kay travels to disparate land and seascapes across Earth, observing and interacting with a variety of creatures and their ecosystems reflecting that 'the whole world was wonderful.' In Australia she observes the unusual fauna, swims amongst the corals and meets locals who are 'the most ancient people on earth.' Here, her new friends teach her 'about spaces for playful awakening: SPAs.' SPAs are introduced as spaces that teach people 'how to awaken wonder, reveal the invisible, [and] measure things that matter with what matters.' Kay is urged to 'keep her heart playful and open, for that way

she [can] bring people together and build more SPAs.' She is honoured with the title 'SPArkitech' and given her own bag of magic seeds.

That night, as Kay dreams she envisions a climate disaster that ravages all of the beautiful locations she has recently visited: icebergs melt, trees burn, and corals are bleached white. The next day, Kay travels beyond Earth's atmosphere and scatters her seeds down to plant 'a new paradise'. The story closes with a shift in perspective to that of a young girl of Kay's age in the city of Bath. This unnamed character observes Kay's tree balloon from a distance and dashes to greet it. In the final scene the young Bathonian discovers an invitation from Kay to the people of Bath to attend 'the opening of the magical tree balloon to build your own Space for Playful Awakening'.

The observed session opened with a warm greeting from the facilitator, Simon Sharkey, to the 15 participants who are year 5 (9-10 year old) attendees of school 2. Simon began the session by asking the children to recall their reading of the Climate SPA book and connect the structure surrounding them to Kay's story. At the centre of the Climate SPA is the Holburne garden's largest and oldest tree, with the tree and the participating group enclosed by a temporary structure comprised of wooden struts and trusses arranged in a large circle. Twine weaves in and out of the structure and provides hanging space for postcards that feature learning provocations on the ecological themes developed in the storybook, as well as artworks made in response to these provocations by earlier workshop participants. Small tables topped with crafting materials and more provocations are arranged around the inner perimeter of the space, while bales of straw and blankets are positioned on the floor as inviting spaces for making.

Simon led a conversation with the children about the story and the space that reminded them of Kay's invitation to the people of Bath and invited the possibility that the tree could be Kay's magic tree balloon, and the wooden structure could be its basket. The children listened keenly, with hands shooting up in response to questions about the story and its themes, and there were exclamations of wonder at the possibility that they were in the presence of the magic tree. After

an interactive discussion of some of the themes of Kay's story (including global warming and the importance of imagination) Simon led a warmup activity, including physical and coordination challenges. Following this he turned the pages of the storybook with the children, inviting them to recap Kay's narrative, drawing out the theme of biodiversity and exploring the definition of 'SPArkitect'. He prompted the children to consider their hopes for the future and how these may impact the environment.

Next, Simon introduced the young participants to the learning provocations distributed around the Climate SPA. He described these as 'playful awakenings' that can be used to inspire action. He demonstrated where to find the postcards and crafting materials (see figures 2-6 below) for a variety of creative projects. The children were invited to explore the space, select a 'playful awakening' that they would like to respond to, and to create their own provocations for each other, for the adults in their life or for future visitors to the Climate SPA. Before engaging in these projects, the children were urged to 'connect with the tree' and take the SPArkitects' oath. The children were eager to make physical contact with the tree by touching, stroking, embracing or leaning against it. Simon read the oath from a poster, and they recited it with him line by line, pledging to awaken wonder, measure what matters with what matters, see the invisible and bring people together with nature.

For the remainder of the session, the children explored and became absorbed in a variety of projects, with some building bug boxes, kaleidoscopes or lamps and others searching for, catching and studying bugs using nets, jars and magnifying glasses. The children worked in small groups, pairs and individually, with some of them migrating from one project to another, completing several activities and others remaining absorbed in a single task throughout. There was evidence of collaboration both within and across projects, with children helping each other to identify tasks and materials, sharing resources and coordinating their efforts. For example, a group of girls keen to search for bugs offered to find inhabitants for the bug boxes under construction by their classmates. The facilitator and accompanying adults in the school party engaged the children in conversation about their projects, but the children remained free to

explore their interest in an open-ended way for around thirty minutes of hands-on creative play. Finally, Simon gathered the children in the centre of the Climate SPA and thanked them for their sharing their imaginative ideas. He wished them well and encouraged them to remember their role as SPArkitects, and their ongoing responsibility to inspire others into playful awakening and connection with nature.



Figures 2-6. Crafting stations in the Climate SPA.

A prominent theme emerging from the coding of field notes recorded during this workshop is the power of imagination, with both the facilitator and the framing narrative of the storybook positioning the young participants as guardians of imagination and creativity in a world where adults have lost or 'forgotten' their own imaginative and creative faculties. This intersected

frequently with the theme of agency, with children encouraged to take on the empowering mantle of 'SPArkitect' and thereby regard themselves as creative problem-solvers with the ability to influence the adults in their lives and help to shape the future. By embedding the workshop experience within a story about the first SPArkitect, the young participants were encouraged to find connections between themselves and the character of Kay, and to view themselves as potential change-makers after her example. This strategy of embedding the workshop within a larger narrative appeared to support the children's meaning-making and their sense of enjoyment and responsibility, with participants taking seriously the idea that they have powers of imagination that adults have forgotten.

The themes of environmental awareness and stewardship also emerged prominently in this session, integrated through the content of the story and the learning provocations. Participating children were encouraged to think about a range of environmental issues, including biodiversity and the impact of humans on the environment through topics such as global warming and deforestation. A sense of connection to nature was also developed through the act of connecting with the tree and pledging the SPArkitect's oath before engaging in hands-on activities centring on the exploration and protection of local wildlife. These observations align with Hay and Amondson's (2024) emphasis on cultivating a biophilic disposition in young participants. By providing opportunities for sensory engagement and emotional resonance with the natural world, the workshop appeared to foster the children's valuing of their role in caring for the environment.

Like the Tinkertrees workshop, this session focused on embodied learning through a range of physical and sensory engagement, inviting children to participate through movement, touch, sight and hands-on creative play. Children were encouraged to use their bodies during the recap of the story, stretching themselves to assume the size of a giant walrus, and to demonstrate where they locate their imagination by pointing to it. Physical coordination challenges were used by the facilitator to transition from the story-based opening of the session to the longer period of hands-on creative play. Like the 'tinkering' portion of the previous session, the time

allocated to 'playful awakening' in the Climate SPA was open-ended and allowed the children the freedom to follow their self-directed curiosity. This emphasis on multi-modal, experiential learning supports Hay's (2022) characterisation of FOI's 'creative pedagogy' as embracing open-ended, emergent approaches that allow children to follow their own fascinations. The children appeared to value this freedom to explore and create, eagerly taking the initiative to select activities and appearing confident in the process of creating and decorating bug boxes, kaleidoscopes and lamps. The children also seemed proud of their work, showing and talking about their work to their peers, the facilitator and the adults accompanying the group. Their enjoyment of the session was also evident in both their engagement and their reluctance to leave at the end of the session.

3.3.3 Observation 3, The Cafe from the Future

The Cafe from the Future workshop was designed and facilitated by Bath Community Kitchen (BCK), a community group that began operating during Forest of Imagination 2023. BCK work to improve people's physical and mental wellbeing by providing community meals and cookery workshops. Their contribution to FOI in 2024 involved an interactive workshop for school groups that explored the impact of the climate emergency on the future of food.

The observed session began with facilitator Rob greeting a group of 14 year 4 pupils (ages 8-9) from school 4. He engaged them with the promise of a trip to the future, and the children followed him enthusiastically through a portion of the event's temporary 'ring of biodiversity' structure which he framed as a time machine. Finding themselves imaginatively transported to the year 2124, the children responded to Rob's questions about how drastic changes to the earth's climate and ecology might have transformed the availability of a range of plants and foods. Together they then visited BCK's temporary 'museum of lost ingredients' installation (see figure 7 below), and identified familiar foods (including chocolate, bananas and maple syrup) preserved as exhibits in specimen jars. Rob encouraged the children to speculate on what had happened to limit production of these ingredients, exploring imaginative scenarios such as the requirement that children in the future would be required to leave school early and work in

agriculture to replace the role of bees and other pollinators. This segment of the workshop ended with a focus on maple syrup, which is likely to fall out of production as temperatures rise. Here Rob introduced the work of his colleagues at BCK in developing a new recipe for a maple syrup substitute that uses potatoes. The children's attention was drawn to a series of specimen jars that illustrate the process by which potatoes can be transformed into syrup, and Rob handed over to his colleague Rakesh who explained the stages. The children's responses here indicated surprise and scepticism, which turned to enthusiasm and excitement when Rakesh invited them to make and taste some syrup themselves.



Figure 7. The exterior of BCK's Museum of lost ingredients installation

Following Rakesh, the children were invited to each take a potato and find a workstation at one of two tables in the temporary 'test kitchen' area of the workshop. Here they followed Rakesh's interactive demonstration, chopping the potatoes and combining them in a large pot with water and salt. This pot was then replaced with one that had already been boiled and simmered, and the children were asked to observe changes to the potatoes and the water following the

cooking process. After eliciting these observations, Rakesh described the process by which the starchy water can be fermented and reduced into a syrup following the addition of caramelised sugar and spices. He was then joined by co-facilitator Helen, who brought over some freshly cooked waffles which she cut and distributed to the children and topped with potato syrup. The children were asked to sample the syrup and provide feedback on the recipe, which was framed as 'experimental'. The children expressed enthusiasm for the waffles and syrup and offered tasting notes, identifying ingredients that had been used to flavour the syrup such as cinnamon and orange.

The next stage of the workshop was introduced as an opportunity for the young participants to develop their own experimental recipe to replace another lost food stuff. Here they were reminded of the absence of chocolate in 2124 and invited to combine a variety of ingredients to create a substitute for chocolate milkshake. The children were invited to work alone or in pairs or small groups to combine oat milk with their choice of available ingredients, which included potato syrup, beetroot puree, turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, lemon and vanilla. They appeared to relish the opportunity to explore these ingredients, passing them around, smelling and inspecting them closely. They also appeared absorbed in the experimental stage of combining ingredients, discussing their choices and different combinations. This stage of the workshop ended with an opportunity to try the milkshakes, and all the participants appeared to relish tasting, evaluating and comparing the experimental recipes.

The workshop closed with discussion and reflection on the experimental recipes and an invitation from Helen for the children to nominate ingredients to include in a new exhibit for the museum of lost ingredients: foods still available in 2024 that they would like to save. The children were invited to write or draw a picture of the foods they wished to save so that these could be preserved in small vials (see figure 8 below). Finally, Rob led the group back through the mock time machine to return them to the present and the facilitators thanked them for their participation.



Figure 8. Nominating foods to be saved for future generations

Thematic analysis highlighted the prominence of imaginative engagement in BCK's framing of the session. The use of the time machine engaged the children's curiosity at the beginning of the workshop, and they readily embraced the imaginative scenario of entering 2124. The facilitators remained in character as inhabitants of 2124 throughout the workshop, reminding the pupils of their temporal location through playful interactions in both the museum of lost ingredients and the test kitchen areas of the installation. Situating the session in an imagined 2124 enabled the facilitators and children to explore serious topics in playful ways. Specifically, this imaginative and playful engagement supported the theme of environmental awareness, with attention to issues of food security and extinction, along with a consideration of the long-term consequences of current practices. Although alarmed by the vision of the future presented in the museum of lost ingredients, the children engaged enthusiastically, expressing empathy for future generations and gratitude for the variety of foods available in 2024. Positioning children within creative, playful scenarios as a means of exploring complex issues is consistent with FOI's aim to provide space for 'hopeful and imaginative' engagement with climate education themes (Hay and Amondson 2024, p.5). By situating the workshop in an imagined future, the facilitators were able to engage the children in a thought experiment about food security and extinction in a way that was both serious and accessible.

The test kitchen segments of the workshop shared the themes of sensory engagement and hands-on learning approaches with both Tinkertrees and the Climate SPA sessions. BCK's interventions were practical and solution oriented, allowing the children an opportunity to respond creatively to challenges. By modelling the process of making syrup, children were supported to explore cookery skills and gain confidence in a kitchen setting, before attempting their own experimental recipes. The children used their senses to explore and sample ingredients, identify changes brought about by cooking processes and develop their own inventions in a problem-solving mode.

Coding of the children's speech and interactions suggests that they valued the novelty of the session's sustained time travel and future scenario framing, which provided a playful structure within which to explore difficult themes. They also appeared to enjoy the hands-on activities in the test kitchen, exhibiting excitement at handling ingredients and responding positively to the trial-and-error approach of developing recipes, remaining enthusiastic about their experiences even when their concoctions proved unpalatable. The framing of the milkshake task as an open-ended invention process appeared to foster confidence and agency with children excited to experiment with novel combinations.

3.3 Focus group interviews findings

Focus group discussions took place with pupils from two visiting school groups, both members of the St John's Foundation supported Primary Empowerment Programme (PEP). Focus group 1 included 3 year 1 children (ages 5-6) who spoke to me during their lunch break after attending two sessions on Thursday morning: an artist-led workshop with Matt, Morgy and Holly, followed by an immersive and interactive storytelling session led by Patchlarks. Focus group 2 included 4 children attending year 4 (ages 8-9) who answered my questions whilst awaiting their return transport after attending a creative cookery session on Friday afternoon hosted by Bath Community Kitchen in their Cafe from the Future.

Thematic analysis of the focus group discussions identifies a range of ways in which participating children ascribed value to their FOI experiences. When asked about the highlights of their visit, children's responses in group 1 centred on opportunities for creative self-expression, referring to making animals out of clay in the artist-led workshop and dancing during the interactive storytelling session ('I enjoyed doing the clay making.' 'I enjoyed the story! I liked the ending where we danced.'). In focus group 2, the respondents were also enthusiastic about hands-on activities, this time with a focus on the sensory pleasures and novelties of the experimental cookery workshop ('I liked mixing the ingredients to make a smoothie.' '[I enjoyed] trying the potato syrup. I was surprised how good it was.'). These responses appear to validate FOI's emphasis on positioning children as active co-constructors of knowledge and providing them the freedom to follow their own creative fascinations. By offering open-ended, multi-modal learning activities, the workshops appeared to support the children's innate capacities for imagination and self-directed meaning-making.

The children in both classes also valued surprising and unexpected experiences. In the first group, these elements had a clear sensory emphasis, with the children enjoying being sprayed with water in the Patchlarks storytelling session about the complex ecosystems hidden in moss ('...they sprayed us with the story, and I liked it when he did that'). Novelty also appeared to activate the imaginations of participants. For the younger group the unexpected microclimate of Matthew Leece's What can we learn from a drip? installation, where it appeared to be raining in an area of the secret garden on an otherwise sunny day, was surprising and memorable ('When we went into the secret forest and water was coming out of the trees, I thought it was raining, and there were no rainclouds!'). Those joining the second focus group were enthusiastic about the time travel framing of their Cafe from the Future experience. Here the children were excited to recall the time machine and their experience of seeing the future which gave them an opportunity to confront the 'sad' and 'scary' consequences of ecological collapse within a playful and solution-focused scenario, as the following excerpted conversation illustrates:

'The future was quite scary, but it was exciting to visit.'

'Because we could come back.'

‘And we could try to save some foods.’

‘Or replace them.’

In addition to alerting them to some potential long-term consequences of climate change, this imaginative scenario also prompted them to express a sense of gratitude for conditions in the present (‘I’m grateful to live in 2024 and not 2124.’ ‘I don’t want to be a pollinator.’). This theme also highlighted the value of narrative and storytelling for engaging children’s interest in the natural world, which emerged in parallel in group 1’s discussion where the Patchlarks session prompted a child’s curiosity about moss (‘I want to look at moss and put water on it to make it grow’).

Respondents in both groups could identify opportunities they had been given to make their own choices, and these were often connected to the tangible outcomes of hands-on creative play. For those in group 1 this included choosing which animals to sculpt out of clay, whereas for members of group 2 this was connected to their choices of which ingredients to include in their test kitchen inventions and which to preserve in their contribution to the new museum exhibit.

3.4 Follow up task findings

The children’s postcard responses illustrate the value of unexpected and novel experiences in creating lasting impressions. Their written messages frequently convey a sense of enjoyment and wonder in connection with the imaginative framing and immersive setting of FOI workshops. The children’s use of adjectives such as ‘fun’, ‘magical’ and ‘amazing’ demonstrate the emotional resonance of imaginative and fantastical elements such as the ‘secret garden’, the ‘time machine’ and the ‘magic tree’. The responses also suggest a connection between novel experiences and learning, with unexpected elements sparking engagement: ‘I was surprised that we made maple syrup. I learned that we can make maple syrup with potatoes.’ (A8). These findings chime with Hay’s (2022, p.39) call for learning environments that constitute ‘spaces of possibility’ where unexpected elements can spark engagement and learning.

Another prominent theme that emerges through an analysis of the postcards is that of connection to nature. The children's written responses frequently highlight the outdoors environment of the workshops and suggest that their experiences fostered a sense of appreciation for nature through opportunities to learn about, explore or interact with wildlife, natural materials and natural processes. Furthermore, their illustrated responses are dominated by representations of trees, plants and creatures, reflecting receptivity to the outdoor setting of the event and its theme of biodiversity. Some children's written responses indicate a new or deepened appreciation for nature ('I was really surprised about how cool nature was. When I was there, I learned how cool nature is.' A9), while others indicate that the outdoors setting produced a calming effect ('As we entered the forest of imagination our guide told us that you would feel a relaxed feeling and we did!'). Some postcards also demonstrated an awareness of environmental issues, such as B10 whose illustration features a polar bear and the message 'Help save climate change'.



Figures 9-12 A selection of the children's postcard illustrations

Children also frequently refer to creative and hands-on activities in positive terms in their postcard responses. Creative activities serve as a focal point for enjoyment and are associated with strong positive sentiments ('I loved making masks' B6). The respondents cite their hands-on participation in a variety of art projects, from making masks to interacting with installations as amongst their most memorable and enjoyable experiences ('The most memorable moment was when we went into the secret garden and made tunes with the bowls and sprinklers' A12). This association suggests that hands-on, creative experiences may be particularly effective in creating lasting educational impacts. This theme intersected with that of agency or autonomy in the children's frequent use of active verbs. Phrases such as 'I made' and 'we created' suggested that creative activities were associated with a sense of ownership and accomplishment.

These themes are consistent with those that emerged through analysis of the observations and focus group discussions. Interestingly, study of the postcards surfaced an additional theme that was less prominent in the preceding data analysis: that of the social dimension of their experiences at FOI. In their postcard messages, children frequently cited having fun with friends as a memorable aspect of the event. This was evident in both explicit references to shared experiences ('I enjoyed having fun with friends' A4, 'My favourite moment was spending time with my friends and having lots of fun' A17, 'Our whole class went to the Holburne Museum and done some fun things' B2) and more implicitly through their frequent use of the first-person plural pronouns ('we went in a time machine' A7, 'We went into the secret garden and made tunes with the bowls and sprinklers.' A12, 'the most memorable moment was when we went into the secret garden' A16, 'we saw Willow, the guardian of the forest that we made.' B1, 'we got to make masks that looked like forest animals' B8). This social dimension chimes with Hay's (2022, p.43) emphasis on 'co-enquiry and co-construction' in creative pedagogy. Although social interactions were recorded in the observational field notes, analysis of the postcards provides evidence that some children ascribe value to peer interaction and a sense of shared experience at FOI.

3.5 Overall findings and discussion

Whilst the analysis of the data in each separate dataset revealed themes that were relatively distinct, synthesising these findings in a broader discussion aims to both validate the salience of the identified themes based on their consistency across multiple sources of data, and highlight connections between the themes.

FOI workshops were consistent in their adoption of imagination and creative play to engage children in learning. Young participants were invited to approach complex topics related to environmental stewardship, biodiversity, and the challenges of the climate emergency through a range of imaginative scenarios including positioning participants as SPArkitects in the Climate SPA and time travellers in the Cafe from the Future. These approaches align with the event's child-centred ethos, and echo Vygotsky's proposition that imaginative play can support learning (Lillard et al., 2013). Creative play was a cornerstone of all the observed workshops, with an extended period of time in each session given to the open-ended pursuit of making or experimenting in an artistic or problem-solving mode. This emphasis on exploratory open-ended play validates children's self-expression and decision-making processes and exemplifies the influence of Reggio Emilia principles on FOI's pedagogy. Hay's (2022, p.45) 'creative pedagogy' builds upon these foundations, highlighting the importance of 'learner agency' and open-ended activities as essential elements. Children's observed behaviours during the workshops, along with their self-reported responses after participating demonstrate that a high level of enjoyment and engagement is associated with FOI's imaginative and novel interventions as well as the opportunities that were provided for self-expression through hands-on creative play.

The theme of imagination and creative play intersected in interesting ways with that of autonomy and agency. Imaginative narratives that were employed to frame FOI's creative workshops appeared to support children's sense of agency by positioning participants as creative problem-solvers with the capacity to influence the future. In addition, the creative play portions of the workshops consistently built in opportunities for children to make choices about

how they wanted to engage with the activities. From choosing which learning provocations to respond to in the Climate SPA, to selecting which materials and tools to use in Tinkertrees and which ingredients to experiment with in the Cafe from the Future, children were able to direct aspects of their experience for themselves. In all of the observed workshops, participants' preferences for working individually or in pairs or small groups were also accommodated. This approach exemplifies Hay's (2022, p.45) concept of 'creative pedagogy', which emphasises learner agency and open-ended activities. By positioning young participants as active agents in their learning environment, FOI workshops practice a child-centred pedagogy that builds upon earlier theories such as Piaget's interactionist and constructivist theory and the Reggio Emilia approach. According to Piaget, encouraging children to engage directly with their environment through hands-on activities and granting them agency in how they interact with learning materials can support cognitive development and foster independence (Lourenço, 2014). HOI's work aims to further develop these ideas, proposing 'a radical change to the way art is taught in schools' and advocating for 'a humanist approach based on self-determination and freedom' (Hay, 2024, p.399-401). While earlier theories emphasised the importance of hands-on activities and children's agency, HOI's vision for Forest of Imagination goes further, aiming to provide 'an experimental site of pedagogical innovation' (Hay, 2024, p.397) where learning is truly negotiated, and all ideas are welcome. Children's observed behaviours and responses in the focus groups and postcard task indicate that they valued opportunities to exercise choice and creative self-expression, responding positively to FOI's approach.

Sensory exploration and embodied learning also emerge as central themes across the data, although these appear more explicitly in the observations and more often implicitly in the children's direct responses. Like the theme of autonomy and agency, this theme is linked intimately to FOI's emphasis on hands-on creative play, which in turn aligns with Piaget's proposition that children learn best when they interact physically and actively with concrete materials (Lourenço, 2014). At FOI children responded positively to opportunities for multi-sensory exploration, which included touching and investigating the properties of natural materials in the Tinkertrees workshop and smelling and tasting ingredients and recipe

inventions in the Cafe from the Future. Embodiment was also reinforced through imaginative play in the secret garden's drip installation, the Climate SPA's storytelling session and participant's movements through the time machine to reach the BCK's museum of lost ingredients. These sensory and physical engagements fostered curiosity, fascination and enjoyment amongst the children, as evidenced in their focus group and postcard responses which often refer to these embodied experiences as highlights.

Perhaps predictably, given the context of the study, a prominent theme across the three categories of data was that of nature connection and environmental awareness. The outdoor settings of the workshops, their focus on environmental topics and their incorporation of natural elements and materials were explicitly designed to foster a sense of connection to nature amongst participants. This approach resonates with Louv's (2005) recommendations in light of the perceived prevalence of 'nature-deficit disorder' and the importance of providing children with opportunities to explore and connect with nature in order to improve their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and inspire their interest in environmental stewardship. The children's observed behaviours and recorded responses highlight their appreciation for the encounters and engagements with nature that the FOI workshops provided. They expressed surprise, curiosity and enjoyment in the exploration of environmental themes and natural elements, from investigating the properties of different species of wood in Tinkertrees, to embracing the role of SPArkitect in the Climate SPA and confronting the prospect of food insecurity in the context of the Cafe from the Future. Their responses evidence an appreciation for the natural world and the findings underscore the value of integrating environmental themes into arts-based educational practices.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how participating children attributed value to their experiences at the 2024 iteration of Forest of Imagination, an outdoors arts-based event focused on biodiversity and environmental awareness. Each year FOI aims to engage artists, educators, children, young people and families in experimental sites of co-creation and learning that explore the environmental themes. Following a qualitative, multi-method research design the study draws on ethnographic observations made by the researcher during the event, focus group interviews conducted with children before they left the site, and children's written and illustrated reflections on the event submitted between one and two weeks later in a follow-up task completed at school. Considered in combination these sources of data reveal several prominent themes that shed light on how children valued their experiences, and the extent to which participation in the event supported the educational aims of fostering creativity, agency, and nature connection.

While formal education often 'disciplines the imagination' (Mills and Morton, 2013, p.2), FOI aims to rewild children's creative faculties by providing an environment 'away from the classroom and the curriculum agenda' where they can 'reveal their true selves through play' (Hay, 2018). This research indicates that a combination of imaginative play, hands-on activities and environmental themes was successful in engaging participants with complex topics. Analysis of the data consistently surfaced high levels of enjoyment and engagement amongst children, along with their appreciation for opportunities to make decisions and express themselves. The research also demonstrates that the organisers and facilitators of creative workshops at FOI align with the principles of the creative pedagogy developed by Hay (2022, p.43). FOI workshops resonate with Hay's emphasis on co-enquiry and co-construction, evident in the way workshop leaders facilitate child-led exploration and inquiry. Although FOI workshops are designed and delivered by an array of creative professionals, there is a clear cohesion in the design of activities that honour children and their ways of thinking and communicating. The participants' positive reception of these constructivist approaches to learning point towards their efficacy in fostering meaningful learning experiences.

The workshops also appeared successful in supporting participants' sense of autonomy and agency by encouraging them to direct aspects of their experience and take on responsible roles as creative problem-solvers. The incorporation of multi-sensory and embodied modes of engagement further supported children to explore their environment with curiosity and excitement. These methods appear to have supported and deepened children's interest in the environmental topics explored in the workshops. By engaging children's imagination, encouraging sensory exploration and embodied engagement, fostering agency and connecting them with the environment, FOI created experiences that children found meaningful and memorable. This study therefore highlights the positive potential of FOI in creating impactful learning experiences for young participants.

Overall, these findings have positive implications, suggesting that an array of benefits accrue to children who participate in creative workshops hosted by FOI. The event's holistic, arts-based approach, grounded in child-centred pedagogy, provides a promising model for engaging children and young people in environmental education. However it is important to assert the limited scope of this study, which renders the findings provisional. The research was constrained by practical contingencies relating to access coordination and synchronous programming, as well as the return rates of consent forms and postcards outlined in section 3.1 of this report. These limitations highlight the difficulty of researching situated educational practices within a short time frame and from the position of an external observer.

Although the study has aimed to achieve validity through triangulation of methods and the recruitment of participants from multiple schools, it remains limited by its time-bound focus on specific events. The research provides a snapshot of pupil experience and does not extend to a consideration of the wider complex social and educational context of the school settings in which participants are immersed. The study would be richer if it contextualised attendance at FOI by considering how the trip is framed by class teachers, and the ways in which it is integrated into existing practices at the school. A future study could explore the relationships

that are established between visiting artists who lead sessions at PEP schools before their attendance at FOI. A study that takes a more longitudinal view, for example by gathering data with children and class teachers after more time has elapsed since their participation in the event, would also provide deeper insight into FOI's impact.

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Appendices

6.1.1 Observation field notes: observation 1

School 1, 9 Pupils, Year 6 (PEP)

Session: Tinkertrees

Facilitators: Andrew Amondson and Daniel Part

Andrew and Daniel meet with the children on the museum's front lawn and introduce themselves. Andrew indicates that they are going to spend a little time on the lawn before wandering and wondering to discover the site. Daniel is also going to prepare an activity for the group for a little later. Daniel introduces his profession- he's a tree surgeon - do they know what that means?

"Like a doctor for trees?"

Daniel explains, "Yes, I can help a tree with health problems, but it's also a little bit like being a tree sculptor. I help trees to fit into their surroundings. Trees aren't natural inhabitants of a city, so I help them to adapt."

Andrew asks the group: "What are the benefits of having trees in cities?"

"They're green!"

"They give shade?"

"Birds can live in them."

Daniel affirms these answers: "Yes, they provide a habitat for other wildlife, and they give shade and shelter. Did you know they can also improve the air quality for us?"

Several children nod and a girl replies: "Yes, they breathe in what we breathe out."

"That's right! They are like giant lungs for the city! Let's look at this tree. Can you see any ways in which people might have changed this tree?"

The children look intently at the tree, but they don't identify any features.

Daniel points to a spot on the tree. "Look at this place on the tree. What do you think happened here?"

"A branch was cut?" a child suggests.

"Yes, a tree surgeon will have removed a branch here; you can see the scar. Why do you think that was done?"

"To stop the branch growing?"

"Yes, they wanted to stop that particular branch growing. Maybe they thought the tree already had enough growth in this direction, and they wanted to balance it better. Maybe they wanted the shade to be on all sides and not too much on one side."

Daniel asks if the group would like to play hide and seek, they assent with enthusiasm and count down in a loud chorus as he exits the lawn.

Andrew asks the children to find a space around themselves. "Let's talk about boredom. When was the last time you were bored?"

"Earlier today!"

"Yesterday!"

"Where do you feel it in your body? What does boredom feel like?"

"Everywhere!"

"It feels heavy and tired."

"It feels boring!"

"I feel it in my foot!"

"Did you know that some scientists tried to study boredom, so they put people into an empty room that was all white - so there was nothing really to look at. And then for some people, they put a button in the room. What do you think happened when it was pressed?"

Some of the children shrug, one asks: "What happened?"

"It gave them a shock! An electric shock, and even though it was painful, some people pressed it more than once. They preferred to feel the electric shock than to be bored! Why are we so scared of being bored?"

Here, Andrew appears to be referencing the study described in Wilson, Timothy D., et al. "Just Think: The Challenges of the Disengaged Mind." *Science*, vol. 345, no. 6192, 2014, pp. 75–77. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24744816>. Accessed 2 July 2024.

"I'm not scared of being bored."

"I hate being bored!"

"Being bored is annoying!"

Andrew nods and says: "Now I want you to look around you. Can you find something that no one else has noticed?"

The children turn their attention to their surroundings and look intently for something to claim.

"When you find something, I want you to sit down with it and give your unnoticed thing your attention. I want you to be bored with it for one whole minute."

The children pick up and look at their objects – these include a leaf, a twig, a feather, a blade of grass - and turn them over in their hands. Most of them sit quietly. After around 15 seconds, one boy asks, "Has it been a minute yet?"

Andrew smiles. "Not yet, I'll let you know. I want you to concentrate fully, with all your energy, on your unnoticed thing. Can you learn anything about it? Does it have a story? You can raise your hand when you start to feel bored."

Around half of the group raise their hands instantly.

"How does it feel to be bored with it? Is it different to being bored without it?"

They contemplate their objects, turning them over in their hands, without responding verbally to the questions. Time passes in quiet contemplation.

"Your minute is over, so let's return to the circle now. We're going to go and find Daniel, our wood magician."

"Are you a wood magician, too?"

"I'm an artist, I make films for Netflix and other things, and I lead walks of discovery."

"Cool!"

"I want to make films for Netflix!"

"Absolutely all of us are artists! Now, let's walk two by two. We'll see what we can discover, and you can talk about what you were thinking about while you were bored."

As they begin their walk I over hear the conversation between two girls:

"I zoned out, it felt like zoning out," says one.

"My twig felt like a friend," says the other.

"Mine too, a bit," her friend replies.

Andrew hangs back a little, allowing the children to find their own way. The accompanying class teacher also hangs back.

A boy at the front of the group calls out: "I hear music!"

Another adds: "It's coming from over there!"

The two boys who hear music pick up their pace, leading the group towards the source of the sound.

"It's coming from the tree!"

The children gather beneath the tree which hosts Martyn Ware's Empath Machine sound installation. There is palpable excitement amongst the children, with three or four of them jumping up and down and two of them stroking and embracing the tree.

"How is the tree making music?"

"What kind of magic is this?"

"There are speakers up there, look!"

"Wow! Who put them there?!"

"Something smells so yummy, what is it?"

"Yeah, I was thinking that it smells good around here!"

"It smells like doughnuts or something!"

Andrew asks, "Shall we see if we can find what smells so good?"

Rob (from Bath Community Kitchen) has overheard the conversation and approaches the group, asking "What do you think it smells like?"

"Sweet!"

"Definitely sweet!"

"It smells like pancakes or doughnuts!"

"It smells so good it's making me hungry!"

Rob confirms: "Yeah, it's something you can put on your pancakes! What do you put on your pancakes?"

"Sugar!"

"Honey!"

Rob replies: "Yes, well this is syrup. It smells like maple syrup, but it's not. Do you know where maple syrup comes from?"

"Trees!"

"Yes, and in the future, it could be difficult because trees need to be cold to produce the sap that creates maple syrup. With global warming, the trees won't get cold enough. So, we're making syrup from unwanted potatoes."

"Potato syrup?"

"Eugh!"

"Ew!"

"Sounds gross!"

Rob asks: "But don't you think it smells like maple syrup?"

"Yeah, it smells so yummy!"

Andrew says, "It was our noses that brought us here! And now we need to follow our senses again because we haven't found Daniel yet. Remember that we were playing hide and seek?"

"Is he in the trees somewhere?"

"Maybe he's in the trees!"

The children choose paths through the bushes and trees on the edge of the museum garden. Andrew hangs back and allows the children to find their way. The group's energy feels high as they wander around and through the more overgrown areas of the garden, weaving between trees and the temporary wooden structure of the biodiversity ring. Some find their way through to a dirt path between bushes and trees and beneath a canopy of leaves. Laughter and exuberant conversation ensue. Two members of the group find the path to the secret garden: "There's a little path," and the others pick up their pace and follow.

The group follows the path a little uphill and then down into a clearing enclosed by trees but open to the air and with the appearance of a small garden. In the foreground stands a structure built of branches in a pyramid or teepee shape, further away is a work bench with tools and pieces of wood on the surface and at the far end of the area there is a small outbuilding. The children find Daniel hiding near the structure made of branches and cry out with excitement "He's here!" "Found you!". He welcomes them to the secret garden and introduces the next stage of the session as 'Tinkertrees', asking "What's happened here? What can you see?"

"Some people have made a fort!"

"How have they made it?"

"They've used the wood from the trees."

"Look at these branches! They're connecting together."

Daniel replies "That's right, some of them have holes, and some of them have these nicely shaped ends that fit inside the holes. Do you remember what I told you about my job? These

are branches that have been thinned from local trees. It helps the trees, but it also creates these branches which themselves may be dead, but they can host lots of life. Look closely, what do you think could live in or on a piece of wood like this?" Daniel lifts a branch from the ground with thick bark, he holds it at the children's level so that they can gather around and observe it closely. The children draw closer and study the branch. Daniel touches the bark lightly, prompting some of the children to do the same.

"Moss!"

"That's right, all kinds of mosses and lichens grow directly on the bark."

"Mushrooms."

"Yes! Mushrooms or fungi can grow on and around fallen branches."

"Bugs!"

"Yes! All sorts of insects and bugs will lay eggs in the bark, and bats and birds will live in the holes left in trees."

Andrew interjects: "So, welcome to our tinkering workshop. What does tinkering mean to you?"

"Building?"

"Playing with things?"

"Yes, it can mean building, it can mean playing, experimenting, building with a purpose or just for fun. So, this is an invitation to build together!"

The children's attention is rapt, and they respond with palpable excitement, wide smiles and cries of "Yay!" and "Yes!" to the idea of building together.

Daniel invites them each to select a piece of wood from those on the ground and pay attention to it. "What are its properties? What is it like? That's an ash tree. Who has the oak tree?" He identifies another child's branch. "Let's compare them. What differences do you notice?" The children appraise the two branches, looking intently, touching and stroking them. A stream of adjectives follows: "grey," "green," "rough," "smooth," "heavy," "lighter," "hard," "softer."

Another child holding a silver birch branch points out that hers is more "flaky," and "papery." Yes, that one has very distinctive bark? Does anyone know the name?" (no one replies) "It's a silver birch," A girl comments about a different branch: "This one looks smooth, but it isn't."

Daniel replies "Yes. That's cherry wood." Another girl asks, "Does it smell like cherry?" The two girls sniff the branch and agree that it doesn't smell like cherry.

Daniel addresses the group: "So think about the character of your piece of wood and how you want to use it for building. You can also think about whether you would like to add a hole or shape the end so that it can connect to the other pieces."

"How will we drill the holes in?"

"Great question - we have some tools on the workbench. Who would like to come and see the tools?"

Most of the pupils (including all of the boys) go straight to the workbench, while a few hang back to compare the branches and select a favourable piece of wood to work with.

At the workbench, Daniel demonstrates the whittling tool (manual) and the drill (cordless electric). He supports the pupils one by one to identify the tool required for the change they want to make to their branch, and then to clamp their branch in place and operate the appropriate tool. The children's keenness for their turn to operate the tools and manipulate their wood is palpable.

Daniel points out that some pupils' wood is easier to drill than others and encourages them to scrutinise the wood and shavings to see how one branch was harder than the other. The pupils exhibit fascination with both the tools and materials in their close attention and absence of distraction. Once drilled or reshaped, they take their branches to the fort-like structure and begin to attach their own branches, making a collaborative effort to keep the structure upright and in balance.

"Oh no, this piece is too heavy. Wait, let's swap it for this one."

"I think that's good."

"Wait, what if I put a hole in the bottom?"

"I made a little swing! You can twist it around!"

"Look what X made!" (Plays with swinging branch, spinning it 360 degrees)

"So fun!"

At the beginning of this activity the children are absorbed in their own work of adding their piece to the structure in ones or twos, but the process quickly becomes more collaborative as they work together to help each other connect different pieces to build a larger, interconnected structure.

After all of the children have made their desired changes to their branches with Daniel and Andrew's help, the facilitators return from the workbench to see the structure. Daniel congratulates and encourages the children and makes further suggestions, e.g. peeling bark or hanging wood shavings to create decorative effects.

Two girls begin peeling strips of bark from a large silver birch branch at the centre of the structure:

"This is actually really satisfying."

"It's like a natural fidget toy."

"It's better than a fidget toy."

One of the boys crawls into the structure and another follows. The first lies down in the woodchip and runs it through his hands. The second crouches and inspects the wood chips and wood shavings. Daniel explains that woodchip is multipurpose: it provides a comfortable surface to sit or play on, as well as a habitat for insects, and it breaks down quickly to feed and replenish growing plants.

Andrew invites the pupils to the 'What can we learn from a drip?' installation neighbouring the Tinkertrees structure.

The children enter the shaded clearing under a canopy of leaves with gasps of surprise.

“Wow!”

“How is it raining in here?”

“It’s sunny, just outside!”

"It's like a rainforest!"

Through smiles, laughter and enthusiastic movement towards different areas of the installation and physical interaction with it -lifting and lowering the bowls to catch drips, raising their hands to feel the spraying water, jumping up and down, twirling around, waving their hands above their heads – the children exhibit enjoyment of the novel space.

After a few minutes of free exploration and play in the area, Andrew and Daniel close the session by thanking the children for their participation and encouraging them to stay playful and enjoy tinkering. The class teacher prompts the children to chorus “thank you!” and takes a class photo with the children and artists in front of the fort structure.

6.1.2 Observation field notes: observation 2

School 2, 15 pupils, year 5 (PEP)

Session: Climate Spa, Space for Playful Awakening (Feilden, Clegg Bradley Studios)

Facilitator: Simon Sharkey

Context:

The space, designed by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, is intended for children to devise activities that help adults to overcome apathy and ignorance and face up to the climate crisis. This space and session expand on a storybook that had already been shared with the visiting class through an artist visit to the school before the event opening.

The book is personalised “To the people of Bath” and centres on the character of Kay, who embarks on an adventure aboard a ‘magical tree balloon’ engineered by her father. The magic vehicle combines a silken hot air balloon with a magic tree grown from a seed sown on the day of Kay’s birth. Kay first travels to the Arctic and speaks to the creatures of the polar landscape. Then she flies over “a wide blue ocean” and observes its life forms. Next, she lands in the Amazon jungle and befriends various creatures, who refer to their habitat as a ‘paradise’. Her next stop is the ice fields of Patagonia from where she slides down to Antarctica, meeting penguins and a giant walrus and reflecting that “the whole world was wonderful.” Finally, she visits Australia and observes the unusual fauna, swims amongst the corals and meets locals who are “the most ancient people on earth.”

“They taught her about spaces for playful awakening: SPAs. They showed her how to awaken wonder, to see the invisible, to measure things that matter with what matters and urged her to keep her heart playful and open, for that way she could bring people together and build more SPAs. They gave her a title: “SPArkitech” and a bag of seeds.”

That night as Kay dreams she envisions a climate disaster that ravages all of the beautiful locations she has recently visited: icebergs melt, trees burn, and corals are bleached white. The next day, Kay travels beyond Earth’s atmosphere and she scatters her seeds down to plant “a new paradise”. The story closes with a shift in perspective to that of a young girl of Kay’s age in the city of Bath. This unnamed character observes Kay’s tree balloon from a distance and dashes to greet it. In the final scene the young Bathonian discovers an invitation from Kay to the people of Bath “to the opening of the magical tree balloon to build your own Space for Playful Awakening”.

Examples of “playful awakenings” (transcribed from postcards and posters that are distributed around the Climate SPA):

“Write a song that makes the birds sing and the flowers grow. Teach it to as many people as possible.”

“Make a treasure hunt in the garden or the forest.”

"Find food in the forest and make a meal you can eat."

"We don't just see things with our eyes. Our dreams and hopes hold great surprises. Do we see the things we feel? When we share them, we make them real!"

"Seeing the invisible: Draw your picture here."

"Create your own playful awakening."

"Make your own kaleidoscope."

"Make your own bug box."

Field notes:

Simon welcomes the group to the Climate SPA and connects the space to the story by holding the book aloft and asking: "Who here has read this book?"

The children all raise their hands eagerly and some call out "Yes," "Me!" or "I have!"

Simon asks "Do you remember what it is about?"

"Yes!"

"The tree balloon!"

"The Climate SPA!"

"Kay"

"The magic tree!"

Simon replies "That's right! And here we are now in the Climate SPA! Do you remember there was an invitation to the people of Bath to join the Climate SPA? Well, here it is! Welcome!"

The children cheer. One asks: "Is this the magic tree?"

Simon replies: "Yes, I think it could be! And this (indicating the temporary wooden structure encircling the tree) could be the basket from the tree balloon!"

"Where's Kay?"

"Kay isn't here today, but she has invited you all to become SPArkitects. Who knows what a SPArkitect is?"

"Kay is one!"

"An engineer!"

"A traveller!"

"A person with imagination!"

Simon helps the children with a definition based on the storybook: " SPArkitects are people who make spaces for playful awakening. They are the people who are going to write the future and help adults to know what a playful awakening is, by filling the basket full of imagination. Hands up if you brought your imagination with you?"

Most of the children's hands shoot up immediately.

Simon continues: "That's a relief! Because the adults have all forgotten theirs! It's normal, because they have to worry about grown-up problems like taxes and mortgages, so they lose

their imaginations. But thankfully we have you! You can share yours and help us. Now, can you point to where you keep your imagination?"

Most of the children point to their heads.

"In your head? That's a good place for your imagination to work. I also keep mine here in my heart (Simon puts his hand on his chest). It's nice to have imagination here and here (he points first to his head and then to his chest). Can you point to your head and rub your heart?"

He demonstrates this, and the children try to do the same. They hesitate and struggle to coordinate their motions.

Simon acknowledges their difficulty and says "It's not as easy as it looks, is it? Now swap! And swap! And swap again!" He alternates his hands between the two motions quickly and the children try to keep up, struggling with their coordination.

Simon demonstrates another physical challenge: "Now point your finger at me with your right hand and put your thumb up with your left hand. Now switch! Switch! Okay, shake it out."

Again, the children try to follow the instructions, appearing to enjoy the challenge while finding it almost impossible to keep up with the pace.

"Now we're going to play with some of the ideas from the book. Awakening wonder, measuring what matters with what matters, seeing the invisible and connecting with nature. Are you ready?"

The children reply "Yes!", some nod, one claps and another jumps up and down.

"So, this tree is the magic tree from the book, and this structure around us is the basket from the hot air balloon!"

Simon turns the pages of the book to recap the story (without reading it out). He prompts the children to check their memory of the story and explore their comprehension of its themes.

"Where is Patagonia? Why are the ice fields there melting?"

"Global warming," a child responds.

"What is that?"

"When the planet gets too hot because of carbon?"

"Greenhouse gas?" another suggests.

"That's right," Simon briefly summarises the greenhouse effect. "The adults are not doing very much about it, which is why we need SPArkitects."

"How big is a giant walrus? What noise does it make?"

The children compete to stretch themselves to the tallest and widest shapes, then make honking and barking sounds. Simon encourages them to grow bigger and make their noises louder.

Simon reads about the lessons of the people of the First Nations of Australia to Kay, and how they invite her to become a SPArkitect. He draws the children's attention to the large tree. "How do you think it relates to the story?"

"It's the balloon tree!" a child exclaims.

"Yes, it could be. Or perhaps it could have grown from one of Kay's seeds that she scattered many moons ago because she knew you were coming to become SPArkitects."

Simon asks the group: "What do you want for the future? We all want some of the same things like money, houses, holidays, things that make our lives more comfortable, but we also have to think about their effect on the wider world and want them in a different way."

"Stop deforestation!" one child shouts.

"Stop the sun burning everything," says another.

Simon: "This place, this structure that we are standing inside, is the basket of the great big tree balloon. While we are in here, you can play with a playful awakening, or you can create your own playful awakening of your own."

Simon shows the children a selection of postcards and posters that include invitations to activities that exemplify the idea of "playful awakening". Simon reads some of the invitations and demonstrates where to find the postcards distributed around the structure of the Climate SPA. He invites the children to explore the space, read the posters and postcards and choose any that appeal to them. He also invites them to think of their own ideas for a playful awakening and to write them down. Finally, he tells the children: "When you're ready, you first need to take the SPArkitects' oath, and to do that you must connect with the SPArkitect tree."

The children move forward quickly to connect with the tree, some embracing it, some leaning against it, some touching it with their palms, or fingertips. Simon reads the SPArkitects' oath line by line, and they repeat each line in chorus with enthusiasm.

"As a SPArkitect I will help people
to awaken wonder,
to measure what matters with what matters,
and to see the invisible.

As a SPArkitect I will bring people
together with nature."

Next, the children split off from the group, some as individuals and others in pairs or threes.

They approach different stations within the SPA and pick up postcards. Some gravitate quickly to objects such as the bug boxes, jam jars, bug nets, and crafting materials. Others take more time to circulate and survey the available materials and options. Within a minute or two, all but one child (who continues to circulate, observing his classmates) is absorbed in a project.

One girl picks up a net and approaches the tree, turning over fallen leaves and says, "I'm trying to find some bugs!"

Another two work together to follow the guide to making a kaleidoscope. They help each other to identify the materials they need and read out the instructions to each other.

Nearby three children have each picked up a glass jar and are deciding what to do with it – perhaps "turn it into a lamp with the candles," or "make a habitat for a bug or a beetle."

The most popular activity takes place on a blanket on the floor of the SPA where several children are quickly absorbed in the construction of bug boxes. They work on separate boxes but collaborate to identify materials and help each other to collect cut bamboo, twigs, leaves and drilled pieces of wood. To fit them the contents of his box in as tightly as possible so that it “stays in places”, one boy asks another to hold the bamboo and twigs he has already inserted in position while he drives in a final piece of bamboo. The other bug box builders follow this example, helping each other to identify a final piece of the right size and drive it into position. Their class teacher asks, “Who would like to live there?” The children respond:

“Bugs,”

“Spiders!”

“Beetles,”

“Woodlice!”

Three girls who have been observing the final stages of box building are inspired to find inhabitants for the bug boxes: “Let’s go and find some bugs!” They take a jar, a magnifying glass and a net and search the area for insects.

Three pupils making bug boxes are comparing this session with their previous session. Their teacher asks, “What did you like more? The last one or this one?”

“This one,” a child replies.

“Why so?”

“This one is more creative.”

“This is more fun.”

“I just like making stuff.”

A girl who has finished making a kaleidoscope is now absorbed in making a lamp with a jar and an LED candle inside. She is decorating the glass with fallen leaves. Simon helps her to find a way to make the leaves stay in place using a glue stick. A boy appears inspired by this lamp “that’s actually really nice” and finds another LED candle which he attempts to attach to his kaleidoscope.

A girl adds grass and leaves to her bug jar to make a better temporary habitat for the beetle she has found before transferring it to a bug box when it is ready (the children making bug boxes have now begun to decorate them using colouring pencils).

Two girls use their jars and nets to catch woodlice to transfer to their friends’ new bug boxes. They turn over a bale of straw to detect more woodlice.

Closing:

Simon gathers the children around himself in front of the tree and thanks them for bringing their energy, enthusiasm and imagination to the session.

“What’s important is that you take these amazing imaginative ideas home with you and share them with the people in your lives. Encourage them to measure what matters with what matters.”

6.1.3 Observation field notes: observation 3

28 June

School 3, 14 pupils, year 4 (PEP)

Session: Cafe from the Future

Facilitators: Rob, Rakesh and Helen of Bath Community Kitchen

Rob, a facilitator at the Bath Community Kitchen greets the group and welcomes them to the site. He opens the session by asking: "Have you ever been in a time machine?"

Several children laugh and cry out "No!" with one girl asserting: "I've been to the 15th Century!"

An exchange between her and Rob continues:

"Have you?! What did you do while you were there?"

"I saw Anne Boleyn!" (she giggles)

"How exciting! Have you ever been to the future?"

"No!"

"Okay, well if you'd like to see what the world looks like in 100 years, please follow me."

Rob turns and approaches a section of the ring of biodiversity, the children dash to follow him.

When they have caught up he adjusts a rope on the structure, explaining that "this is how you choose the year you want to travel to. What year is 100 years from now?"

"2124!"

"Yes, and how old will you be in 2124?"

"One hundred and nine!"

"I'll only be a hundred and eight!"

"Now, you might have a slight tingling feeling all over as you go through here, but it's nothing to worry about."

Some of the children shake their limbs and others bob up and down on the spot, appearing excited to go through the structure. Rob crouches and dashes through the middle of the structure with the children following close behind, making themselves smaller so that they fit through the narrow space. As they exit, Rob welcomes them to 2124 on the other side.

"How does it feel in 2124?"

"Exciting!"

"Did you get that tingly feeling?"

Several pupils reply "yes!", and all appear animated.

"So, you might find that many things around us look the same in 2124, but in fact there are lots of differences. For example, there are fewer plants and foods available in the future. Why do you think that could be?"

"Climate change."

"They died out?"

"Yes, changes in the temperature and the absence of fresh water have been a huge problem. It's so bad some of them only exist in a museum. Would you like to see the museum of lost ingredients?"

The children chorus "yes!" and follow Rob to Bath Community Kitchen's 'museum of lost ingredients' installation. He shows them "the world's last bananas" and asks what other ingredients they can identify in the display. The children take turns, pointing to the exhibits and calling out the names of the foods, each item exhibited in its own specimen jar: "chocolate bar", "avocados", "strawberry jam", "can of tuna!" When a boy says "I'd love to eat that bar of chocolate right now!", Rob warns that he mustn't try to eat any of the specimens because they are worth millions of pounds each.

As the children identify the different products, Rob asks them whether they have ever eaten the item and whether they like it. While bananas and chocolate are popular, only a few pupils say they like avocados. Rob points out that they are "very lucky" to have tasted so many things that are now extinct, and explains why certain ingredients were vulnerable to changes in the climate: "Plants like cocoa and coffee are very sensitive to changes in temperature and humidity, so they were quick to die out. Avocados require lots and lots of water, so they were lost due to drought. Strawberries don't grow anymore because the pollinators died out."

"Oh no!"

"Who were the pollinators?"

"Bees!"

"Yes, the bees were great pollinators. But so were wasps, butterflies and other insects.

Unfortunately, they've all gone now so it's difficult for anything to grow. Do you know who the pollinators are in 2124?"

One child suggests "robots?"

"Robots have been developed, but they are far too expensive and unreliable to replace the billions of insects that used to do the job. Instead, we have to send all of the world's children out to pollinate with little brushes."

"No!"

"I'd hate that!"

"I wouldn't mind!"

"So, all children have to leave school at the age of 9 and go out into the fields with paintbrushes all day long to pollinate, and it takes a whole year for one child to do the work a bee could do in a day!"

The children gasp.

"That's crazy!"

"I'd rather go to school!"

Rob draws their attention to the can of tuna: "Unfortunately tuna disappeared due to overfishing, so you may have heard that there are plenty of fish in the sea, but there are none left now. Only one kind of fish has survived - can you guess which?"

"Sharks!"

"Not sharks, they move like this." Rob makes a motion to mimic the action of a jellyfish with his hands, some of the children copy him.

"I know! Octopus!"

"Squid."

"This is a fish that can sting you, it's very dangerous."

"Jellyfish!"

"That's right! And there are so many of them that we can't go swimming in the sea anymore."

"Oh no!"

"I don't like 2124!"

"2124 is pretty bad."

"It is, but we have been experimenting to create new ingredients to replace some of the old ones. Do you know what this is?" Rob holds up a specimen jar with a bottle of maple syrup inside.

"Maple syrup!"

"I love it on pancakes!"

"Do you know how it's made?"

With more back and forth, the group establishes the process by which maple syrup is produced from the sap of Canadian maple trees. Rob explains that the production of this sap depends on variations in temperature that are no longer present in Canada, so authentic maple syrup is no longer available.

"This is the last ever bottle, so you can't imagine how valuable it is. But we've come up with a new recipe to make maple syrup from unwanted potatoes!"

The children's expressions and interjections indicate a combination of surprise and scepticism. Rob introduces his colleague, Rakesh, who directs their attention to some jars that show the different stages of the process by which potatoes can be made into a substitute for maple syrup.

"But does it really taste like maple syrup, though?" asks one boy.

"Would you like to make some and find out?"

The children shout "yes!" in chorus and Rakesh invites them to the "test kitchen" where he and his team look for "creative solutions" to the problem of lost ingredients.

The children are invited to select a potato from a large sack before finding a position around two large tables that are each laid with 8 places to include a chopping board and plastic knife. The children chat to each other and compare their potatoes as they find places around the tables, with the boys in the group standing around one table and the girls around the other.

Rakesh stands in the middle and quizzes them about what life was like a hundred years ago, asking about their favourite foods "back then". When everybody has settled into their place, he asks them how people in 2024 use a knife without hurting themselves, and one girl makes an arch shape with her hand: "Like this!" Rakesh replies that this still works well in 2124 and demonstrates how to cut the potato in half safely. The children follow his example, chatting to each other about the activity as they go: "My potato is so big, I don't know if I can cut it!" Having finished chopping his potato into eighths quickly, Rakesh demonstrates the size of the final pieces and asks the children to put their potato chunks into a pot in the middle of the two tables. He then circulates and assists any children struggling to cut their potatoes, finally asking everybody to grind a little salt into the pot. The children do not hesitate to work, and the atmosphere is happy as they chat and joke with each other and Rakesh.

Next, Rakesh asks how potatoes are usually cooked in a pot, eliciting that the process requires water for boiling. The children gasp and laugh as he produces a watering can to fill the pot. He then removes the pot to a table behind the children's workstations and returns with another pot full of potatoes that have recently been boiled. Now he elicits ideas for what can be done with the boiled potatoes before drawing the children's attention to the cooking water. "We don't need the potatoes for our syrup, so we can turn those into chips or mash, but this water will become our syrup. What do you notice about it?" "It's hot!" "It's potatoey!" "It's going white!" Rakesh confirms these responses, adding that the cloudy substance is starch from the potatoes, and this will thicken the syrup. He describes the process of making the syrup by adding sugar and spices and boiling it until it reduces to a thick and sticky substance.

At this stage, a third facilitator, Helen, brings over some freshly cooked waffles (the children greet this arrival with cheers of approval) which she cuts into pieces and distributes to the children in small paper sampling cases. Next, she and Rakesh provide each child with some syrup for their waffle, checking for allergies as they go. They remind the children that this is an experimental recipe, and they ask them to think carefully about the flavours as they try the syrup. The children are enthusiastic as they sample the food with little hesitation and call out the flavours they can identify: "It's sweet!" "It tastes quite a lot like maple syrup." "It's a bit orangey?" "I can taste cinnamon!" "It's potatoey!" Helen and Rakesh confirm all the tasting notes, elaborating further on the ingredients, which include orange zest, cinnamon and vanilla. Helen introduces the next stage of the session explaining that with this syrup they have invented something new to replace something they missed. Now they would like the groups' help "to adapt and think creatively" about how they can replace something else: "We really miss chocolate milkshakes, and we're inviting you to experiment with new ideas for a replacement." The children share their enthusiasm for chocolate and chocolate milkshakes as the facilitators bring a new set of equipment and ingredients to the tables.

"Do we even have milk in 2124?" asks one boy.

"That's a great question! Unfortunately not. Cows require too many resources, so there's no more dairy farming. Instead, we have oat milk."

"What's it made of?"

"It's made by soaking oats, which are a cereal you might know from porridge."

"How are they still around in a hundred years?"

"Luckily, oats don't require much water to grow, so they are one of the surviving crops."

Helen distributes oat milk to the children, asking if they want to work alone or in twos or threes. Four sets of children join small groups and receive a plastic jug with oat milk while the rest choose to work individually and receive a sample cup with a smaller quantity of the milk. Next, Helen introduces a cup of brightly coloured puree she has recently blended and asks the pupils if they can recognise the main ingredient. They name a variety of colourful fruits and berries but hear that these are now extinct. "In fact, this is made from beetroot, which is still growing like potatoes. It contains natural sugars so it's great for making things taste sweet."

"Eurgh!"

"I quite like beetroot, actually."

"I eat beetroot in salads!"

"I've never had a beetroot milkshake!"

Helen introduces further ingredients for the children to use in their recipe inventions, including ground cinnamon, ground turmeric, ground ginger, vanilla essence and slices of lemon. She points out that the beetroot puree and the potato syrup from the previous activity can be used to add sweetness. "Explore the ingredients and think about what might taste good together. Add small amounts to your milkshake and mix it well."

The children are curious to inspect the ingredients, passing them around, smelling them and looking at them closely. Two girls lean against the table and bounce up and down with excitement as they wait for the ingredients to reach them.

The children ask questions and talk about their invention process as they go:

"What's this yellow one? Is it spicy?"

"I know that one, it's like masala."

"I'm putting lots of cinnamon in, it smells yummy."

"I like the smell of the ginger one."

"The beetroot makes it so pink!"

One girl appears to be struggling with her choices and tells Helen "I don't like any of these ingredients." Helen points out that even if they taste too strange or strong on their own, different flavours can taste nice in combination, giving the potato syrup as an example. The girl nods, saying "I liked the syrup, did it have cinnamon?" "Yes, so perhaps that's something you could start your recipe with." The girl nods and begins concocting her milkshake.

After a period of experimentation, Helen distributes small spoons and more sampling cups, asking if the group are ready to start tasting their milkshakes. The children assent and begin

tentatively to try their inventions, collecting some on a spoon and sipping a small amount, or testing it with the tips of their tongues. A range of responses ensue including squeals of delight, loud interjections of disgust and shrill giggles. The girl who was hesitant to begin making her milkshake is quick to try both her own recipe and those of her friends. Even those pupils who dislike the taste of their milkshake appear to take pleasure in the process of trying it and declaring their verdict. The group soon begin trying each other's milkshakes and comparing them, evaluating whose taste the best and worst. The children appear to enjoy receiving these comments from their peers, regardless of how harshly their attempts are judged:

"Yours is truly disgusting!"

"I know, it's the worst milkshake in the whole world!"

"Is it really worse than mine?...Oh yeah, it is actually."

Helen asks the children if they are happy with their milkshakes and asks which ingredients went into the more successful recipes. She points out that recipe invention is always "a matter of experimentation, of trial and error" and encourages them to approach cooking at home in this way. Next, she invites the children to nominate ingredients to include in a new exhibit that is in development at the museum of lost ingredients. The focus is those ingredients that the children would most like to save from 2024. The children call out ingredients and foods with enthusiasm:

"Chocolate!"

"Pizza!"

"Waffles!"

"Bananas!"

"Lemons!"

Rob returns to the table to ask the children "So what do you think about the future? Is it better or worse?"

"There's no chocolate!"

"It's a disaster!"

"There's none of my favourite fruits!"

"Would you like to return to 2024?"

Most of the children cheer, with a few dissenting. All follow Rob to the time machine. Noting their enthusiasm and high energy levels, he encourages them to pass through the structure slowly and carefully to avoid damaging the "highly sophisticated technology" and becoming "stranded in the future".

After passing through the time machine the three facilitators thank the children for coming and wave goodbye. The children chorus a "thank you!" and follow their accompanying teacher towards the lawn in front of the museum, some of them darting playfully off the path:

"I'm a badger!"

"I'm a wolf!"

"This is my badger den!"

6.1.4 Observation field notes: observation 4

School 3, 14 pupils, Year 1

Session: Bath Mind

The facilitator Aly introduces the session, pointing out that there are two main areas: a tent with a crafting area in front of it where they can make a bird feeder, and a neighbouring area with a “forest floor” project, where they can create a plant or creature from fabric and weave it into a larger tapestry that has already been begun and embellished by artists and other visiting groups of schoolchildren. The facilitator explains that they will have time during the session to play in both areas; they will break into two groups and swap after around twenty minutes.

In the forest floor area, two artists ask the children what lives in the forest, particularly on the floor. The children quickly name lots of creatures including “Hedgehogs,” “squirrels,” “snails,” “foxes,” “rabbits,” “worms,” and “beetles.” They are asked next to think of the plants that grow in the forest along with trees. They name “bushes,” “moss,” “mushrooms,” “grass.” The facilitator agrees emphatically adding, “Yes, moss, lichens, mushrooms, that's right.” She encourages the children to reflect on the rich biodiversity of the forest floor in a temperate rainforest climate, such as exists in the UK.

She now draws their attention to a large net that represents a forest floor and has had woven into it a range of fabrics, threads, wools, ribbons, felts and so on, asking the children if they can identify what some of the materials and threads might represent. One identifies a snail, another says, “This looks a bit like a mushroom,” and others note, “This must be moss, it looks very mossy.”

“Yes, I think it probably is moss – what features make it look like moss?”

“It's dark green, soft and sort of spongy.”

“Why do you think that one is a snail?”

“It has a curly shell that feels smooth.”

The facilitators encourage these identifications and ask the young participants what they would like to add to the forest floor. One immediately suggests an owl, while another is keen to create his own snail. The children are invited to choose any material they please from a large selection, to craft it into any shape they choose and to attach it to any area of the net, by weaving or tying it in place. Accompanying adults are invited to support them with cutting material to whatever size the children choose. The children are also invited to refer to some images, which include several colour printouts of photographs of temperate rainforests included in the publication “A provisional definition of temperate rainforest in Britain and Ireland” by botanical consultant Ben Averis, 2023.

Once the brief is described and the children are invited to begin, they quickly and enthusiastically approach the pile of fabrics and thread. Some ask each other what they are going to make while others proceed wordlessly. Within moments all are absorbed in exploring the materials and making their selections. They use sight and touch to explore and identify fabrics that they want to work with and begin to cut shapes or lengths, in some cases asking for adult help with this. There is some conversation about the colour and “feel” of the fabrics, but for the most part the children are absorbed in their own work. The facilitators offer help where needed and ask the children to describe their process with questions including “what are you making?” “Why did you choose this piece of fabric?” The children explain themselves with comments such as “its green and soft like a fern.” “I made it round like a ladybird.”

One girl is keen to take her creation - an owl shaped out of brown felt with large eyes and beak - home, but the teacher intervenes to encourage her to think about how much nicer it is to leave the owl as part of a larger artwork that she can return to and visit with her parents at the weekend: “Your owl can feel at home with all of the other forest creatures made by all of the other children.” After a little resistance, the girl accepts this idea and asks for wool to attach her owl in the centre of the artwork. She weaves it in carefully and with pride tells the other group as they swap over that the owl in the middle is hers. She tells them, “You can't take anything home just so you know.”

After around 25 minutes, the children swap and join the Bath Mind facilitators who explain to them the project that they will work on next: a bird feeder made from apples, twigs and twine. They invite the children to collect sticks of around 20 to 30cm in length, a task that they undertake with gusto, darting around the gardens to find a suitable piece of wood.

Next, they are given half an apple and shown how to drive the stick through the apple to create the main section of the bird feeder. The children appear to enjoy this stage, comparing their apples on sticks.

“Oh wow, that's actually making the juice come out!”

“It looks like a toffee apple! I'm going to eat it!”

Aly draws their attention back to her demonstration: “Now, what kinds of food do you think the birds would like to eat?”

“fruits,”

“breadcrumbs,”

“berries,”

“nuts and seeds,”

That's right! They like seeds very much so we're going to put seeds into our apples to attract the birds to our birdfeeders.”

“How are we going to put seeds in an apple?!”

The facilitator demonstrates, “Let's take the pointy side of the seeds and push them in like this.”

Children eagerly take seeds and insert them into the flesh of their apples. One child comments: "It's not as hard as I thought." Aly replies "Yes, look how easy it is - you could make another one at home with your parents."

Another child asks: "Are we allowed to put the seeds all over?"

"Yes, you can use as many seeds as you like, so that there are plenty for the birds to take."

One child comments "I'm making a wall of seeds around the sides," as she inserts her seeds in a neat row along the edge of her apple.

Another child says the birdfeeders resemble "apple hedgehogs."

Finally, the facilitator cuts a piece of twine for each bird feeder and invites the children to attach the twine at each end of the twig with a knot to make a loop that can be used to hang up the feeder. Once they have completed their feeders, the children are invited to find a place to hang it on the nearby trees. They run with enthusiasm to the trees at the edge of the garden and hang their bird feeders carefully on tree branches. Aly gathers the group back at the tent and asks whether the children will remember how to make the bird feeders so that they can repeat the activity at home. The children nod.

Next, the group is invited to sit inside the tent with their shoes off and illustrate some leaves with words relating to the forest. Each child is given a piece of A4 paper with the large outline of a leaf in the centre of the page. The children each choose a word "flowers," "mud," "trees," "roots," "weeds," and a colour and are helped to write their word inside their leaf by the facilitator, then they decorate and colour in the leaf. Aly explains "We're going to decorate a giant tree and put your nature words all over."

After the children have decorated their leaves, Aly introduces a bug hotel activity that they can help with: "We're just beginning to make it, so you can help us to get it started." The children rush with enthusiasm to a wooden structure that is built a few feet wide and tall with cavities inside. The children seem to recognise immediately what the structure requires and begin gathering sticks, leaves and prepared pieces of wood and bamboo. They work together to fit the materials into the cavities. As they work, the facilitator encourages them to use a range of materials so that it attracts a range of different creatures.

A girl comments "I think a beetle would like this bit."

A boy adds "This bark is good for woodlice!"

Finally, the children are asked, "Who would like to see the wormery?" Five of the children jump up and follow the facilitator to the edge of the garden to examine the wormery. The facilitator takes the lid off, and the children observe food waste in the top layer.

"Where are the worms?"

"Hello? Worms?!"

As the next layer with moist soil is revealed, the children begin to rake the soil with their fingers and cry out with excitement when they see a worm.

"There's a worm!"

"I want to feel one!"

"I want to show my friend!"

They are allowed to take out the worms and hold them gently. Some of the children do this while others gather around to look at the creatures or tentatively stroke them.

"This one's really wriggly!"

The facilitator explains that the worms' movements help to move the soil and turn it over, which is helpful for the plants.

The children are encouraged to return their worms and observe them burrow down into the soil

"They're making tunnels!" comments one of them.

The children help to replace the top layer and lid of the wormery and return to the tent where the group is thanked for their participation. The children thank the facilitators and depart with their accompanying teachers.

6.1.5 Observation field notes: observation 5

Home educated group, 3 children a boy aged 8 (nearly 9) a girl aged 7 and a girl aged 3 (nearly 4) with two mothers)

Facilitator: Andrew Amondson

Andrew introduces the concept of the forest as the children nestle into the Bath Mind tent, taking off their shoes to enter and lying down, covering themselves with blankets. Andrew asks them how they understand the word 'biodiversity'. They know the word 'biome'. The oldest child suggests that the term has something to do with different types of life, and Andrew confirms this, explaining that biodiversity refers to the rich variety of plants and creatures of all types, from tiny microbes and small insects to small and large animals that live together in an ecosystem and depend on each other. Andrew poses the question, "If you were a creature, what would you be?"

"A horse!"

"A peregrine falcon,"

"A dinosaur! A T-rex!"

"Can you really be a T-rex if they are extinct?" (one child challenges another)

Andrew responds, "We can play in this space of imagination where anything you can imagine can exist."

"Then as a horse, I would be flying,"

"Then I'll be a dragon!"

Andrew asks, "And if you as your creature could do something, even something really small, what is an action that you could do that would make a change?"

"I'd be super quiet,"

"As I fly over, the plants would grow better,"

"I would protect the other plants and creatures,"

Andrew thanks them for their ideas and suggests that they leave the tent to continue their exploration of the forest. The children get up and begin to make the tent tidy. Andrew thanks them for tidying and connects this action to his earlier invitation:

"This is like the action I asked you about, because people won't know that you did it, but they will feel that somebody took time and care to arrange the tent like this. It's a small act that makes a difference to people."

Andrew invites the children to wander and follow their curiosity. They walk around the ring of biodiversity and approach the AnKi tent. They are very curious about what goes on inside.

"What happens in here?"

"Can we go in?"

"It looks interesting in here!"

Andrew explains that it's a secret theatre tent and you need to have a special ticket to go inside.

A boy exclaims that he smells something delicious, and Andrew invites him to follow his nose.

The group approaches Bath Community Kitchen's area of the site, and Rob welcomes them.

"Is something cooking?"

"It smells so yummy,"

Rob explains that it is a pot of potato syrup.

"How long does a potato syrup take?"

"Well, it doesn't take long, but you have to travel to the future to find out. Would you like to enter a time machine and travel forward 100 years?"

The children assent with enthusiasm. Rob takes them inside a portion of the biodiversity ring and, after walking through it, welcomes them to the year 2124. He invites them into the museum of lost ingredients and allows them to explore examples of foods that have become unavailable due to the extinction of many forms of life. He explains that after bees died out, many plants couldn't survive because there weren't enough pollinators to help them reproduce. In 2124 all children have to leave school very young and pollinate plants using paintbrushes. "It takes a child a whole year to do the same amount of pollination that a bee can do in a single day,"

"What about the animals? Can they survive?"

"Many of them have also died. Only mosquitoes, rats, flies, cockroaches and pigeons are thriving,"

"Oh no, my cat will die!"

The children appear dismayed by the news that their favourite food and animals may no longer exist, but they appear energised and enthusiastic about the activity. The parents share that they hoped there would be a more hopeful vision of the future; "it seems so pessimistic". Rob invites them to return for their workshop later where they can work together to "think of creative solutions".

They re-enter the time machine, walking back through the ring of biodiversity with Rob. He thanks them for visiting and invites them to return later to make their own potato syrup. The children rush through the time machine with exuberance and cheers. They jump up and down after going through it. Andrew welcomes them back to the present and invites them to continue their exploration of the site: "Let's keep our wandering ways."

Together they walk alongside the biodiversity ring towards the Climate SPA. There are no activity leaders in the structure, but they can see a range of workstations equipped with lots of materials: bug boxes, jars, pencils, crayons, pens, glue sticks, card, paper, twigs, bamboo cut to size, bales of hay and straw for sitting or working on, and blankets on the ground. It appears as a colourful, comfortable, inviting space.

Andrew points to the postcards and the poster with the pledge on it. He says, "There is a beautiful book, but I don't think it's here at the moment. It explains a story about this magical tree." He summarises the key points of the story in which Kay travels around the world to see its beauty and variety before having a vision of its destruction due to climate change. He explains that she travels to Bath in a magic tree balloon to invite the children of the city to become "SPArkitects" and develop "playful awakenings."

Andrew invites the children to explore the space and find an activity that appeals to them. The children become immediately absorbed in creative construction. They take the bug boxes and, after securing the sticks, twigs, and drilled pieces of log, they begin to decorate their bug boxes with colouring pencils. The boy is first to finish and circulates around the space. He soon finds the materials and instructions to make a kaleidoscope and shows his group when he has finished. The younger girls are still working together on a bug box when he shows them how he made his kaleidoscope and demonstrates it to the other children. The older girl finds her own piece of mirror card and says, "I'm going to stick this on my bug box so it shines up and the bugs can see it better."

Andrew asks her to explain, and she says, "So it reflects the trees and the wildlife, and they can find it."

Next the boy finds materials for the girls to make their own kaleidoscopes, saying he wants everyone to have one. After they've finished decorating the bug boxes, one of the girls ask if they can take them home, but Andrew explains that they should stay here because they're for the creatures in this forest. Then he says, "Now we're going to use our ears to find something else."

Following Andrew's prompt, the children begin to explore the trees, bushes, and shrubs on the perimeter of the garden, and they quickly find a small, covered path. "Is this the way to the Secret Garden?" one asks. As they proceed through the path quietly, a child whispers, "I hear something. What's that?"

Guided by the sounds, they notice to the right a small clearing covered with a leafy canopy. There are tree stumps on the floor with stainless steel bowls positioned on top, and water appears to be raining down, dripping musically into the bowls. Andrew introduces the space as "Matt's water drip installation."

The boy cries out, "Guys, come and see this! It's water! There's a mist!" He dashes to the bowls, and the girls follow, each picking up their own bowl. They try to catch water in their bowls or in their hands. They raise and lower the bowls, observing the sounds, comparing the resonance of the bowls and size of the splashes at different positions.

After a few minutes, the eldest child finds a mossy stone and crouches down to see it more closely. Andrew initiates a conversation about moss, asking the children what they notice about it and introducing facts about how moss operates as a biome. "Did you know that moss can

survive 40 years dried up, but if you water it, it will revive and come back to life? Did you know there are many creatures that live in the moss? It has its own tiny ecosystem."

The children pat and stroke the moss lightly and the boy finds a tiny gem that Andrew has hidden in it.

"I found a diamond!"

"It's a moss diamond!"

Andrew congratulates him and says he can take it home.

The eldest girl has returned to the middle of the clearing and cries out, "There's a rainbow! Can you see the rainbow?"

"It's from the water!"

The children wave their hands towards the colourful mist and twirl around until one of them finds a whittled stick on the ground: "Wow, this is a cool piece of wood!" Now Andrew guides them further into the secret garden, where a larger clearing open to the sky reveals a pyramid-like structure of branches that have been engineered and fitted together as part of the Tinkertrees workshops.

"Wow, that's a nice den. I'd like a den like that,"

They look closely at the branches and how they're fitted together. A parent asks: "Can you see how they connect?"

"It looks like there are holes in some of the branches."

The parent agrees and queries whether people would have made structures from wood in this way "before screws and nails were invented."

Andrew introduces the area as a tinkering workshop. He asks whether they know about tinkering? The children are not sure.

"Tinkering is a way of building, of trying," Andrew explains. "We can try something; if it works, that's fine, but if it doesn't work, that's okay too. We can enjoy the process of trying. We can make something with a plan, or we can just play without a plan."

They pick up some branches and inspect them. The youngest girl lifts one end of a branch and drags it across the forest floor. The eldest girl strokes her branch, commenting: "The bark is pretty on this piece." The boy takes his branch to the tinkering structure and twists it into a hole so that it attaches to the pyramid shape at a perpendicular angle.

As the girls look for ways to attach their pieces of wood to the structure, the boy returns to the drip installation where he finds another tiny gem in the moss. He calls to the girls and helps them to find another one each. The girls admire their gems while the boy begins to climb one of the trees. The parents return, and one of them comments, "Oh, this is his happy place. He loves to climb trees."

Andrew indicates that the session is over and thanks the children for "bringing their imaginations,"; he invites the group to continue exploring the site and hopes that they will "keep their wandering and wondering ways" after they leave. On the way out of the secret

garden, they meet Matt squatting at the entrance to the path that leads to the secret garden's creating a small signpost. "Ah," says Andrew, "this is a rare sighting of an artist in the wild!" Andrew asks the children what they thought of the "drip artwork" and they reflect positively on their experience "It's fun!" "I was surprised it was raining!" "I liked catching the drips!" "I liked the silver leaves!" Andrew comments that the silver leaves reminded him of the "silver mirror" that one the children had attached to her bug box. Matt thanks the children for their comments and asks them if they are going home now? The children look to their parents and express reluctance to leave: "I want to stay in the forest!" "I want to stay here!" The parents agree that they would rather stay than return straight home. They thank Andrew and Matt and return to the Climate SPA.

6.1.6 Observation field notes: observation 6

Home educated group, 3 children: a boy aged 8 (nearly 9), a girl aged 7 and a girl aged 3 (nearly 4) with two mothers.

Session: Café from the Future

Facilitators: Rob, Rakesh and Helen of Bath Community Kitchen

The group returns to Bath Community Kitchen where Rakesh invites them to return to the future by passing through the time machine. They follow him through the structure and into the Museum of Lost Ingredients. Rakesh recaps the purpose of the museum and asks "So, why don't we have these ingredients anymore?"

"Because everything died."

"Because the planet is too hot."

Rakesh holds up the maple tree specimen and asks "Why is heat a problem for making maple syrup?"

"They need to be cold at night to make the sap for the syrup."

"Yes, that's right. So, we've developed a new recipe. Would you like to see how we've made maple syrup from potatoes?"

All the children exclaim, "Yes!"

They follow Rakesh to two large tables beneath a shelter. Several places are set with chopping boards and plastic knives. Rakesh invites the children to position themselves around the table in front of a chopping board and knife. He gives them each a potato and asks if they know how to use a knife safely.

"Yes, you make a bridge."

"That's right," Rakesh confirms. He demonstrates the bridge technique with his thumb and forefinger bridged over the potato and the knife beneath the bridge. He encourages them to follow his example.

The children begin, but they struggle to cut through the potato. Rakesh shows them how once the knife is into the potato, they can push down directly on the knife. This works for the older girl and the boy. The younger girl's mother helps her.

"We need them about this big," Rakesh indicates, showing the pieces of potato that have already been cut. Together, they cut their potatoes with concentration and enthusiasm. After they have finished, Rakesh invites them to add the potatoes into a large pot.

Rakesh encourages them to add two grinds of salt each to the pot.

He explains that they need to boil the potatoes. He takes the pot to a small stove on a different table and brings back a bubbling pot where potatoes have been simmering for some time. He demonstrates that the water is now starchy. "This will be the basis of our syrup," he tells them.

"But we can use the potatoes for something else. How do you like to eat potatoes?"

"Mashed potatoes!"

"Roast potatoes!"

"Chips!"

"Yes," says Rakesh. "You could make any of those with these potatoes. You can keep the potatoes and eat them as usual, but don't throw away the water because the water can become something different, something delicious."

Helen joins Rakesh with two bottles of prepared syrup. She explains that the recipe also requires a little caramelised sugar, and some spices including cinnamon and fenugreek.

Next, Helen asks, "Would you like to try the syrup on a little piece of waffle?"

The children cry, "Yay! Yes!" enthusiastically. They each receive a small paper cup with a piece of waffle, and she adds the syrup, checking for nut allergies. They begin tasting, some tentatively by dipping a small spoon into the syrup and licking it, while others take a small bite. They all approve of the flavour, and everybody finishes their waffles, commenting that the syrup is delicious.

Helen says, "So this was our recipe for replacing maple syrup. Of course, we don't want to lose maple syrup, but this is a possible solution. Can you think creatively about recipes for the future? For instance, something to replace chocolate milkshake? What do we like about chocolate milkshake?"

"It's sweet!" one child says.

"It's yummy!" adds another.

"It's chocolatey," says a third.

"Right, chocolate milkshake is all of those things," Helen agrees. "But unfortunately, we don't have chocolate in 2124, so I've been experimenting. This is a test kitchen, and I've made something out of this. Do you know what this is?" She holds up a beetroot, intact with its leaves, roots, and skin on.

The children are surprised by the object. They touch it. "It looks like an alien," says the older girl.

"It's a beetroot," says Helen. "Do you like beetroot?"

"I eat beetroot," one child says.

"I eat beetroot too," adds another.

"Well, in the future there will be no more sugar cane, but we can still find sugar in things like beetroot," Helen explains. "Beetroot is sweet, so I've made a beetroot puree." She shows the children a blended cup that is bright purple. "It just has beetroot and water," she explains.

"It's so colourful!" a child exclaims.

Helen decants the beetroot puree into a pot on the table and explains, "This could be a good ingredient. Here are some more ingredients you could use." She introduces the ground spices: cinnamon, turmeric, and ginger, and asks the children to smell and name them. She also brings out lemon in small slices.

Next, she puts some oat milk into a jug for each child. "I want you to make your own blend of flavours. You can use your senses. Smell them, add them to your milk. What would taste nice? For sweetness, you could use beetroot. There is also some of our potato syrup."

The children take their jugs of milk and a spoon for stirring and begin to add ingredients. They use their senses, smelling individual ingredients, adding small amounts of spices into their concoctions, stirring them carefully, and smelling them again. They ask each other what they're adding. They appear absorbed in the activity, interested in the sight and smell of the different ingredients.

When they are satisfied with their mixtures, they receive a small tasting cup to pour a little of their milkshake into. As they decant their ingredients, Helen asks them to recap the ingredients and to try the drinks. They are very excited to taste what they have made, and they each taste each other's. The drinks are very different: one is yellow from turmeric, one is pink from the beetroot, and one is a chocolatey brown from a combination of spices and potato syrup. They enjoy sharing, passing around the cups and checking if everyone has tried all of them, including the children, the parents, Rakesh, and Helen.

The yellow one is the most popular, made by the older girl. She says, "It tastes like a custard tart."

Helen says, "Yes, and it's the colour of a custard tart too. Perhaps it's the cinnamon you added. Custard tarts have some spices as well."

Helen asks them if they would like to write down their recipes so they can remember them, and the children reply enthusiastically, "Yes!" She gives them each a recipe card, and they begin to note the quantities and types of ingredients.

The boy, after writing his own recipe, asks if he can write the girl's custard tart milkshake recipe as well because he likes it so much. She explains what she used, and he takes notes on the recipe card. Then he draws five stars next to the recipe and says, "It's a 5-star recipe." He then attempts to make his own version following the girl's recipe. He tries to recreate the flavour, using the recipe but making a smaller version. He also uses his senses to compare the two, using smell, colour, and at different stages, he tastes it. He's happy that he's made something that tastes good.

Finally, Helen asks them to return to the museum with her. She says that in addition to the main exhibits, they're making a collection with the help of their guests. Visitors are invited to nominate an ingredient that they would like to save for the future. They're inspired by the Norwegian Svalbard Global Seed Vault, she explains. She shows them some examples: children visiting have saved tiny amounts of food in small glass vials, or in some cases, they have drawn pictures. For example, pictures of a strawberry and a roll of sushi are in one glass jar. She asks the children, "What would you like to save? You can find a small amount to put in the bottle, or you can draw a picture and save that."

The boy chooses waffles and takes a tiny piece of waffle to put in his jar. The girls say that they will go and find something. They look around the garden and return with petals from blossoming trees. Helen helps them to write labels for their contributions to the museum. She thanks them for visiting and encourages them to try making syrup or milkshakes at home and to think about what ingredients they want to save. They depart through the time machine.

6.2.1 Focus group interview schedule

Forest of Imagination Impact Study Focus Group Interview Schedule

Opening the session

Welcome

"Hello everyone! My name is Eleanor and I'm here to talk with you about your experiences today at Forest of Imagination. Thank you for joining me."

Purpose

"I'd like to hear your thoughts and feelings about the event to understand what you've enjoyed, what you've learned, and how you've felt during the activities."

Procedure

"I have a few questions that I will ask, but feel free to speak up and share your thoughts whenever you want. You can talk to each other as well as to me. You don't have to answer every question, and it's okay if you don't know the answer or if you don't want to talk about something."

Assent

"You don't need to join in at all if you don't want to. You can ask me any questions if you're unsure about something, and you can decide to stop participating at any time. Is that clear?"
(Wait for assent/resolve queries)

"I will make a recording so that I can remember what was said here, but I won't write down any of your names, so that your personal opinions are not linked to your name. Is that clear?"
(Wait for assent/resolve queries)

Do you all agree to participate?" (Wait for agreement)

Focus Group Questions

Procedure: choose 1 question from 'general reflections' to open the conversation and use follow up questions from different themes, following the flow of conversation. Aim to discuss all the themes but allow children to pursue their own priorities and interests.

General Reflections

"Can you tell me about your favourite part of the event?"
"What was the most interesting thing that happened today?"
"Was there anything that surprised you today?"

Emotional Responses

"What did you enjoy the most today and why?"
"How did you feel when you were doing [specific activity]?"
"What made you happy or excited during the event?"
"Was there anything that made you feel confused or frustrated?"

Creativity

"Did the event give you any new ideas or inspire you to be creative? Can you tell me about one of those ideas?"

"How did you express your creativity at the event?"

"What new creative skills do you think you learned from the event?"

Agency and Autonomy

"Did you have a chance to make your own choices during the event? How did that feel?"

"Can you describe a time at the event when you felt in charge or like you were making decisions?"

"Did you try something new at the event? How did it make you feel?"

"How did the event help you feel more independent or responsible?"

Meaning and Personal Significance

"Do you think the event was important? Why?"

"Why do you think we had this event today?"

"Did you learn anything new or interesting? Can you tell me about it?"

"How do you think this event might change the way you think about biodiversity?"

"What will you remember most about today?"

"How has the event inspired you to do something different or new in the future?"

"If you could keep one aspect of today (an object, an activity, a feeling) with you when you go back to your school, what would it be and why?"

Closing the session

"Thank you all for sharing your thoughts and experiences today. Your feedback is really important. Before we finish, does anyone have any final thoughts or anything else they would like to share?"

6.2.2 Focus group interview transcript 1

Focus Group 1 (Year 1)

ER: So, can you tell me about your favourite part of the event so far?

1: I enjoyed doing the clay (inaudible)

ER: Could you speak up a little bit?

1: I enjoyed doing the clay making.

ER: Oh, you enjoyed doing the clay making! Can you tell me what you made?

1: I made a little pug

ER: Oh lovely. And how about you?

2: I enjoyed the story! I liked the ending where we danced.

ER: And how about you?

3: I liked making the clay animals.

ER: You liked making the clay animals? And what animal did you make?

3: A spider

ER: You made a spider out of clay?!

2: I made a turtle.

ER: Did you? I'd love to see them!

ER: Was there anything surprising about being here?

2: Yeah, they sprayed us with the story, and I liked it when he did that.

ER: In the woods or in the story?

3: In the story! When they did the spray and sprayed us.

ER: When they sprayed you? Did they spray you with water? While they were telling you a story?

1: I put my hat near my face so they couldn't spray me.

ER: Oh really, so you stayed dry?

1: Yeah.

ER: I bet that was surprising! Was it surprising in a good way or a bad way?

2: A good way!

1: Yeah!

ER: A good way, okay. That doesn't usually happen at school does it, getting sprayed with water, okay.

(laughter)

ER: And was there anything confusing this morning?

The clay

ER: The clay? What was confusing about it?

The... Making the turtle.

He made a turtle.

ER: Have you made a clay turtle before?

No.

ER: Not before, So was it a bit difficult, or?

No, it was fine

ER: And did you find anything confusing?

2: When we went into the secret forest and water was coming out of the trees. I thought it was raining, and there were no rainclouds, but then I noticed that it was stuff putting rain there.

1: Yeah, that's what I thought!

ER: It was confusing, yeah! It was sunny on one side of the garden and raining on another.

ER: And did today give you any ideas about things you'd like to do in the future? Activities...

1: I'd like to do sewing.

2: We're making hats

3: I would like to paint on the walls

ER: You'd like to paint on the walls? Which walls would you like to paint on?

3: Of the museum.

ER: Of the museum? Oh, like Mr Doodle did? Those white squiggly lines, I see, okay.

ER: And did you have the chance to make your own choices today?

Hesitation.

ER: For example did you get to choose which animal you could make out of clay?

2: Yes.

ER: What other choices did you make?

3: (inaudible)... hedgehogs.

ER: And did you try anything new today that you hadn't tried before?

1: I know! Making the clay.

2: Making stuff out of clay I'd not done that before.

ER: I see, and how big was your clay animal?

3: From there to there

ER: Okay, nice. Let me see.

ER: Why do you think you came here today, why do you think you were invited here?

2: Because you wanted us to have fun and lots of activities and lots of stuff to explore

1: And have adventures

ER: (to 3) And why do you think we were invited today?

3: I'm not sure

1: Because you wanted us to do some art.

ER: And is there anything you would like to take home with you, anything you would like to do again, at home maybe?

2: My turtle

3: The clay spider

1: We got some photos.

ER: Great, and what about activities, are there any things you'd like to do again at home, or at school?

2: If there is an activity that we are gonna get to do like this at school?

1: Make the story, do the ball thing.

3: I want to look at moss and put water on it make it grow.

ER: Well, thank you everyone, I really enjoyed hearing about your ideas. Your feedback is really important. Thank you for helping me with my research.

6.2.3 Focus group interview transcript 2

Focus Group 2 (Year 4)

ER: How did you feel during your visit to the forest of imagination today?

1: Fun!

2: I really enjoyed it!

3: I was excited and surprised.

4: Me too!

ER: What was surprising?

3: That we could make syrup out of potatoes!

1: Yeah, I wasn't expecting that!

2: I was surprised we travel to 2124!

4: I wasn't expecting a time machine in the forest.

ER: And were these happy surprises?

3: Yeah, I loved the time machine!

4: Even though all the fishes and all the plants had died out!

2: And the bees.

1: The future was quite scary, but it was exciting to visit.

2: Because we could come back.

3: And we could try to save some foods.

1: Or replace them.

2: We can try to save our favourite foods by looking after the bees.

ER: And what was enjoyable about your time here?

2: Eating waffles!

4: Waffles! Also trying the potato syrup. I was surprised how good it was.

3: Time travelling!

1: I liked mixing the ingredients to make a smoothie.

3: Me too, even though mine tasted terrible!

1: Mine tasted bad as well, but it was so fun!

ER: Did you have the chance to make your own choices during the workshop today?

1: Yeah, I chose which spices and how much to put in.

3: I chose to have a second piece of waffle!

2: I chose which food to save from 2024.

3: Oh yeah, I saved pizza!

2: I saved waffles.

4: I chose not to put any beetroot in my milkshake.

ER: Would you like to do some of these kind of activities again, at home or at school?

2: I'd like to make milkshakes again, I could try different recipes.

3: I want to go through the time machine again!

ER: (to 1 and 4) and how about you?

1: I want to make syrup and eat waffles again.

4: I want to do it all again!

ER: Are there any other thoughts or feelings about your visit here today that you'd like to share?

1: I'm grateful to live in 2024 and not 2124.

2: Yeah, I don't want to be a pollinator!

3: I want to make sure we don't run out of chocolate.

4: I love this place, the museum is very big and it has so many fun things in the garden.

6.3.1 Follow up task guidelines

‘POSTCARD TO A FRIEND’ FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY

Forest of Imagination Impact Research

Thank you for attending Forest of Imagination with your class today!

We hope your class had a wonderful and inspiring experience.

To extend their engagement and reflect on their visit, we have included blank postcards for an optional follow-up activity. This activity is designed to be both fun and reflective, allowing children to creatively express their memories and thoughts about their trip.

Purpose of the Activity

The activity serves two main purposes:

Creative Reflection: Encouraging children to artistically and verbally express their experiences at Forest of Imagination, fostering creativity and reflection.

Research Participation: Gathering valuable data on pupils' thoughts and feelings about their visit, which will help us assess the impact of the event and improve future experiences.

Suggested Procedure

Creative Invitation: Hand out blank postcards and invite class members to imagine they are writing a postcard to a friend or family member about their visit to the Forest of Imagination. They may choose to illustrate the blank side, write a message on the reverse, or do both.

Please keep instructions for the task quite open - individuals can respond to the prompt in any way they choose, for example by describing an enjoyable or surprising part of the visit, something they learned, or any memorable moments.

Return Postcards: Please return the completed postcards to the researcher using the stamped addressed envelope provided. Please only return postcards from students whose parents have provided consent for participation in the research. When returning the postcards, please write on a slip of paper or on the envelope which school you are with and the year group.

Research Ethics

Confidentiality: The information collected will be used solely for research purposes and will remain confidential. Any names or details that could identify individuals will not be transcribed or reproduced. Individual pupils will not be identified in any reports.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. There are no consequences for choosing not to participate or for any student whose data is not included.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or require further information about the activity or the research, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

Dr Eleanor Rowley

Postdoctoral Impact Research Fellow

Bath Spa University

Email: e.rowley@bathspa.ac.uk

If you would like to express concerns or make a complaint to somebody independent of those conducting the research, please contact Bath Spa University's Research Support Office:
researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk

Thank you for your participation and support in making Forest of Imagination a meaningful experience for all visitors.

Your involvement is greatly appreciated!

6.3.2 Follow up task responses

	Text	Image
A1	Me, my brother and mum went and we made flower buns with clay and mud and flower and we did some craft and we went into a secret garden with a sprinkler and it was making noises on the pans and we danced under it and some people filmed us and we saw a bunch of art from Mr Doodle in a big tower and some carvings and there was a big bunny that people were writing on we did.	Big bunny with a doodle and two people. Trees with speakers.
A2	At the forest of imagination I ate strawberry and tomatoes. My memorable moment was role playing and uncovering words.	The museum with a tree either side.
A3	We went to a table and had a drink and some food and went to a sunny bit and played. And went back to school in the coach.	A large table with 14 chairs arranged around it amongst a forest of trees.
A4	I liked cutting potato and eating lemon. I enjoyed going to the forest. I enjoyed having fun with friends. I enjoyed being 108 years old. I learned making syrup.	6 trees with drops around them
A5	I enjoyed the event because we saw Mr Doodle's art on the benches and we cooked maple syrup out of potatoes. I loved the waffles, too.	Trees with sprinklers showering two figures, one of whom is holding a bowl.
A6	I loved eating the strawberries and the water. I liked that I was called the hideaways and I liked that mother nature was a wood lice.	A table loaded with items, potatoes, cups, two figures one at either end of the table.
A7	I made a (illegible) smoothie and I went in a secret garden with the group. It was fun and we cut up a potato and a sample of waffle and we went in a time machine.	Sun, blue sky, trees and the words 'secret forest'

A8	I liked that we made smoothies. I'm surprised that we made maple syrup. I learned that we can make maple syrup with potatoes. The most memorable thing in the forest of imagination is we went into a time machine and the secret forest.	*two figures catch drips in bowls on tree stumps as water falls from the tops of two trees. Their faces are animated in an expression of surprise.
A9	In the forest of imagination I really everything! Overall I was really surprised about how cool nature was. When I was there I learned how cool nature is. The most memorable moment was when they brought the	Two figures at a table or counter with three bowls of what appear to be fruit in front of them.
A10	I made milkshakes with some spices and syrup and beetroot.	Three figures stand beneath trees as water drips down from above.
A11	We liked the fruit we had strawberries and tomatoes, peas and other stuff. We played duck duck goose and I didn't like it. We did the mother nature and it was good.	A tree bends over a table with creature on top.
A12	At the forest of imagination I really enjoyed going to the secret garden with the water. Overall I was surprised by how good the maple syrup was. During the visit I learned you can make maple syrup out of potatoes. The most memorable moment was when we went into the secret garden and made tunes with the bowls and sprinklers.	Five figures stand around two tables in a configuration familiar from the Bath Community Kitchen activity area at Forest of Imagination. They each have a chopping board and knife. There are three trees in the background.
A13	I was surprised about the giant woodlouse crawling in my hand. The most memorable moment is we had food and we had acting food in the forest school.	The museum with a bench and a tree beside it.
A14	At the forest of imagination I really enjoyed eating waffles. Overall I was surprised by going into the future. During the visit I learned making syrup. The most memorable moment was getting really, really wet.	A large building (the museum?) towers over surrounding trees. It is decorated with hearts, crosses and stars, perhaps referencing Mr Doodle's decoration of the museum. A figure stands in the grass in scene's foreground.

A15	At the forest of imagination I like it because we made chocolate milkshakes and syrup. It was so good! And even the secret garden. Omg 2124 was so good I wanna go there again.	The field is illustrated with around 20 trees.
A16	At the forest of imagination I really enjoyed making pancakes. Overall I was surprised by how fun it was. During the visit I learned about nature. The most memorable moment was when we went to the secret garden.	The museum, covered in doodles, towers over surrounding trees.
A17	At the forest of imagination I really enjoyed making waffles and spending time with my friends. Overall I was surprised by how they made a time machine which was really cool. During the visit I learned how to make maple syrup it tasted so good. My favourite moment was spending time with my friends and having lots of fun.	Three trees tower over two tables. Sun and clouds in the sky.

	Text	Image
B1	Today I went to the Holburne Museum and into the forest of imagination. We saw Willow, the guardian of the forest, that we made. And we decorated bug houses and built animal masks.	A large tree fills most of the field with three branches on each side, leaves at the top and detail in the bark. Behind it is blue sky.
B2	Our whole class went to Holburne museum and done some fun things. I really liked the book especially the polar bear.	A giant polar bear is as tall as a tree that he stands beside. The tree's roots are visible.
B3	The trip to the Holburne Museum was amazing. As we entered the forest of imagination our guide told us that you would feel a relaxed feeling and we did! It was amazing.	A smiling figure stands inside a hot air balloon with branches protruding from the balloon.
B4	I went to the forest of imagination and made a mask. I also made a bug hotel at the tree balloon.	A tree stands in the middle of the field with brown soil below and orange shapes sit in this area in the foreground. These appear to signify sprouting seeds, but could be fallen leaves or creatures.

B5	Yesterday I went to the Holburne Museum and I liked making the masks and seeing Willow from our project.	A tree stands in the centre of the postcard.
B6	I had an amazing time at the Holburne Museum. I loved making masks.	A figure in a tree balloon floats high above the ground in front of a large building with many windows. A figure looks out of a window with surprise and three more figures stand on the ground.
B7	I had a great time at the forest of imagination. I made lots of things like a mask, a bug box etc. I really enjoyed the book as well.	A tree balloon floats in the centre of the card, above rooftops in the bottom right foreground.
B8	Holburne Museum was great! We got to make masks that looked like forest animals. We also got to see the magic tree. It was great!	A tree balloon floats amongst the clouds in a blue sky.
B9	We went to the Holburn Museum to see the forest of imagination to see Willow.	A creature stands on all fours. Possibly Willow.
B10	Thank you for the magical adventure to the magical forest of imagination, it was so fun! I loved to go in Kay's balloon and explore it. The book was so good. I would really want to go to the Holburne Museum again. I miss Willow.	A tree balloon floats above trees, houses and a building labelled Holburne Museum. A polar bear wearing a scarf and raising its arms says 'Help save climate change' via a speech bubble. A sign beneath the bear reads 'Welcome to Bath SPA' and two other boxes of text read 'You have been invited' and 'The Climate Spa'. In the top right a floating creature appears next to the words 'You're a Sparkitect'.

