

Article

Conserve My Village—Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish Students' Valued Landscapes and Well-Being

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Abstract: In the context of landscape, both the natural environment and the built environment can be linked with human health and well-being. This connection has been studied among adults, but no research has been conducted on young people. To fill this gap, this case study aimed to elucidate students' views on landscapes worth conserving and the landscapes that affect and support their well-being. The participants ($n = 538$) were Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish students from grades 3–6. The students drew the landscapes they wanted to conserve. The drawn landscapes and the welfare-supporting features they contained were analysed using inductive and abductive content analyses. The students from all three countries preferred water, forest and yard landscapes. In the drawings of natural landscapes, the most recurring themes were sunrise or sunset, forest, beach and mountain landscapes. Physical well-being was manifested in the opportunity to jog and walk. Social well-being was reflected in the presence of friends, relatives and animals. Therapeutically important well-being-related spaces—the so-called green (natural areas), blue (aquatic environments) and white (e.g., snow) areas—were also depicted in the participants' drawings. It can be concluded that the drawn landscapes reflect several values that promote students' well-being.

Keywords: landscape; mental; physical and social well-being; primary school students; drawings; inductive and abductive content analyses



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1. Introduction

The World Health Organization [1] introduced a definition of health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. By definition, only a person without deficiencies is healthy. However, all people need medical help to correct 'abnormalities'. Dietrich Bonhoeffer [2] defined health as 'the strength to be'. Thus, health can be seen as the ability to flourish without being unduly impeded by illness or disability or by overcoming illness or disability. One key factor in a person's well-being is their living environment.

Current thinking in health geography engages with the importance of natural environments [3]. Gesler [4] highlighted the idea of therapeutic landscapes, which are places with 'an enduring reputation for achieving mental, physical and spiritual healing'. Therapeutic landscapes are combinations of physical, psychological and social environments that interact to produce a sense of healing [5,6]. For instance, gardens [7–9], people's homes [7,8], spas, retreats [8,10] and sacred sites [4,10] can represent these places.

Therapeutic landscapes are categorised as green spaces, for instance, forests and gardens [11], blue spaces, for instance, rivers, lakes and seas [12], yellow spaces, for instance, deserts [13] and white spaces, for instance, snow and ice-covered places [8]. Green spaces and blue spaces promote participation in physical activities [8] and affect people's psychological and physical health [12]. They are important spiritual and restorative

environments that promote feelings of contemplation and spiritual peace. Green spaces and blue spaces can stimulate contact with family, friends and neighbours, serving as places for social interaction [8]. Yellow spaces [13] and white spaces [8] may influence an individual's perceived goodness of therapeutic landscapes.

Previous studies [8] have shown that different people perceive nature very differently. Being outdoors or seeking remote and isolated places surrounded by nature, where one can 'get away from it all' are introduced as places supporting well-being in the Western world [5]. Untouched forests and lakes are common examples of nature, but other natural features, such as single trees or rows of trees and fountains in a courtyard, can also represent nature. Reactions towards nature can range from enjoyment to indifference and concern [8]. Individual perceptions and a sense of safety can affect people's relationships with natural landscapes.

Besides the natural environment [14,15], built environments, well-being and health are interrelated [16]. Natural and built elements are combined in traditional healing environments, such as health care settings (e.g., hospitals), retreat centres, health camps [17], respite care centres [7] and yoga retreat centres [10], etc. Today, place-focused applications are extended into a range for more 'ordinary' spatial contexts, such as home, community and city spaces [17]. These environments have been called brown and grey spaces [18].

Built landscapes can provide a physical framework that promotes people's well-being and increases their life satisfaction. They may influence someone's perception of goodness, providing sense of happiness, comfort, achievement, healing and recovery, thus promoting health and well-being [6]. Additionally, cultural landscapes (e.g., museums or places with architectural goods and services) might affect people's health and well-being [13].

The link between landscapes and well-being has been studied extensively among adults [8,14,19], but for young people, these connections have been less studied. Thus, in the current study, students' drawings were used to discover the students' views on the landscapes worth conserving and the landscapes that affect and support their well-being.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Core Concepts and Definitions of Landscape and Environment

The core concepts of this research are landscape, environment, environmental values, environmental relationships and well-being. The concept of landscape is difficult to define [14], but it can be approached by looking at official definitions and changes in this concept over the years. Geographically, a landscape can refer to an area containing a mosaic of landscape elements [20,21]. The Council of Europe Landscape Convention [22] defines a landscape as people's perceptions of an area created by humans or by natural phenomena. A landscape is considered to be a continuum from completely natural landscapes to completely urban landscapes. Thus, a landscape can include parks and urban and neighbouring forests, among other things [14]. According to Abraham and others [14], a landscape can be perceived and experienced physically and in a variety of ways through different senses. Individual human factors and uniqueness affect a landscape experience. In the current research, landscape is defined in terms of thematic content, so it can be understood as a visual experience of an environment [23]. In this study, landscape and environment were used in parallel and interchangeably.

The environment is a complex concept that can be examined from a number of dimensions, as follows: immediate, local, international, global, animate, inanimate, natural or constructed [24]. The environment can also mean issues associated with humans, including physical and social dimensions [25]. The environmental relationship describes a person's attitude towards the environment and it can be developed through the acquisition of experiences from nature through active activities [25,26]. The interaction between humans and an environment, the so-called landscape in geography, is reciprocal, so it is only the human who affects an environment and is also affected by that environment [27,28].

There are several formulations of environmental values. In the current study, environmental values are related to perceptions that depict the underlying values of students in

Nordic countries in relation to the environment and the roles of humans and other living things in connection with landscape and sustainability.

2.2. Dimensions of Well-Being and Landscape

Well-being is promoted by various factors, such as health, relevant social relationships, adaptation to changes in a living environment, a harmonious relationship with nature and the built environment and a balance of life experiences [29]. As for deterrents to well-being, Wiens [29] listed health-impairing factors, such as negative personal feelings, inconsistencies in social relationships and unpleasant phenomena happening around the person. Animals are known to positively contribute to human well-being [30]; well-being holistically increases mental, physical and social levels [29]. Pets give a person a sense of security and acceptance; for example, pets do not criticise their owners [31]. Social well-being is in a strong position between the pet and its owner, and on a mental level, pets reduce or eliminate stress [32].

Abraham and others [14] interpreted the relationship between well-being and landscape as a triangle of mental, physical and social well-being. Physical well-being increases when physical activity increases—in other words, when a designed landscape takes into account the possibility of walking, cycling or easy access to physical activities. Social well-being was understood by communality and its strengthening, and well-being was experienced through shared experiences. Additionally, a sense of security in an urban environment is an important measure of social well-being. Mental well-being means manifesting naturally, for example, through recreation, a reduction in stress and an emphasis on positive emotions, and thus an improvement in mood [14].

Finlay, Franke, McKay and Sims-Gould [8] divided the concept of well-being into physical, social and mental well-being in their study, which focused on Canadian retirees and well-being in connection to a landscape. This study highlighted the impact of green space and blue space on the well-being of the elderly. Finlay and others [8] defined green spaces as umbrella concepts for all-natural areas, both in wild and urban areas. According to a study by Milligan and Bingley [33], the interactions between people and forests, parks or gardens are beneficial. People travel to parks to find healing and recovery. Some enjoy the scenery and experiences offered in parks [34,35]. Studies also show that green space gives a sense of meaningful purpose in life [36] and increases mood and energy [37].

Finlay et al. [8] classified aquatic environments as blue spaces, both in untouched and human-touched natural areas and in urban areas where the water element can be standing or running. In a broad interpretation, blue areas can be anything from seas to fountains [38]. It is common for people to use water-related services, such as spas, to find serenity and healing [39,40]. Water elements, such as waves and sounds of water and immersion in water (e.g., swimming or bathing), have long fascinated humans, and these water-related experiences have been described as calming and strengthening [38]. Finlay and others [8] stated that blue areas increase physical and mental well-being in the elderly. Physical well-being increased due to it being nice to walk in or escape to a beautiful sea landscape. Mental well-being in the blue areas was enhanced by various factors, including the observation that it was good to calm down, seek serenity and reflect on the past.

Studies on the impact of green and blue areas on well-being are still scarce. However, Finlay and others' [8] study provides indications that green and blue areas increase well-being, at least among elderly people. However, they acknowledge that the research on the impact of green and blue areas on well-being is scarce and more research is needed concerning other ages, for example. The elderly had a feeling that their mental well-being improved while amid the blue areas because they could admire the roaring of the sea. This could also be the case among young people, but they likely prefer to play on the seashore, so well-being would be more oriented towards physical and social well-being. Abraham and colleagues [14] shared the same idea that aesthetically beautiful landscapes play a key role in increasing physical activity. However, some young people may consider

aesthetically beautiful landscapes, such as by observing the seascapes rather than playing amid them, in which case a landscape would increase their mental well-being.

2.3. Drawings as Study Material

Drawings have been used as study material in various studies [41–44]; their potential (and challenges) as study material has been discussed in earlier studies [41] and also in connection to landscape and environment studies [42–44]. Drawings provide access to children’s and adolescents’ ideas [45] and make their thinking visible [46]. Drawings also support students who are shy or lack the language skills to express themselves. There are challenges in analysing drawings, particularly those of young people [47–49]. In the present study, the students’ written text on the back of their drawings supported the analyses of the pictures.

3. Study Design

3.1. Study Questions

This case study aimed to discover what kinds of landscapes the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian primary school students, aged 9–13 years, want to conserve, what the main elements of the landscape they want to conserve are and what kinds of features of well-being their drawn landscapes reflect. The hypothesis behind this study is that the landscapes the students want to conserve are important and valuable and reflect the drawer’s well-being.

The study questions were as follows:

- (1) What landscapes do the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish primary school students want to conserve, according to their drawings?
- (2) What landscapes, reflected in the drawn and described landscapes/environments of Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish students, affect and support the students’ well-being?
 - (a) What are the specific features of the drawn and described landscapes in relation to the students’ well-being by country?
 - (b) What are the specific features of the landscapes drawn and described by 3rd–6th grade students in relation to their well-being?

The first study question is related to the elements drawn in (untouched) nature, as well as built and social landscapes, as defined in environmental psychology [25]. The second study question is related to students’ drawings and written texts, analysed in the framework of the health-promoting impact of environments and therapeutic landscapes on well-being [8,14].

3.2. Study Settings

This is a qualitative phenomenographical study. In a qualitative study, the research objectives, strategies, data, analysis and validity are intertwined in the research process [50]. Thus, in qualitative research, the researcher continuously utilizes reflexivity and judgment skills in analyzing data and making decisions about it [51]. In the present study, the lack of rigorous control measurements enables qualitative research design for pluralism, diversity and the opportunity for the researcher to seek alternative explanations and hypotheses throughout the design, data collection and analysis of the research process [50]. Control can affect data in ways that compromise the representativeness of the analysis. Qualitative researchers must remain open and alert to possible alternatives [52]. In line with the view presented above, the hypothesis of this case study is not tested.

The study included 3 groups of primary school students (see Table 1): a group of Finnish students ($n = 174$), a group of Norwegian students ($n = 200$) and a group of Swedish students ($n = 164$). The students were selected from Finland, Norway and Sweden because of the similarity of their natural, built and cultural environments. The participants were recruited by email via teachers who informed them about this research and asked whether

they wanted to participate. Both the teachers and the students consented to participate. The participants were from rural and urban schools. The researchers visited the schools and gave oral and written instructions to the teachers. The teachers informed the students and their parents about the research procedure via a digital platform. The teachers were also asked to explain to students, if necessary, that the word ‘landscape’ is related to environment. According to the teachers, the students knew the concepts, at least on a basic level.

Table 1. Distribution of nationality, gender and grades of the Finnish (FI), Norwegian (NO) and Swedish (SE) primary school students ($n = 538$) in grades 3–4 and 5–6. Of the drawings, Norwegian accounted for 37%, Finnish 32% and Swedish 31%.

Grade	Age	Finland			Norway			Sweden		
		Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
3 and 4	9–10 years	48	30	78	36	37	73	30	37	67
5 and 6	11–12 years	60	36	96	76	51	127	53	44	97
		108	66	174	112	88	200	83	81	164

The students ($n = 538$) were asked, in their mother tongue, to draw a picture of a landscape they wanted to conserve. The landscapes were drawn on white A4 paper using crayons/colour pencils. The students were also asked to write their name, age, their school’s name, grade, home country and place of birth on the back of the paper. The students were also asked to briefly explain what their drawings represented. The students were given one hour to complete the drawings during the study lesson.

The drawings ($n = 538$) were collected during the 2011–2012 study year. The participants were from 2 comprehensive schools in southwestern Finland ($n = 174$, 32% of all drawings), 3 schools in southeastern Norway ($n = 200$, 37%) and 3 southern, southeastern and southwestern Swedish schools ($n = 164$, 31%). The age of the students varied from 9 to 12 years. Altogether, 221 students were from grades 3–4 and 320 students were from grades 5–6. Three drawings could not be analysed due to their unclear, indistinct or ambiguous features. According to the results of the previous study, the children did draw similar kind of landscapes despite the 9-year difference in data gathering [53]. The data gathered in 2011–2012 for the present study can be considered to reflect students’ current values regarding landscapes, notwithstanding the year of collection.

3.3. Study Methods and Analyses

The students’ landscape drawings were analysed by reproducing the visual content of each drawing, one at a time, in written text. The drawings were coded (e.g., 70NG9C4) by using a serial number (e.g., 70), country (F = Finland; N = Norway; S = Sweden), gender (G = girl; B = boy), age (e.g., 9 years) and grade (e.g., C4). The written text and background information were exported to Microsoft Excel. The written text was then analysed in three stages, I–III (for a detailed description of the methodology, see [43,44]). Three researchers analysed the material independently and separately in stages I and II and two researchers analysed the material in stage III. After that, the different interpretations were jointly agreed upon.

In stage I, the drawings were divided into the three main landscape categories (nature landscape, built landscape and social landscape) using theory and deductive content analyses [25,54]. All three landscape types were found in the drawings of the 3rd–6th grade students in each country. This result is in harmony with the results of studies in other countries [43,55], and these findings of the current study provided a reliable basis for the second phase of analyses and supported further analyses.

In stage II, the content of the drawings was analysed further using inductive content-based analyses [56,57]. The detailed elements and prevailing content of the landscapes were

further specified. Finally, eight landscapes, identified according to prevailing elements, were analysed by grade and country.

In stage III, the drawings of all the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish students were analysed as a single group to study what kinds of well-being the drawings reflect. Analysis in a single group was supported by the fact that, based on the preliminary analysis, no major differences were found in the results of the grade groups (i.e., 3–4 and 5–6) between the countries.

The analyses in stage III were theory-guided content analyses [58] and inductive content analyses [56]. The theory-guided analyses were based on the triangulation of well-being: mental, physical and social [8,14]. Inductive content analysis [58] was used to discover new things in the landscape drawings of Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish primary school students, that were not explained by previous studies.

The main categories/criteria for mental, physical and social well-being were deductively derived from previous studies involving participants of all ages [14]. In practice, each drawing was surveyed and then classified into three categories, and justifications were made to determine which well-being element of a drawing determined the well-being category. Additionally, other elements about well-being were separated from the drawings: elements that defined and created inductive content analyses' subcategories [8,14]. This meant that, in the analyses of the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish landscape drawings, each of the main categories (i.e., mental, physical and social well-being) still involved different subcategories in which a certain recurring theme was repeated (Tables 2 and A1 in Appendix A). At the end of the analyses regarding well-being, each landscape belonged to only one main category in the criteria-based classification.

Table 2. The main categories of mental, physical and social well-being in the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish students' landscape drawings ($n = 538$) with their subcategories (Appendix A, Table A1).

Mental		Physical		Social	
subcategory	typical theme	subcategory	typical theme	Subcategory	typical theme
safe space	buildings, personal spaces, travel targets	doing things in nature	in neighbouring forest, in a distant place	acting together in nature	winter and summer games
natural environments	sunrise or sunset, aquatic (blue) areas, terrestrial (green) areas, wild animals, nature conservation environments	doing things in urban areas	types of sports activities	companion animals	domestic animals and pets
reading	reading in hammock	vicinity (natural or urban)	physical training	socially constructed 'own' culture	Nationality
spirituality	Churches			socially connected building	home with a taste of other people, school with friends, housing and cottages of relatives, familiar buildings in the city conurbation
imaginative landscapes	fantasy, utopias				

All the spaces that symbolised the students' own and familiar living environments, and thus provided them with security, were placed in the mental well-being category. An example of such a drawing is a picture of a student's home or neighbourhood and there are no people around. Additionally, the data, including an abundance of natural landscapes depicting pure nature (e.g., blue or green areas or nature reserves), were included in the mental well-being category. There were also a few dystopic images in the drawings describing, for example, fire or the polluting of nature. In these cases, the interpretations were often obtained with help of students' texts. These images represented events not desired to occur in landscapes perceived as important to oneself. Mental well-being was also described by drawings that contained elements that suggested spirituality, such as churches, or purely imaginative drawings in which animals and vehicles are flying; however, there were only two such completely imaginative landscape depictions.

The category of physical well-being included all drawings in which various opportunities for sports or exercise were present (e.g., a soccer field). However, if the drawing clearly focused on working with one or more people, this focus was placed on social well-being. If the student's drawing depicted someone important to him or her at home, it was interpreted as representing social well-being. The drawings in which people were clearly in contact with other people or communicating with each other were also placed in the social well-being category. Additionally, we interpreted that social well-being represents buildings and institutions that involve important or familiar social contacts for the students, such as drawings that represent a school or familiar grocery store. Pets and domestic animals were also counted as relating to social well-being.

During the analyses in stage III, the researchers made observations regarding the differences and specific features of well-being in the drawings, wrote them down and pooled them. These results are presented by grade (3–4 and 5–6) and country (Finland, Norway and Sweden).

3.4. Dependability of the Study

Dependability can be enhanced by detailed analysis concerning the process and the product of the research for consistency [59]. The consistency of data in this study was achieved by verifying the steps of the research through examination of drawings and their descriptions made by the students, the data reduction products and the process notes [60]. As for the trustworthiness of the study [61], the design and implementation of the study was negotiated among the researchers. The study procedures were carefully documented to review and verify data throughout the study. Three researchers analysed the material independently and separately in stages I and II and two researchers in stage III. At the end of the analysis process, the researchers compared and discussed their interpretations until a unified view was reached. The results were also compared with previous studies.

4. Results

4.1. Prevailing Landscape Elements in the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish Students' Drawings

The eight prevailing elements (see Figure 1A,B) were drawn in the students' landscapes of all the grades in Finland, Norway and Sweden. The elements in the landscapes were water landscape (E1), meadow or park (E2), forest (E3), mountain (E4), road or street (E5), yard in a village or city landscape (E6), field (agriculture) (E7) or theme resort (such as a game room, playing field or theme park) (E8). The main drawn activities were playing in a playground or game house, cross-country skiing or slalom or other kinds of hobbies. The landscapes often presented boreal types of forest; spruce and birch trees were common. Drawings of built environments often included trees typical of parks in southern Sweden and Central Europe. Additionally, palm trees in the jungle or holiday areas near the sea were drawn.

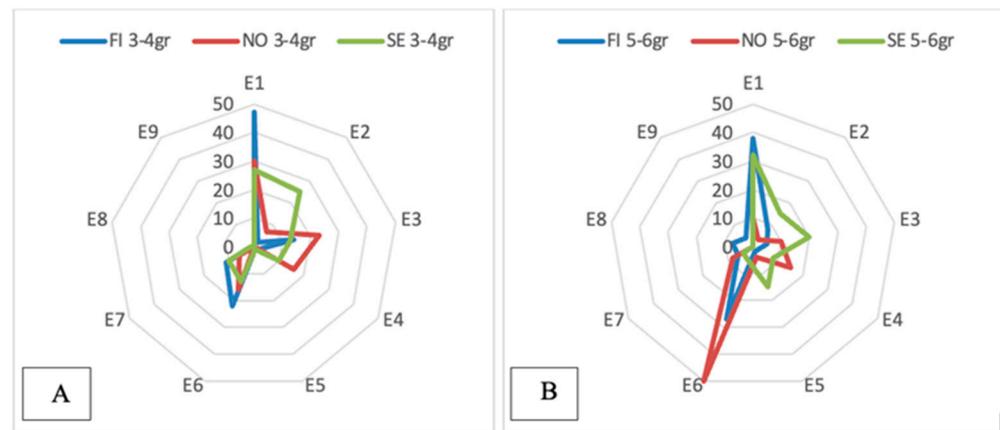


Figure 1. Frequency (percentage) of the main elements in the students' landscape drawings by grades 3–4 (A) and (B) 5–6 (FI = Finland, $n = 174$; NO = Norway, $n = 200$; SE = Sweden, $n = 164$). Elements in landscapes are water landscape (E1), meadow/park (E2), forest (E3), mountain (E4), road/street (E5), yard in village/city landscape (E6), field (agriculture) (E7) and theme resort (e.g., a game room, playing field or theme park) (E8).

In the Finnish 3rd and 4th graders' landscapes (see Figure 1A), water, forests and yards were presented often. The students drew archipelagos, lake districts and small forests near home or summer cottages, while mountains and fields were seldom present in their drawn environments (see Figure 2). The Norwegian 3rd and 4th graders drew water, forest, yards and mountain landscapes. They did draw street, meadow/park and field elements, but they existed in a minority of the landscapes. In their landscapes, rivers, seas or ponds represented water elements, and they were placed in the vicinity of a home, summer house, forest or park. A yard was combined with a family's regular house or summer house or with a block of flats. Mountains were more common in the Norwegian 3rd and 4th graders' drawings than in those of the Finnish and Swedish students. The Swedish 3rd and 4th graders often drew water, meadows and parks in their landscapes. Their second favourite was forest and yard areas, and the third was mountain and field (agriculture) elements. In the Swedish students' drawings, street or road scenery near a home or theme park in the surroundings was often presented. They also drew a meadow or park with a few trees and lots of open spaces with flowers and animals.



Figure 2. Mountain landscape drawn by a Norwegian 5th grader (77NB10C5), representing physical well-being slalom activities by himself (left); water landscape by a Finnish 3rd grader (41FG9C3), representing a mental landscape (middle); and a yard in a village/city drawn by a Norwegian by 5th grader (82NG10C5), representing social well-being (right).

All the Finnish students drew mostly water and yard (see Figure 1B). Theme resorts involving a game room, playing field or theme park were typical for grades 5–6. The Norwegian 5th and 6th graders most often drew yards in village or city landscapes (see Figure 2). Mountains were the second most common element in the Norwegian drawings and the most drawn landscape element compared with the two other countries. The

Norwegian 5th and 6th graders drew water, forest and street landscapes. In their drawings, a single-family house, summer house or block of flats were distinctive elements. The favoured elements in the Swedish 5th and 6th graders' landscapes were water and forests, followed by meadow and street elements. In a few drawings, only mountains, yards or fields were presented.

4.2. Mental, Physical and Social Well-Being and the Students' Landscapes

All three types of mental, physical and social well-being, with their subcategories, were present in the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish students' landscape drawings—the landscapes they wanted to conserve. Natural landscapes were often present in the drawings, which made the mental well-being category by far the most common of the three well-being categories. The students' drawings included various kinds of landscapes with opportunities for sport and exercise, and these activities were often placed amid green or blue areas and clearly expressed the students' physical well-being. Physical well-being existed especially often in winter landscapes in which there was a possibility for winter sports. Regarding built landscapes, the students drew the opportunity for many sports activities, such as playing football or skating, again representing physical well-being.

4.2.1. Specific Features of Landscapes in Relation to Mental, Physical and Social Well-Being by Country

To determine the specific features of landscapes about physical, social and mental well-being, the drawings were also pooled by country. Specific features meant that the specific issues/themes of landscapes about well-being were repeated in the drawings of the students from several grades in a certain country (see Table 3). The issues/themes that are presented are those that can be found in the two countries but not in the third country. There were also small features that either highlighted or lacked a particular issue related to well-being.

Table 3. The specific features of landscapes in the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish students' landscape drawings about well-being.

Well-Being Category	Finland Specific Features; Subcategory; Theme	Norway Specific Features; Subcategory; Theme	Sweden Specific Features; Subcategory; Theme
Mental	saunas, cottages; safe places; buildings	dystopia images in which nature is destroyed, signs for the protection of nature, environmentally friendly cars; natural environments; nature reserves	nature reserve areas, signs for the protection of nature; nature reserve; natural environments
	own room; safe places; personal spaces	forest animals, savannah animals, jungle animals, sea animals; natural environment; wild animals	
	zoological gardens, amusement parks; safe places; travel target	mountains; natural environments, terrestrial green areas	
Physical	cross-country and downhill skiing; vicinity; physical training	fishing; doing things in nature; in a distance place	
Social	snowball battle, downhill skiing together; acting together in nature; winter games		

Most of the specific features drawn by the students that appeared in one or two countries fell into the mental well-being category. Wild animals, including nearby animals (not domestic animals or pets) and exotic wild animals from abroad, were drawn by all nationalities. The Norwegian students, more often than the Finnish and Swedish students, drew an assortment of exotic animals, from lions to elephants, in their drawings. Mental well-being brought about by exotic animals was not repeated as often in the Swedish or Finnish students' drawings as they were in the Norwegian students' drawings.

In the Swedish students' drawings, mental well-being regarding nature conservation was often depicted, which was not so much the case in the Norwegian or Finnish drawings. The Swedish nature conservation drawings often included nature with signs of where to put rubbish—you should not throw it into the environment or that rubbish should be placed in the recycling bin (see Figure 2, the middle drawing). The Norwegians and Finns did not present such environmental awareness in their drawings. The Swedish primary school students felt the need to place more emphasis on environmental protection than the Norwegians or Finns did.

In the Finnish drawings, saunas, cottages and a private room represented safe places, that has a meaning to the drawer and emerged as a specific feature. They represented mental well-being, including a private room for mental well-being, as a special space and saunas and cottages as relevant buildings representing culture. However, a large proportion of cottages were classified as social well-being if they were, for example, a grandparent's cottage, that is to say, something which has meaning for a family's inner circle, or if people were present in the drawing (see Figure 3, right-side drawing: two people discussing in the cottage). This was interpreted as making the landscape worth conserving for the family.



Figure 3. On the left, wild animals represent mental well-being drawn by a Norwegian female student (70NG9C4, on the left); in the middle, a nature reserve represents mental well-being, drawn by a Swedish female student (254SG12C6, conserve nature, do not throw rubbish); on the right, the cottage (often summer cottage) represents the social well-being of a Finnish male student (239FB9C3).

However, in many drawings, the cottage was just part of the landscape, with no people in it and without the written text of its connections to family or friends, in which case, these images were classified as constituting mental well-being. 'My own room', representing personal spaces as part of mental well-being, was displayed in the Finnish drawings but not in the Norwegian or Swedish drawings. 'My own room' was interpreted as a place for a Finnish primary school student where one is safe and allowed to be completely oneself. Images of their own homes, however, were found in all of the nationalities involved in this study. The Finns had more drawings of them playing amid winter landscapes, such as downhill skiing, sledding, having a snow war or making a snowman. The Finnish drawings lacked spirituality in the form of churches and had only a few natural reserves.

The Norwegian primary school students highlighted dystopian landscapes as part of mental well-being, which, to the researchers' understanding, sought to tell which things should not be destroyed. These dystopias were mainly found in the Norwegian students' drawings and were found less abundantly in the drawings of the students from the other countries. Besides the dystopian landscapes, exotic animals and mountain landscapes also emerged as specific features of Norwegians' mental well-being. The Norwegian and Swedish drawings included few travel targets compared with the Finnish ones.

4.2.2. Specific Features of Landscapes about Mental, Physical and Social Well-Being by Grade

In the lower grades, social well-being was mainly related to one's immediate environment, while in the upper grades, spaces larger than one's surroundings were valued (see Figure 3). In the former, the focus of social well-being was on one's own home and yard or other environments familiar and important to the student, while in the latter, other living environments were also valued. This was illustrated by drawings showing, for example, a school environment, social security structures (e.g., hospitals and ambulances) and service structures (e.g., shops and transport-related safety and infrastructure issues).

Animals and plants were common in the drawings of students of all ages; however, in the older age groups, social well-being shifted more widely from animals to other social elements; even in landscapes there were somewhat fewer animals. In grades 5–6, domestic animals (e.g., farmed pigs) were depicted more often than by the younger students. Agriculture as an occupation was more emphasised by the 5th and 6th graders. In the higher grades, animal and plant species were often drawn, and the species were named specifically.

The group of the lower grades 3–4 often drew a pier or a building amid natural landscapes, but the older grade groups 5–6 often drew natural landscapes without human signs. Some of the drawings clearly depicted the landscape surrounding the grandparents' house or its immediate surroundings. Sometimes it was even written on the landscape drawings. The natural landscape drawings of the students in grades 3–4 often depicted a neighbourhood familiar to the child, such as a landscape close to home. Churches and imaginative landscapes that manifested spiritual well-being were more evident in the drawings of the grades 5–6 than in the drawings of the lower grades 3–4.

5. Discussion

In this qualitative phenomenographical study, the prevailing landscapes were water, forest and yard in all three countries: Finland, Norway and Sweden. Mountains were often present in the Norwegian students' landscape drawings and meadows in the Swedish students' drawings. The students also drew themselves playing, gaming and doing sports activities, which meant that they had a relational focus on the environment, and the drawn landscape was not only an object for them [55,62]. Animals fostering well-being were common in the students' landscapes, which typically represented wild and often exotic animals, especially in the Norwegian students' drawings. Both of these results are in line with earlier studies about students of the same age in Nordic countries [43,63]. The current study's results differ from those of Yli-Panula and others [55], in which Gambian and Kenyan students drew only a few animals; the Gambian students depicted domestic animals and the Kenyan students depicted wild animals.

In the current study, mental well-being was emphasised in drawings of natural landscapes. Natural landscapes with the most recurring themes were those involving a sunrise or sunset, forest, beach or mountain landscape. Studies have found a link between green and blue areas and well-being in older populations [8]. The current study supports this finding. However, the results cannot be generalised globally because only Scandinavian students participated in our study and no other studies on the connection of green spaces to children's mental well-being have been published [64].

Physical well-being appeared in the natural landscape drawings, including the possibility of jogging and walking. A study found that exercising in a green area affected children's physical and mental well-being [65]. Exercising in a green area also seemed to produce well-being, according to the drawings in the current study. Social well-being was also highlighted in the data with the presence of humans (e.g., with images of friends, relatives and animals), which is in line with previous research because animals brought well-being to people [30,66] and especially to children [67].

In the current study, winter landscapes were strongly emphasised as a typical factor that influences students' well-being. According to Meagher [68], any given behaviour

depends on the supporting structure of the physical environment. In the study, snowy landscapes were connected to the students' physical and social well-being (e.g., via sport activities) in the Nordic students' drawings; however, no actual nature landscapes in winter representing mental well-being were among the drawings. In addition to green and blue areas, white areas could also be introduced to the field of well-being and landscape studies. Therefore, the impact of winter landscapes on children's well-being should be studied in more detail and the link between snowy landscapes and children's well-being could be an interesting research topic in future.

Abraham and others' [14] speculation that beautiful landscapes are the main source of physical well-being is supported in the current study only regarding winter landscapes. The commonly drawn landscapes involving a sunrise or sunset refer to the issue that the primary school students appreciated beautiful natural landscapes, supporting their mental well-being.

No major differences or clear distinctive features were found between the drawings of Finns, Norwegians and Swedes. This made it interesting and attractive to study the sparse findings of a few specific features. The Norwegians had dystopian images, mountain landscapes and exotic animals as a specific feature of mental well-being. The existence of national landscapes [43] and animals and their proper ecosystems have been shown to exist in children's drawings [55,63,69]. The Finnish students emphasised social and mental well-being through their drawings of summer cottages, and the Swedes drew pictures of nature conservation. These drawings often reflected typical national landscapes or environments, but they could also have represented issues based on school curricula.

Dystopia, utopia and fantasy appeared in the drawings mainly of the 5th and 6th graders. A perception in the drawings broader than just one's living environment, and an appreciation of this broader living environment, referred to a wider understanding of social well-being than just one's own family. The current result is in line with the results in an earlier study [53]. The younger age groups describe more concrete landscapes that are close to them, and as age increases, the artistry and detail of landscape drawings increase. Physical well-being existed, especially often in winter landscapes where there was the possibility of winter sports. Based on this, one could talk not only about green and blue areas but also about white areas.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the research design and implementation were negotiated in an agreement between the researchers throughout the research process. The study procedures were carefully documented to review and revise the data throughout this study. The context and implementation of this study are explained in detail. The results were interpreted and described based on the students' drawings and by using their explanations of the drawings. Additionally, the results were compared with previous studies [61].

6. Conclusions and Implications

Therapeutic landscape research suggests that outdoor spaces can support people's well-being. In teaching and learning situations, students' well-being can also be promoted by using outdoor education. Outdoor education is a didactic approach that utilises authentic learning environments and combines a subject of academic study with its real-world surroundings, actors and activities for fostering sustainable development conceptions and actions of students. It involves regular activities outside the classroom, giving individuals the chance to use all their senses and create personal experiences in the real world [70].

Direct contact with nature is important because it provides physical and psychological benefits. It affects, for example, young people's motor skills [71] and has a positive effect on their happiness and well-being [72]. It may increase their emotional affinity for nature [73] and promote understanding of their connection to and impact on the environment [74]. It positively affects their mental, emotional and social health outcomes, such as their sense of achievement, self-confidence and self-esteem [75]. It supports adaptation to different learning styles, skills in caring and nurturing, connectedness to others, feelings of freedom and

creativity and feelings of stress relief and engagement in school [76]. Wistoft [77] reported possible benefits for some aspects of young people's learning motivation. Additionally, direct contact with nature may affect children's and adults' behaviours, having the most critical influence on later attitudes towards the environment.

Outdoor education is no longer seen as being just about field studies or adventures or as the remit solely of geography or biology teachers. The possible locations of outdoor learning include school grounds, woodlands, coastal areas, gardens, parks, urban spaces and farms, etc. In this context, outdoor education can be a teaching approach for all teachers as a way of enhancing and integrating a wide range of topics and activities across the entire curriculum, thereby potentially connecting students with their environment, their community, their society and themselves. Thus, outdoor education can also be seen as a part of education for sustainable development, including environmental issues, environmental conservation and issues of sustainability of nature. To conclude, the approach of teaching holistically, respecting emotional well-being, in addition to physical and social well-being, in outdoor education, is a good approach for generally supporting students' well-being.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Criteria for the categories of well-being and the number of drawings in each subcategory by the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish students. In the landscapes, the students want to conserve.

Main Category	Subcategory	Typical Theme	Examples Found Int the Drawings (<i>n</i> = 538)
mental	safe space	buildings	home (17), own summer cottage (10), sauna (1), when without human beings
		personal spaces	own room (2), hammock (1), clothesline (1), wooden shelter (1)
		travel target	Statue of Liberty (1), safe architecture (3), zoological gardens (4), amusement park (3)
natural environments	aquatic (blue) areas		sea (35), lake (12), river (16), waterfalls (6), cloud (1)
		terrestrial (green) areas	forest (51), mountains (30), shore (13), meadow (16)
		sun rise or sun set	sun rise or sun set (33)
	wild animals		forest animals (30), savannah animals (8), jungle animals (6), sea animals (5)
		nature conservation environments	dystopia images in which nature is destroyed (8), signs for the protection of nature (3), environmentally friendly cars (2), universe (1)
	Reading		in hammock (1)
	Spirituality	churches	church or its surrounding (7)
imaginative landscapes	fantasy	flying cars (7), flying animals (2), mermaid (3)	
	utopias	futuristic or abstract constructions (5)	
physical	doing things in nature	in neighbouring forest	forest games (1), promenade (2), berry and fruit picking (2)
		in a distance place	hiking and camping (5), fishing (2)
	doing things in urban areas	types of sports activities	football (2), skateboarding (1), swinging (4)
	vicinity (natural or urban)	physical training	horse riding (3), golf (1), beach with swimming equipment (6), winter sport (cross-country and downhill skiing) (10), jogging path (2)
social	acting together in nature	winter games	throwing snowballs (1) and downhill skiing together (3)
		summer games	get-together (11)
	companion animals	domestic animals and pets	cats (4), dogs (7), horses (3)
	socially constructed "own" culture	nationality	national flag (3), old culture (1), Christmas (2)
	socially connected buildings	home with a taste of other people	car in the yard (4), family and friends (8), camper van (1), argument (1), (4)
		school with friends	(4)
		housing and cottages of relatives	granny's house (13), godmother (1)
		familiar buildings in the city, conurbation	convenience store in neighbourhood (3), neighbouring block (61), infrastructure (7), source of livelihood (11)

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