Chapter 1 Searching for Worlds Worth Living in



Mervi Kaukko, Sally Windsor, and Kristin Reimer

Abstract The idea of living well, the 'good' life, and the type of world that allows all lifeforms to thrive is not new. Its outlines are visible in many Indigenous knowledges. In the Western tradition, its roots stretch back beyond Aristotle in ancient Greece. This chapter presents the book at hand as a listening project. Through the 13 chapters of the book, we invite the reader to pause, ponder, identify and interpret what 'living well' or a 'world worth living in' means in different contexts and for different groups of people, and how the meaning changes depending on where one stands. Hearing from knowledge holders standing in different positions in the world, our knowledge gets richer. As we listen deeply to all the chapters of the book, we can hear clearly the language of criticism: how educational practices are currently stopping us from living well; and how educational practices are creating a world of inequity and unmet needs. But we can also hear the language of hope: how education is helping us to live well and to live well together—both today and in the future; and how education is supporting us, together, to create a world, day by day and practice by practice, that is worth living in for all.

Keywords World worth living in · Deep listening · Praxis

M. Kaukko (🖂)

S. Windsor University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden e-mail: sally.windsor@gu.se

K. Reimer Monash University, Clayton, Australia e-mail: kristin.reimer@monash.edu

Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland e-mail: mervi.kaukko@tuni.fi

Searching for Worlds Worth Living in

'Super Visor', my 7-year-old said, repeating a word he'd heard me use in conversation, but separating it into its two parts. 'What's that even mean?'

I love when his mind catches a word and tosses it back to me. Words that I use unthinkingly, often as shorthand, get placed in front of me to consider and explain. My son slows my speech down so that we can, at least momentarily, examine a word's meaning and be present to its use in context.

Supervisor. Meaning above (super) and to see or observe (visor): to observe from above.

Not necessarily the superhero superpowers that my son was imagining, and yet power is indeed inherent in the definition. By pausing to consider the meaning of a word I use daily in my academic work context, I'm confronted anew with its intentions and implications. (Kristin)

Words and phrases that we use often—as powerful as they may be in the first hearing—can quickly lose some of their intensity, their impact and their meaning through repetition. As Williams (1976) pointed out, pausing to consider keywords and phrases helps to reveal complex historical, cultural and social interrelationships and tensions. For a word or phrase to maintain or grow into its rich meaning, we need two things: (1) for people new to the word or phrase to stop, ponder on it and ask what it really means, and (2) for people familiar with the word or phrase to intentionally pause and ask, what does it mean now, in this time and in this context?

This book is an attempt at pausing, pondering, identifying contexts and interpreting Stephen Kemmis' phrase that education's purpose is 'to help people live well in a world worth living in for all' (see, for example, Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 25). Kemmis refers to education as having a double purpose: it should help individuals to live well, and it should contribute to making the world a better place, and one that all people find worth living in.

The idea of living well, the 'good' life, and the type of world that allows all human and non-human lifeforms to thrive is not new, of course. Many nations and cultures express similar concepts in their own language. In Australian Indigenous knowledge, it is articulated in the Wiradjuri term *Yindyamarra Winhanganha*, which has been translated as 'the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in' (Charles Sturt University, 2021). We are grateful to have received permission from Wiradjuri Elder Uncle Stan Grant Senior to share this term. The Wiradjuri have inhabited the country in what is today called New South Wales, Australia for at least 60,000 years, and although we can't accurately date the concept and term Yindyamarra Winhanganha we can assume that it has been a part of Wiradjuri consciousness for many millennia. On the opposite side of the globe, the Northern Sámi term *árbediehtu*, 'the collective wisdom and skills of the Sámi people' outlines the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. It, too, connects a vision of how each person should live with a vision of how all creatures can thrive together.

Two millennia ago, in ancient Greece, Aristotle also pondered upon the purpose of life in his question 'How should we live?' to which he believed there was a simple answer—'to seek happiness' or *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* is a Greek word which is not exactly happiness as a feeling of enjoyment as we think of it today, but perhaps better translated as 'flourishing' (Warburton, 2011). Neo-Aristotelian philosopher MacIntyre (1981, p. 204), in turn, says:

... the good life for [humankind] is the life spent in seeking the good life for [humankind], and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for [humankind] is.

Following MacIntyre's view of the good life for humankind, perhaps we could say a world worth living in is a world in which people can spend time seeking a world worth living in, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else a world worth living in is.

But how does a person educate others in ways that will 'help people live well in a world worth living in for all?' This is a question that instantly resonates with people, and captures the essence of much of the work of the Pedagogy, Education and Praxis (PEP) international research network. In fact, it captures what the PEP network was established to do in 2006: to bring together educational researchers from across different intellectual and educational traditions, different languages and different geographical locations to understand what 'good' education means and how it could be implemented (e.g. Kemmis & Smith, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014; Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Mahon et al., 2020). Like so many concepts in education and philosophy, the phrase—to live well in a world worth living in for all—is open to interpretation. At a PEP meeting in 2019, a few newcomers voiced this into a question: 'What does the phrase actually mean—on the ground, to real people, in diverse locations, and diverse situations?'.

We took this question as an opportunity to intentionally pause and interrogate the meaning of the phrase—now, in this time, in our various contexts. The phrase itself was never meant to become taken for granted. Instead, Kemmis et al. asserted in 2014 that 'what counts as the good life for humankind, individually and collectively, must always be determined anew for changing times and circumstances. Similarly, what is good for any person or group to do at any particular historical moment is always a matter for practical deliberation' (p. 27).

Bringing together a range of diverse voices from across different geographical locations, PEP researchers and our colleagues explore the critical question for our era: 'What, for our times, does it mean to live well in a world worth living in for all?' Asking the question—*aloud* and *with* and *to* others—is an act of mobilisation. Moving the question out of our heads and into the world catalyses new ways of thinking, acting and being—with one another and with/in the world. The act of asking the question is an act of living well, as MacIntyre (1981) might say. It is also an act that invites a response and requires those of us asking to be fully present in that response. And, while we must keep deliberating about what counts as a good life, we must keep in mind that our deliberations are happening in a time of nested eco-crises (Kaukko et al., 2021) and supercomplexity (Barnett, 2015). In this book, PEP researchers and our colleagues hear from those that are committed to the dual

purpose of education, that is, 'a common good for the benefit of people, nonhuman beings, our environment and shared life conditions' (Pedersen et al., 2021, p. 2).

A Listening Project

Deep listening requires the full presence of the listener. To really listen one must engage with curiosity and 'an openness toward the unforeseeable in-coming (*l'invention*; invention) of the other' (Miedema & Biesta, 2004, p. 24, italics in original). Waks (2010) discusses 'apophatic listening' which he contrasts to 'cataphatic listening'. Cataphatic listening has the listener reducing what they hear to fit set categories in their mind. Apophatic listening involves intentionally laying aside categories and entering into a conversation with no predetermined end in mind.

When engaging without an end in mind, listening is generative and understanding grows and changes. Bohm (2004) suggests that to listen deeply, people must attend to one another sensitively, not only to find what is in common but also to be able to understand differences more fully. He calls for people in dialogue to suspend assumptions, to literally imagine assumptions 'suspended in front of you' so as to more clearly view them. It is only through listening to our differences with sensitivity that Bohm (2004) believes it is possible to co-create something new.

The PEP network has been involved in listening sensitively to the differences across educational theory and practice traditions since its establishment. The network engages in a 'conversation of traditions' in order to appreciate those differences more fully and 'as a means of interrogating the origins and formations of our own understandings, presuppositions, and traditions' (Kaukko et al., 2020, p. 3). This book, in its entirety, can be viewed as a listening project, where we ask the question and then listen sensitively to our commonalities and our differences. All the chapters in the book involve the authors listening deeply to the people they work with, listening with curiosity to better understand and to develop our ideas about the depth and breadth of life worth living. We suspend in front of us what we believe and what others believe about what it means to live well and what a world worth living in looks like, to see them all more clearly. Taken as a whole, we then can co-create something new: a new way to see, think and act.

Listening as an Educative Practice

Education is a thread that weaves its way through all the chapters in the book. Most of the authors work in the field of education, as researchers, teachers or other educational professionals. The educative listening practices that the authors of each chapter have engaged in show them as '*being attuned to and engaging with*' (English, 2009, p. 73 italics in original) people in different contexts. As you will see, this book is by no means a passive listening project. Each chapter in its own unique way is educative in the sense that it is 'intended or serving to educate or enlighten' (Lexico, 2021) about

living well in a world worth living in for all. As Susan Groundwater-Smith (Chap. 3) explains in her chapter, educative practice is 'formed, re-formed and transformed ... through the processes of participative inquiry.... [and] is made possible by the various arrangements inherent in the sites within which educative practices occur'.

Based on the deep listening we have done, as editors, reading through the texts, we think many of the writers express versions of the concept of *Bildung*. Bildung is arguably one of the most complex terms describing educational processes and practices (Taylor, 2020) and impossible to simply translate into English (Biesta, 2002) or many other languages. It is also hard to define, but Pauli Siljander sees it as

... the historical development process of both individuals and societies in which people systematically strive towards developing themselves and their sociocultural environment into something 'more humane', 'more enhanced' and 'more developed' (Siljander, 2007, p. 71)

In line with this definition, we see Bildung as a process in which an individual acquires the needed skills and knowledge for individual growth and character formation (on an individual level) while also learning to be an active and critical member of their community (the social level) to open up new possibilities for individual and shared lives. The self-formation and transformation of individuals living together foster the development of communities that are able to critically address crucial social and other concerns (Kaukko et al., 2020; Taylor, 2020). So, character formation does not refer only to a person's inner cultivation, that is, their capacity for living well, but their reflective and critical self-refinement is also linked to broader hopes for a better society—or as we say, a world worth living in for all (see also Strand, 2020). Importantly, Bildung is a concept that is not limited to formal schooling. In fact, we enjoy Ellen Key's expression from over a century ago: 'Bildung is what is left when we have forgotten what we have learned' (quoted in Gustavsson, 2013, p. 38) in formal education. As you will see in this book, people learn to live well and learn what a world worth living in might be all the time and in all places by continuing to engage in educative and self-educative practices.

The chapters that follow consider the double purpose of education from their specific points of view. Each of them brings a different group of people into the spotlight, and all these groups have experiences that are shaped by their unique circumstances. Many, but certainly not all chapters in the book, use the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008); so, it is a theory that you, the reader, will become familiar with. Many that use theories of practice do so in dialogue with one or more other theories, such as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in Chap. 8; transformative activist stance (Stetsenko, 2020) in Chap. 11; temporarily embedded agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) in Chap. 9; relational well-being (White, 2017) in Chap. 10; and Steiner epistemology (Steiner, 1964) in Chap. 5. This variety is important to us as it speaks to both the flexibility and inclusiveness of the PEP network and the educational theories that can be used to think about a well-lived life in a world worth living in.

Chapters of the Book

Following this introduction, the chapter by Stephen Kemmis lays the groundwork for the book by introducing the theory of practice architectures and touching on the history and the rationale of the double purpose of education. The chapter reminds us that two purposes of education must be considered both separately and in conversation: education is not only about forming good people who will then, individually, ensure society is good but also about forming society at the same time (see also Biesta, 2002). One's idea of what a good life for each person depends on one's view of a good society; and, at the same time, one's idea of what a good life for each person. Kemmis argues that education fosters:

- individual and collective self-expression that not only forms people who can reason well but also helps to form cultures based on reason;
- individual and collective self-development that not only forms people who can do things well but also helps to form productive and sustainable economies and environments; and
- the development of individual and collective self-determination that not only forms people who act justly and fairly but also helps to form just and democratic societies.

The next two chapters consider 'voice' in educational contexts. Susan Groundwater-Smith, in Chap. 3, emphasises the importance of including the voices of all involved in educational research. Attentive listening to those who participate in schooling in Australia, not only students but also teachers, is needed to understand how 'educative practices' can and should take place. The chapter offers a critical reading of Hart's (1992) 'ladder of participation' and how teachers and learners can unite to inform just and equitable pedagogical and curriculum processes—to make visible the otherwise unsayable.

Chapter 4 by Gunilla Karlberg-Granlund takes the reader to a completely different school context of small rural schools in Finland's Swedish-speaking region. The chapter explores the pedagogy of such schools with a metaphor of a candle. In this candle, the heart represents the connection that links the pupils' home cultures and their optimal development with the support of the village school, whereas the candle holder represents the teacher and her educational aims. The chapter argues that small rural schools can offer their students unique experiences of freedom, safety and proximity while also helping to maintain rural culture and continuity in areas that are at risk of being deserted. In Chap. 5, Virginia Moller's focus is on how Steiner schools in Australia develop people who act with agency in an ever-evolving future. Moller explores the dialogue between Steiner epistemologies and the theory of practice architectures and argues that Steiner pedagogical values of love, life, wisdom and voice are truly a call to action for all who aspire to educate children and offer hope for a revitalisation of what matters in education.

The next two chapters draw on the voices of Australian Aboriginal people, children, youth and educational leaders. Christine Edwards-Groves's Chap. 6 explores the voices of young Aboriginal Australian males, at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, as portraved through creative media—poetry and photography. By creating practice architectures for a rich process of joint meaning-making, these methods enabled the participating young men to locate, negotiate and mediate their Aboriginal identity in intersectional, intergenerational and intercultural ways. The beautiful poems and photos reveal a world worth living in as seen by the artist behind them, that is, the Aboriginal youth in Edwards-Groves's study. In this world, living well comes with self-worth, self-awareness, personal identity and agency. In Chap. 7, Catherine Burgess, Christine Grice, and Julian Wood argue that to shape a society that enables all Australians to live well, Aboriginal knowledges, as expressed through Aboriginal voices, should be central. The focus of the chapter is on educational leadership but the message is universal: including Aboriginal-informed knowledges in policy and practice is a needed, yet radical shift. Through the lens of the theory of practice architectures, Burgess and colleagues propose that educational leadership practices founded on deep listening, reciprocity and respect, and those that are critical of Western leadership practices, are key to organising education so that it fosters a world worth living in for all.

In Chap. 8, Sally Windsor and Amoni Kitooke write about a community of new researchers from 14 countries who came to Sweden to study for a degree in educational research, but whose studying practices changed rapidly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group engaged in a project exploring the question of *What does it mean to live well in a world worth living in?* and found that it consists of political engagement; connection and basic needs; social stratification and access; living slow and in 'flow'. Overarching for all these themes was the role of education, and the importance of connection and equality in/through it.

In Chap. 9, Sally Morgan listens to how young asylum seekers in Australia engage in a dialogue with the author, a participant-researcher working with them, and how this talk is a form of agentic narrative practice. Although asylum policies bring multiple barriers to the lives of the participants in Morgan's study, the chapter sheds light on their narrative agency as a practice. The young asylum seekers have the capacity to imagine a world worth living in, meaning that they creatively reconfigure and make judgments of their situation and talk in ways that run counter to government discourse. Narrative agency is a relational rather than solitary practice, and it links with the participants' past, present, and imagined future. Likewise, Chap. 10, by Nick Haswell, Mervi Kaukko, Marte Knag Fylkesnes and Paul Sullivan, draws on empirical research with young people who were once asylum seekers but are now young, settled refugees in Finland, Norway and Scotland, The focus of their chapter is on the relational well-being of the young refugees, and how it requires three types of relational movement: movement with, for the sake of, and in relation to other people in their lives. The destination of this movement is not static, but a state of living well together in a changing world.

Nick Hopwood wrote Chap. 11 together with 7-year-old Australian Henry Gowans, his mother Jessica Gowans, an artist Kate Disher-Quill and a clinician Chris Elliot. The chapter focuses on Henry, a child with a metabolic disease who requires tube feeding. The text brings Henry's words into dialogue with images, art and one of Henry's original recipes to discuss what living well in a world worth living in means for a child in Henry's position. As for most children, perhaps, living well for Henry is about being joyful and accepted and having a chance to realise himself now and in the future. The deficit that has to do with his feeding does not lie in Henry as an individual, but in society and in its exclusionary arrangements. Finally, Tomi Kiilakoski and Mikko Piispa's Chap. 12 listens to young people in Finland who are worried about the state of the world and the ecological crisis we are facing. The chapter paints 'everyday utopias' of democracy-a political system that could preserve a planet that can sustain decently and eco-socially just conditions for all, arguing that while democracy is the best and most effective platform to approach the eco-crisis in a just manner, it needs to become less hierarchical and more bottom-up in order to work.

Utopia—The Language of Criticism and Hope

Taken together, the twelve chapters show that living well and a world worth living in look different depending on where one stands. When the viewer moves, their worldview changes. Hearing from knowledge holders standing in different positions in the world, our knowledge gets richer. They all envision their own version of utopia, which, according to Kiilakoski and Piispa, requires both a language of hope and a language of criticism.

This book, as a listening project, allows us to listen in to diverse understandings of what it means to live well and what makes a world worth living in. As we listen deeply to all the chapters of the book, we can hear clearly the language of criticism: how educational practices are currently stopping us from living well; how educational practices are creating a world of inequity and unmet needs.

But we can also hear the language of hope: how education is helping us to live well and to live well together—both today and in the future; how education is supporting us, together, to create a world, day by day and practice by practice, that is worth living in for all.

May we continue to listen deeply, and act thoughtfully, to live as well as we can and to continue our attempts to make the world more worth living in, for all, every day. Please visit https://www.monash.edu/education/wwli to access more information, videos, podcast and join the conversation.

References

- Barnett, R. (2015). *Thinking and rethinking the university—The selected works of Ronald Barnett*. Routledge.
- Bohm, D. (2004). On dialogue. Routledge Classics.
- Biesta, G. (2002). *Bildung* and modernity: The future of *Bildung* in a world of difference. *Studies* in *Philosophy and Education*, 21, 343–351. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1019874106870
- Charles Sturt University. (2021). Our ethos. https://about.csu.edu.au/our-university/ethos.
- Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), 962–1023.
- English, A. (2009). Listening as a teacher: Educative listening, interruptions and reflective practice. *Paideusis*, *18*(1), 69–79.
- Gustavsson, B. (2013). The idea of democratic 'bildung': Its transformation in space and time. *Popular education, power and democracy*, 35–49.
- Hart, R. (1992). *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*. United Nations Children's Fund International Child Development Centre.
- Kaukko, M., Francisco, S., & Mahon, K. (2020). Education for a world worth living in. In K. Mahon, C. Edwards-Groves, S. Francisco, M. Kaukko, S. Kemmis, & K. Petrie (Eds.), *Pedagogy, education and praxis in critical times* (pp. 1–13). Springer.
- Kaukko, M., Kemmis, S., Heikkinen, H. L. T., Kiilakoski, T., & Haswell, N. (2021). Learning to survive amidst nested crises: Can the coronavirus pandemic help us change educational practices to prepare for the impending eco-crisis? *Environmental Education Research*, 27(11), 1559–1579.
- Kemmis, S. & Edwards-Groves, C. (Eds.). (2018). Understanding education: History, politics, practice. Springer.
- Kemmis, S., & Grootenboer, P. (2008). Situating praxis in practice: Practice architectures and the cultural, social and material conditions for practice. In S. Kemmis, & T.J. Smith (Eds.), *Enabling praxis: Challenges for education* (pp. 37–62). Sense.
- Kemmis, S. & Smith, T.J. (Eds.). (2008). Enabling praxis: Challenges for education. Sense.
- Kemmis, S., Wilkinson, J., Hardy, I., Grootenboer, P., & Bristol, L. (2014). *Changing practices*. Springer.
- Lexico. (2021). *Educative definition*. Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary. Found at https://www.lexico.com/definition/educative.
- MacIntyre, A. (1981). After virtue: A study in moral theory. Duckworth.
- Mahon, K., Edwards-Groves, C., Francisco, S., Kaukko, M., Kemmis, S., & Petrie, K. (2020), *Pedagogy, education and praxis in critical times.* Springer.
- Miedema, S., & Biesta, G. J. (2004). Jacques Derrida's religion with/out religion and the im/possibility of religious education. *Religious Education*, 99(1), 23–37.
- Pedersen, H., Windsor, S., Knutsson, B., Sanders, D., Wals, A., & Franck, O. (2021). Education for sustainable development in the 'Capitalocene'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1–4. https:// doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2021.1987880.
- Siljander, P. (2007). Education and 'bildung' in modern society—Developmental needs of Finnish educational and sociocultural processes. In R. Jakku-Sikvonen & H. Niemi (Eds.), *Education as a social contribution: Reflections by Finnish educationalists.* Peter Lang.
- Steiner, R. (1964). *The philosophy of freedom: The basis for a modern world conception* (M. Wilson, Trans.). Rudolf Steiner Press. Original work published in 1894.
- Stetsenko, A. (2020). Hope, political imagination, and agency in Marxism and beyond: Explicating the transformative worldview and ethico-ontoepistemology. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52(7), 726–737.

Strand, T. (Ed.). (2020). Rethinking ethical-political education. Springer.

- Taylor, C. (2020). Reconceptualising the subject-citizen of Bildung in a posthuman world: Rethinking the promise of higher education. In T. Strand (Ed.), *Rethinking ethical-political education* (pp. 209–222). Springer.
- Waks, L. J. (2010). Two types of interpersonal listening. *Teachers College Record*, 112(11), 2743– 2762.
- Warburton, N. (2011). A little history of philosophy. Yale University Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity. *Cambridge University Press*. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803932
- White, S. (2017). Relational wellbeing: Re-centring the politics of happiness, policy and the self. *Policy and Politics*, 45(2), 121–136. https://doi.org/10.1332/030557317X14866576265970
- Williams, R. (1976). Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society. Oxford University Press.

Mervi Kaukko works as Associate Professor (Multicultural Education) in Tampere University, Finland, and is an adjunct research fellow at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia and a docent (Migration Studies and Global Education) in Oulu University, Finland. Mervi's research is mostly framed within practice theories, focusing on refugee studies and global education. At the moment, Mervi's Finnish–Australian research study investigates refugee students' day-to-day educational practices. Mervi is also involved in an international research project focusing on young refugees' relational wellbeing, and a longitudinal study exploring asylum seeking students' experiences in higher education in Australia.

Sally Windsor is an Associate Professor in Sustainability and International Education at the Department of Pedagogical, Curricular and Professional Studies, University of Gothenburg. Currently Sally teaches courses in Education for Sustainable Development, International and Comparative Education and educational research methods. Sally's research interests include inequality and the unequal provision of school education, sustainability education in schools, social sustainability, preservice and beginning teacher experiences, in-school mentoring, and the implications of globalisation on school education.

Kristin Reimer is a Senior Lecturer in Monash University's School of Education, Culture and Society, working to advance the idea of education as a humanising practice. Restorative Justice Education (RJE), the main focus of Kristin's work, is one such humanising approach in schools that helps educators build strong relationships in schools and create healthy learning environments. Beyond RJE, other threads of Kristin's research and practice reinforce education as a connective endeavour: alternative education for justice-involved youth; access to higher education for non-traditional students; experiences of refugee and asylum-seeking university students; global citizenship education; and intergenerational teaching relationships.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

