

Workshop  
**We are in this together -  
(in)finite waters**

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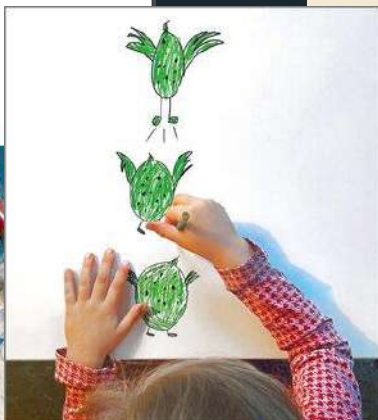
Presentation  
**(In)finite waters - preschool  
children as connoisseurs  
engage in environmental issues**

**SERN 24 MAY 2024, Piteå**  
**Teresa Elkin Postila**  
**PhD. in Early Childhood Education**  
**Senior Lecturer**  
**Department of Education,**  
**Mid Sweden University**

## (O)ändligt vatten

En studie om hur förskolebarn som *kännare* engageras i samhälleliga miljöfrågor

Teresa Elkin Postila



### Höj hörstyrkan!

LYSSNANDE PEDAGOGIK IDAG OCH I FRAMTIDEN

Camilla Eline Andersen, Lena Aronsson



nordisk  
barnehageforskning  
nordic early childhood educational research

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## An Ecology of Practices – The Hydrosocial Cycle as a Matter of Concern In Preschool Children’s Explorations

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Abstract

Cultural Studies of Science Education (2022) 17:277–299  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-021-10075-3>

ORIGINAL PAPER



Stories of water: preschool children’s engagement with water purification

Teresa Elkin Postila<sup>1</sup>

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EDITED BY  
LISA A. MAZZEI AND ALECIA Y. JACKSON

POSTFOUNDATIONAL  
APPROACHES TO  
QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Australian Journal of Environmental Education (2019), 35, 222–229  
[doi:10.1017/aje.2019.27](https://doi.org/10.1017/aje.2019.27)

RESEARCH-PRACTICE ARTICLE

## Water as method: Explorations of locally situated environmental issues together with preschool children

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### Abstract

The aim of this article is to show how water emerged as a research method nearby and within a small stream during a 9-month fieldwork carried out with preschool children. The fieldwork was informed and shaped by the preschool children’s and researcher’s situated knowledges and their questions about environmental issues concerning water, absence of water, pollution and ethics. The empirical material consists of films and photos, drawings and field notes, produced together by the preschool children and the researcher during the research. The analysis draws on relational ontology and the writings of Isabelle Stengers and Donna Haraway. The article concludes with a discussion about what can be learnt from the study and its contribution to research within the fields of Early Childhood Education and Environmental Education.

**Keywords:** early childhood; environmental education; education

CAMBRIDGE  
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education in preschools by taking Donna Haraway’s *with* seriously, here, *purification*. This posthumanist inspired epistemologically on the writings of Haraway, cal data consist of three stories from a the Stockholm region in Sweden, col-films, photographs, drawings, and notes invitation to preschools to engage in the less around environmental concerns, not school.

Environment education - Water

kolon genom att ta Donna Haraways upp-

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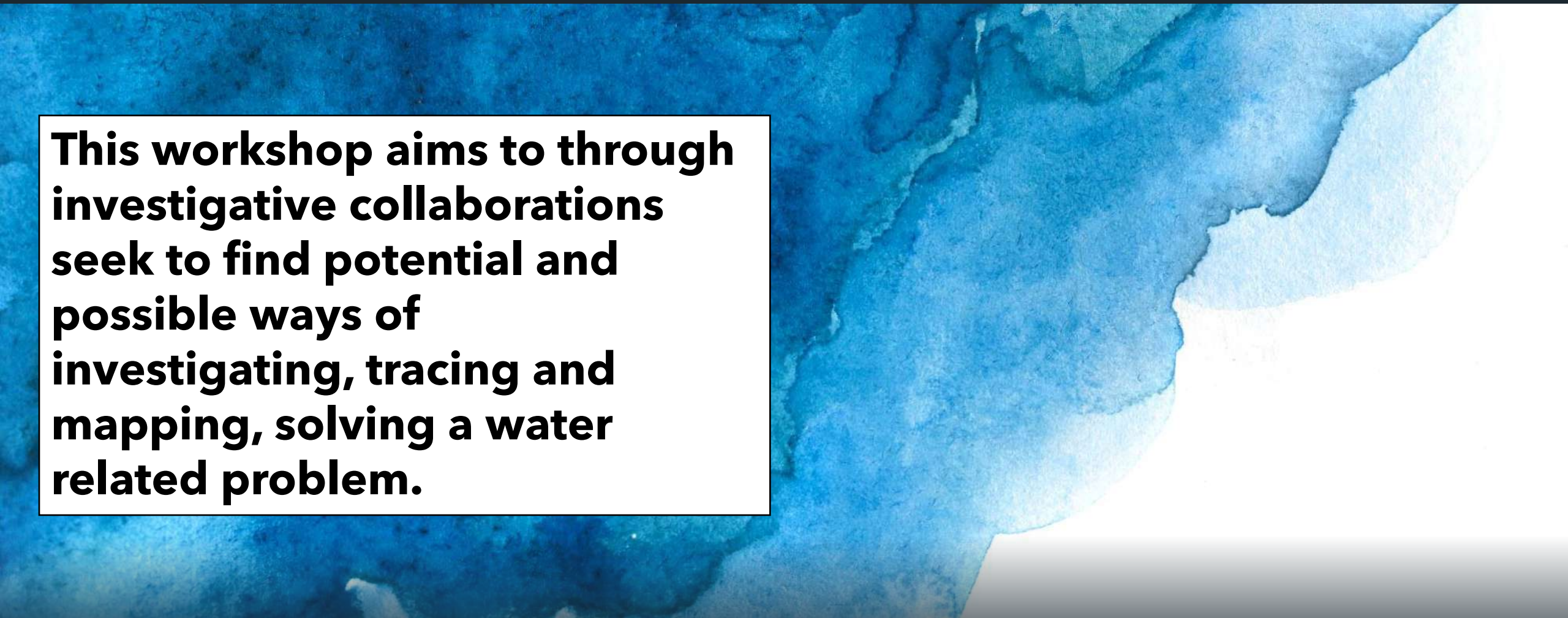
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# Workshop

## **We are in this together - (in)finite waters**

**This workshop aims to through investigative collaborations seek to find potential and possible ways of investigating, tracing and mapping, solving a water related problem.**



# Collaborative investigations concern a water related problem

## The setting

A small and narrow stream in a highly populated urban area. The stream has slowly carved its way down through the bedrock and is now wedged in between granite outcrop. At places along the stream there are open areas with high alder trees, herbs and grass. There are birds, insects, amphibians, bats, deer, squirrels, mice and so on.

## The problem

From one day to the other the stream has dried out.

# Collaborative investigations concern a water related problem - mind mapping (15')

- 1) Think individually about the problem and the setting (max 2')
- 2) Share you're the first think you thought of in relation to the problem and the setting (max 2').
- 3) Mapp the consequences of the missing water - think in all scales (micro - macro; local - national - global; in different disciplines; economical; social, ecological etc.)
- 4) Mapp what knowledge and who's knowledge you need, to start to investigate the consequences and where the water is and why it disappeared.
- 5) Mapp who you can/may contact to find out more about the problem and the setting.
- 6) Mapp who can "fix" the problem (3-6 max 11')

Collaborative investigations concern a water related  
problem - mind mapping

Summary - let's share with each other!  
Thoughts, ideas, difficult, important...





Presentation  
**(In)finite waters - preschool  
children as connoisseurs  
engage in environmental  
issues**

- **WHAT IF!**
- **WHAT IF?**

# The water project

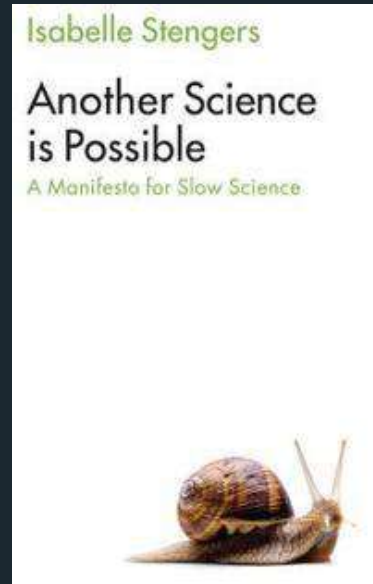
46 children (3-5 years)

2 preschools with fresh water  
and the Baltic Sea within  
walking distance

The Stockholm region

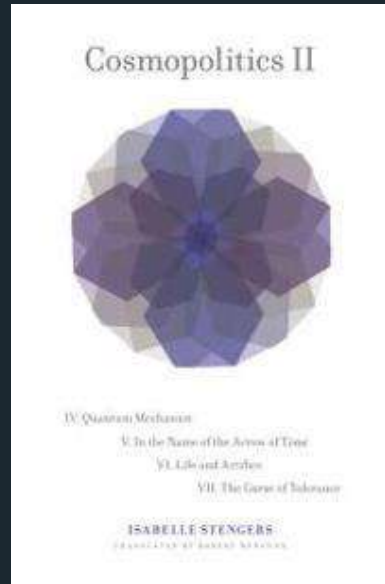






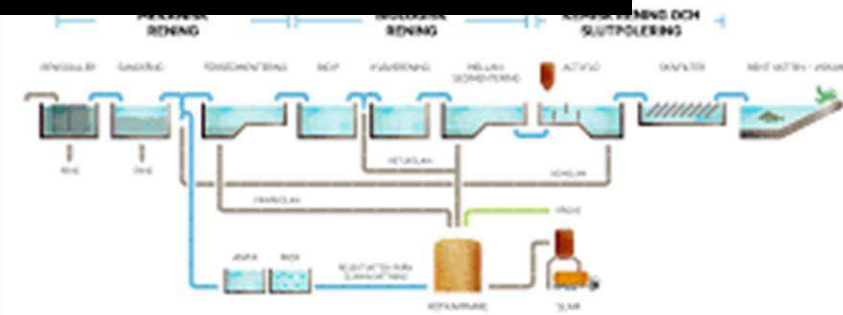
# An ecology of practices - to "meet", listen, challenge and change

Isabelle Stengers (2010, 2011, 2018) -  
Philosopher of Science





Water – is constantly present but almost always out of sight and difficult to access



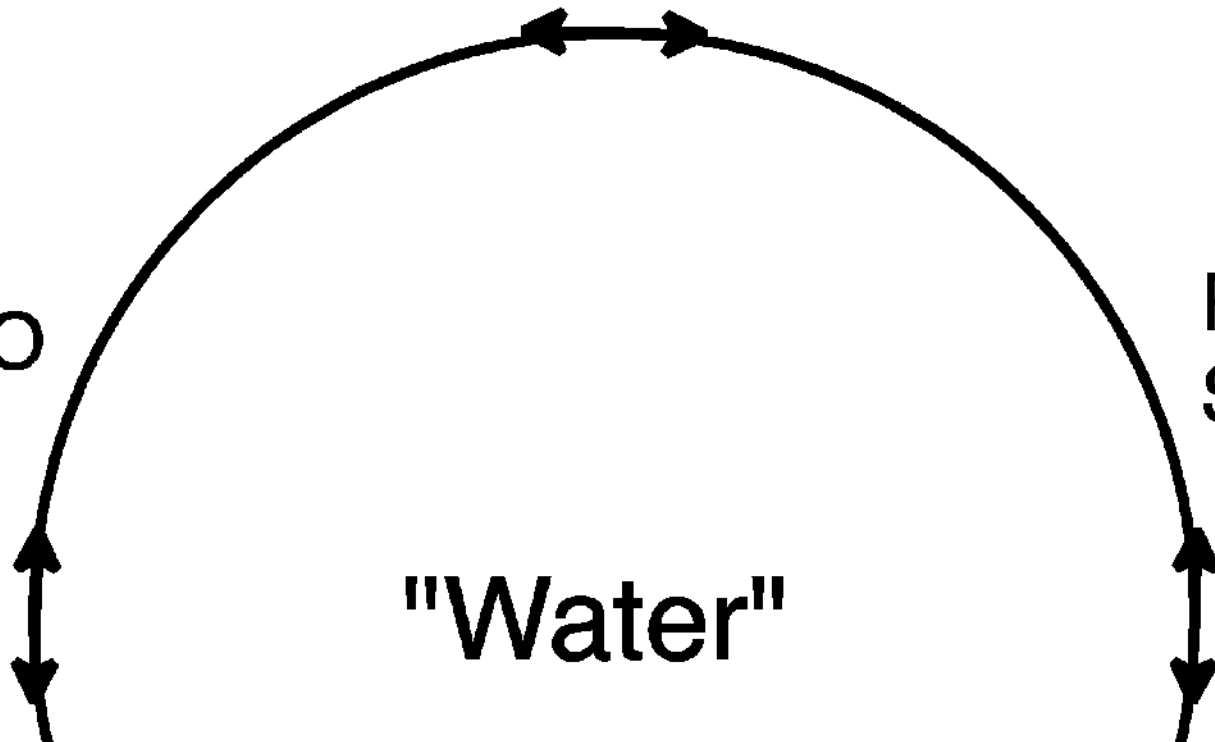
**Physical:**  
Hydrologic of H<sub>2</sub>O

**Social:**  
Power Relations and  
Society Organization

"Water"

The hydrosocial cycle  
Water and the social - make and remake each other  
(Linton & Budds, 2014)

**Technology:** Infrastructure  
and Research



# How? To meet and "listen" – what happens then?

What if?

"Please contact me if you have questions concerning water. Especially in urban areas where we live, pollution etc ends up in our lakes and other water resources. If I can, I'll be happy to help you produce some material to show the children, and I'll be happy to participate and also talk on occasion."



# The child as an expert - knower and feeler - a connoisseur

- in their areas,
- of their questions,
- their immediate environment, and
- of their methods

(Stengers, 2015, 2018; Stengers m.fl., 2014)



When we (adults) stop and start to listen and  
respond to what we have heard -  
something other emerge.

It is our response-ability to answer to what is  
important and urgent.

The stream = timeplace

**"The water disappeared in a day"**

**"What if all these things could tell you what they've been through and how they got here?"**

Making the  
"invisible"  
visible

# Speculative fabulations and speculative thinking

Facts are related to a playful exploration that includes surprises, astonishment, amazement and potential "what if?" questions.

Asking questions like "what if?" became a playful serious part of the activity at the stream.

(Elkin Postila, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, forthcoming; Elkin Postila & Eriksson, forthcoming; Elkin Postila & Palmer, 2023; forthcoming; Lenz Taguchi & Elkin Postila, 2023;)



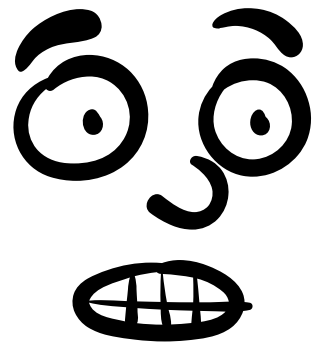


“Making a fuss” – the potential  
of disrupting and being  
disrupted

(Stengers och Despret, 2014)

Opens to thinking and feeling differently in  
research, and to dare to try out other  
people's methods and approaches

# Meet society's youngest – HOW?



"Nervous, how can I capture their interest, to instead of going out and standing and talking, more be with the children based on their questions."

Beliefs about children – obscures?

Taken for granted  $\approx$   
forgotten?





And finally.....



Different ways of listening together create an ecology of listening, where listening goes in several directions:

Children-children, specialists-children, researchers-children, researchers-specialists, educators-children, educators-researchers, educators-specialists, robots-specialists, children-robots-water, preschool-municipality and preschool-community, etc etc etc

Listening creates relational connections between children and society, science, culture and nature.

(Elkin Postila, 2019, 2021; 2022; 2023; Elkin Postila & Palmer, 2023; forthcoming).

The water project contained several unforeseen exchanges of knowledge and meetings that made new issues and thoughts possible. The knowledge that arose from being together is different from whether each person had created their own knowledge within their own practice or discipline.



## Spin-offs

The company in charge of water and waste (water specialists) + preschools (preschool children) = day water pond surveillance + information meetings targeting preschool children



A vertical strip on the left side of the image features a blue, marbled texture, resembling watercolor or aged paper. The rest of the image is a solid dark blue background.

Thank you!

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