

# Report on the Leisure-time Pedagogy Network at the NERA Congress March 23–25 2017 in Copenhagen, Denmark

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The NERA (Nordic Educational Research Association) congress is a yearly congress that is hosted by one of the different Nordic countries. NERA was founded in 1972 and should now be seen as a meeting place for educational researchers in the Nordic countries. The association strives to stimulate educational inquiries and supports the use of research to enhance education in different areas. The association also strives to both function as a platform for Nordic researchers and to support collaboration between them and the international community (for more information of NERA visit the home site at <http://www.nfpf.net/>). Although the focus is directed to research that involves the Nordic countries researchers from other parts of Europe and sometimes Asia and America also participate. This year about 700 participants attended the congress in Copenhagen.

NERA consists of 25 different networks and every network have their own special interest even if this sometimes means some overlapping between focus of interest. Every network has a convenor who is supporting the board by administrating, and sometimes also reviewing, abstract applications before the conference, administrate the Network web page, organize a network meeting during the conference and hand in a network report after the conference.

The formation of Network 17, Leisure-time Pedagogy, started 2012 since researchers from some of the Nordic countries during some time had experienced a need to focus on after-school activities. Until then research and presentations directed to after-school activities had been incorporated in other networks, for instance the Early Childhood Research Network. The NERA board accepted the appliance for starting a new network and the first conference where the Leisure-time Pedagogy Network was included was in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 2013 (for more information of Network 17 go to <https://neranetwork17.wordpress.com/>). Usually 10 to 15 attendances visit the presentations (about 9–15 presentations have been common) at the Network 17 sessions. This means that the network is rather small but also that it has survived the first important and vital period as a self-dependent network.

The conference in Copenhagen 2017 included 12 presentations within the Leisure-time Pedagogy Network (two contributions had, however, to be cancelled). The presentations only included researchers from Denmark and Sweden this year and it

became obvious that the focus of interests, although methodological and theoretical perspectives diverged, were similar. The space available for a thorough description of the presentations is limited and the following report should only be seen as a brief and somewhat broad categorization concerning the content: *New governmental policies and the resulting educational practice, Children's perspectives, Children's identity formation and Theory discussions.*

Six of the presentations should be seen as belonging to the first theme, focusing how governmental policy in different aspects influence the educational practice. Five of these contributions were focusing on how staff, working in after-school service/primary school, realized their work relative recent established educational reforms. These presentations comprised both Danish and Swedish research where the Danish presentations took their points of departures from the 2014 educational reform where staff, pedagogues, in Danish after-school services were invited to participate in curriculum based school activities in a more comprehensive way. Noer Ahm and Ringskou focused on how leisure-time pedagogues can create varied learning environments in school based on learning processes of aesthetic animation while Gravesen and Ringskou discussed how the increasing stress of qualification challenges the leisure time pedagogue's work when they try to handle the balance between qualification and inclusion. Ankerstjerne also focused on what pedagogues at leisure-time centres do in school and in the leisure-time centre but also which role they settle into and which role they are able to see themselves in. The Swedish contributions also problematized the increasing stress of learning within their activities. The presentation by Boström, Augustsson and Haglund focused how political decisions are mediated between the formulation and implementation arenas, i.e. how staff at leisure-time centres perceive their steering documents and implement their learning mission. Lager discussed teaching, a new concept within leisure-time centre activities, which means a wholeness of care, learning and development mixed together in the leisure-time centre. While these presentations all focused how staff at afterschool services acted and reasoned concerning their work the presentation of Andersson and Klerfelt focused principals and how they perceived and organized leisure-time teachers work in the leisure-time centre as well as with a practical/aesthetic subject in school.

Two Swedish presentations, in whole or in part, stressed children's perspectives concerning their perception of different aspects of afterschool services. Fastén discussed how children understand and construct the conceptions of School, Leisure-Time Centers and Spare Time and what differences and similarities they highlight concerning these conceptions. Ljusberg, Elvstrand and Söderman Lago used the concept children's agency to portray teachers and children's reasoning concerning independence in school-age childcare.

The presentation by Pugh and Svane Hansen focused how Danish children used Youtube as a digital tool to actively unfold themselves in everyday life. The results were expected to gain knowledge of children's digital behavior, experience and contributions and at the same time get insights in how children influence – and are influenced by – other digital users. The last presentation, by Hammarsten, focused a discussion concerning Lefebvre's theory of critical spatial analysis. The theory was

the point of departure for her study that aimed at examining children's experiences of a Swedish forest garden regarding *perceived space*, *conceived space* and *lived space*.

At the end of the conference every network received a slot in the time schedule to form a network meeting. The meeting regarding Network 17 was directed at, amongst other things, discussing the performed presentations, opportunities to publish in the IJREE journal, possible future collaborations concerning both visiting different universities and different national networks. Next NERA conference will take place in March 8–10 2018 at the University of Oslo, Norway. It would be a great opportunity for researchers outside the Nordic countries to participate and contribute since NERA is open for all researchers interested in educational research in the Nordic context.