Expanding the Home Economics classroom: new opportunities with outdoor cooking?

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Very little attention has been directed at the didactic Where-question. A field work was carried out that explored the possibilities with outdoor cooking as a way to expand the traditional HE-classroom and highlight the didactic Where-question. By examining HE-education in an untraditional setting it was possible to examine the meaning of Where for teaching and learning.

Introduction
A Home Economics (HE) teacher spend a lot of their time in the HE-classroom, and the two first curriculums for the mandatory nine year school in Sweden included guidelines for the HE-classroom. Today there are no guidelines, although the regulation (1) states that facilities and equipment needed to meet the aims of the education should be present. According to Benn (2) the HE-classroom is a very specific place that has influenced how the subject is experienced and a study (3) explored how this classroom can be understood as both a physical and social space. There is a concern that teaching and learning has become decontextualized, meaning that the activities included in education has little or no relation to ‘real life’ (4).

Methods
A fieldwork was carried out three days in October 2017 in a south-Sweden forest. During those days, all students in grade 8 and 9 from a nearby school had one day outdoor HE-education each. Field notes were taken as well as photographs and videoclips. A follow-up interview was held a few weeks after the fieldwork with one of the HE-teachers.

Results
• The project demanded a lot of preparation by the teacher
• Some students who participate to a low degree in the regular classroom stepped up and showed their skills
• Some students who participate to a high degree in the regular classroom seemed lost
• Some gender roles were more visible
• Students solved tasks in a creative way
• Traditional roles taken by teacher and students in the regular classroom were somewhat dissolved
• Zones regularly established in the regular classroom were non-existent

Outdoor cooking in HE has the possibility to:
• offer students real-life experiences
• make what is taken for granted visible and thus possible to discuss
• promote communication & collaboration

References