Värmland (Re)imagined. Place Based Education in Literature and History for a Sustainable Future

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This paper presents a project aiming at enhancing students' knowledge and understanding of the interaction between humans and place through the use of regional fiction, exploring how it can become a resource for addressing sustainability issues, and developing students' action competence in these matters. The study is conducted in the subjects of Swedish and History at upper secondary school, and is inspired by place-based education, which involves interdisciplinary teaching with the goal of engaging students with their local environment.

Studying society's relationship to ecological conditions is mostly seen as a domain for the natural sciences, while the potential of the humanities to equip students to face the challenges of climate change and the environmental crisis is rarely in focus. We argue, however, that the humanities have a crucial role in this context, offering opportunities to develop critical thinking and the ability to analyse new situations.

The study uses the literature, places, and history of the Värmland region as examples. Upper secondary schools in three towns with varying economic structures and narrative traditions are participating. In a practice-oriented intervention study, research circles are conducted in which teachers and researchers collaborate to develop a place-based teaching design, which is then tested in the classroom. The research circle is an established form of professional development, where teachers and researchers contribute different but equally important competencies. The research circle consists of three parts with different focuses. Initially, both subject-didactic and literary texts are read and discussed. The implementation is jointly analysed by teachers and researchers, and based on these analyses, the didactic model is constructed.

We will discuss how teaching can support scenario thinking, where fiction serves as a vital resource that encourages students to explore alternative paths. Scenario thinking should be seen as a prerequisite for students' action competence, often described as essential for promoting development toward competent action in sustainability issues. The historical perspective can support students' ability to envision and connect with potential futures, while fiction can affect not only how we conceive and feel about the real world but also how we act in it.