"Give it a chance, let nature be as it is, and you be as you are within nature"

Exploring experiences and meanings of relations to outdoor natural places in the recovery process for persons with problem substance use

Maria Fagerberg

"*Give it a chance, let nature be as it is, and you be as you are within nature*" Exploring experiences and meanings of relations to outdoor natural places in the recovery process for persons with problem substance use

"Ge det en chans, låt naturen vara som den är, och du som du är i naturen". Utforskande av upplevelser och betydelse av relationer till naturliga utomhusmiljöer i återhämtningsprocesser från skadligt bruk och beroende.

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Abstract

Within the field of social work there is a growing body of knowledge concerning the importance of holding a holistic perspective, integrating the natural environment and the human – environment interplay within practice. Several theories and perspectives from the field of environmental psychology may provide social work practice and research with a clearer rational of the importance of integrating human- environment interplay as an important aspect of concern for the field. This study aims at exploring the possible connections between social work and environmental psychology through the relations, experiences and meanings the outdoor environment, particularly nature, may have within the process of recovery related to Problem Substance Use (PSU). Through an interpretative phenomenological perspective and a pluralistic qualitative methodological approach, a two-set step of semi-structured interviews, both indoors and as go-along interviews outdoors, have been performed with participants holding experiences of being within recovery related to PSU and/ or from working within the field. Selected theories from the field of environmental psychology are being merged into a theoretical base, such as slow and fast processes of sensing a place, interactional processes of place attachment and mechanisms of interplay between recovery and place, to support the research process and discussion of the results. This study explores understandings of the human-environment interplay within recovery, and the results point at that an outdoor environment that are perceived as safe and accessible may support and bring meaning to the process of recovery in multiple ways. For example, by providing space for physical, existential and emotional movement that may support new understandings and sense of self as well as support the creation of new routines and structures. Additionally, an increased sensory awareness that may alter perception of present time and support an increased sensibility towards needs and emotions. The study aligns with a large field of research regarding how the outdoor environment may support restoration and recovery from stress but adds on by exploring personal experiences of relations to the outdoor environment during processes of recovery related to problem substance use.

Keywords: Recovery, problem substance use, environmental psychology, social work, outdoor environments, interpretative phenomenological analysis, go-along interviews, favourite places, sense of place, interplay between recovery and place.

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Abbreviations

ART   Attention restoration theory

PSD   Perceived sensory dimensions

PSU   Problem substance use

SRT   Stress reduction theory

SUD   Substance use disorder

IPA   Interpretative phenomenological analysis

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1. Introduction

1.1 Possible connections between social work and environmental psychology?

This study takes a starting point in the existing knowledge, experience and research within the fields of environmental psychology and social work. The study aims to explore possible connections between the different fields by addressing the importance to bring awareness of how we as humans affect and get affected by all parts of the environment. In this study focus lays on the experiences of relations to favourite places in the outdoor environment, especially natural environment, for persons with experience of recovery from PSU (Problem Substance Use) and on professional experience of how the outdoor environment may matter within the process of recovery.

Research within social work have in the last decade problematized the lack of connection between the natural environment, climate change, sustainability and social work practice, theory and education (Dominelli 2012; McKinnon & Alston 2016). Researchers stress the importance of nature-based interventions within social work practice, together with a biopsychosocial approach, and different theoretical perspectives of an integrative understanding of the relations and interplay between people and the natural environment as well as of environmental justice (Slattery et al. 2023; Dominelli 2012; McKinnon & Alston 2016).

Within my work as a social worker in the past 16 years, experience of nature connectedness and visiting different favourite outdoor places have often been a topic mentioned by adults within treatment from PSU or by children within my work as a school counsellor, from different perspectives. Sometimes concerning personal and subjective emotions and memories of different places in nature and sometimes concerning a structural level of environmental and economical sustainability and personal relations to climate change or migration affected by the same. Sometimes these questions concerning relations to nature have become an individual focus in that specific process and relation but seldomly a part of the ordinary intervention or counselling on an organisational and structural level. This experience drove me to further focus on how social work practice could do more systematic assessments of the relations to natural environment in one's surroundings, specific nature-based interventions or gain understandings of how structural processes of disparities in access to natural environments and green spaces may affect health and well-being.

Despite existing knowledge of the physical, psychological, social and emotional health-benefits of being in nature on an individual, community and societal levels there is still a big gap of use of this knowledge in the actual every-day practice and interventions within social work (Boetto 2016).

1.2 Eco-social work, green social work and environmental social work

Within social work practice, education and research focus on the psychosocial environment and an ecological system theoretical approach, the person-in-environment, is at the core of the field (Grey & Webb 2013). Encountering complex inequalities, social problems and injustices on individual, community and societal levels (Grey & Web 2013; Boetto 2019).

Within the field of social work, a field called green social work, eco-social work or environmental social work is growing. Heather Boetto (2019) argues for a reconceptualization of the philosophical base of social work research and practice, from the human-centred and modernist ontological and epistemological world view to a holistic and integrative understanding of planetary health, nature and human well-being. This philosophical transformation would change social work practice in its core through critical reflexivity of the interconnectedness of humans and nature (Boetto 2019). Lena Dominelli (2012) addresses that all persons need a sense of place to experience connection and feel respect and value towards the environment and others. Green social work is defined as a practice that integrate the interdependence between humans and all aspects of the environment such as socio cultural, economic, psychosocial and physical with the aim to protect the well-being of both people and the environment (Dominelli 2012). Green social work also connects a more structural interpretation of environmental injustice, inequalities of power and resources and politics of identity (Dominelli 2012).

Björngren Cuadra & Ouis (2020) explores which questions are to be asked in the connection between social work and other disciplines to integrate a broader perspective of the environment within social work. There are historical routes within the development of social work practice that addressed community work and the need to focus on social change, power relations and different aspects of peoples living environments and Björngren Cuadra & Ouis (2020) therefore lifts that a reconceptualization of the environment could be closer at hand within the field of social work.

Boetto (2016) suggests two crucial considerations for reflection in the practical integration of a sustainability approach and the natural environment within the every-day practice of social work. *"How can we incorporate the natural environment as part of day-to-day practice? And how can we promote sustainability of the environment and address disproportionate impacts of environmental disasters and decline?"* (Boetto, 2016: 63). For example, Slattery et al. (2023) have in their study studied the prevalence of different nature-based interventions within social work practice in 6 different countries and states that this practice is rare but existing.

To explore the connection between the fields of environmental psychology and social work, this study has narrowed down to a specific topic. With guidance of the quoted considerations above from Boetto (2016), this study explored connections with the outdoor environment, particularly the natural environment, and the roles and meanings these relations may take within a process of recovery from PSU. To reach a deeper understanding regarding subjective experience of relations to the outdoor environment particularly nature during the process of recovery for persons with experience of PSU (Problem Substance Use) has been the core aim of the study but as well to understand which specific constitutes of the recovery process that these relations may support or enable.

The overarching goal was to reflect upon the possible pathways of connection between the two fields to support possible development of practical interventions and approaches.

1.3 Supportive outdoor environments

Within the field of environmental psychology, a large amount of research has been performed to understand different dimensions of the human- environment interplay, specially concerning the relation to natural outdoor environments and its impact on human health and well-being (Hartig et al. 2010; Grahn et al. 2022).

Several theories concerning the restorative effects of being in natural environments such as the Attention Restoration Theory (ART) by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) as well as the Stress Reduction Theory (SRT) by Ulrich (1991) are at the core of the field. ART focuses on how being in natural environments may support cognitive restoration and defines four different conceptual and experiential dimensions in the interaction between person-environment that may support restoration from direct attention fatigue, *being away*, *soft fascination*, *extent* and *compatibility* (Kaplan 2001). The stress reduction theory (SRT) focuses on that natural environments in contrast to urbans settings tend to support emotional and physiological stress relief and restoration (Ulrich et al. 1991)

The Supportive Environment theory (SET) has been developed from both ART and SRT, integrating a salutogenic and biopsychosocial perspective of health by formulating a multimodal approach of how to understand the supportive characteristics of an outdoor environment (Grahn et al. 2022). The SET theory focuses on how a combination of different needs and challenges within a rehabilitative process may affect and get affected by the supportive experience of the environment (Grahn et al. 2022). It is stated within the SET theory that the same environment may be perceived as both supportive or non-supportive depending on a person's current needs, state of mood and former experiences (Grahn et al. 2022).

The SET theory focuses on the supportive dimensions of nature and outdoor environments and the supposition that humans have an inherent need of supportive environments for one´s overall health and well-being (Grahn et al. 2022). The

different important components in a supportive environment may change due the needs of an individual or a specific target group, involving gradients of demands in the environment, from completely undemanding and easy comprehensible to a more stimulating environment, supporting different stages within a rehabilitative process (Grahn et al. 2022).

Included in the supportive environment theory (SET) are the model of Perceived sensory dimension (PSD) developed by Grahn and Stigsdotter (2010) that has shaped eight different dimensions of sensory perceptions that are claimed to constitute humans' perception of supportive components of an outdoor environment (Grahn and Stigsdotter 2010; Pálsdóttir 2014).

The different qualities within the PSD model are 1. *natural* which is defined as the perceived naturalness of an outdoor environment as not affected by humans, 2. *serene* the perceived calmness and peacefulness in an environment with for example little noise disturbance, 3. *diverse* is related to both the perceived biodiversity of a place and the diversity of landform or affordances (Stoltz & Grahn 2021). To continue, 4. *Sheltered* is defined as the possibility of protection within an environment and to be able to find hideouts where cannot be seen but see others, 5. *social* is related to the social qualities of a place for example if the place provides and may hold social gatherings, activities or to meet other people, 6. *cultural* are related to how much of a human touch one may perceive in the outdoor environment related to for example history, art or maintenance of a place (Stoltz & Grahn 2021). The last two dimensions are 7. *cohesive* that is related to how the environment is perceived to be unified and fit together and 8. *open* related to the sense of overview within the place and its surroundings (Stoltz & Grahn 2021).

Two terms that are used within research conceptualizing the dynamic relation of support while being in natural environments are *restoration* and *instoration.* *Restoration* is referred to as to restore and regain energy from stress and depletion of daily capabilities (Grahn et al. 2022; Grahn, Ottosson & Moberg 2021). *Instoration* is defined as a process beyond restoration where nature environments act as a catalysts and new processes of insights, coping strategies, emotional regulation or understandings emerge through the connection with the natural environment (Grahn, Ottosson & Moberg 2021:12).

In the article by Grahn, Ottoson & Moberg (2021) the authors develop the calm and connection theory, of how different cues from the natural environment, often in form of archetypal elements and representations that are perceived immediately within an environment, may activate the oxytocinergic system. The oxytocinergic system is connected to the parasympathetic nervous system and may according to the authors play a crucial role in the restorative and instorative processes while experiencing nature (Grahn, Ottosson & Moberg 2021).

Several researchers address the importance of the supportive potential of favourite places for restoration and instoration such as for example emotional self-

regulation (Salonen et al. 2022; Johnsen 2022; Korpela & Hartig 1996; Korpela et al. 2018) and from these readings the authors interest to focus on places that the participant define as favourite or important derives. With a specific focus on outdoor environments that are perceived as favourite or supportive in any way.

The narratives and shared stories about favourite outdoor places may create connections between people but as well enhance the actual attachment and relation to the specific place (Lavesson & Ottoson 2022; Salonen et al. 2022; Cross 2015). Cross (2015) refers to the narrative process of place attachment as unique in its sense of how bonds are enhanced and deepened with a place through telling and listening to stories about the place. In a study by Salonen et al. (2022) participants, within a treatment called flow with nature (FWN) created as a nature-based group treatment for depression, were sharing stories and bringing their peers to their favourite places in nature as one part of the treatment. The authors claimed that the participants' sharing and storytelling about those places and why they found them supportive may have enhanced the actual connection to that place as well as the therapeutic potential of the same (Salonen et al. 2022).

1.4 Integration of nature-based interventions within treatment related to problem substance use

A brief literature search was made to find existing studies of nature-based interventions within the field of treatment of PSU and a couple of articles where the researchers refer to each other addressing the lack of research within the field (Kotera & Rhodes 2020; Benvegnu et al. 2024). Shin et al. (2012) found in their study from South Korea significant results of how forest bathing can lower self-rated perceptions of depression for persons with SUD (Substance Use Disorder) of alcohol, and this study is highlighted as one of few studies within the topic by Yasuhiro Kotera and Christine Rhodes (2020). Kotera and Rhodes (2020) address that forest bathing have shown results of reducing depression, stress, anger, anxiety, mental distresses that are commonly related to SUD and suggest the need of more research evaluating the possible effects of forest bathing (Shirin-yoku) within treatment of SUD.

Giulia Benvegnu et al. (2024) suggests an integration of "nature experience" into treatment of SUD and claims it to be an under researched field. Their study showed result of that nature walks compare to urban walks may decrease craving of drugs/ alcohol and negative mood and increased well-being and experience of agency (Benvegnu et al. 2024). Berry et al. (2021) have been studying how access to greenspaces and nature possibly could serve as a complementary treatment to pharmacotherapy for persons with opioid and substance use disorder due to several mechanisms that are not address within the ordinary treatment.

Masterton et al. (2022) explores how different forms of greenspace programs (nature-based interventions) might be effective for persons with problem substance

use (PSU) and have identified a 7-step programme theory to be able to study the context, mechanisms and outcomes of a nature-based intervention and more specifically understand why it may work or not. Research within the field of environmental psychology may provide the field of social work with a clearer rationale of the importance of developing a more in-depth and practical understanding of ecological and green social work addressing the interconnection of human- nature relationship on micro-meso-macro levels.

In the study by Masterton et al. (2022) professionals and other stakeholders working with nature-based interventions as one part of treatment for persons struggling with PSU are interviewed and the focus of the study lays upon different green space programs being performed by the participants of the study. The importance for further studies to incorporate lived experiences from persons struggling with PSU is highlighted in the study by Masterton et al. (2022). This study therefore aims to explore the lived experiences and potential roles and meanings different relations to natural outdoor environments may have in the process of recovery, without focusing on one specific treatment, intervention or program. Therefore, the concept of recovery will be elaborated more below

1.5   Recovery as a concept and critique

The concept of recovery derives from critical research within the mental health field and was developed as a form of critique against the medicalized psychiatric care, lifting the need to address the social context of mental health and recovery as *"a personal process in a social context"* (Topor et al. 2022:1). The recovery concept questioned the social stigmatization and suppression of persons with mental health difficulties through focusing on opposing stigma and enhancing empowerment, developed as a concept of experiential knowledge (Klevan et al. 2023).

In a recent article by Alan Topor et al. (2022) they address the turn in which the concept of recovery has taken during the last 40 years, from a critique to become a part of the nowadays psychiatrization of concepts of mental health conditions in our society.

Initially the concept of recovery addressed the role that social, material and structural aspects of a person's life may have for both mental health and recovery, not merely focusing on the actual care within psychiatric unit or a diagnosis (Topor et al. 2022). The acknowledgement of social contexts such as a person's engagements and relations to the larger community, one's social network or aspects such as safe housing, economic stability, sense of meaningfulness, experiences of inequality and social structures affecting ones overall living conditions are addressed as crucial (Topor et al. 2022).

The concept of recovery has developed in the same era as new public management was growing in the public health care institutions and welfare services, becoming more individualized, highlighting the lived experience but without placing the

experience in a social and contemporary context nor the need of social change (Topor et al. 2022). Topor et al. (2022) suggests a redefinition of the term recovery that includes the interplay between uniqueness and social processes wherein our relations, material and living conditions and our sense of self develops. Below follows a section regarding the conceptual development and definitions of recovery related to PSU.

1.6 The concept of recovery related to problem substance use

According to several authors there has been a shift in the last 20 years in the approach in practice and research around PSU towards a more solution-oriented model of recovery in comparison to a model of pathology regarding PSU (Ivers et al 2018; White 2005). The more solution-oriented model of recovery highlights recovery as a multi-dimensional and unique process, with the need to reach out and understand different processes and communities to find already existing solutions and knowledge (White 2005). Therefore, in the brief literature search for this study articles published from 2005 until today were selected to get a broad understanding how the *recovery paradigm* has been researched and developed since and to be able to draw an initial understanding of which crucial constructs and aspects that constitutes the recovery process according to existing research. White (2005) is defining the concept of recovery process as taking a more holistic approach of recovery and care as a continuum, including pre-, in- and post treatment with a variety of possible support anchored in the every-day environment of the community.

The model of Recovery capital (RC) has been developed as a theoretical base and a practical model (initially by Granfield & Cloud 1999) to operationalize the concept of recovery process into practice and research and is defined as an ecological model were both internal and external factors and resources co-occur and influence the recovery process (Best & Hennessey 2022). The different aspects of resources are connected to the individual, inter-personal and community-based relations, supporting and strengthening the recovery process depending on dynamic aspects such as time and other circumstances, as for example availability of support services (Best & Hennessey 2022). RC was first developed by Robert Granfield and William Cloud (1999) but has since then overgone several interpretations and critiques (Best & Hennessey 2022). The recovery capital is defined as *social*, *personal* or *community* resources depending on various factors that may become enablers or barriers to recovery, one example is that the recovery perspective has put light on the need for aftercare, housing and economic stability or employment as crucial for the progression and maintenance of the recovery process (Härd 2024). According to Valencia & Peters (2024) one of the main barriers in the recovery process is social stigma around PSU.

The overall critique and dilemmas within the recovery field is related to the conflict between sobriety (abstinence) and controlled substance use and a more harm reduction approach (Lancaster, Duke & Ritter 2015) But also, how the recovery paradigm itself to a large extent have become individualized (Härd 2024; Lancaster, Duke & Ritter 2015) lacking understandings of more structural processes of inequality affecting the process itself, access to the same but also limitations in understandings and sensitivity towards different experiences.

Despite the ongoing debate and lack of a clearcut definition of the concept of recovery process the SAMHSA´s (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration) definition is often accepted within the recovery research field connecting mental health recovery and problem substance use (Klevan et al. 2023). SAMHSA is national substance abuse and mental health service administration in the US and define recovery as "*a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellbeing, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential*[1] (SAMHSA 2012: 3; Härd 2024:6).

According to a study by Johansen et al. (2013) social support is being highlighted as a crucial aspect of recovery, especially the practical elements of a supportive relationship and the feeling of "*being of use*" to others, creating meaningfulness and ability to share skills and experiences (Johansen et al. 2013: 8). The study creates a model of recovery formed by positive identity development where one is being seen as a whole individual, strengthening healthy identifications (Johansen et al. 2013).

The idea of positive identity development can be connected to what Setiawan et al. (2024) and Ivers et al. (2018) are addressing as crucial components of the recovery process, such as increased insights and enhanced self-awareness of needs and limitations as well as responsibilities.

Mats Hilte (2005:45) argues that in research concerning treatment for persons with experience of PSU it is important to address several dimensions of power relations of negotiations. interpretations and normalizations of what *good life* and *good* treatment is. Mats Hilte (2005) addresses that the process of recovery and change needs to take a starting point in the subjective understandings, interest and diverse truths of each and everyone. The core of treatment is addressed by Hilte (2005) as when the client becomes an ethical subject that in collaboration with the social worker observe and create new understandings, pathways and stories about their past, present and future self´s.

Ryan Kemp (2018) define the important stages in the recovery process as concerning to navigate ambivalence in relation to change and recovery, open up for the future, connect with the world and other persons, re-connect with the body*,* gain new insights and skills to handle emotional stress and difficult emotions, create a

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[1] https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep12-recdef.pdf

new relation to self through finding meaning in life and reside in truth (Kemp 2018: 96).

Dekkers et al. (2020) problematizes the lack of common understandings of the term recovery and highlights in their research a need to both practically and theoretically address and reflect around different perspectives of recovery from the person in recovery, family members and professionals.

Another aspect is the connection of what the concept of recovery means in different political, cultural and historical contexts (Lancaster et al. 2015; Kemp 2018). What constitutes the discourse of drug use in general or more specifically regarding PSU and recovery might expand or narrow the understanding of the phenomena (Kemp 2018; Lancaster et al. 2015). One example of this is how the construct of recovery is connected to the polarised debate between harm-reduction and abstentionism (Lancaster et al. 2015). This study is conducted in Sweden and therefore the need to contextualize the concept of recovery in a Swedish context appears.

1.7   The concept of recovery in a Swedish context

In Sweden the number of persons above 17 years old that self-report symptoms and problems defined as substance use disorder related to alcohol was 3,8 % and related to other psychoactive drugs 2 % in 2021 (Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare 2024). A number that has been persistent not indicating an increase or decrease for several years and according to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (2024) this self-reported number may be an underestimation of the actual prevalences of SUD among the entire population.

According to a report by the EUDA (European Drug Agency) presented in 2020 the drug induced deaths in Sweden were the highest in EU, 81 drug induced deaths by 1 million inhabitants. From 2015 until 2023 the drug induced deaths in Sweden have diminished by 30 % (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2024) but Sweden is remaining among the five countries within European Union with highest amount of drug induced deaths (EDUA 2025).

The view on use of psychoactive drugs in Sweden is historically founded on a prohibitionist view with zero tolerance of drugs that has guided policies and legislation, criminalizing the individual user. Harm-reduction interventions such as for example substitution treatment and syringe change have therefore been controversial in a Swedish context and not developed as far as in other European countries. Since the beginning of 2024 all regional health care services provide syringe change and substitutional treatment (Public Health Agency of Sweden 2024).

The responsibility of providing different forms of treatments, long-term care, social support and housing related to PSU lays at the social service organized by the municipality, which may be compared to the UK and several other countries in

Europe where treatment, care and support is provided by the health care services (Samuelsson et al. 2013; Härd 2024). The regional health-care service provides emergency care, detoxification, psychiatric care, substitution treatments and other forms of directed care towards different target groups, such as pregnant women struggling with PSU (Samuelsson et al. 2013).

A study by Sofi Härd (2024) showed results in line with previous claims by Stenius (2017) that weather the main interventions and treatment for PSU are runed by the health care service or the social service it may create a notable difference in approach and understanding of the phenomena of substance use problems as well as the understanding of what constitutes the process of recovery. The perspective of a continuous recovery process with a holistic perspective and long-term support beyond the initial treatment or abstinence as suggested within the recovery paradigm showed to be already applied according to the respondent social workers of the study within the social services in Sweden (Härd 2024)

Stenius (2017) stresses that the recovery perspective may challenge the somehow growing medicalized view within treatment in Nordic countries by lifting the importance of participation, social inclusion and general well-being for persons struggling with PSU but doubt the transferability of the concept directly into a Swedish concept.

However, there is a coming reform to happen in Sweden where the legal responsibility of providing treatment and long-term support and care regarding PSU will be placed under the health care service all together with the main goal of being able to create a more person- centred care, especially for persons with co-morbidity (Socialdepartementet 2025). This reform aims at diminishing the existing risk of falling between the cracks between the health care system and social services (Socialdepartementet 2025).

The interest of this thesis was to explore different interpretations of personal and professional understandings of recovery in relation to outdoor places and the term recovery process has been selected to include a dynamic and broader definition of recovery, not considering whether the person participated in a specific treatment programme or not.

2. Aim

As presented in the introduction, the integration of nature-based interventions and experiences in and of nature within recovery related to PSU is claimed to be an under researched field. More precisely, related to limited research regarding the *lived experiences* of integration of outdoor natural environments within treatment and throughout recovery.

The first part of the aim of this study is therefore to explore *lived experiences* of relations to the outdoor environment, particularly nature, during processes of recovery related to PSU. The study doesn´t seek to evaluate a specific treatment or fully describe all components of a recovery process but instead explore experiences of relations to and constructions of self in relation to the outdoor environment throughout processes of recovery.

The second part of the aim is to gain more knowledge and understandings of which roles and meanings relations the outdoor environment, particularly nature, could have in the process of recovery, which in turn could be inspirational in the development and performance of treatment. Derived from the identified gap of integrating nature within social work practice, outlined in the introduction, and the interest of exploring if theories within environmental psychology may support a clearer rational towards an *eco-social* work. To investigate how the outdoor environments may matter in the subjective processes of recovery this work includes an exploration of which aspects the participants of the study experience and interpret as important constituencies of a recovery process.

The aim of the study is divided in two to allow both a lived-experience and professional perspective of relations to the outdoor environments during recovery to emerge. Three out of four participants of the study hold a dual experience of being within recovery related to PSU and working in the field, which is common in practice and therefore an experience that is given room for in the study.

2.1 Research questions

- Which aspects are defined as constituting the recovery process from problem substance use (PSU), from a lived-experience and/or professional perspective?

- How do persons with experience of being within a recovery process related to PSU experience their relations to favourite outdoor places, nature in particular, throughout recovery?

- Which roles and meanings may relations to the outdoor environment, particularly nature, have in the recovery process related to PSU?

3. Theoretical framework

In this section the theoretical frameworks and different concepts of the study will be explained in more detail. The section is divided in four parts including 1. *Conceptualization of PSU and recovery for this study. 2. Recovery and the role of place,* 3. *Sense of place and sense of self,* 4, *Aspects of time within recovery.* Based upon the existing knowledge within environmental psychology and social work regarding recovery processes, different theories have been considered important for this study to explore the relation between the outdoor natural environments and recovery related to PSU. For example, different mechanisms of relations between recovery and place, sense of place, place attachment, sense of self and the aspects of time within recovery which all will be presented in this chapter. In the last section an overarching theoretical framework will be presented, derived from the merging of the different theories and concept of relevance for the study to support the research process and the framing of the discussion of the results.

3.1 Conceptualizations of PSU and recovery

Over decades different concepts and words to define the phenomenon of substance use problems or addiction have been used in different cultural, political and historical contexts. This study takes a phenomenological perspective with focus in experiences of recovery related to problem substance use without the attempt to fully explain the complex phenomena of substance use disorder per se. Instead, a phenomenological perspective may capture other more existential perspectives of what it means for an individual to experience, as described by Ryan Kemp (2018), an *addiction* in a specific time and place. This study wants to explore how this experience may be intertwined with the social and physical environment from the lens of theories and methodologies within environmental psychology.

The use of the term *addiction* is being questioned as a potentially stigmatizing term because of its original meaning in Latin (Scholten et al. 2107), even though it is still widely used within the field. Schlag (2020) suggests *problem drug use* as being possibly a more neutral term not carrying a tail of moral assumptions and stigmas behind, although a solely word may not eliminate structures of social stigma towards persons with problems related to substance use or merely using drugs, the language matters and holds power structures that may influence interpretations and understandings of a specific health condition (Kelly et al. 2016).

A similar term used by Masterton et al. (2022) is persons with *problem substance use* (PSU) which is the selected term for this study, describing experiences of suffering and problems related to the use of different forms of substances such as alcohol and illicit psychoactive drugs. The conceptualisation of PSU in this study does not refer to all use of drugs per see but rather on when a person experiences

suffering or different forms of problems related to their use of drugs that might have developed into a dependence or harmful use. The word *addiction* will appear in different citations and texts throughout this study, due to its still prevalent use within the field of research. More specifically referring to Ryan Kemps (2018) phenomenological conceptualisation of *addiction* referred to above. Highlighting how *addiction* is both a *social condition* and a *personal condition* and therefore the understanding of the process of recovery cannot be separated from how addiction is interpreted (Kemp 2018: 93).

The importance to keep a "*person-first*" language and not attributing the problem on the individual itself as a noun, is stressed by several researchers (Kelly et al. 2016; Scholten et al. 2017) and maintained throughout the study.

In this study the process of recovery is conceptualized as a multidimensional process of change which is unique for everyone at the same time anchored in social, political and historical context of contemporary society (Kemp 2018; White 2007; Topor et al. 2022). Multiple dimensions such as being an individual process connected to a manifestation and attempt of behavioural change from suffering on a personal level (Kemp 2018, 2019) and an existential process to find purpose and meaning in life in relation to a holistic perspective on health and well-being (SAMHSA 2012). Recovery is being interpreted as a socially embedded process where peer-support and transitions of social identities are important aspects of recovery (Best et al. 2016) as well as each person's creation of and sense of self in connection with oneself and others (Hilte 2005). This conceptualization implies that the recovery process on an individual level cannot be separated from the social and psychosocial environment (Best et al. 2016; Hilte 2005) and therefore also may be intertwined with the experience of and interplay with the physical environment.

3.2 Recovery and the role of place

The role of place in the process of recovery for people with mental health difficulties have been studied within different fields such as occupational therapy (Doroud et al. 2018) and environmental psychology (Salonen et al. 2022; Grahn and Stigsdotter 2010) and medical geography (Kearns & Gesler 1998). Doroud et al (2018) discusses in their meta-synthesis the multifaceted role of place for mental health recovery and shapes a theoretical framework containing the processes of *being*, *doing*, *becoming* and *belonging* as different mechanisms within the interplay between people and places in the recovery process. This theoretical framework by Doroud et al. (2018) presented in Figure 1 below have especially worked to support the discussion of the results, providing a sensitive approach towards different mechanisms of interplay between recovery and place. Furthermore, also as a guidance in the methodological progression and data collection of the study.
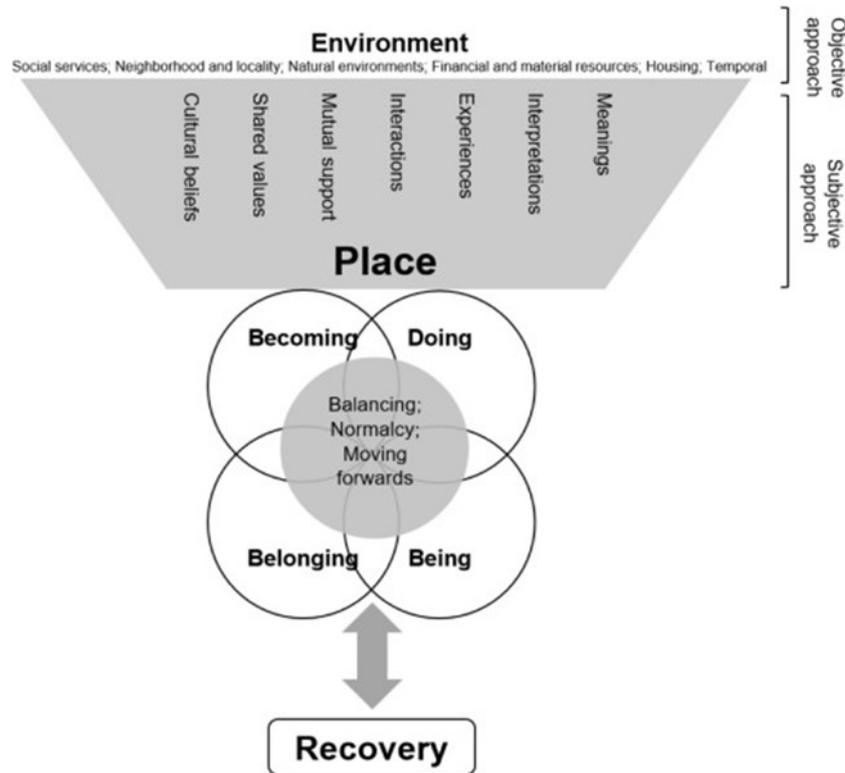
Figure 1. The theoretical framework of becoming, doing, belonging and being as constituting the interrelation between recovery and place. Source: Doroud et al. (2018:117).

The different place characteristics that are addressed as important in the meta synthesis and its developed theoretical framework are mostly related to access to safe housing, safe and healthy neighbourhoods, supportive social services, social community spaces and to a small extent to natural environments like parks or gardens (Doroud et al. 2018). Together with aspects of economic and material resources and different aspects of time such as frequent use or visit at a place, time of the day or season (Doroud et al. 2018). But the authors of the article as well stresses that there are no "universal" characteristics of places that always may be experienced as supportive of the recovery process.

Nevertheless, the framework may provide a more in-depth- understanding of potentially enabling jet complex interactions of experiences and interpretations of places that may have an important role within the process of recovery (Doroud et al. 2018). The four different mechanisms described in the framework through which place may impact the process of recovery are summarized below by the author from the definition in the article by Doroud et al. (2018).

- *Being*: processes related to how the interplay with a place may support perceived safety, sense of security, stability, identity and self-esteem as well as the creation of emotional bonds to different places.
- *Doing*: connected to how a place affords an activity that may support routines, creations of habits and encouragement to engage in activities that may support one´s recovery and restoration.
- *Becoming*: related to how the interplay with and experience in places may support growing of hope and instorative processes of growth and re-gaining a connection towards the future and sense of self-determination.
- *Belonging*: related to how places may support sense of belonging and connection with others and the society at large and development of old and new relationships. As well related to attachment to a neighbourhood and the familiarity of a place.

Specifically, natural environments are in the study by Doroud et al. (2018) mentioned as one place characteristic potentially supporting all four mechanisms of *being*, *doing*, *becoming* and *belonging* in different ways within the interrelation of recovery and place, without it being mentioned more precisely.

Existing research point at the multifaceted role of experiences in place in relation to processes of mental health recovery (Duff 2012; Doroud et al. 2018) and as well for persons with complex needs related to mental health difficulties, homelessness and PSU (Tran Smith et al. 2015). Places may become enabling, or supportive related to several different resources provided by and shaped through relations with a place (Duff 2012). These enabling resources are defined by Duff (2012) as either material, social or affective. Duff (2012) highlights the role of informal community resources shaped by relations to local places and how these relations in different ways promotes recovery in relation to mental health difficulties and supports processes of social inclusion. The study focuses on relational aspects of place bonding and how a place may be enabling for one person but not another and not always related to what is defined as therapeutic values and characteristics of a place (Duff 2012).

However, when it comes to the relations to the natural environment not as much is known and thus, it seems important to relate different theories and research to understand more about the specific roles and meanings that relations to outdoor natural environments might have in the recovery process related to problem substance use. Therefore, this thesis aims at exploring more in-depth the different meanings and roles relations to the outdoor environment, especially favourite places in nature may have in the process of recovery related to PSU.

3.3 Sense of place and sense of self

Sense of place is a well-established and researched concept concerning the overarching human-environment interactions and transactions including concepts such as place attachment and place meanings (Raymond et al. 2017). In this section different important concepts and theories within the field of sense of place will be presented and put in relation to the concept of sense of self within the recovery process.

Raymond et al. (2017) addresses an urge to include both slow and fast processes within the concept of sense of place to reach a more complex understanding of how the immediate perception, experience and socially constructed meanings of a place in a dynamic way may affect how we perceive and experience a place. Moreover, also how our experiences and sense of place may change over time, due to different life circumstances and stages (Raymond et al. 2017). Within a recovery process changes at different levels are at the core of the process both on an individual, personal level of changing habits, re-gaining connections with one´s body, gaining strategies to cope with emotions as well as shaping a new relation to the self (Kemp 2018: 96). The process of change occurs as well on a more structural level in relation to societal stigmas and discrimination and on a material level of finding safe housing and economic stability (Klevan et al. 2023) and on a social level of regaining trust in oneself and others and creating new relationships (Hilte 2005).

In this aspect, it becomes interesting to reflect upon how both changing needs and life circumstances and changing relations to the self and the body during the recovery process may affect one's perception, sensing, attachment to or experience of places. Besides the opposite, how meaning making processes of relations to places may affect ones understanding of the self (Raymond et al. 2017).

Tran Smith et al. (2015) addresses the relationship between human- environment as a dynamic process in their research around the role of place in the narrative identity reconstruction within a complex recovery process, related to both PSU and mental health difficulties. Participants in their study lifts both experiences of how they needed to avoid certain places to be able to set boundaries to protect themselves and how an experience of a place that has been related to one's former use of drugs have changed into something else during the process of recovery (Tran Smith et al. 2015).

Place attachment is a wide and complex concept that has been studied from different perspectives, concerning the dynamic phenomena of relationships between people and places (Manzo 2003). Studies around place attachment have moved between a more static perspective of place towards a multifaceted changing process concerning different settings, places and both positive and ambivalent emotions (Lewicka 2011; Manzo 2003).

The slow processes of sense of place are by Raymond et al. (2017) related to processes of place attachment and emotional bonds to places as well as meaning

making processes in relation to memories, cognitions and socially constructed understandings of our relations to different places. The fast processes are related to our immediate perceptions and the bottom- up processes of information that takes part while sensing a place and may according to Raymond et al. (2017) play a crucial role in the meaning- making process of a place. The authors use the term affordances to cover the direct perception- action process that takes part within an interaction between a person´s needs, wishes and abilities and the potential of opportunities and actions within a specific place (Raymond et al. 2017).

In other words, Raymond et al. (2017) highlight that the direct condition of our minds and bodies interact with how we immediately perceive a place and happen alongside the long term socially constructed processes of emotions, memories and place meanings.

Two essential questions asked by the authors concern how the immediate perceived meanings and the socially constructed meanings relate and how this dynamic relationship affects changes of sense of place over time or through different life stages (Raymond et al. 2017).

Jennifer Cross (2015) addresses the need to combine both phenomenological and discursive approaches to comprehend all dynamic aspects of our attachment to places. Her study illustrates how different processes of place attachment co-occur and are shaped in the cross-section between experience and meaning making of an individual in a dynamic relation to different places (Cross 2015). The study emphasises seven different interactional processes of place attachment that simultaneously may occur and relate to time in different ways, some may be more static than others, some increase by time and some decrease or change over different stages of life (Cross 2015). The seven interactional processes are defined as, *sensory*, *historical*, *narrative*, *spiritual*, *ideological*, *commodifying*, *material dependent* (Cross 2015).

These theoretical frameworks of fast and slow processes of sense of place and the seven different interactional processes of place attachment have worked as a base from which the results of the study have been discussed in relation to both the immediate experiences in place and the larger associations, memories and structural understandings that appears. People experience unique combinations of processes of attachment on both individual, social and cultural levels that may co-occur for different places simultaneously and change over time (Cross 2015).

Within place attachment theories, the concept of place identity is central and defined as how a place resonates with one's beliefs, values and views upon oneself and the larger context of the community (Seamon 2014), and place identity have been connected to the processes of sense of self-continuity (Scannell & Gifford 2014). Connected to the research about recovery and treatment for problem substance use mentioned above by Hilte (2005) and Kemp (2018) several relational aspects of the self seems to be an important aspect of the process of change. Sense

of self-continuity have been addressed as an important aspect of human well-being and psychological health and that aspects such as narratives of our past, present and future self and nostalgia may have an influence of our sense of self-continuity (Sedikides et al. 2023). In research of place attachment and relations sense of continuity have been studied from various perspectives such as how our bonds to places may be connected to a specific landscape that one can find in new places of residence, through commitment in a community (Di Masso et al. 2019) or through interest in the history of a place (Lewicka 2014).

The aim of this thesis is not to find out whether relations to places matters for health and well-being in general and recovery in particular, there is already a growing knowledge about this within research (Doroud et al. 2018; Duff 2012). The aim is that of exploring how the outdoor environment is experienced and interpreted and in which specific sense these place experiences could support the recovery process for persons with experience of PSU. To come closer to this phenomenon, it becomes important to also dig deeper into research within environmental psychology on the supportive role of the person- environment interplay with the outdoor environments, particularly nature, for well-being in general, and restorative and instorative processes in particular.

3.4 The aspect of time within recovery

Different aspects of time and supportive environments are according to Dekkers et al. (2021) the base of the recovery process enabling processes of development of both sense of self and sense of future. The aspects of time highlighted in their study are related to that all processes of recovery holds a unique pace, that recovery requires time, being a long-term process, and the need of structure and routines in one's everyday life (Dekkers et al. 2021).

Time and temporal aspects of *addiction* are from a phenomenological perspective put in connection to both potential suffering in relation to how time and life pass by or as an experience of pausing time and the view towards the future with the use of drugs (Kemp 2018), or as an *escape from time* itself (Hilte 2019:121). Kemp (2018:45) addresses that recovery may have the potential of widening *temporal horizons* by bringing in both the past and future into the horizon but claims it to be an area that is under researched.

The underpinning of this view of change of understandings of time within recovery is based on a phenomenological theoretical interpretation of time or as defined by Martin Heidegger as temporality (Kemp 2018, Heidegger 1962). The term "*Being-in-the-world*" by Heidegger constitutes by humans' understandings of their own existence as well as their own time through existing, a movement in time referred to as *temporality* (Kim 2016). Kemp (2018:39) refers to the phenomenological time as "*lived time*", not being measurable or quantified.

In this study the interest is to explore different interpretations of the role and meanings the natural outdoor environment may have in the recovery process. Phenomenological interpretations of time and temporality have during the process of this study emerged as important to reach understandings of the self in recovery. Dekkers et al. (2021) purposes that structure and routines and to receive a long-term support within recovery are essential aspects of time provided within and in relation to supportive social environments. Thus, it seems important to understand which temporal aspects of recovery, change and sense of self that might be experienced in relation to the natural outdoor environment during recovery.

3.5 Overarching theoretical framework of this study

The different theoretical concepts and frameworks considered to support the aim of this study, described in this theory chapter, have been merged into an overarching theoretical framework presented below in Figure 2.
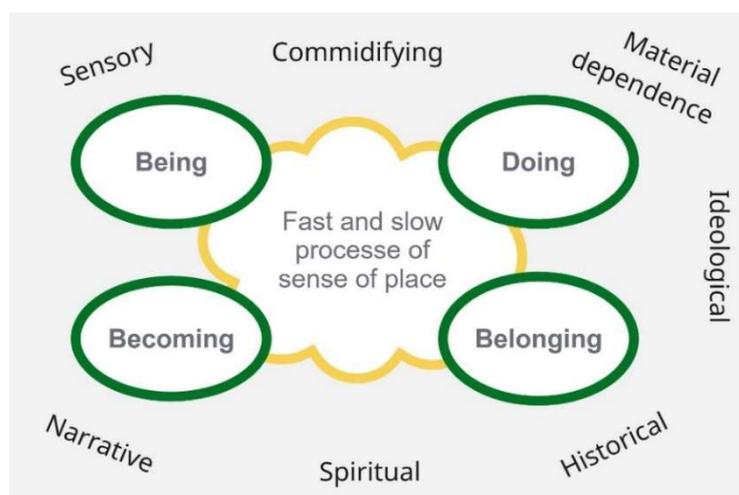
Figure 2. Illustration of the theoretical framework of this study combining the theory of sense of place by Raymond et al. (2017) with the theory of processes of place attachment by Cross (2015) and the framework by Doroud et al.(2018). Source: Author´s own figure.

The framework contains the four different mechanisms through which place have been found to impact the recovery process when it comes to mental health difficulties, *being*, *doing*, *becoming* and *belonging* (Doroud et al. 2018). The seven *interactional processes of place attachment* (Cross 2015) with an emphasis on that humans may sense places in both *fast and slow processes*, and how these processes may be intertwined in different ways and change over time (Raymond et al. 2017). Additionally, the different aspects of time within recovery highlighted by (Dekkers et al. 2021 and Kemp 2018).

To contextualize the lived experiences of the participants' transactions with the outdoor environment during recovery and potentially as well their professional experience it seemed important to include some theories regarding different dimensions and characteristics of an outdoor environment. The eight different perceived sensory dimensions (PSD) have been elaborated to support the understanding of perception of outdoor environments and in connection to *restorative* and *instorative* processes they may enhance the understanding of what is experienced as supportive in an environment (Grahn et al. 2022, Grahn and Stigsdotter 2010, Pálsdóttir 2014, Stoltz & Grahn 2021). Depending on state of mood, former experiences and needs we humans may perceive the same outdoor environment differently (Grahn et al. 2022; Duff 2012; Doroud et al. 2018).

To be able to get a more in-depth understanding of the perceptions of and supportive experiences within the different outdoor environments that the participants of the study relate to in the interviews the eight different dimensions of PSD:s and concepts of *restoration* and *instoration* have been included as supportive concepts in the methodological development. The PSD have also been supportive to categorize described elements and dimensions of different outdoor environments within the analysis. These concepts and theories have enhanced the discussion of the results in relation to the presented theoretical framework above providing examples of the fast and slow processes of sensing a place or emphasising elements that may have enhanced emotional bonds to or memories of places.

Moreover, providing categorizations of perceptions of different natural elements and characteristics in an environment that are experienced as supportive in relation to *restoration* and *instoration*.

4. Method

This section presents the methodological approach of the study and why selection of a *pluralistic qualitative approach* was found appropriate in relation to the aim of the study. This study combines different methodological tools which will be outlined in more detail in the section called methodological approach and research design followed by a presentation of the practical steps such as participants and sampling, data collection and analysis. In the end an ethical- and methodological reflection of the whole research process, the design of the study, the tools used and the role of the author as a student-researcher is presented.

4.1 Methodological approach and research design

A combination of different qualitative approaches and tools was selected in this study such as Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and thematic analysis which is an example of intra-paradigmatic difference (O'Reilly & Kiyimba 2015) and as Frost (2021) defines as a *pluralistic qualitative approach*. Practically, this combination of analytical tools and methodological approaches relates in this study to the dual aim of both exploring the lived experiences of relations to favourite outdoor environments during recovery and to explore what roles and meanings the outdoor environment might have in the processes of recovery.

   The dual aim of the study opened for the possibility to include participants with experience of working within the field of PSU and/ or with own experience of being within recovery from PSU, as potential participants.

    Semi-structured interviews were selected as the main methodological tool as it is stated that this way of interviewing may bring the potential of reaching a more in-depth experiences of the studied phenomena (Frost 2021; Kvale & Brinkman 2015; Smith & Osborne 2008) especially for studies using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) with the focus on first persons lived experiences (Smith & Nizza 2022).

   Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was selected and performed in this study since, this approach appears sensitive to both personal lived experiences and the contextual and socially constructed interpretations (Larkin et al. 2006) and thus, in line with the objective of this work. To explore unique experiences of the relation between recovery and places in the outdoor environment and how the interpretations of these experiences may resonate with a specific time and context.

   Interpretative phenomenological analysis is according to Larkin et al. (2006: 108) a methodological approach containing two important commitments related to the phenomenological notion of *persons- in- context*. By placing the focus on the participants' understanding and sense making of their world and their relation to the studied phenomena and in a sensitive way situate and contextualize these

understandings in a specific time and place in relation to theories and psychological processes (Larkin et al. 2006).

The IPA analysis allowed the author to focus on the lived experience of the studied phenomena and to interpret the participants' interpretations of these experiences (Frost 2021). The thematic analysis from a reflexive approach enabled the author to grasp the participants' professional understandings and derived knowledge of how the outdoor environment may be integrated within their different practices and treatments (Frost 2021; Braun & Clarke 2006).

Using a pluralistic qualitative approach can give insight into a phenomenon from various perspectives and epistemological starting points and in such a process it is crucial to clearly describe each perspective and the different type of knowledge that may be generated (Frost 2021).

The epistemological underpinning of the study is critical realism, often connected to IPA due to the *double hermeneutics* of the researcher conducting the interpretation of the participants' sense making of their experiences of the studied phenomena (Frost 2021: 62). But as well placing an importance to take a reflexive stance for the researcher and to be transparent of how the experience of the participants' have been interpreted, both in relation to the authors former knowledge, experience and existing theories and research (Grace & Priest 2015; Frost 2021). A reflexive thematic analysis requires interpretation by the researcher like the IPA analysis (Braun & Clark 2022) and by searching for overarching themes in the data material concerning knowledge from a professional point of view another level of understanding might appear.

The design of the study was composed by a two-step set of semi-structured interviews as showed in the Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. An illustration of the research design, timeline of the process, the two-step sets of interviews and the following analysis further described in section 4.3 and 4.4. Source: Author´s own figure.

Interviews in part *1* concerned the overall experiences and understandings of the *recovery in relation to places* in the outdoor environment. Interviews in part *2* covered experiences of *favourite outdoor places* selected by the participants and the role that specific place potentially played in individual processes of recovery. The division of part *1* and *2* was presented from the start in the information folder of the study which made it possible for the participants to select which part to

participate in, both or only one of them due to interest, time and experiences. The performance of the two-step set of interviews will be further elaborated in the data collection section.

4.2 Participants

This study collected data from four participant who have different forms of experiences related to knowledge of processes of recovery from PSU. Three of the participants have personal experience of struggling with PSU and to be within a recovery process. Furthermore, all four participants have experience of working professionally within the field of treatment in relation to PSU and/ or with peer-support. Today two of them work within different treatment centres related to PSU, one work within the field of social psychiatry and one is retired. One participant is a treatment pedagogue and a yoga teacher, one participant has a bachelor's in social work, and another is a social pedagogue. The participants are two women and two men, and their age range varies between 46-76.

All participants showed interest to participate when the author reached out either through social media, the authors professional network or when contacting professionals at different treatment centres in Sweden.

4.2.1 The process of sampling

For this study a purposive sampling has been used, which is in line with what Frost (2021) and Smith & Nizza (2022) suggest when conducting an IPA study. The purposive sampling was performed through searching for participants with experience related to PSU and as well having experience of being within a process of recovery and/ or having professional experience of working within the field. Being a sensitive and personal topic this process of searching for participants involved a lot of ethical reflections due to the potential vulnerability of the target group even though it is a heterogenous group having many different experiences and life situations. The ethical process will be further discussed in the section of ethical considerations, and an *ongoing process* of ethical reflection have followed throughout the whole research process from shaping the research design and while facing dilemmas and decisions made during the process (Frost 2021:139).

A poster with information of the study and contact information (see Appendix 1) was made to be spread in the author's social media and professional network, in different open care treatment units and contact was made with several treatment centres in different parts of Sweden. Staff at one of the open care units presented the study shortly for participants in their treatment and had the poster printed so that persons with interest could take one home and by themself contact the author. In one open care treatment centre where the author had formerly worked the staff invited the author to shortly in 5-10 minutes present the study and leave printed flyers of the poster for the persons interested in participating in the study.

Initially five interested persons with personal experience of PSU and being within recovery of whom two persons as well had a dual experience of working within treatment related to PSU, contacted the author. In the pre-interview contact the author gave information of the study, practical issues and information about consent and de-identification. The two-step interviews were presented and two participants wanted to be part of both interviews and dates for the first interview in part *1* was booked. The other three interested persons participated in different open care treatment and contacted the author individually with interest to participate in the second part of the interviews regarding favourite places and time was booked for the interviews. All these three interviews were cancelled which will be further discussed in the ethical considerations.

A second search for interview participants was made towards professionals at different treatment centres in Sweden having close access to natural outdoor environments. The contact was made through e-mail or by phone with information about the study. Two persons answered with interest to participate in the first part of the interviews regarding the recovery process in relation to place.

4.3   Data collection

Within this study a total of six interviews with four participants have been conducted. Four interviews were conducted in *part 1*, with all four participants, covering recovery in relation to place. Two interviews with two participants were conducted in *part 2* regarding favourite places.

The interviews took approximately 55 - 80 minutes each and have all been audio recorded with the author's phone. All interviews have started with taking a written consent from each participant and all participants have received information about the study before the interview concerning the audio recordings, de-identification, save storage of recordings and about the possibility to withdraw one's participation without having to explain why. Below, a description of the data collection of each part in the two-step design of the study is presented.

4.3.1 Interviews part 1- Recovery in relation to place

The interviews in *part 1* concerned the overall understandings of the recovery process and its potential relation to places in the outdoor environment. Not focusing on one specific place but rather adopting a flexibility to let the participant select the route of the interview towards the topics in relation to different outdoor environment that has been relevant for both their personal and/ or professional experiences.

The theoretical framework has been growing alongside the data collection of the study in a non-linear process. The mechanisms of *being*, *doing, belonging* and *becoming* by Doroud et al (2018) are touched upon in the interview questions such as in *what is important for you to perceive safety in a place?* The interviews in part

1 were based upon a semi-structured interview guide (Kvale & Brinkman 2015) with explorative and open questions such as *what does change mean to you? What does recovery mean to you?* to start the interview followed by many follow up questions in the moment to get a rich description of the participants' experiences. The interview guide was flexible for each participants' experience and situation, focusing on the same themes (see Appendix 2) such as experiences and understandings of recovery processes and change, experiences and perceptions of the outdoor environment during the process of recovery as well as their professional experiences and roles.

On of the interview was conducted over zoom and was audio-recorded for 58 minutes. Beforehand the participant e-mailed the author confirming and consenting their participation after having received information over e-mail. It was a notable difference to conduct the interview digitally in comparison to all the other interviews that were conducted in person. An effort was made from the author to create a relaxed atmosphere.

The three other interviews were conducted in person. One at the participants' workplace, a treatment centre in the countryside, inside in an office and audio recorded for 55 minutes. The interview was interrupted twice by phone calls that the participants had to answer, and the audio recordings were then paused. One interview was conducted at a public library and the participant, and the author meet up outside the library and went inside to a room that the author had booked in advance. The interview lasted and was audio recorded for 1 hour and 16 minutes.

One interview was conducted in the participants' home and audio recorded for 60 minutes with a break in the middle. The author and the participant talked for about 20 minutes before the interview started around the practicalities of the interview, informed consent and some small talk. The author in total stayed for around 90 minutes in the participants' home.

4.3.2 Interviews part 2- Favourite places

Two interviews with two participants were performed in *part 2* focusing on favourite places. The interviews were planned to be performed through go-along interviews at selected favourite places of the participants. *Go-along* interviews or *walking interviews* was selected as a tool to be able to come closer to the sensory, emotional and situated experiences of the participants' selected favourite places in the outdoor environment and by sharing a moment at that place the author could as well experience it (Kusenbach 2010; Frost 2021; D´Errico & Hunt 2022). Bringing a possibility to reach a more in-depth understanding of different supportive elements and perceived sensory dimensions experienced in place. The theoretical framework presented above highlight several pathways and transactions affecting the process of sensing a place such as slow and fast processes (Raymond et al. 2017) and different interactional processes of place attachment (Cross 2015). The focus

of this second interview was to gain knowledge of the meaning and role of the selected favourite place within the recovery as well which elements and dimensions the participants' experienced as supportive.

A go-along method as defined by Kusenbach (2010:10) gives the possibility to connect participant observations and interviews in a dynamic way, giving room for both observation of the participants' interactions within a place as well through the semi-structured interview at the place to reach the participants' interpretations of the same.

Beforehand the author had prepared a semi-structured interview guide with question (see Appendix 2) regarding the participants' understanding of, perceptions, experiences and memories in place. Additionally, themes to focus on during the participant observation was also prepared beforehand such as how the participants interacted and moved in place, which qualities or elements in the environment that triggered memories, emotions or brought the interview forward and finally the authors own sensory and embodied experiences.

One of the interviews was conducted as a *go-along* interview at a favourite place selected by the participant in the countryside by a lake with surrounding forest. It was wintertime at 10 am and it was about 5 degrees in the air, misty and with a soft drizzling rain. The interview was audio recorded from start and took 1 hour and 15 minutes in total.

During the interview the author followed the participant as they walked around and selected sites to stop for a talk or to show something. Their interaction with the place became apparent as they moved around and showed different natural elements that they appreciate by the lake, the view and in the surrounding forest and meadows. Memories and stories came forward in the interview as they pointed out different sites and elements and move around. It was like the interaction with the environment moved the interview forward and the author asked follow-up questions as the participants spoke. The author had memorised the interview guide from before and sometimes brought up a question from it that had not been covered. The participant also shared a picture from springtime at the same place with the author during the interview.

It was hard for the author to manage to take photos during the interview because of the walking, active listening and audio recording happened simultaneously and therefore the author stayed a bit longer after the interview was finished, walking the same route again to take photos of specific objects, elements and features that were talked upon in the interview.

For the second interview in part two, the participant selected a favourite place from their childhood (an urban park) that reminded them of another favourite outdoor place during their recovery process that they had talked about in the first interview, that was not possible to visit within this study. The interview was planned to be performed as a *go-along* interview at the selected urban park but due

to cold weather and health conditions it was performed at the participants' home. The author took photos of the selected place in the morning before the interview that were looked upon during the interview together with photos from a digital public city archive, and a personal photo from the participants' childhood. It was wintertime and around 3 degrees outside and a bit misty in the air. The author moved around in the park and tried to capture photos from different angles and views. The interview was audio recorded for 66 minutes with a short break in the middle. The author stayed around 90 minutes in the participant´s home including the interview, a break, the participant preparation of coffee meanwhile the author prepared the computer to show the photographs.

All six interviews have been performed in Swedish and have been transcribed verbatim by the author in Swedish. During the process of analysis, the specific themes from the analysis were translated into English by the author. The selected quotes in the result section have as well been translated into English by the author with some support of the translation tool Deeple for specific expressions and words, see Appendix 3 for the selected quotes in Swedish.

4.4   Analysis

In this section the process of analysis using both IPA and thematic analysis will be further described in detail. Though, as presented above the participants hold different experiences regarding personal or professional experiences the data-material concerning personal experiences of being within recovery and of relations to different places in the outdoor environment during this process were analysed with IPA. Focusing on the lived experiences of the participants and their interpretation of the phenomena of the study. The parts of the data-material concerning professional experiences in working within treatment or peer-support, where they often did not talk in first person were analysed with thematic analysis.

A concern in the analytical process has been to be sensitive and stay close to the understandings of the participants at the same time as trying to anchor these experiences within a specific time and context. Below, a presentation of the performance of each analysis is made.

4.10.1 IPA analysis of the interviews

The IPA analysis has been carried out in a 6- step model by Smith & Nizza (2022) with an idiosyncratic focus on each participant's experience of their relation to the outdoor environment during dynamic processes of their recovery process. The IPA analysis included five interviews with three participants (1-3) due to that participant 4 did not have personal experience of being with in recovery related to PSU.

Eatough & Smith (2017) is addressing the importance to initially embrace the data material without applying different theoretical understandings or interpretations but searching for emergent themes and meanings interpreted by the

participant. The study had selected a theoretical framework to support the discussion of the results, and the author have former professional experience within the field and had been conducting a brief literature review around research concerning the recovery process. This pre-knowledge has, with support of the applied stages in the analysis, been tried to set aside during the analysis to fully focus on the unique experiences of each participant.

The analysis was initially conducted in 4 steps that are presented below.

1. Step one was to listen again to the recorded interview while reading a printed version of the transcript and different forms of exploratory notes were conducted in the margins. Beforehand the author had decided in line with the suggestions by Smith & Nizza (2022) to focus on the participants' personal experiences as well as the language in terms of repetitions and difficulties to express oneself in a particular theme. Another aspect that was added to listen for were passages that concerned time and changes in time due to an observation the author made from the interviews while transcribing the material that this might be a recurrent and important aspect to dive in to in the data- material. All notes where then written into clear sentences in a two collum table in a word document while re-reading the transcript several times, with notations of where to find the passages in the transcript.

2. The second step in the analysis contained of writing experiential statements based upon the explanatory notes of the interview containing both the psychological and contextual processes of the experience (Smith & Nizza 2022). These statements were written within the other column in the word-document and then the author re-started step one with the second interview of the same participant repeating every step until having experiential statements for both interviews. The transcripts were written in Swedish as well as the exploratory notes, another layer to the process was that the experiential statements were written in English. When finalized these two steps of both interviews with participant 1 all experiential statements emerged together in step 3 and 4 of the analysis.

3. The third step of the analysis contained clustering the different experiential statements into themes, and this was done for both interviews of the participant together, mixing all experiential statements. All experiential statements were printed and cut out and placed on a big table allowing them to be moved around and conceptually connected in different groups, from suggestions by Smith and Nizza (2022)

4. Step four contained of naming these clusters of experiential statements into experiential themes, writing the experiential themes into a table and going back and forward between the original transcript and the themes and experiential statements. Trying to perform a process the *hermeneutic circle* from the whole to the details and back (Frost 2021; Smith et al. 2008). The experiential themes, experiential statements and connected quotes from the transcripts were written into one table per participant.

The same procedure was repeated for the second and third participant, in the end having gone through all four steps for all participants individually, showed in Figure 4 below.
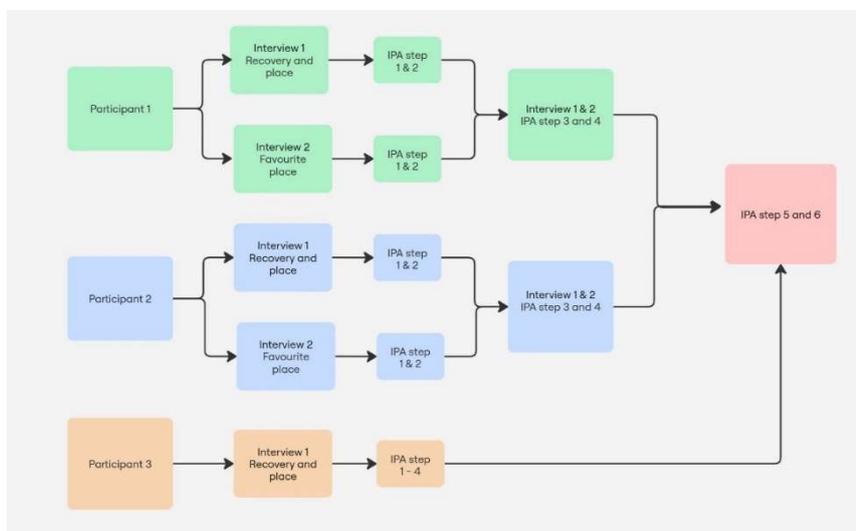
Figure 4. The analytical process with IPA for this study. Source: Author´s own figure.

Following the first four steps an analytical process of connecting the results from the three participants in a cross-case analysis was made. The cross-case analysis followed the suggestions from Smith & Nizza (2022) by starting with connecting and comparing the experiential themes of each participant. The tables with the experiential themes, experiential statements and quotes from the transcripts were printed out to be more easily compared and after finding connections on the experiential theme level between the participants the comparison went down to the experiential statements level and to the actual transcript and quotes. Finding similarities but as well contradictions in-between or particularities of each participant (Grace & Priest 2015). New experiential themes on a group level were created.

The last part of the analytical process was to write a narrative account of the results of the analysis in a way that brought a clear presentation of the participants' sense making of their experience of the studied phenomena as well as the authors

interpretation of the same (Smith & Nizza 2022). The IPA analysis was conducted in two different periods during the research process, first the four interviews with participants 1 and 2 were analysed in all 6 steps and then the data-material from participant 3 was analysed in step 1-4 before combined with the analytical results of the other 2 participants. By working closely with the five transcripts and the tables with individual experiential themes and statements, new interpretations were being made at this stage and the connections between the different experiential themes became clearer and new conceptual similarities between the participants' experiences emerged. The main experiential themes on a group level from the first analysis were found relevant and became enriched with specific particularities and experiences from participant 3.

4.10.2 Thematic analysis of the interviews

The thematic analysis was made with in total 4 interviews with three participants (2-3) as showed in Figure 5 below. Participant 1 as well have experience of working within the field related to PSU but did not touch upon those experiences as much during the interviews which made the author decide to exclude those two interviews form the thematic analysis.
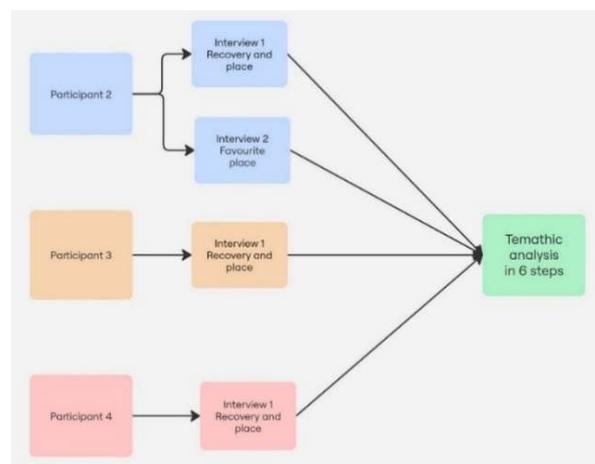
Figure 5. The analytical process with thematic analysis. Source: Author´s own figure.

The thematic analysis was made on selected parts of data-material concerning professional experience using the 6-step model by Braun and Clark (2006) such as *familiarization with the material*, *finding initial codes*, *searching for themes within the initial codes*, *reviewing the different themes and their consistency*, *defining and giving names to the themes* and *lastly to write the analytical report*.

The analytical process was based upon an inductive approach of finding both sematic and latent patterns across the whole dataset in relation to professional

experiences and knowledge of the studied phenomena and what cooccurring themes that could be found in between the data-material (Braund & Clark 2006). This approach guided all steps in the analysis but at the same time a critical-realist epistemology has guided the process, not excluding theoretical connections and reflections throughout the process of analysis.

The IPA analysis was made first and themes connected to different temporal aspects of recovery came forward in the IPA analysis. Which made the author searched for literature regarding perspectives of time in relation to recovery before the thematic analysis and that has been interwoven into the reading and analysis of the material in search for different understandings of time and recovery. This would imply that as well a more theoretically driven analysis was made in relation the specific topic of time (Braun & Clarke 2006).

4.5 Ethical considerations

There are several ethical aspects that have been touched upon during the whole research process of this study that are important to mention, especially concerning the aspects of conducting the study in a way that avoids harming the integrity of the participants (Swedish Research Council 2024). If this study had been a research project or a doctoral thesis it would be necessary to do an ethically review and get an approval by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority because of the collection of sensitive and personal information regarding health, well-being and former experiences of recovery related to PSU (Swedish Research Council 2024). Different universities and institutions have different local requirements and formalizations of assurance of ethical aspects of bachelor and master's thesis regarding sensitive and personal information (Wendel et al. 2024).

Initiating the project this aspect of ethical approval concerned my thoughts and may be connected to my professional background as a social worker where questions of professional secrecy and ethics are central. But also, broader ethical aspects as why I should do this study and if the focus and topic is of interest and importance for the persons addressed in the study? Is it something that could be practically useful and how will it best be performed? Carla Willig et al. (2017) defines these types of inquiries as the ethical *why* and ethical *how* of qualitative research in psychology going beyond the mere individuals taking part in a study.

One such aspect concerns the question of studying the experience of a phenomenon that the author self does not have a personal experience from. Leili Laanemets (2005) discusses back and forth the different power relations and levels of interaction regarding research within the field of PSU, highlighting the need of participatory research and involving persons with own experience of PSU within the process of knowledge formation in the field. This study cannot be defined as a participatory or action-based research since the formation of research design, questions, performance and analysis have all been performed by the author

(Laanemets 2005). Nevertheless, with the focus from an exploratory ambition on highlighting the lived experience of recovery and relations to the outdoor environment during processes of recovery. The performance of this study could be compared to what Laanemets (2005:106) according to Svensson (2002) defines as to "*research for*" a specific target group with the aim to contribute to practice and reflections on experienced based knowledge. This perspective may involve some risks, while setting the agenda, of neglecting or overlooking important aspects lifted by the participants considering that the researcher holds the advantage of determining what should be part of the study or analysis of the same (Laanemets 2005).

Several ethical aspects have been constantly present and ongoing throughout the whole research process and not viewed upon as something possible to solve through a setting of ethical rules such as for example obtaining informed consent (Willig et al. 2017; Frost 2021). Willig et al. (2017) refers to the ethical ongoing process as an openness to reflect upon dilemmas, conflicts and potential ambivalent situations that will emerge during the process.

One example of an ambivalent situation and dilemma that occurred during the research process is connected to a situation where double roles of the author as a professional social worker used to act in a specific situation clashed with the role of a student conducting a master thesis that the author has less experience of. This situation created several reflections and emotions that was addressed with the supervisor of the study to be able to take decisions of how to proceed.

The reflections by the author concerned whether it had been appropriate to seek for participants within open care treatment facilities with support of the staff where the potential participants currently were in treatment. No interviews have in the end been conducted with persons within active open care treatment centres, two interviews were cancelled beforehand by the interested participants, and one was cancelled in agreement between the author and the interested participant due to a personal situation.

A decision was made not to continue the quest for new interested participants within ongoing treatment. But though several persons within ongoing treatment showed interest to participate and curiosity of the topic of relations to favourite outdoor places while in recovery would make it interesting to further reflect around how a larger study could be conducted involving specific treatment centres or organisations in a more participatory study design. As for example, performed and defined by Laanemets (2005: 107) addressing one out of four stages in interactive research by Svensson (2002) "*to research with*" as an interactive process of knowledge production through where the researcher and the involved participants create, performs and learns from the whole research process together. For the timeframe of this study this appeared hard to conduct but remains highly important.

To reach the lived experiences of the possible participants semi-structured interviews was selected as the best methodological tool to use but where there any risks that the interview situation itself could affect the participants psychologically? It was a central issue during the process to safeguard this and to be sensitive to the reactions of the participants before and during the interview situation. Informed consent to participate and easy possibility to recall participation or interrupt the interview situation without needing to explain why was thoughtfully described to each participant, in line with the report *Good research practice* (Swedish Research Council 2024).

The interview guides left out specifically sensitive questions about experiences connected to trauma and in-depth information about personal experiences of PSU. The interviews were transcribed manually and after the analysis and writing up of the results the author contacted the participants to ask if they wanted to read the selected quotes and a very brief descriptions of the different themes of the analysis under which their quotes were presented as a form of *member checking* referred to by LaCroix (2022). The full-text interpretations or discussion by the author and quotes from the other participants were not included. LaCroix (2022) discusses different challenges, power relations and risks with member checking. But in relation to the more personal experiences touch upon in this study and that all participants had expressed an interest of reading the study the author decided to do a brief member checking. With focus on the participants' quotes, a brief description of the themes and how they are described as participants was important to perform to reassure that they felt comfortable, avoiding causing harm while reading the finalized report. Three out of four participants wanted to read their quotes which was sent to them and no one responded with any comments or questions.

The audio recordings, transcriptions, field notes and photos were all stored in a safely directly after the interviews.

The results have been presented with quotes and an interpretative narrative text by the author without mentioning any names or places. To diminish the possibility of identification the participants have not been given fake names but instead the quotes have been presented as participant 1, 2, 3, 4. Throughout the narrative account of the result section a gender-neutral language was being used when referring to the participants, such as they and them.

Regarding the analysis, it was important to reassure that no simplified generalizations were made as suggested in the report good research practice (2024) and that the diversity of the participants shine through in the analysis without risking integrity and confidentiality. This required attention and sensibility of the data material and an ongoing reflection of how to write up the results.

4.6 Methodological reflection

This section will reflect upon the method, research design and performance of the study in relation to the discussion in the ethical considerations regarding different aspects of power relations and experienced based understandings of a specific phenomenon (Frost 2021; Laanemets 2005).

During the interviews the author have tried to reframe, shortly summarize or ask *do you mean…*to reassure that the author have understood the participant perspective and what they have been talking about in the interviews. These prompts or questions have led to that the participant sometimes have talked more about the specific experience leading to a richer material.

In other occasions it becomes clear while listening to the audio recordings that the author did miss to ask follow-up questions regarding a certain topic and deeper understandings of an interesting topics have been left out due to this. The craft of interviewing is an ongoing process of learning (Kvale & Brinkman 2015) and the different forms of interviews in this study provided a great learning process and possibility of comparing on-site and on-line interviews as well as indoors sitting and outdoor go-along interviews.

The two-step interviews supported the process of understanding and provided a second chance to come back to a certain topic touched upon at the first interview or to ask a question that accidentally were left out at the first interview. The author has a professional experience of more counselling and supportive colloquies and not as much experience of research interviews.

The authors experience of talking around the topic of recovery, PSU and different forms of treatments might have led to a more relaxed atmosphere during the interview at the same time as the author had worries of that the interview should not become a therapeutic setting with risk of leading the participant to talk more than they wanted to in the frame of an interview. All these aspects were considered with attention in the data-collection and analytical stage of the process acknowledging the power of the author within the process of interpreting and writing up the results (Frost 2021).

Carla Willig et al. (2017) problematizes the use of two-part interviews regarding the risk of them becoming more like therapy settings and it was important to the author to stress the difference between the two interviews for the participants. The initial thought was to have a go-along interview in the second interview to reframe the context and focus on slightly different things on the second interview, more direct in relation to a specific place even though the topic of recovery was talked upon at the second interview it was more in relation to experiences and perceptions in that specific place.

One of the second interviews were performed as a go-along interview and the more active and moving go-along interview gave another dimension into the participants' experiences in comparison to the first interview as well as a more

meta-reflective dimension (Grace & Priest 2015) regarding the participants' personal experiences in place and about recovery.

The go-along interview as well allowed room for the interplay with the environment to come forward and guide the flow of the interview, as referred to by Kusenbach (2010), Frost (2021), D´Errico & Hunt (2022). The participant moved around and showed the author that followed and asked questions to capture the different experiences which brought forward both perception and movement in place in the interview and participant observation.

In the second interview concerning favourite places was changed to an indoor interview and photos of the selected place from different times were looked upon instead. This affected the potential of coming close to the experience in place that became more distant, but instead the importance of memories in place came forward.

Another aspect of power relations is to be transparent about the researcher's role in the performance of the study as well as the analytical and interpretative process and according to Bryne (2022) there is no ambition with a reflexive thematic analysis of finding the "right answer". The analytical process is defined by Bryne (2022) as a process of interpretation in the intersection between the researcher skill and experience of analysing, the data material and the theoretical assumptions.

The interpretation of the researcher of the participants' interpretations is as well central in IPA (Frost 2021; Larkin et al. 2006). A critique of IPA is related to that how to practically perform the reflexive process is not as articulated in methodological texts around IPA according to Grace & Priest (2015). One part of the critique concerns that even though there, according to Grace & Priest (2015), is no claim for reduction within IPA the interpretative process happens at several stages and should therefore be given more importance in the theoretical and methodological considerations.

The reflexive stages of this process happened in the moment of interviewing as mentioned above, the pre-knowledge of different terms and concepts or the authors lack of personal experience of being within recovery may have influenced the interview situation and the author tried to be conscious about it before, during and after the interviews.

The author knew two of the participants from before, from two different work circumstances several years ago without having an active contact today. This pre-contact was not considered to negatively affect the outcome of the interviews but did undoubtedly to some degree have impact of the actual interview situation. One of the participants reflected on the fact that they knew the author a bit from before made it easier to relax during the interview. The topics talked upon in the interview have not been addressed in former conversations or job relations, but the author knew, from before that they both had a lot of experience and thoughts around relations to the outdoor environment during recovery.

In an interview situation several aspects may affect the conversation and experience such as language, body language and expectations by both participants and the interviewer (Grace & Priest 2015). The author did have a concern for the interview to become both rich and in depth but at the same time not too revealing of sensitive aspects or traumas and did have an ongoing meta-thought around this during the interviews, especially for the two participant the author knew from before that might risk becoming more personal. Overall, a lot of reflection has been made regarding the responsibility one holds with the shared experiences of the participants. Both of giving the experiences justice in the interpretation, being clear about what is the authors' interpretation of their experiences as well as writing something that perhaps could be practically of use. One participant expressed that they felt happy to contribute with their experiences and another one expressed curiosity for what this study could lead to.

In the analytical process the difference between an IPA analysis and a thematic analysis comes forward by far related to difference in strategy to focus either on one participant experience at a time for an in-depth analysis or by reading and putting together themes from the whole data set at once. The analytical process may go back and forth between an explorative and a critical orientation and Braun and Clarke (2022) is addressing the commonly used distinction between hermeneutics of empathy and hermeneutics of suspicion by Ricoeur (1970) as key concepts within qualitative research. Pluralistic qualitative research is defined by flexibility and openness towards the diversity of human experience, informed by different perspectives and understandings (Frost 2021).

In this study the focus is on the lived experience of relations to specific outdoor environments within recovery and which roles and meanings these relations may have for different aspects of the recovery process. The participants' experiences derive from both personal and professional practices which in different ways may impact their interpretations of the same. Understandings of their personal experience may influence their professional practice that in turn may impact their current understandings of their personal experiences. The results of the study have limits in generalisability due to few participants, but the material still provides in-depth descriptions and interpretations of the participants' experiences. The two step interviews and the two different forms of analysis may have created a more flexibility to analyse the material from different perspectives in line with what Frost (2021) describes more opportunities to try to understand the participants' experiences. It was a deliberating and sometime frustrating experience to go from the IPA analysis focusing on each person's specific experience to the more overarching thematic analysis trying to find consistent themes among all participants' professional experiences. The process has been both time consuming and difficult. Afterwards, looking back at the process there might be some aspects could have been structured in another way by the author from start.

5. Results

The first part of the aim of the study was to explore experiences of relations to the outdoor environment during the process of recovery. The second part of the aim was to explore which aspects that were understood and interpreted by the participants as constituting the process of recovery from PSU and which roles and meanings the relations to natural outdoor environments may have in the recovery process. To start a presentation of the results concerning the experienced and defined crucial components of processes of recovery will be presented in part 1, each analysis per se. Thus, first the IPA analysis, in section *5.1,* about personal experiences of important aspects connected to processes of recovery followed by the thematic analysis in section *5.2* where the professional experiences and related knowledge are presented.

Part 2 follows the same pattern as part 1 and the IPA analysis is presented in section *5.3*, with focus on the results concerning personal experiences of favourite outdoor places during recovery and interpretations of roles and meanings the outdoor environment may hold in the process of recovery. Followed by the thematic analysis in section *5.4* with focus on the professional experiences and related knowledge concerning the role and meanings that the outdoor environment may have in the process of recovery.

5.1 Part 1 Processes of recovery- IPA analysis

All participants lift the complex and demanding processes of struggling and coping with PSU and to proceed in a recovery process and many different aspects that they express as important within a recovery process comes forward in the interviews. Two main emergent themes that stick out in their experiences are related to *the process of creating meaningfulness through habits* and *the role of challenges as enabling awareness about needs.*

In this narrative account different aspects of perceived safety have been integrated into all emergent themes in the IPA analysis due to that it is a recurrent theme that was hard to separate as a singular theme from the participants' experiences of the process of recovery and the outdoor environment, being highly related and depend on their perception of safety.

5.1.1 The process of creating meaningfulness through habits

All participants experience an importance of creating space to come away from negative thoughts and stress as part of the recovery process and to gain restoration as well as letting go of thoughts that keep repeating themselves in the head.

...if you take me as an example, that have been at it for many years, no, but that, that system eventually breaks down and it becomes very hard to slow down (Participant 3)

They all experienced that it is important to find something meaningful to fill one´s everyday life with both to cope with stress as well to find an existential meaningfulness early in the recovery process, which then eventually can develop into something that one truly likes and might become a new habit. One participant exemplifies with that this process initially can be very hard. *It´s hard at start, but eventually it becomes a routine and then you want to go and train. But it is important to get there to want to. (Participant 2)*

An example of how the positive effect from an activity might inspire and support motivation to continue and try out more, a cyclic development an experience that eventually becomes a part of one's everyday life. *For me, being in nature and so on it was more that as I know it makes me feel good then I´ll do it. Then I need to do it because otherwise I might end up there, well not now this far afterwards, but right then. (Participant 2)*

Another participant holds the importance of finding a purpose in the here and now supporting the process of knowing what they are doing even if they do not know where they're going. *...today I think like this, since I don´t fully understand life it is a matter of filling life with something that I find meaningful. (Participant 3)*

It might be hard to start this process by oneself depending on different circumstances and former experiences all participants lifts that a crucial aspect is to receive support, inspiration as well as respectful and positive affirmation from the social and physical environment within for example a treatment centre or form one's social network and peers.

In the beginning when I came there, I was working exclusively with the greenhouse and gardening and I loved it, like putting onion and carrots and the see it grow up and then go back and pick it for the kitchen. (Participant 1). Well, I was inspired and yes, it must have had to do with where I was… and the responsible persons there that had been there for a long time, they inspired me because they came and praised me for the food. I think that this have had to be about that I, for the first, I was feeling better, and something had inspired me to feel better, and I had done something with it. (Participant 1)

A commonality in all participants' experiences is the importance if that someone else sees and supports the process one is in, acknowledging the struggles and shows trust and belief in that one can find coping strategies and find ways of taking care of oneself that resonates with one's specific needs. This support may come from peers within treatment both informal and organised as a part of the treatment, professionals, peer support organisations, social workers or family and friends.

So, it´s great to be validated in what you do. If you are in some form of group or treatment centre and it is like, I think it is important that you get affirmation in that you're doing something good. (Participant 2)

Figure 6. Picture of a symbolic gatekeeper role of the social services pointed out by the participant during the go-along interview, "Here you have the authorities, here you have to stop" (Participant 2). Source: Author´s own picture.

In turn the same participant lifts their experience of how trust for themselves and sense of self has grown through sticking to a goal set by them self and no one else. To "*build themselves*" (*Bygga sig själv*) through the insight about their needs and what supports their well-being.

> *… that you can do it. That you manage to do that routine, which no one else, which is voluntary like. For me, there was nobody who sad that you had to exercise, you decided for yourself….there you did it yourself, I do this when everyone else are watching TV or stands and smoke in the corridors…I remember that it felt good to go and practice. (Participant 2)*

Several of the participants lifts that many persons struggling with addiction to a larger extent carry traumatic experiences related to unsecure attachment and lack of care as children and one participant relate to their personal childhood experience of how they escaped into different activities to cope. *It was hard enough to make me feel bad and I fled away very much into sports and into nature, I was always outdoors and among other things I went fishing a lot. (Participant 3)*

They describe how nature always have been important to them since childhood but also acknowledge a contradictive emotion in the present wondering if they sometimes push themselves to hard by following a rough structure of being outdoors in the *fresh* air whenever the sun is shining.

In this section the elaboration of the experiences of *Participant 2* shows that pushing themselves to create daily routines has helped to experience safety today. How experience of trust for themselves and sense of self has grown through sticking to a goal set by themselves and no one else. On the other hand, *Participant 1* experience the social atmosphere and the inspiration from both the physical environment and the social community at the treatment centres as enabling support in their creativity and daily activities. Aspects related to social support and to dare to share one´s vulnerability to be able to receive more genuine and profound support seems to be closely related to their perceived safety at place. *Participant 3* interprets

both their present and past (as a child) self as searching for activities and habits as a dual process of searching for existential meaning as well as a way of coping with difficult situations and emotions and how they sometimes experience their routines as too rigid.

5.1.2 The role of challenges as enabling awareness about needs

Throughout the interviews a healing and dynamic narrative in relation to the recovery process and the struggles that may come with experiences of addiction is painted by all three participants, especially with focus on enhancing the honesty with oneself of one's needs and limitations. All participants touch upon the topic of relapse as something very common, *So, like to change it is, recovery, it is not easy, right. There are many that relapse like. (Participant 1).* One participant lift believes of that there are normative assumptions around relapse that dominate different treatment methods *… that it is more difficult to come back from drugs after each relapse, you know sometimes one says like that at treatment centres. For me, I think it is false to say like that…after each time if you want to come out of that then you learn what you shouldn´t do. (Participant 2)* This participant reflects further on how the experience of relapse does not only have to be a negative experience, although it contains risks, and that it has been a learning process for them personally. They find the step-by-step practice and growing awareness form experience as a crucial aspect of the process of recovery exemplified below with metaphors from the forest path.

If you fall then you have, then you know that you have overestimated your ability and that´s why you should take it a bit calmer next time. That´s why you need some relapses, always when they say ""relapse uh it becomes even harder to come up from that" no, it won´t. It is a good experience….you do not know one single stone, root or stone but if you get practice, then you know. It goes faster and faster and next time, the relapses might help with that like, so relapse is not all negative. (Participant 2)

But as well as to practice honesty with oneself in the process of getting connection to one's emotions, limitations and needs and not to run to fast, acknowledge the complexities and need of safe routs. The participant gives an example; *Now, I am free from drugs, I handle this. I´ll quickly get a job, an apartment, internship or just go out to drink a beer. This is a beer (points at a slippery stone at the path). I´ll shortly make it and then "shun" (Shows with their body that they fall). (Participant 2).*

Taking the safe routes to protect themselves has been a support in their recovery process as well as in the forest track. They experience motivation and support to dare to take care of themselves as intertwined.

Another participant touches on a similar theme and describes the coping with relapse within a recovery process as an effortful act of honesty with

oneself.*...depends on how far down you allow yourself to go, this is your choice, and I mean it´s just like that. You must see that, right, I chose to do this myself and I chose to end it...and I as well chose if I allow myself to like, completely loose it. (Participant 1)*

Another participant describes a turning point in the insight about themselves that came through a challenging question from a staff at a treatment centre that allowed them to reflect about their experience from another perspective. *...so right there I gave up everything, all my reservations....there´s no way of continuing this, I must fully engage in the treatment. (Participant 3)* Needing to confront how some places and actions may be closely related to experiences of PSU and their need to fully give them up, even though it was hard and they had ambivalent feelings towards giving them up.

The healing part of the narrative is related to the participants growing knowledge of themselves and their strengths and limitations as well as understandings of former experiences and actions through the lens of acceptance of one´s responsibility, even though many external and structural factors may affect the decisions one make as well. All participants reflect about the importance and difficulty of believing in oneself from their personal experiences and how challenges in the path of recovery may enhance self-awareness.

5.2 Part 1 Processes of recovery- thematic analysis

In the thematic analysis of 3 participants work experiences three main themes were found as crucial elements related as important aspects of the individual recovery processes. 1. *Processes of gaining structure and safety with the subtheme's - importance of routines and structure -a sensitive and responsive approach - accessibility and trust. 2. The process of will, change and honesty 3. Movement of time within recovery.*

5.2.1 Processes of gaining structure and safety

Importance of routines and structure:
All participants bring up the importance of providing a clear structure and safe routines with predictability within a treatment centre as something that supports the overall process of recovery in various aspects.

To bring about change or support a process of change we need to have structures, safe routines in place from where we can support... (Participant 4). You want to find, like, uh, routines in your everyday life that makes you feel safe (Participant 2) ...destructive patterns of behaviours, or whatever you want to call them...it is not something that you easily just shake off uh it requires a solid structure. (Participant 3)

So, to say that routines and a clear structure may strengthen the sense of safety needed to dare to face changes in one's behaviour and interpretation of the same or to be open to receive support. The need of a clear structure as described by the participants is often the base of different forms of treatments within the field of recovery from PSU and according to Kemp (2018) often related to a limited view of temporal "*ordinary*" structure of society. Kemp (2018) addresses that the term *structure,* especially when it is provided by a clinic or treatment centre may hold a normative understanding of which form of structure that one is supposed to perform or adapt to, and it is therefore important to aim for a more in-depth understanding of personal experiences of structure. The view of structure presented by all participants touch on to something deeper not merely lifting the every-day-aspects of structure, such as schedules and timeframes (Kemp 2018) and is divided in two subthemes below: *a sensitive and responsive approach* and *accessibility and trust.*

A sensitive and responsive approach:

All participants address in the interviews that the process of a clear structure goes hand in hand with a sensitive and responsive approach towards individual needs and experiences that are expressed with slightly different wordings but interpreted as connected in the analysis.

… be loving it is as well very important…when a client is feeling very bad, they will eventually feel bad... and then it is very important that there is someone there to accept and hold it and handle it in good way. (Participant 3) So, if you want to come away from something you need to be somewhere where you feel safe…it may take a little time to feel that sense of safety in places and with people. (Participant 2) … responsiveness and showing alternatives are undoubtedly extremely important. (Participant 4)

What is described is that only structure may not alone bring perceptions of safety and needs. Perceptions of safety is related to both accessibility of different forms of alternative strategies and activities as well as an emotional and social support based on a sensitivity towards different experiences.

For the process of one´s recovery from PSU dynamic relations between the self and others and perceptions of safety seems to play a crucial role to re-capture the self and the same topic is lifted by all participants. *Experiencing trust to your own ability to make wise decisions, that is very important, like to trust in that I know what I need. (Participant 4) … you need to be brave to handle it so…that you are receptive of other ideas than your own. (Participant 3)*

Participant 2 highlights that for some persons it might be a hard process to gain safety and be comfortable in a new place with new people and refer to their experience of meeting people that does not hold any safe places in their life and the

importance to support this process. *... there are those that may never be able to do so. I have seen in work that there are no places where one experience safety.*

Accessibility and trust:

Having accessibility to and receiving support to try out different forms of strategies and tools are mentioned by all participants as important within the recovery process, especially in the process of gaining structure and routines. To be able to collect strategies and tools of affect and self-regulation and reflection to bring with oneself further on supporting the overall recovery, especially after treatment. *... after a while you leave that place and you have to recreate that sense of safety somewhere else. (Participant 2)* It becomes important to collect strategies to bring with oneself and this comes with material or physical difficulties and the participants' experiences of if this is available or not goes a part.

...there´s very little of that like, to be able to try out or variation of things as well as the person that have to try out or get someone to try out with. For me, I would really want to bicycle with my clients every day like, to get them out of their rut. Their worries and stuff every day, but then I go home, and they go home. Then they do not have access to a bike or to go out into nature, they don´t have that. (Participant 2) In the long run we want to give them tools, strategies to be able to feel better, to stabilize their well-being, be able to take part of the treatment here. But it has to be something that is available when you come home, and we know that money can be a dilemma…(Participant 4)

Economical and material barriers might impede a supportive routine or structure to be maintained and the different degrees of accessibility and flexibility at a treatment centre may affect the process of gaining structure and safety.

5.2.2 Processes of will, inner change and honesty

To gain willpower is described as a *process* by one participant and all participants highlight individual and personal processes of will and decisions of change as a crucial aspect of the recovery process, something that comes from within everyone that cannot be given to another person.

...that I know is important, that change comes from within to be sustainable. (Participant 4) If we generalize, I would say that it is crucial that you really want to. I always say like this, like it often starts with a thought as it did for me…we can call it a thought to become free from drugs and then it develops into a wish to be free from drugs and then hopefully it turns into a will to become free from drugs. But even willpower is so to say, willpower is a process. (Participant 3)

Participant 2 makes an analogy to the path we walk during the go-along interview *to do this path on your own, because that is what you need to do in perhaps a recovery, others might have been a support…but eventually you'll need to run by yourself.*

Owning one´s own process to reach a sustainable recovery that is anchored in each and every one and the professionals work is to support this process described as *to enable change (Participant 4 5: 30).* This process of enabling and supporting persons to reach a sustainable change and that *"you get to find your own way, so to say" (Participant 2:1 14:30)* which is something that may take time. All participants describe that many persons would need support to reach the specific insight or states of mind of what change may mean especially for them. In relation to this complex process of reaching an inner change several aspects are defined as interrelated, affecting the overall change and process of will.

Honesty, the participants relate the process of honesty towards oneself, and the importance of holding a healing narrative

> *….that really honest contact of change… (Participant 2) … you have to be very, very honest you must talk about your own problematic….you have to have what we call an open mindset. (Participant 3) The client needs to own their own process of change.(Participant 4)*

Support with *realistic expectations* in term of when one has decided to start a process of recovery it is common to tend to expect everything to go very fast and the participants highlight that this is important to work with.

Facing more *structural aspects* such as stigmatisation and its implications of one's sense of self as well as how different social, economic and material barriers may affect the process of recovery.

> *Like to put away all ideas about that you are wrong and ugly and everything what it is and so, try to build up the idea of that you are worthy, that you make a difference and have an importance and so. It becomes very strange that society is imposing these ideas upon us. (Participant 3)*

This process of will, inner change and honesty hold many different aspects lifted by the participants as interrelated enabling or hindering the personal journey of recovery or support of the same, such as honesty, realistic expectations, and different structural aspects such as stigmatisation. Which may affect the overall recovery process and in particular the process of finding *one's own path* and will of change. Lifting both more individual aspects of recovery besides social and structural aspects.

5.2.3 Different aspects of time within recovery

The process of recovery is described by the participants as containing different phases both in relation to different parts within a treatment or a twelve-step program and as in a more long-term perspectives of an individual process of recovery not merely focusing on the phases of treatment but instead on how to gain strategies to support a long-term recovery.

The process of time within recovery is described as dynamic, recovery needs to take time, and it is not necessarily a linear process and the support from a treatment centre may if it works well help to reach the essence of one's personal process more intensely.

Many persons that come here have decided to create a change, then all the bits should fall in place "just tell me what to do"...uh but this will take time, to let the change take time (Participant 4) ... suddenly a tree falls on the path and then you have to stop and like this, come back to those decisions that you made in the beginning (Participant 2) So this ongoing support and being at a treatment centre is much of worth ... it makes the process become more intense and through that it goes faster. (Participant 3)

The temporal aspects around addiction that comes forward in the interviews are related to the extreme stress addiction may create for an individual which becomes important for the understanding of what is crucial for recovery.

...to slow down the pace and dare to take it a bit slower, to put out fight and flight responses (Participant 4)
Stress, like if you live with an addiction then stress is like, you become stressed out. If you are too long of a time in criminality and addiction, they say, it is like being at war... and you have a very hard time to slow down. (Participant 3) ...this with the stress that stresses and all these negative thoughts that are always there, going (oehehoeheh) (Participant 2)

The results show that within the recovery process another temporal dimension of allowing oneself to slow down the pace to become more aware of ones needs, reservations and limitations is important.

An enhanced sensory awareness...and that we know is very supportive in treatment, especially when you are about to start to pay attention to your signals. (Participant 4) I can, after all, relate with the clients in how they are fighting with their models of explanations and reservations and fears and so ... it´s very much that that all is about. (Participant 3)

Another aspect in relation to the time aspect of recovery is that of being able to collect strategies and tools of affect and self-regulation as support in future different life circumstances, as mentioned above in the subtheme accessibility and trust. To receive support to try out different activities and strategies that might bring meaning and a new gaze towards the future.

We do this together until it becomes an interest so important to you that you want to keep it, that you want to develop it. (Participant 2) To see changes in the small steps is also important, because if you think about that the reward system and dopamine system that we face here is completely out

of balance and you want the fast solutions, the quick rewards to feel yes, I made this. (Participant 4)

A process of recovery and change holds according to all participants as well ambivalent elements that are important to acknowledge and reflect upon such as sorrow or loss of times, places, persons and contexts. *... allow yourself to grieve, not that want it back but that it somehow was a part of your life. (Participant 4) One thing that we say a lot here is that your old playgrounds do not work anymore, so you need to avoid them. (Participant 3)*

The reflections around the need of processing past experiences and collecting strategies and tools towards the future touches upon this multiple temporal existence of sense of self. The results show that time within recovery has many meanings both in relation the overall process of recovery, allowing it to take time but as well to increase awareness of one's own movement in and with time in the past, present and future.

5.3 Part 2 Experience, roles and meanings of the outdoor environment during the process of recovery- IPA-analysis

All participants are describing a continuum of processes over time, bringing up memories and relations to the specific outdoor environment throughout different phases during their recovery processes. But jet in the analysis the focus has been to understand the participants' sense making of these experiences and memories in the present time and context as well the meaning these experiences might have had in their personal process of recovery. The results will be presented below divided in four themes clustering the conceptual similarities and discrepancies between the participants' experiences of which role and meaning the outdoor environment might have within the process of recovery. *1. Time aspects of change in experience of nature mirroring processes of change within the recovery process, 2. Outdoor environment providing space within the boundaries of an institution, 3. Movements of change and change as a movement requiring space, 4. Supportive environments and natural elements and details bringing calmness.*

5.3.1 Time aspects of change in experience of nature mirroring processes of change within the recovery process

All participants describe a process of gradient change within the recovery process related to awareness of emotions, of needs and notions of self-care coming a bit later into the process of recovery. Gradient changes within their recovery process are mirroring changes in their experiences of being in nature during their processes of recovery.

No, but like it is great that you can be outdoors, really, but you might not get that when you are in that, like when you just came out of an addiction I don´t think that you see nature as recovery, it comes maybe later on when you´ve have woken up a bit or depending on what you want and how motivated you are to quit. (Participant 2)

One participant exemplifies with their more inward focus during the first months of their personal recovery process and makes a connection to their different experiences of the outdoor environment at two different treatment centres that they spent time at following each other. The environment at the first treatment centre was not as important nor supportive to them in comparison with the environment at the following treatment centre that they stayed at later into the process.

The first treatment centre where I have spent the first five or six months or, so I was really sad, you know and the environment there was not so calming ... as to say the nature there did not have that peaceful effect on me. Then it was as like that it was the few first months of being drug-free when a lot of emotions come up, like after an addiction you tend to supress your feelings. The drug itself does that to you, yes. (Participant 1)

This participants experience of the natural environment in the second treatment centre was more impactful due to both being perceived as a more comfortable and supportive environment but as well related to that they had gone beyond the first phase of the recovery, struggling with difficult emotions that impeded a more outward focus towards the surrounding environment.

One of the participants emphases that they experience themselves at another stage today in comparison to the beginning of the recovery process many years ago and today their motivation to be outside in nature is different from while in the recovery process. The outdoor environment within a treatment centre and the different activities outdoors supported them to re-discover how nature may bring calmness.

Once you get out you want to go to a place like this (refers to the place we´re at during the interview) ... there´s like, some kind of peace and quiet in my old days (laughing) if one should have come to this place and have the same experience at the age of 20 or 15 like, I don´t think so…It´s probably something that I have started to think about by the age of 30 or so....So, nature and stuff like that ... you became more aware of it. Before it has always been other things, but now it´s like uh it´s kind of more, take up another space in one´s life (Participant 2)

Author: Can you remember…is it something...when you think about that change around the age of 30, is it something special?

Ah, I think it´s more this with being drug-free, that´s the main thing. But I think that that place at the treatment centre was also very…the nature made you go oh shit, you know...so, you can be like, wow. So, it takes a little water and a little soil and trees and stuff like that to give you that feeling. (Participant 2)

Becoming overwhelmed by nature and of different phenomena in nature such as heavy rain, thunder lightning, wild animals and a naturalness is expressed thorough out the interviews as important aspects of an outdoor environment, becoming a drive to go outside. This experience has grown since as a way of creating meaningfulness in their life today and it was a support when facing changes within their process of recovery.

You find the way you should be at that place (the treatment centre) like, so that one can feel secure. But then after a while you leave that place and you´ll have to recreate that safety again somewhere else….but I think of a place that was great for me in that phase after the institution…a gym, a bike, so for me that was it. (Participant 2)

The experience of the outdoor environment during the stay at a treatment centre is by another participant experienced as regaining contact with their former self as a child and the role nature and fishing played for them during childhood, strengthening a sense of continuity and creating meaningfulness during their recovery.

… almost every lunch and pretty much every evening I would go to a lake there. We had a boat laying there so I rowed out with that boat and fished …but that meant very much to me and fishing meant a lot to me the first seven or eight years (my note; of their recovery process). (Participant 3)

All participants express how the outdoor environments at the different treatment centres they have been to have played a crucial role in their experience in place as well as in their recovery process and well-being. These experiences became more apparent to them and has grown simultaneously as their awareness and ability to open up more towards the surrounding environment increased, beyond the first initial phase of recovery.

There is a clear longing in the narrative of participant 1 and that they especially miss the outdoor environment at the specific treatment shows that they do not have access to that kind of outdoor environment in their present life. In contrast to participant 2 who is constantly seeking out new outdoor places containing their needs of movement and wow-feelings of excitement. The places them self provides inspiration for movement and the urge to come back to them for new experiences. Participant 3 is reflecting on experiences of coping with difficult emotions in their childhood and how the outdoor environment at the treatment centre supported a reconnection to their past times and self which supported the creation of meaningfulness.

5.3.2 Outdoor environments providing space within the boundaries of an institution

Since all participants holds different experiences of being in institutional treatment centres, they reflected a lot about differences in relation to how they experienced the outdoor environment at these places. How the natural environment within a treatment centre is being used is central to if it becomes a part of the experience.

No, but there is a big difference (my note: between two different treatment centres) even if there was nature as well, but it was not like we didn´t use nature. We weren´t out, no, we did not take advantage of the nature. (Participant 1)

One of the participants compares their different experiences of treatments centres to one specific treatment centre and the surrounding nature that made a big impression on them, being a place that they miss today. The nature surrounding that specific treatment centre was one of the favourite places this participant selected when asked to select a favourite place outdoor place for their participation in this study.

I was feeling mentally unwell at the first treatment centre, it disappeared slowly at this treatment centre. Quite quickly and I mean of course you don´t do any associations right away like that, oh well it´s because I have ended up here in nature that it…but it´s something that came with time. Those reflections you get after wards like, why does this feel so different compared to the first treatment centre, and I associate that with nature. (Participant 1)

The experience of the outdoor environment seems to be related to both specific qualities or affordances in the environment, the phase of the recovery process one is in, the actual approach or method being used and how much the environment is integrated within the treatment program. Furthermore, the potential space the outdoor environment may provide to meet individual needs of safety, self-care and space to express oneself seems as well to affect the experience. For one of the participants the outdoor environment at a specific treatment centre created a space to take distance from former behavioural patterns and experiences while the environment supported their adjustment to the place itself.

You had to do something else and then you could go and stand and rake somewhere, cut bushes or so, it was like peaceful and then the talk in these groups is so much about drugs … find something that makes you feel good about yourself, to just stand there and talk about that kind of stuff, you know, it just becomes like this, it felt pointless somehow. Last time (my note: they were within a treatment) you had to, I´ve have been there and talked rubbish to and it didn´t do me any good (laughs). But yeah, the smoking room isn´t a good place for recovery. (Participant 2)

The availability of a surrounding garden at the treatment centre where the care of the garden was integrated within the activities and programs at the centre did as

well provide a space for this participant to create own projects, to activate oneself and the feeling of contentment with oneself.

For me, it´s been about standing and working in these gardens … it´s like an activity, this is what we do during the day, and okay, you just go on with it. But then you notice that peace comes to you in some way … there were many times when I stood there working by myself because there was nothing else to do, just passing the time with this. This was something you could see a beginning and an end to… Then when you see a change, when you work in nature with gardens, you see a difference, and then you were satisfied with it. (Participant 2)

Furthermore, as a space where the surrounding natural environment provided a place for physical activity or restoration and instoration, bringing calmness and supporting thoughts.

So, we had our activities, if you were in the green house or the centre more in general… and then we had our free hours, like… you could walk around there and enjoy the nature there and that's something that you did, I did that a lot. Walked up there and we had a building far up…I could sit there for hours when I had time of and just think. (Participant 1)

The outdoor environment at the treatment centre as well provided space for an activity that could continue after the treatment and supporting an existential experience of meaningfulness. *I even bought a boat then, out by one of the islands here and was out fishing a lot... it makes life meaningful, that it gets a purpose, that I know what I´m doing. (Participant 3)*

All participants share experiences of being within different forms of treatment centres that provided or gave room for activities in a natural outdoor environment, and their experiences has both similarities and differences depending on their individual needs and preferences related to the actual environment and their relation to it. One participant addresses repeatedly during the interviews that they have experienced a lack of accessibility of different activities and methods in treatment centres, that treatment institutions tend to not always give room for different individual needs and abilities.

… it should be accessible. It is hard when you are in these processes, like, but ah no, but when you are at such institutions there are rules and then maybe someone says, eh, I would like to bicycle like out in nature and "no, we don´t do that, we don´t do like that here." Then, maybe you would like to do it individually, but it won´t go because here we do everything in groups … you know it can mess things up, so it locks one up. (Participant 2)

An experience of frustration comes through in this quote exemplifying that adjustability to an institution can both be supportive for the motivational process as

mentioned above with the gardening work, as well as limiting of the same and in this case the urge for doing an activity in the natural outdoor environment. This participant process of shaping of meaningfulness in their recovery process is largely described as being self-driven as the same time as they address a need to receive support and inspiration from peers, a treatment centre or other significant persons in one's life.

... I guess I found that in somehow then how you could get out of your pit or whatever you want to call it for. You'll have to, you get to find your own way, so to speak. (Participant 2)

They experience that this support to some extents have been lacking in their personal process and that they had to by a bicycle for the little money they had while still in the treatment process to be able to come out in nature which today is one of the activities that give a lot of meaning to their life. They have an urge to share this experience within their professional social work highlighting the need of support, inspiration and accessibility to be able to try out new activities.

The outdoor environments within or around a treatment centre may throughout the examples of the participants' experiences hold different meanings during the process of recovery while being in treatment. Both creating space for individual expressions and needs within the structure of an institution, providing space to come away from the institution and of reaching more existential reflections around life. The experience of space is closely related to the accessibility of the outdoor environment in terms of processes of meeting everyone where they are and be sensitive to different needs and former experiences.

5.3.3 Movement of change and change as a movement requiring space

Different dimensions of processes of change are expressed by the participants throughout the interviews both connected to the individual changes in relation to the process of recovery and to a more holistic view of life in general. These dimensions of change mirrors change in nature and how processes of change both require and are constituted by space and movement and how the outdoor environment may be supportive of change, which will be elaborated below.

Each participant experiences the transaction with the physical environment as part of processes of change where the ability of movement and space becomes an important aspect of sensing an outdoor environment even though their ways of movement and activities differ. One of the participants experienced their selected favourite place as providing space for movement as well as having a calming effect.

So, it's a lot of crying and much, okay at this treatment centre I was as well sad at times, but that's what I mean I could go around there and walk around and enjoy the nature there and feel a sense of calmness. (Participant 1)

As if the natural environment that they perceived as calming gave more space for emotions and acceptance or consolidation of the same, important for their individual process of recovery.

The other participant experiences the activity as a central part of their recovery process and the place itself where the activity takes form as an integral part of the activity, possibly creating a driving force or motivation.

Yes, but it´s a place where the activity itself is recovery…and that place has a bit more value like, you make an effort to get there. (Participant 2) This with recovery and to get away from something like this, yes, addiction or like mental ill-health that is, that have been connected to some form of physical activity. (Participant 2)

They lift physical activity as supporting their coping with struggles related to substance use and mental health and to bicycle in nature allowed them a sanctuary, greater contact with themselves during the last step of their recovery process. The ability to move fast is central in their experience of natural outdoor environments both creating meaningfulness and supporting self-determination, potentially enhancing their sense of self.

…that you can be and to decide by yourself where you´ll go and how long you´ll stay at a place. (Participant 2) That´s what keeps you alive that you can, that I can take this route and time and yes, here I´ll go… I think that that´s my way to, so to say, this with recovery and regain energy… For me, it´s about movement, yes, you're looking for a kind of peace. I'm not drawn to cities and things like that. (Participant 2)

All participants experience processes of change as something that is both unique to each individual and largely needs to be self-driven while the support and transaction with the social and physical environment are important aspects for it to happen. Their way of understanding change as a process of gaining experience or new perspectives of oneself, life in general and one's important relations is in different ways related to movement in contrast to stagnation and passivity.

…yes, for me change is, it´s this with to grow and to get other perspectives, so to say, on existence and life and relations to people… Change means a lot, of course, for me it does at least…and it´s something that´s important in life, I think, that you feel that you´re changing and not stagnating. It´s just that it has to happen things around you to, so to say, for change to happen … something that awakens something in you. (Participant 1)

You see changes in nature and well, yes you change all the time. You think a lot when you bicycle. (Participant 2)

... everything is actually made up of relations and relations are extremely important in life. That´s where you get energy, that´s where you get your humanity… so to regain your relations, to create relations that are based upon human values, I think you could say that it´s very important. (Participant 3)

The participants lift the aspect of how change is experienced as an act and process of growing and gaining new perspectives "*to get your humanity back*" *(Participant 3)* in transaction with the social environment. Additionally, understandings of change are also related to the process of gaining experience through the relation to the physical environment, to be able to practice and receive support to dare to try out new things and to take care of oneself. This is expressed by one participant through symbols and metaphors in the natural environment at the favourite place selected for the interview. *That form of bicycling contributes to the fact that you have to make fast decisions about how to avoid problems and that´s maybe something you do later on in….what should I say…what should I do to not end up in problems. (Participant 2)*

The fast track in the forest may have enhanced their contact whit themselves and self-efficacy to cope with challenges in life and within the recovery process.

That´s a problem (points at a tree rot) and that´s a problem (points at a large stone on the path) … you have to make fast decisions … you know, like this, this I´ll avoid quickly…Eh should I take drugs, no, I won´t do that…I´ll avoid that….I´ll go through it. Let´s go there (points straight into the forest) (Participant 2)

To become aware and learn about oneself through experience and the fast track in the forest path with roots, stones and different obstacles becomes a symbol of challenges faced within the recovery process, as the potential risk as well as awareness that may come with coping with a relapse and managing to break and come back from a relapse. A way of practicing conscious decisions to be able to navigate and bicycle along the path of life without falling.

Figure 7. Pictures on various obstacles and barriers on the path (both physical and symbolic) pointed out by the participant. Source: Author´s own pictures.

During the second interview at a selected favourite place, the participants experience of an outdoor place through the lens of activity and movement becomes clear in their way of paying attention to details in the natural elements and characteristics of the place such as gradients, the water by the lake, the rocks, tree roots and stones on the ground along the path visualizing different barriers to go fast through with a bicycle. The need to pay close attention to the ground and eventual barriers is being put in connection to the need to become aware of one´s needs in relation to oneself and others in life in general and especially within a process of recovery. Exemplifying their way of coping with life challenges and practice self-compassion and self-care while paying attention to details to become able to take decisions that supports well-being and not taking unnecessary risks.

You have to be here and now in those decisions because you go, it is tree meters per second if you bicycle and then you´ll have to make "rrrrr" or just stop and look if you´re not experienced " oh shit, where should I go?" Du did like that in the forest path and can´t you just implement that about which partner to choose, which job or who you should be with? Yes, but you have a dialogue with yourself, so to say. Oh, I´m not taking that risk. (Participant 2)

This self-dialogue, both containing a process of gaining awareness about needs to be able to make fast decisions but as well to know when to stop and reflect around the potential risks or barriers, is an ongoing and dynamic process that the participant is engaged in still today.

On the other hand, the favourite place of one of the other participants is not accessible anymore due to that the treatment centre has closed and while being asked to select a favourite place for the study, they associated the outdoor and built environment at the treatment centre to an urban park form their childhood. This park does not appear as during their childhood, being less green and smaller in size. The constant change of time becomes apparent and is present throughout the interview while bringing up memories of these two favourite places. *So, it becomes a bit hard, like to associate to, you understand that right? I mean I almost become sad when I see how it once looked and now it´s completely cut down. (Participant 1)*

Figure 8. Picture of the urban park from the participants ‘childhood that has diminished in size, both in number of trees and actual area. Source: Author´s own picture.

The participant experiences a current lack of connection to the outdoor environments not being able to the same amount of movement as they experienced during childhood or at the selected favourite place by the treatment centre mentioned above. The movement of doing many things, being curious, meeting new people and experiencing new places has always been a crucial drive since childhood in their way of being and relating to the surrounding environment and in their processes of change within life.

So, when I´ve been out travelling, right and different places where I´ve lived at so, I mean it has always meant that things have happen that have changed me. Getting to know people from all over the world and that´s interesting, I mean I find it very fun. I love that life. Here it is hard not to stagnate because I don´t do that much here and have not done so for a while…(Participant 1)

Showing an example of how the transaction with the social and physical environment have supported experiences and processes of change for the participant. They associated the natural and built environment at the treatment centre with the childhood park which may have created a familiarity, becoming one aspect that supported them to relax and experience safety while being at the treatment centre. The place itself seems to be sensed through memories of the physical environment and of experiences of the self in the past in that place affecting the experience of the outdoor and built environment at the treatment centre.

The participants' experiences coincide within the motion of time as well as through experiencing space that allows movement as important aspect of change and support in processes of recovery. The supportive elements of the outdoor environments reflected around in the interviews will be further elaborated in the following section.

5.3.4 Supportive outdoor environments and natural elements bringing calmness

All participants highlight that they perceive calmness, peacefulness, relaxation and safety by being in nature and that this experience is something that they search for and appreciate. Their way of being in nature is as mentioned in previous section related to experiences of movement but their preferred activity differs. One participant is taking distance form passively experiencing nature while another participant is highlighting how they by sitting in a natural environment for meditation or contemplation experience a specific ease and calmness that is hard to reach elsewhere.

It´s easy to sit down…somewhere where it´s only me and nature to meditate…it happens a lot with you when you manage to reach that calmness so to say that you somehow disappear from

yourself…that I mean with to disappear from yourself is when you don´t have a bunch of unnecessary thoughts spinning around in your head. (Participant 1)

To reach the experience of being away from themselves and stressful thoughts in everyday life is an experience that dominate the participants' perception of natural outdoor places.

…you probably skip over that with the stress that stresses. All these negative thoughts that are there all the time (oehoeh) and if you´re out bicycling in beautiful nature surroundings…here in the forest it´s calm, like. (Participant 2)

Then it´s important that there´re as calming signals as possible around you so to say and then nature and this rural environment, it´s very good to have that. (Participant 3)

The different physical aspects perceived as restorative or important for the participants both coincide and differ between them. On participant prefer aspects such as naturalness, diversity in the landscape providing mountains, rocks, moving water, forests and a possibility of refuge or being by themselves in that natural environment as important for an environment to become restorative and support the drive to come there.

There are places where you can do some things in a better way … if you think like out here in nature. I also enjoy finding places where it runs water…you just like the place that there´re, like a forest, then it is a forest, trees and a path, stones and moss and like that but when it comes to water it´s simply another element, it feels more complete (Participant 2) Places that I like are not like, constructed either by someone but it´s only natural places…(Participant 2)

Meanwhile another participant emphasis qualities related to openness and possibility of a view over the surroundings, and an experience of how the environment is cohesive and fits together in a calming way. The view over the hilly landscape with lush trees and the cohesive character of the natural environment at the treatment centre made a strong impression on them.

… It´s highly unusual to me because I usually almost get shortness of breath if the ocean is not near me. But not in the treatment centre, it didn´t bother me a tiny bit, so. Actually, no, I have not made any direct reflections about why, but it might be possible that because of it being high up sort of, up on so you could see out over a valley in somehow, right, you could se far away. (Participant 1)

The third participant experience nature as a source of life providing relaxation and purpose to them and lifts the ocean or a lake as an example, to sit and look at the water, the non-artificial light from the sun and the freshness of the air as

important natural elements. *...where I did my treatment was in the forest by a lake and it was perfect, you know. (Participant 3)*

To be in the sun and beath pretty fresh air is meaningful and it calms some anxiety, I can´t claim that I have that much anxiety, but I would get anxiety if I sat indoors and watched a movie when it´s sun outside. (Participant 3)

The participants expediencies of by being in these supportive natural environments, as have been described above, takes place on different levels both on conscious and unconscious levels not being so easy to pronounce, explain or share with others.

Yes, but you´ll end up, unconsciously from the beginning, in a meditative state. It´s not something that you´re actually aware of from start. I don´t think I was aware of it during the initial period, I became that later because of such a sense of calmness came over me. (Participant 1)

... you get some energy but it´s not like that that all those thoughts and decisions and everything that we have talked about ...it just happens in the moment and then one can talk to someone about it like this (my note: as we do in the interview) but it´s not something that I, at least, bring up and talk about that much. You´ll just no, I bicycled in the forest...but there´s so much more under that heading...people just " ah I´m out walking in nature" and I know that there´s a lot of things going on there. (Participant 2)

The experiences of how being in supportive environments that they feel safe and relaxed within seems to support different levels of contact with themselves and these experiences might to some degree be intertwined with the changing process of recovery as one gain more and more awareness about oneself. While in a process of recovery there is an urge to work with oneself at profound levels, to be able cope with an experience of addiction and gain strategies for well-being. This process of re-connection with oneself while experiencing nature might become a bridge of connecting to something bigger than oneself and that need of consolidation and re-connection to nature may be enhanced in a process of crisis or extra demands. The participants' experience that these processes occur at more profound levels, and one participant is also lifting an uncertainty of how to talk about the experience and that they find that people in general do not talk about their experiences in nature.

5.4 Part 2- Roles and meanings of the outdoor environment during the process of recovery- thematic analysis

5.4.1 Becoming aware of embodied experiences and bodily movements

All participants touch upon how they see different effects of either having access to or integrating nature in their work, such as *stress reductive* and *restorative* aspects of experiences of nature within the process of recovery while in treatment. They highlight different aspects of enhanced sensory awareness, sensory stimulation and bodily contact through either outdoor physical activity, just being in nature or doing some form of activities.

Yes, what we notice is that it slows down the pace…just this with slowing down the pace and dare to be a bit slower. Put of fight and flight responses, like, take it a little easier on earth, that we see very clear effects of. (Participant 4)

It was a client that you know, ruminates all the time like this and then you have bicycled there on the paths and then you´ve a pause and asked like "How did it feel?" "Ah, but you know you´re alive like you breath and puh you get tired, and I didn't know it was like this". (Participant 2)

It´s calming, like, it´s calming being out here, like, you feel that it´s de-stressing when you come here. I think it´s very important, it´s not a coincidence that most treatment centres are situated in the countryside…it´s incredibly important that there´re as many calming signals as possible around you. (Participant 3)

To slow down the pace to both gain contact with internal bodily signals, sensory stimuli and experiences, an interactive process that may potentially become a bridge to self-awareness and self-care according to the participants. All participants refer to that it is common within recovery that one "goes in the pace that the body already has, if it is the fight and flight mood or if one is high up in the window of tolerance." *(Participant 4)*. Movement in nature and enhanced awareness of sensory stimuli and experiences may support the process of becoming aware of one's bodily movements and pace, trying to find the pace that allow oneself to listen inwards.

The participants' work-experiences differ in many ways especially upon how they integrate nature within their different treatment centres and support services within the spectrum of having access to nature, being in nature or being a part of nature and this will be touch upon in the next section. Nevertheless, their thoughts around the importance of stress reduction, restoration and processes of growth within recovery and the potential of natural outdoor environments to enhance these dimensions coincide. The results shows that the participants hold a belief and understanding of nature as important for recovery. This may be related to different levels of nature connectedness which might have an impact on their way of seeing

and interpreting the surrounding outdoor environment and its importance for recovery as well as the other way around.

5.4.2 Presence of nature or being present in nature

The outdoor environments that are being thought upon and talked about in the interviews concerning the participants' working experiences will be briefly described below connected to an interpretation of different perceived sensory dimensions (PSD) from the participants' descriptions. The different places are:

- A treatment centre with a garden close to an old forest that is a nature reserve within a larger surrounding landscape with a stream and many historical and cultural elements close by, such as an old mill and older houses and mansions. An environment perceived by the participant as <u>natural</u> *"...a natural environment, we have these old grown trees...we can hear the sound from the stream"* the built and natural elements in the environment are described as being <u>cohesive</u> *"It is very beautiful aesthetically, how it is built with wooden details and how it flows together"* and a <u>cultural</u> dimension of the environment *"...one can say that the history is very present. "*.The nature reserve close by having lying dead wood creates a perception of <u>diversity</u> with *"a rich birdlife"* and the diversity of the landscape. A *"viewpoint"* creates and <u>open</u> character and prospect over the landscape. In the way the environment is being described it appears to potentially hold several <u>serene</u> and <u>sheltered</u> places as well as <u>social</u> by for example the treatment centre´s garden where they have different activities and moments of relaxation and mindfulness.

- A treatment centre within an agricultural landscape with horses and paddocks, some forest and large rocks that creates the possibility to walk upon and have a larger view of the surroundings holding <u>open</u> and <u>cohesive</u> dimensions with a larger river at a walking distance. An environment experienced as <u>serene</u> *"it is calm"* as well as <u>diverse</u>, providing seasonal changes *"we are entering a lovely period when it is very nice out here"* and being <u>natural</u> *"...it is not artificial in any case, it´s natural"*.

- A forest area surrounded by pastures and fields with a clear path through the forest area and around a stream that floats through the forest with occasionally some bridges over the stream. The forest environment is perceived as <u>natural</u> *"not constructed by anyone, except for a bridge that they´ve put up..."* and <u>diverse</u> *"there runs water there and... it is very nice right there"* and the area is situated with 20 minutes travel distance from a larger city.

- An environment within a larger city by the sea and where the participant tried to find paths and come closer to nature *"one stayed at the more natural places"* and away from the city traffic and crowd searching for more <u>serene</u> and <u>natural</u> environments.

These environments may hold many different perceived sensory dimensions and be perceived differently depending on mood, preference and experiences (Grahn et al. 2022) and some perceived dimensions were found in all participants' descriptions of their respective settings, such as *natural*, *diverse* and *serene*.

As mentioned above regarding the differences of integrating nature within the ordinary treatment the participants addresses that it is not enough with just merely access to nature from the treatment centre or support service.

If I would present the forest like this….it´s wonderful and here you go, in the afternoon you may go out as much as you please …then it doesn´t matter that you say that we are located in a beautiful natural environment and you may experience relaxation by coming out in nature because then it´s not integrated as a part of our work of change that´s supposed to support their processes. (Participant 4)

You probably need support, too. Doing it all by your self is probably difficult or you´ve just got it in you and just do it…uh but that´s uh…it´s just there, it´s out there and it´s just going to a tree, like. (Participant 2)

I believe that it´s very important that people can go out and walk about in the surroundings…that nature is accessible but we, I can´t say that we integrate….if I have some time over sometime then I can go to the participants and ask, shall we go out for a walk? We take a long walk ….you can go to the river over there, right at the mouth of the river … I try to get the participants to walk with me back and forth. (Participant 3)

The structure of the centre itself and the specific approach towards the potential meaning of the outdoor environment within recovery seems to affect the potential role the outdoor environment may hold within the treatment and in the long run as well the process of recovery. The participants are in different ways lifting the importance of receiving support and inspiration to dare to try out new things or re-gain an old interest or contact with nature in one's own way to enable change, self-care and well-being. *So, because we do activities to be able to dare to feel safe in, to reach the safe and secure system... there, nature and the environment is extremely important. (participant 4)*

Nature as demanding and undemanding

The outdoor environment has according to the participant a potential of being both undemanding and demanding and they state that it is common within recovery to experience a need to "*do the very best for oneself*" (Participant 4) or to struggle with emotions of "*that we are not good enough as we are* " (Participant 3) which may create a lot of pressure. The beautiful outdoor environment that are supposed to *do good* risks to become a performance that one can failure or not being worthy of. *…. how nice that you´ve come to this beautiful nature now you´ll feel well and secure uh we must not put this burden on the on a person either but to really meet each person where they are otherwise it won´t be healing. (Participant 4)*

Having a flexibility and sensitive approach of different former experiences of nature in connection with many possible activities and tools integrating nature in different ways are described as important. A way of questioning and reflecting about norms of how to be in nature and what is defined as nature and acknowledging fears, uncomfortableness and ambivalent emotions.

... at the same time that we know that nature is healing, in itself uh, we can joke and say that you may walk out in nature and be as angry or annoyed that you are. You don´t have to go out and think that now you´ll enjoy it but give it a chance, let nature be as it is and you be as you are in nature. Things will happen either way, like uh, at the same time that we know the possibilities it´s as important not to say that you must or that you should do this because it´s good for you. (Participant 4)

6. Discussion

The aim of the study was to gain better knowledge about which aspects were understood to be important constitutes of the recovery process, explore experiences of outdoor natural places during recovery and how relations to different natural outdoor environments might impact different aspects of recovery. Several of the subthemes and emergent themes presented in the result chapter overlap and interrelate with each other which will be discussed in this chapter with the support of the overarching theoretical framework purposely developed for this study. The discussion is structured in four different sections mirroring the order of the three research questions of this study. Starting with the heading, *different dimensions of recovery related to PSU* followed by two headings concerning different dimensions of lived experiences of the outdoor environment during recovery, *supportive aspects in the experience of the outdoor environment within recovery* and *temporal aspects in the experience of the outdoor environment within recovery*. The last section, *interplay between recovery and the outdoor environment*, connects the presented aspects and dimensions regarding recovery, support and temporality to discuss the potential roles and meanings relations to the outdoor environment might hold for recovery. The last section ends with an illustrative figure summarizing the overarching experiences, roles and meanings of the interplay with the outdoor environment for the process of recovery from this study.

6.1 Different dimensions of recovery related to PSU

Overall, the participants seem to emphasise that recovery demands time which goes in line with former research by Dekkers et al. (2021) and may be experienced in a dynamic non-linear way. The base for the understanding of the developmental processes within recovery is related to it being a long-term process with the need to find sensitivity for individual pace of time, the need of a clear structure and development of routines in one's everyday life (Dekkers et al. 2021).

Several of the constituencies lifted by the participants as crucial within in recovery processes, from both personal and professional experience, can be related to an individual level of recovery, focusing on the personal experience and resources of emotional and psychological strategies and motivation to maintain recovery. Such as for example to face challenges of relapse and to manage to regain control over one's situation, to build oneself and reach the point of being honest with oneself leading to a change from within, regaining trust.

But the participants as well address more social and structural aspects of recovery such as experience around adaptability while taking part of an institutional treatment and stresses the importance of sensitivity towards different needs and experiences. For example, participant 2 describes experience in both their personal

process of recovery as well as in the professional experience of how different treatment centres and interventions not always manage to perform this sensitive accessibility.

Tran Smith et al. (2015:115) stresses the importance to acknowledge the dynamic and relational aspect of place and its role in the identity work of recovery by addressing that some places may "*impinge on participants identity work*" affecting the process of creating positive identifications and conceptions of self. The experience of a certain structure and routine within a recovery process supported by for example a treatment centre seems to balance on a fine line between being enabling or inhibiting in this process of identity work and creations of sense of self. Or as addressed by Kemp (2018) the interpretation of structure needs to go beyond time limits or schedules into meeting a person where they stand.

The participants address from their professional perspective that only structure and creation of routines may not alone create perceptions of safety within recovery. In turn both accessibility of different activities, alternative strategies as well as sensitive emotional and social support seems crucial to create the base for persons within recovery to practice and regain trust in oneself and others, in line with what is addressed by Hilte (2005). A recovery process per se is described by the participants as a balancing act of facing challenges and creating safe routes, learning to trust one's own abilities and perception of safety in the social and physical environment seems to be a precondition for this process to evolve.

A merely individual focus on recovery may according to Härd (2024) and Lancaster (et al. 2015) risk of placing the responsibility of problems related to substance use and as well the process of recovery on the individual.

6.2   Supportive aspects in the experience of the outdoor environment within recovery

The participants 'experiences of the outdoor environment while in recovery seems to be related to multiple aspects such as accessibility and physical qualities of the outdoor environment, where in the phase of recovery one might be, different approaches and weather the outdoor environment was integrated or not within treatment or through activities. Together with more existential or psychological aspects such as how the environment gave space for emotions, perceptions of safety, differences and possibility to express oneself, one's needs and former experiences within the boundaries of the institution.

Cross (2015) addresses that while we are making meaning of experiences in a place people often tend to compare different sensory experiences that stands out in place with sensory experiences in other places. It becomes interesting to relate this reflection to how all participants make comparison between different outdoor places during recovery or in their former and present life situation to highlight specific qualities, perceived sensory dimensions, experiences, and memories.

Masterton et al. (2022) found results of that a connection to nature was interpreted as a mechanism in all different greens space programs for PSU of their study, indicating that the quality of the environment could be more important than the actual program itself when it comes to the mechanism of enhancing connection to nature. In contrast Duff (2012) focuses on how the relational aspects of place bonding may play a crucial role for the place to become enabling or not within recovery not merely if an environment holds a therapeutic characteristic.

The participants having own experience of being in recovery experienced the natural outdoor environment as important throughout recovery, bringing calmness, peacefulness and possibility of activity. From their interpretations it seems that they all re-gained and continued to hold a strong connection to nature related to specific elements of the natural environment but as well the activities it afforded and the space it provided to meet individual needs of movement and safety.

In the study by Masterton et al. (2022) all programmes included some form of nature-based intervention. In this study one participant have both participated and worked within a treatment program where nature was accessible but not integrated, even though they integrated it by themself. One participant had possibility of some form of activity in nature within the treatment but wanted to perform other activities in nature that was not accessible but eventually became accessible through their own effort. Two participants experienced a close integration of nature and the outdoor environment within the treatment centres approach where they have participated respectively worked.

Their experiences have both similarities and differences, but all participants highlight the importance of a structure that supports the integration of nature and to have a sensitive and accessible approach towards different needs and experiences of and in nature. In line with what Masterton et al. (2022) highlighted as the need of a person-centred approach. It was not experienced as enough for the participants with mere access to nature close by the treatment centres and they pointed at the role of social support and perceived safety to dare to try out different activities. Thus, the importance of relational aspects of place bonding (Duff 2012) or to become "*tuned in*" with an environment to enable the process of healing and recovery (Grahn et al. 2022: 218).

The perceived sensory dimensions (PSD) that stood out as important for the participants' experiences differed, but some aspects coincided among all participants such as *natural*, *diverse* and *serene* as well as *open* and *cohesive*, providing possibility of a longer view over the surroundings. Research have pointed out different perceived dimensions as more important in a human-environment relation to enable restoration and recovery from stress, such as *refuge*, *diverse* and *species richness* (*diverse*) (Grahn & Stigsdotter 2010) or *refuge*, *prospect* (*open*) and *serene* (Pálsdóttir, 2014) as discussed by (Pálsdóttir et al. 2018).

A supportive environment should according to Pálsdóttir et al. (2018) hold a variation of elements and dimensions that may bring fascination and the PSD:s lifted by the participants in this study may show an example of this variation between *open*, *cohesiveness*, *nature*, *diverse* and *serene*. Possibly meeting different needs according to in which part of the recovery one is in or individual preferences and needs, as suggested by the SET theory (Grahn et al. 2022).

6.3 Temporal aspects in the experience of the outdoor environment within recovery

Within the participants' experiences of the selected favourite places and outdoor environment during recovery several temporal aspects have emerged as important, illustrating different layers of understandings of the interaction with the outdoor environment.

The first example concerns the procedural progression and all three participants within the IPA analysis holds experiences of how a step-by step process within the recovery is reflecting the process of awareness of the surrounding outdoor environment at the different treatment centres. The initial phase of the recovery is experienced as demanding and having a more inward focus thus not allowing one to pay as much attention to or take in the surrounding physical and social environment. They all experienced a gradual awareness of how the outdoor environment provided an experience of safety and calmness that eventually evolved along the experienced step-by-step process within recovery.

The evolving notion of awareness of the outdoor environment that provided support for them can be related to the *inward involvement* of the initial phase of recovery from stress related mental difficulties (Grahn et al. 2022). In this initial phase there is an urgent need of a supportive environment with an extremely undemanding character (Grahn et al. 2022). It seems like the presence of a natural outdoor environment while in treatment supported the participants to reach this gradual awareness of and connection to nature while in recovery. But it may as well have been initially to demanding through lack of initial support to integrate the outdoor environment.

Another temporal aspect in the experience of the outdoor environment addressed by the participants is related to how the cyclic development of a new habit or routine may create meaningfulness for the future and re-create relations to past self and interests. For participant 3 the connection to and experience of the outdoor environment during recovery has foremost been related to the activity it provided, defined by Cross (2015) as more *material dependant* and *sensory* form of attachment. The possibility to re-gain a former interest of fishing may have created meaningfulness and support to face the future. Nowadays the interest of fishing has faded, and they describe that they do other types of activities outdoors which is an example of how the material dependent form of attachment may change over time

due to preferences for different activities (Cross 2015). This experience could be related to the concept of *compatibility* which is one out of four perceptual qualities for an environment to become restorative according to the ART theory, how the environment meets one's currents needs and inspires to interaction (Bengtsson et al. 2022; Kaplan & Kaplan 1989).

Furthermore, for participant 2 there have been several places that all have common natural dimensions of trees, water elements, rocks and gradients holding space for them to move with a bike supporting both restorative and instorative purposes. The potential sensory experiences and perception-action process (Raymond et al. 2017) seems to be the foremost guide of finding places that they bond to, together with the *material dependent* and *commodifying processes* of holding space for the activity they want to do (Cross 2015). In their way of telling stories about their motion in place it becomes clear that there is a deeper connection to nature as well as an understanding of self that occurs while in place that is expressed as harder to pronounce for the participant but becomes apparent in the interview. Symbols and metaphors perceived in the environment supports the narration in place and possibly also as defined by Cross (2015) as a narrative attachment as well as a deeper connection with and understandings of self. A (re) connection with present self to support change, potentially altering the temporal understanding of self (Kemp 2018).

The favourite place of participant 1 during recovery could be interpreted as experienced through multiple interactional processes of place attachment as described by Cross (2015) and the ones that stands out are *spiritual processes, sensory experiences* in place as well as *historical forms of attachment* to specific dimensions of a natural environment. Historical forms of place attachment are divided in *biographical aspects* of a particular individual's life-story*, genealogical aspects* of a family's ties to a certain place or more *cultural aspects* connected to an attachment to place (Cross 2015). It becomes interesting to relate the *biographical aspect* of historical place attachment to this experience of connection to one's past self even though the place itself is not the same as during their childhood several natural elements and its compatibility relates the place to something familiar. Connecting past and present experiences that may create a connection towards the future (Kemp 2018).

It becomes clear that this bond is still very strong in the participant 1´s present meaning-making process (Raymond et al. 2017) of that past experience in place. Thus, as a positive memory of an important place of the past in relation to who they might have become there, interpreted by the participant as more creative, inspired with a higher degree of well-being. The memories of and profound experience in this specific favourite outdoor place might have had an importance for their understanding of past and present self, in line with the study by Mathers & Brymer (2022).

The characteristics of the outdoor environments that the participants have relations to are very different but at the same time have performed important roles in their individual processes by allowing space for movement. Movement in different shapes such as physically thorough different activities and psychologically by allowing space for emotions, reflections and coming away from oneself. Additionally, in relation to the movement of time through memories of past experiences in favourite places in the outdoor environment and different activities. By becoming aware of one's movement in and with the surrounding outdoor environment the constant changes in nature may resonate with one's personal process of change and recovery (Bierski 2016). As one participant in this study stresses, change does not happen in isolation and may be interpreted as a counteract of stagnation.

6.4 Interplay between recovery and the outdoor environment

The above three sections regarding different dimension of recovery, supportive and temporal aspects in the experience of the outdoor environment during recovery will be looked upon in this chapter through the lens of the overarching theoretical framework of the study. To come closer to the interdependency between the results regarding research question 1 and 2 and explore the potential role and meaning of the interplay between recovery and the outdoor environment.

The discussion is related to different experiential themes from the IPA analysis and themes from the thematic analysis such as *time aspects of change in experience of nature mirroring processes of change within the recovery process, movement of time within recovery, becoming aware of embodied experiences, outdoor environments providing space within the boundaries of an institution and movements of change and change as a movement requiring space.*

Below the experiences and interpretations of different dimensions within the interplay between recovery and the outdoor environment are presented with support of the theoretical framework of the study. Both experiences of the interplay with the outdoor environment while in recovery and the potential roles and meanings these relations may have for recovery are addressed in this section.

6.4.1 Interplay between *being* and *becoming*

According to the framework by Doroud et al. (2018) the mechanism of *being* within the interplay between place and recovery is related to having accessibility to a space for more inward reflections and space to be with oneself which is closely dependent of perception of safety. Aspects of *being* comes forward as connected to how the outdoor environment provided experience of calmness or contentment and safety

and trough out the different phases of the recovery seems to have become a place for inwards reflection and enhanced awareness about needs.

Participants 2 and 1 describe how they experienced the environment more *unconsciously* at first and then gradually became aware of the calmness it brought them. This experience corresponds to the general restorative potential of being in a natural environment according to ART by Kaplan & Kaplan (1989) and SRT by Ulrich (1991). More specifically, it corresponds to the specific needs within recovery, bringing light to the need of an increased sensory awareness and bodily connection (Kemp 2018) as defined by one of the participants as "*to slow down one's pace*".

Thus, a forward motion from restoration to awareness and instoration that may be related to the mechanism of *becoming* in line with the findings by Doroud et al. (2018). The *being* within an environment that one feels safe within might have supported an instorative process of awareness and growth (Doroud et al. 2018; Grahn et al. 2022). In line with a central aspect within the process of recovery of enhancing one's awareness of a reconnection to self and one's needs and limitations (Ivers 2018; Setiawan 2024; Kemp 2018; Hilte 2005).

The participants enhanced the experienced of being in the outdoor environment by themselves as important for them personally and it was especially highlighted by *participant 2* that to a larger extent had to figure out ways of being alone within the social boundaries of the institution and the surrounding outdoor environment provided this space for them. The outdoor environment has been described by the participants to enable a space to find connections with oneself beyond the borders of the institution. To take distance from specific behavioural patterns or expectations by other clients at a treatment centre or professionals.

On the other hand, participant 3 asks themselves if they are creating too strong pressure on themselves to follow a certain routine of being outdoors every time it is nice weather. The same balancing act of enabling or impinging a process of connection to and creation of positive identity reconstructions (Tran Smith et al. 2015) may be relevant for all places, even the natural outdoor environment which according to the participants may be experienced as both demanding and undemanding.

The sensitive approach needed within treatment as part of a recovery (Hilte 2005; Kemp 2018; Dekkers et al.2021) seems to apply as well for the experience in and interplay with the natural environment which goes in line with the supportive environment theory SET (Grahn et al. 2022). States of mind, former experiences and currents needs may affect how the same environment may be perceived by different persons (Grahn et al. 2022; Duff 2012; Doroud et al. 2018) The participants highlight the importance to receive sensitive support within recovery and that this might support the process of connecting with places that support one's own way of *being*, and when it comes to the interplay with the outdoor environment

it seems important to let it take time and grow, creating undemanding opportunities to be in nature. Allowing everyone to be in nature in their own way. Described by participant 4 as to "*… let nature be as it is and you be as you are within nature* ".

6.4.2 Interplay between *doing* and *becoming*

The outdoor environment at the different treatment centres and the selected favourite places are experienced as providing different amount of space to do activities which gave access to new habits, *building oneself* and served as a space to come away from experienced boundaries within the institution. The space within the outdoor environments were experienced by the participants as encouraging to try out different activities which is emphasised by Doroud et al. (2018) as an important aspect in how the mechanism of *doing* may impact the interplay between place and recovery.

These activities were described by the participants as either available within the treatment programme such as maintenance of the garden, gardening and green house or accessible outside the ordinary treatment such as the boat by the nearby lake giving possibility of fishing, to have a walk or just sit alone and look at the surrounding views or to be able to bicycle in nature. These activities and the outdoor environment are experienced by the participants as providing space for reflection, meaningfulness and a structure or practice of daily routines that especially participant 2 and 3 have carried with them since. According to both IPA and thematic analysis the importance of accessibility of a safe environment in relation to a clear structure and routines may have implications for the more long-term recovery process in terms of supporting the connection with self and developing strategies to bring with oneself in the post-treatment recovery phase and in life in general. The participants lift a challenge related to material and economical aspects of finding activities that the participants at the treatment centres can afford and easily access even after treatment. Participant 2 describe how they had to save money for a bike themselves to be able to bicycle in nature throughout their recovery process and after.

The temporal aspect focuses on how a cyclic development of creation of a habit through trying out, becoming inspired to try out more and finding motivation to continue may support the sense of gaining contentment with self, sensing a purpose and self-determination. A forward motion towards *doing* activities that one knows is supporting the recovery process, described by Doroud et al (2018:116) *as gaining a sense of control* thus, becoming more aware of one's needs and boundaries and possibly creating a connection to a physical or social environment. The mechanisms of *doing* and *becoming* seems intertwined in this process and the activities and routines accessible within the outdoor environment seems to have provided a more instorative process of gaining hope towards the future for the participants, addressed as a crucial aspect of recovery (Kemp 2018; Dekkers et al. 2021). When

it comes to the experience of the outdoor environment *doing* is foremost related to different hobbies or leisure activities that may give a sense of meaningfulness beyond the demands in every-day life. Expressed by participant 2 as an important practice towards creating new habits. In the beginning it might be hard, one struggles with lack of motivation but through social support, accessibility and space within the physical environment it became possible. All four participants within the IPA and thematic analysis highlight the importance of social support, a sensitive and responsive approach and affirmation to be able to dare to try out new or old activities.

6.4.3 Interplay between *being* and *doing*

The dynamic relation between the mechanisms of *being* and *doing* in the interplay between the outdoor environment and recovery becomes apparent in multiple ways. Participant 3 experience the knowing of what they are doing as a support gazing towards the unpredictable future, the *doing* of an activity while in recovery created meaningfulness that made it easier to look towards the future and a way of *doing* to support *being* in forms of creating stability and structure within the present.

Furthermore, the need of slowing down one´s pace to become aware of one's bodily movement and sensory experiences could be interpreted as a form of allowing *being* through *doing*. Where a meditative walk or a slow movement in nature might open up towards one's sensory experiences or by becoming aware of one's heartbeat through a physical activity may become a bridge to a new way of *being*, by understanding and sensing the self and time. Which goes in line with what Kemp (2018) defines as a crucial aspect of recovery, to re-gain contact with one's bodily experiences and pleasures.

The theory of perception-action of fast processes of sensing a place through sensory experiences by Raymond et al. (2017) is interesting to relate to this process of *being* through *doing*. Sensory perceptions enabled in the outdoor natural environment may have supported the process of *being* in terms of paying attention to sensory experiences, restore from stress and getting to know one's own pace and movement in time which is central within recovery according to the participants of the study, in line with Dekkers et al (2021) and Kemp (2018). Processes that, according to the participants in the IPA analysis, are hard to articulate and talk about but underneath the surface one knows a lot of things are happening.

In the thematic analysis it is highlighted as the need to come away from a pattern of fight and flight responses or gain an initial restoration that may allow one to understand and look towards self and time differently, maybe leading to reflecting on what Heidegger defines as ones *being-in-the-world* and *moments of vision* beyond our potentiality of being in our every-day concerns (Heidegger 1962: 387).

Change as a phenomenon is interpreted by the participants as a movement requiring space and counteract to stagnation as representative of non-change. The possibility of movement within the outdoor environment during recovery were related by the participants to different aspects of change and understandings of change. One example of this is the temporal aspect between *doing* and *being* in relation to immediate perceptions of fast decisions as experienced by Participant 2. To be able to practice and go fast with the bicycle on the forest path they constantly needed to pay attention to the surrounding environment, it´s space and different physical elements and sensory perception. Their experience showed a connection to the perception-action process of sensing a place (Raymond et al. 2017) that becomes the base of the experience in place that through repeated visits have become an important place filled with multiple meanings and for the participant. It is as if by attentively focus on every detail of the place the *doing* gained a clear meaning for them within their recovery and a path towards *being* - creating safety and trust in themselves to cope with challenges in the forest path and in life. The movement of change can be interpreted as at the core of this experience both physically, psychologically and existentially.

This result goes in line with what Bierski (2016) discuss about the fluid motion of interaction and the intentionality of movement. They found results of that while the participants of their study visited favourite outdoor places during their recovery form mental health difficulties the participants' experienced to re-gain flow and movement into their life's (Bierski 2016).

6.4.4 Temporality within the process of *belonging*

A central dimension of time in the findings of this study is related to how the different selected favourite outdoor environments or a specific activity that the environment enabled resonated with former experiences for the participants.

In the IPA analysis participant 3 found the lake and the forest as a perfect place for them to re-gain a former child interest of fishing which provided meaningfulness for them while in recovery. Participant 2 created possibility to bicycle outdoors, something that they had always liked since childhood, which provided several different experiences of finding meaningfulness, self-determination and change. Participant 1 interpreted their experience of how the outdoor environment that provided safety, calmness and inspiration at their mentioned favourite place was a familiar place though it had specific characteristics that reassembled a specific place from their childhood.

The reconnection to a familiar environment or activity may have affected their experience related to the mechanism of *belonging* as addressed by Doruod et al. (2018), in terms of both connection to self, connection to past positive experiences and a re-connection to the natural environment per se or familiarity with a specific natural characteristic. A meta synthesis study by Zeng et al. (2025) found results of

that increased contact with nature may lead to a deeper connection to nature. Nature connectedness as a concept involves several aspects such as emotional connection and sense of belonging to nature, cognitive understandings of oneself as part of the natural world as well as a behavioural aspect of protecting and caring for the environment (Zeng et al. 2025). The participants all described having had a lot of contact with nature as children, and thus also possibly holding a former connection to nature. Elements of the favourite places during recovery, talked about in this study, resonated with characteristics of natural outdoor places from their childhood that they remembered through being in place. It is as if the accessible nature contact during their processes of recovery re-shaped a former connection to nature that was not as present at the initial phase of recovery.

Doruod et al. (2018) foremost relates the mechanism of *belonging* to the social aspects of a place, especially in relation to one's home or neighbourhood. The authors claims that the balance between *belonging* and *being* in place is crucial for recovery, *being* as related to the more inward motion of reflection and having space for oneself in relation to the more outward and social motion of *belonging* (Doroud et al. 2018).

The experiences of the participants of this study foremost relate to *belonging* in terms of nature connectedness and relations to the self in former experiences and times. Their expressed experiences in nature during recovery were foremost related to a space allowing them of *being* alone in the outdoor environment while in treatment, which has continued later during their recovery and after, especially for participant 2 and 3.

Experiences of favourite or appreciated nature elements and environments during recovery seems (among other things) to have had a supportive role and meaning for the participants in connecting to past, present and future self. Which may be related to research around how recovery may enable a broader temporal understanding of self, an important constituent of recovery (Hilte 2005; Kemp 2018, 2019; Dekkers et al. 2021). Thes experiences in the favourite outdoor environments by the participants of this study may show an example of what Kemp (2018: 45) refers to as of how the *temporal horizons* becomes wider within recovery letting broader understandings of self, go beyond the experience of *addiction*.

As referred above in section 6:3 research has found a connection between profound experiences in nature and increased understanding of self (Mathers & Brymer 2022). Participant 1,2 and 3 defines the experiences to their favourite outdoor places during recovery as highly important in several ways, providing meaningfulness and supporting change in their way of understanding their needs, emotions and building themselves and their trust.

This experience of how the outdoor environment supported a connection to self might as well have supported the social connection and experience of safety in the social sphere of the treatment. As mentioned by participant 1 of how they became

inspired and creative by both the physical and social environment to participate in the common activities as well as how participant 2 experienced how the space of the outdoor environment supported the process of adaptation to the place and to handle ambivalent emotions derived from the social atmosphere in place. Which goes in line with the results by Masterton et al. (2022) of how the outdoor environment within their studied green space programmes gave space for reflection beyond the traditional settings of a treatment.

In comparison to participant 2 and 3, participant 1 still experience the favourite place at one of the specific treatment centres with a strong connection being a place that they miss today. It becomes interesting to relate this experience to what Cross (2015) defines as a *spiritual place attachment*, a deeper belonging to a place. It is a form of connection to a place that appears fast and last over time related to a deeper connection in relation to the self (Cross 2015). Participant 1 experienced a deeper connection to themselves and their emotions beyond the initial phase of the recovery and in that moment, they moved to this new treatment centre with the surrounding outdoor environment that immediately made a strong impression on them that they still today experience a strong connection to. It might have been that this new-won connection to self and their emotions resonated with the environment and as well that the experience in the natural environment per se enhanced the connection to self. Later, at the time for the interview thy interpreted that the specific place resembled a childhood place which might have unconsciously brought them back to former experiences of self.

The described experience of participant 1 might give a practical example of what Hilte (2005) addresses as the crucial aspect of creating new understandings and stories about past and present self and that each person might hold and create several truths and stories about self and life.

Another aspect concerning belonging is the emotional ambiguity towards past experiences, places and people that one may have to take distance from temporarily is described by the participants to be an important process to acknowledge within the work of supporting recovery. These former places may have had a crucial part of one's identity or experience of belonging to a certain context or time (Tran Smith et al. 2015).

Participant 4 expresses the need to allow sorrow to take place. In relation to the fast and slow processes of sense of place it becomes interesting to consider how the process of sensing a place may change due to changed life circumstances as suggested by Raymond et al. (2017) especially during a process of recovery (Tran Smith et al. 2015). The examples of relations and processes of sensing place in this section relates immediate impressions of sensory experiences and affordances in place holding possibility of different activities and movements, defined as fast processes of sensing a place (Raymond et al. 2017). Furthermore, they related to more cognitive processes of memories connected to former experiences that might

have happened interchangeably creating emotional bonds to the mentioned places, described as more slow processes of sensing a place (Raymond et al. 2017). The deeper connection with self through spiritual bond with place is defined by Cross (2015) as fast occurrent and may create a strong sense of belonging and emotional bond to a place showing the multidimensional and dynamic process of place attachment (Cross 2015; Manzo 2003). The dynamic character of relations to different places that holds meaning for an individual, seems to bring forward connections to and understandings of different times and self that might be of support for the progression of the process of recovery.

6.4.5 Overarching understanding of the interplay between the outdoor environment and recovery related to PSU

In this section a summary of the discussion around the interplay between recovery and the outdoor environment is illustrated below in Figure 9. Highlighting the potential roles and meanings of relations to the outdoor environment within recovery processes related to from PSU, that have been discussed above.
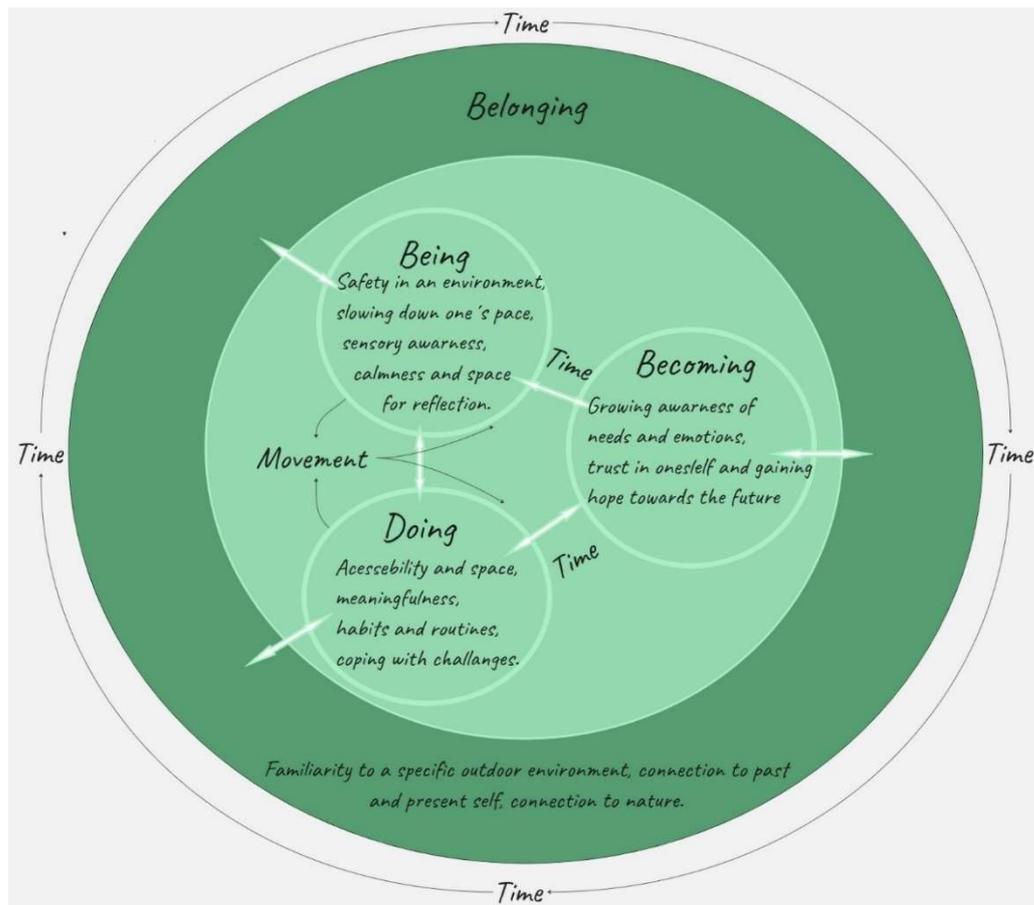

Figure 8. Interpretation of different experiences, roles and meanings of the interplay between recovery and the outdoor environment developed from the theory of the 4 different mechanisms of interplay between recovery and place by Doroud et al. (2018). Source: Author´s own figure.

By focusing on the different dimensions of the participants' personal and/ or professional experiences of interplay between the outdoor environment and recovery several meanings and roles for the process of recovery have emerged.

Figure 9 illustrates how *being* and *doing* may be interpreted to interrelate in a complex way forming the base of the experience of the outdoor environment in recovery that through *perception- action process* or more *emotional processes or memories* (Raymond et al. 2017) may lead to *becoming* in forms of increased awareness and sensitivity towards needs beyond the initial phase of recovery, meaningfulness and increased trust in oneself. Several temporal aspects seem to affect these interrelations such as the phase of recovery, one's bodily pace and connections to past selves.

The mechanism of *being* in the interplay between recovery and the outdoor environment have in this study been related to how the natural environments may support increased sensory awareness and slowing down one´s pace in terms of both bodily movement and allowing recovery to take time. Perceived safety and sensitivity towards different experiences seems to be crucial components of this process, especially while being within treatment and in the initial phase of recovery.

The mechanisms of *doing* have in the discussion been related to the experiences of accessibility and space of an outdoor environment to try out or re-gain activities that one likes. Activities that may support restoration as well as the creation of meaningfulness through new habits and routines. The outdoor environment was experienced as providing space for physical, psychological and existential movement within the process of recovery- enabling space for the movement of change, illustrated by black arrows in Figure 9, as well as the potential of gaining hope towards the future.

The mechanism of *belonging* at the background appears to act in a dual relation both affecting the *doing*, *being* and *becoming* such as if an outdoor environment or activity is familiar, brings memories or connection to past or present selves. If one already experiences a nature connectedness from before or if it is created or re-gained through the experience of *doing*, *being* and *becoming*. The mechanism of *belonging* could as well be interpreted as including the gaze towards the future through creating connection to local places, other persons within a specific place or an activity in place.

Former research has pointed out the dynamic and non-static role of relations to different places as part of the re-shaping of identity within the process of recovery, relations that constantly evolve and engage in transaction between place and person (Tran-Smith et al. 2105).

The changing nature of outdoor environments seems to have hold symbols of change for the participants. Providing spaces to move, come away from stressful thoughts and regulate difficult emotions, to relax, try out activities that supported the creation of new habits as well as self-determination and sense of self. These

results go in line with the study by Masterton et al. (2022) of how the integration of green-space programmes within treatment may provide something else beyond the individual-level changes and enhancement of social relations in ordinary forms of treatments. Offering a more holistic perspective of recovery and possibility of coming away from everyday demands beyond the therapeutic setting as well as stigmatization. (Masterton et al. 2022).

The participants lift different experiences related challenges in adaptability to a treatment setting and how the outdoor environment provided a space to come away from aspects of the therapeutic setting that would have had the risk of affecting their motivational process. Or how the outdoor environment supported a re-connection with former hobbies that created another level of purpose and meaning for them.

The accessibility of a natural outdoor environment supporting the *being* with oneself and *becoming* in one's own pace may have supported a closer connection to past, present and future self. Supporting processes of sense of continuity (Sedikides 2023) beyond addiction (Kemp 2018) and the settings of treatment (Masterton et al. 2022). As if the outdoor environment gave space for movement connected to a deeper understanding of change, an instorative process as a counter act of stagnation (Bierski 2016).

6.5 Practical implications

Boetto (2016) askes how we can integrate the outdoor natural environment as part of our practice and work within social work and this study have shed light on some potential roles and meanings the outdoor environment might hold within recovery from PSU.

As mentioned by one of the participants, it is common that treatment centres in Sweden are situated close by natural outdoor environments in the countryside, by the ocean or lake or close by a forest which could imply that an integration of more nature-based interventions within treatment could be close at hand.

In this study multiple ways of meaning making processes and relational aspects towards natural outdoor environment and self, have come forward to impact the process of recovery. In comparison to previous studies (Masterton et al. 2022) this study has brought an additional perspective from persons with personal experiences of relations to the outdoor environment during recovery. The essential results points at different temporal aspects within the transaction between processes of recovery and outdoor environment. For example, when it comes to the connection with past self through a familiar activity or specific natural element or characteristic or when the outdoor environment provides a safe space to be in the present moment slowing down one's pace and may increase support and sensory awareness.

Another aspect from the findings relates to how change is identified by the participants as movement that may be inspired of and integrated with the social and physical environment, through both slow and fast meaning-making processes of

sensing a place as well as memories and emotional bonds to places (Raymond et al. 2017).

There may be a great potential of developing and enhancing the integration of natural outdoor environments within treatment and from these four participants' lived experience and/or professional knowledge multiple ways of meaning making processes and support for the process of recovery have emerged . Not claiming the results to be generalisable due to few participants of the study but relevant as examples potential connections between recovery and the outdoor environment.

This could become an inspiration and incitement for further research deepening the knowledge about the different mechanisms of interplay with a place, processes of attachment as well as forms of sensing a place that might have impact for recovery. Furthermore, an incitement to professionals working within the field of treatment and recovery to explore their surrounding outdoor environments, which dimensions and possible mechanisms they hold for the specific target group of their treatment centre as well as for them self, by starting to explore one's own nature connectedness, perceptions and experiences in nature (Santin 2021).

For different treatment centres that already have close access to different forms of natural environments the integration of the natural environment within their treatment or nature-based interventions could possibly promote an enhanced well-being for the target group. Relations with the outdoor environment may provide space to be defined and identify beyond PSU and addiction, to increase understandings of self – related to a more holistic view on life in general and on the process of recovery form PSU.

6.6 Limitations of the study

The gender-neutral language selected to safeguard the de-identification of the participants excluded reflections from a gender perspective regarding understandings and interpretations of recovery as well as relations to the outdoor environment. There are many studies showing examples of how structural gender norms affect understandings of the conditions around addiction as well as the process of recovery and treatment (Eleonorasdotter 2024; Hilte 2005).

The data-material for this study showed some hints of interesting threads to reflect around different interpretations and expectations of relations to the natural outdoor environment or integration of nature-based interventions in relation to structural norms around gender. This was not possible to include due to the gender-neutral language selected for the study. This could be an interesting topic for further studies including more participants and perspectives.

The contextualisation of the participants' experiences in place has been related to the specific places addressed in the interviews and not as much in relation to a larger societal and structural context. More needs of studies to expand the understandings of relations to different communities and neighbourhoods as well as the more

relational aspects of recovery processes, since the result of this study focuses more on existential and personal processes of recovery.

The involvement of participants holding both personal and professional experience might have impacted how the experiences have been interpreted as well as presented during the interviews. As mentioned in the ethical and methodological reflections there could be a strong incitement to perform this study in a larger scale including participants with no professional experience, but with former experience of being within recovery in a more participatory and safe way. To further explore relations to and perceptions of the outdoor environment during recovery.

6.7 Conclusions

There is not one way of experiencing different natural outdoor environments while in recovery and the different interrelations and meanings these experiences might have for recovery itself. The theoretical framework of the study contributed to bring light to multiple dimensions of relations and interplays between the outdoor environment and recovery as well as on individual experiences and differences.

The findings of the study may imply that the process of gaining support from the outdoor environment within recovery requires time and might differ a lot between specific individuals. In line with former research (Doroud et al. 2018; Duff et al. 2012; Grahn et al. 2022) this study emphasis that there is not a single form of landscape or therapeutical garden that may cover all potential supportive paths of interplay with the outdoor environment. But when an outdoor environment is experienced as safe and supportive it might give space for the movement of change, physically, psychologically and existentially.

By discussing the results through the lens of the overarching framework of the study (Doroud et al. 2018; Cross 2015; Raymond et al. 2017; Dekkers et al. 2021) it comes forward that receiving support by *doing* in the interplay between recovery and the outdoor environment one´s *being* and understanding of self and time may alter. Which in turn could support processes of finding out more about ones needs and what could be supportive of change and how to allow space for the movement of change. A process towards *becoming* that may be intertwined by new or re-discovered ways of belonging to past, present or future self and different parts of the outdoor environment or nature.

There are many forms of places that have not been addressed in this study that simultaneously have a great importance for recovery such as safe housing, social communities, access to adequate health care as well as financial stability and different forms of social support, social networks and relations (Klevan et al. 2023; Doroud et al. 2018). Additionally, the connection between recovery, social support and the surrounding outdoor environment could be something for further studies to investigate.

Foremost, the experienced outdoor environment in this study seems to have brought meaning for a broader temporal understanding of and connection to past and present selves. Additionally, the outdoor environments provided space for movement that may have supported individual processes of change. Potentially enabling a gaze towards future selves, not isolated from aspects such as accessibility of sensitive support and strategies to cope with challenges in the larger physical and social context the participants were in.

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Finally, I want to send a big thank you to my family and friends, always creating moments of wonder.

Appendix 1 Poster with information about the study

Participate in a study on experience of the outdoor environment in everyday life and its importance for recovery and change in the experience of problem substance use or dependence.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

The study is a master's thesis within a master's programme in environmental psychology at SLU (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences). The aim of the study is to explore what meanings and roles places in the outdoor environment, especially natural environments, can have during the recovery process for people with experiences of problem substance use or addiction/ dependence. It also aims to shed light on different perspectives and aspects of what is perceived as important in a long-term recovery process.

PARTICIPATION

If you are interested in participating in the study, I will contact you for more information. The study is aimed at people with some form of experience of problem substance use or dependence, people active in various user/support organisations and professionals in care and treatment. The study is divided into two parts, and you can either participate in one part or in both.

> **Part 1; Interview**, on different aspects of recovery and change processes. The interviews will last between 30-60 minutes.
> **Part 2;** *Go-along interview*. You will be asked to choose some outdoor places that you like, find supportive or important and we will then take a walk to the places you have chosen and do a walking interview (if needed we will go by bus/bike). The interviews will take around 60-90 minutes.

The interviews will be recorded and audio recordings, notes from interviews will only be accessible to me and my supervisor and information such as names, locations or other sensitive information will be anonymised. The structure of the study can be made more flexible if you wish, and participation is based on voluntary consent, and you can cancel your participation in the study at any time without giving reasons.

For questions or participation, contact: mafg0010@stud.slu.se

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Appendix 2 Interview guide

Inledning: Tack för att du tar dig tid att träffa mig och svara på några frågor kring återhämtnings- och förändringsprocesser. Intervjuerna kommer spelas in och ljudfilerna kommer enbart vara tillgängliga för mig och min handledare för den här uppsatsen och kommer raderas så snart uppsatsen har skrivits, presenterats och examinerats. Jag kommer ställa några frågor som jag förberett i förväg men även följdfrågor under intervjuns gång. Du kan när som säga till om du inte vill svara på en fråga och du kan när som dra tillbaka din medverkan i studien utan att förklara varför. Jag har med mig en samtyckes blankett här som du gärna får skriva under för att delta i studien.

Du har läst lite om studien (infoblad), och mitt intresse är att förstå lite mer kring förändringsprocesser och återhämtning när det kommer till skadligt bruk och beroende och lite om vad är det som upplevs som viktigt i den processen. Sen koppla det till erfarenheter av utomhus miljön och att vara utomhus på platser som är dina favoritplatser, det är det som är mitt intresse.

Intervjufrågor
- Vill du berätta lite om din erfarenhet av återhämtning och förändring i relation till - skadligt bruk och beroende?

- Vad betyder ordet förändring för dig?
- Vad betyder ordet återhämtning för dig?

- Vill du berätta om vad som är eller har varit speciellt viktigt för dig för att en förändringsprocess och återhämtning ska kunna ske och bibehållas? (För dig personligen eller andra personer du möter?)

- Finns det en speciell situation som representerar förändring för dig/ återhämtning för dig? Vill du berätta mer?

- Finns det några aspekter av förändring/ återhämtning som du saknar i ditt nuvarande arbete/ engagemang/ situation?

- Vill du berätta om olika platser i din vardag, framför allt platser utomhus som du brukar besöka? (såsom parker, havet, torg, gator, träd, gårdar, skog, landet etc.? Förändringar över tid? Platser under återhämtningsprocessen).
- Har du någon favoritplats utomhus? Vill du beskriva platsen? (detaljerat)

- Vad är viktigt för dig för att du ska kunna slappna av och känna dig trygg på en plats?

OM personen är engagerad i en organisation eller arbetar inom en verksamhet:
- Hur länge har du arbetat/ varit engagerad i verksamheten/ organisationen?
- Vill du berätta om organisationen/ verksamheten och ditt engagemang/arbete?
- Vilka aspekter lyfter ni i er verksamhet/ organisation som viktiga för att en förändringsprocess och återhämtningsprocess från skadligt bruk och beroende ska kunna ske?
- Finns det några aspekter som du saknar?
- Vill du beskriva utomhusmiljön i er verksamhet?
- Något mer du vill tillägga?

Intervjuguide del 2 vid valda platser
På plats;
- Vill du beskriva platsen? (så detaljerat du kan) Beskriv gärna i detalj ett besök på platsen, hur upplever du den? Känslor? Tankar? Sinnen, lukt, hörsel, smak, känsel, kroppsuppfattning, syn.
- Vad brukar du göra när du är här? - Går hit ofta?
- Något speciellt ögonblick här?
- När hittade du platsen?
- Vill du berätta om ett specifikt tillfälle när du besökte den här platsen? (vad upplevde du, vilka sinnesintryck var starkast, var du här ensam el med någon annan, vad gjorde du/ ni, associationer, känslor, minnen, tankar?)
- Vad är det som du speciellt tycker om/ föredrar med denna plats? Något som sticker ut? (Stigsdotter et al. 2017). (ev. ta foto?).
- Något mer du upplever när du är på platsen tidigare eller idag? (Associationer; minnen, tankar och känslor, sinnesintryck).

- Vad är viktigt för dig för att du ska kunna slappna av och känna dig trygg på en plats?
- Vad är natur för dig? (Vill du berätta om en specifik plats eller landskap som representerar det för dig?)

- På vilka sätt kan dina upplevelser på denna plats kopplas till det vi pratade om tidigare kring förändring och återhämtning? Vad kommer du att tänka på?

Appendix 3 Quotes in Swedish

5.1.1 The process of creating meaningfulness through habits (p 44-47)

"om man då tar mig som exempel som har hållit på i väldigt många år, nej men det, det systemet går ju sönder till slut och man har väldigt svårt att gå ner i varv." (Participant 3 7:25).

"I början är det tufft och så men sen blir det ju en rutin och sen vill man gå och träna. Men det gäller ju att komma dit till att vilja." (Patricipant 2:1 p 13 r 4)

"Det här med att vara ute i naturen och så för min del var mera för att jag vet att jag mår bra av det och då gör jag det. Då behöver jag göra det annars kanske jag hamnar där, ja inte nu så här långt efter, men just då." (Participant 2 :1 p 13 r 31).

"idag så tanker jag så här att eftersom jag inte riktigt förstår mig på livet så gäller det att fylla livet med någonting som gör att jag tycker det är meningsfullt" (Participant 3 5:24)

I början när jag kom höll jag på uteslutande med växthuset och med odling och jag älskade det här liksom att sätta löken och morötter och sen se när det växte upp och sen gå och plocka det till köket. (Particpant 1:1 p 2 r 22)

Eh, alltså jag blev inspirerad och ja det måste ha haft med det att göra var jag befann mig… och de som var ansvariga där de som hade varit där länge, de inspirerade mig för de kom och gav mig beröm för maten. Jag tänker att det måste ju ha handlat om att jag för det första mådde bättre och någonting hade inspirerat mig till att må bättre och jag hade gjort någonting av det. (Participant 1:2 p 10 r 5).

… våga ta ett kliv fram och göra något för sig själv. Man behöver stöd liksom. Göra det helt på egen hand är nog svårt eller så har man liksom det i sig och bara gör det, eh, men det är ju…det finns ju bara där ute, det är bara att gå till ett träd liksom. (Skrattar). (Participant 2:1 p 9 r 24).

"Sen är det jättebra att man blir bekräftad i den man gör också. Om man nu är i nån grupp eller behandlingshem att det liksom att man blir bekräftad på att man gör något bra, det tror jag är viktigt." (Participant 2:1 p 9 r 14)

… att man klarar av att göra det. Att man klarar av att göra den rutinen, som ingen, som är frivillig liksom. För det var ingen som sa att man måste träna, det valde man ju själv… där fick man själv göra, det här gör jag när alla andra sitter och kollar på TV eller står och röker i korridoren… Jag minns att det var skönt att få gå och träna. (Participant 2:1 p 7 r 29).

"det var tillräckligt jobbigt för att det skulle bli dåligt för mig och jag flydde ju väldigt mycket in i idrott och i natur, jag var alltid ute och bland annat så fiskade jag mycket" (Participant 3 5: 21)

5.1.2. The role of challenges as enabling awareness about needs. (p 47-48)

Nej, alltså det här med att förändras det är ju, återhämtning, ja det är inte lätt, va. Det är det att så många återfaller alltså. (Participant 1:1 p 9 r 28)

… att det är svårare att ta sig ur drogerna efter varje återfall du vet ibland så säger man det på behandlingshemmen. Men det tycker jag är helt, det är helt osant att säga så … efter varje gång om man vill komma ur det där då lär du dig vad du inte ska göra (Participant 2 :1 p 17 r 11).

Om du ramlar då har du ju, då vet du att du har överskattat din förmåga och det är därför du ska ta det lugnt nästa gång. Det är därför man behöver lite återfall, alltid när det säger "återfall ahh det blir ännu värre att ta sig upp." nej, det blir det inte. Det är en bra erfarenhet…. Du känner inte till en enda sten, rot eller sten utan om du får öva då vet du. Då går det snabbare nästa gång och nästa gång och de där återfallen kanske hjälper till med det liksom, så återfall är inte något helt negativt. (Participant 2:2 p 12 r 21)

Nu är jag drogfri, jag klarar av det här. Jag ska snabbt jobb, lägenhet, praktik och ut och prova en öl. Det här är en öl (pekar på en hal sten på stigen). Den klarar jag säkert över och så bara" shun". (Participant 2:2 p 14 r 14)

… beror på hur långt ner som man tillåter sig själv, för det här är ju ditt val ju jag menar för så är det ju bara. Det måste man ju se va, att det här väljer jag själv att göra och jag väljer ju också att avsluta det…och jag väljer också om jag tillåter mig själv liksom och helt tappar allting. (Participant 1:1 p 9 r 7).

"…så där gav jag upp allt, alla mina förbehåll…det finns liksom inget sätt att fortsätta det här utan jag måste ägna mig fullt åt behandlingen." (Participant 3)

5.2.1 Processes of gaining structure and safety (p 48-50)

För att då få till en förändring eller stötta den förändringsprocessen så måste vi ha ramar, trygga rutiner där vi kan hjälpa till… (Participant 4, 5: 22)" "man vill ju hitta liksom ehh rutiner i sin vardag som gör att det känns tryggt (Participant 2, 1:1: 33)" " … destruktiva beteende mönster eller vad man ska säga… det är ju inget man bara kastar av sig och så är de borta utan ehh det krävs en stark struktur. (Participant 3, 3 :28)".

"…vara kärleksfull det är också väldigt avgörande…att när en klient mår väldigt dåligt för de kommer att må dåligt…och då är det väldigt viktigt att det finns någon där som tar emot det och som kan hålla det och bemöta det på ett bra sätt. (Participant 3, 3:32)"

"Alltså om man ska komma ifrån någonting så ska man vara någonstans där man känner sig trygg… det tar väl sin lilla tid att känna den tryggheten till platser och människor (Participant 2 1:1 18)"

" … följsamhet och visa på alternativ det är nog extremt viktigt" (Participant 4: 8: 40).

"Att känna tillit till sin egen förmåga att ta kloka beslut, så, den är ju väldigt viktig liksom att lita på att jag vet vad jag behöver" (Participant 4 7: 30). "… man måste ju vara modig för att klara det så…att man är mottaglig för andra idéer än sina egna" (Participant 3 3:5)

"… det finns ju de som aldrig kanske kan, man har ju sett utifrån jobbet att det finns ingen plats som man känner sig trygg i" (Participant 2: 1 2: 1).

"… efter ett tag så lämnar man ju den platsen och så måste man ju återskapa den här tryggheten igen någon annanstans" (Participant 2:1 1:30) …

"…det finns väldigt lite av det där liksom av att få prova på eller variation av saker och sen också personen som måste få prova eller få nån med sig till att prova saker. För jag, jag skulle jättegärna vilja cykla men mina klienter varje dag liksom och få ut dem ur sin grej. Sina bekymmer och så här dagligen men sen går jag hem och de går hem till sig. Då har de inte tillgång till cykel och ta sig ut i naturen, det har de inte". (Participant 2:2 p 20 r 1.)

"För i förlängningen så vill ju vi ge dem redskap, verktyg att kunna må bättre, stabilisera sitt mående, kunna ta del av behandlingen här. Men det ska också vara någonting som är tillgängligt när man kommer hem och vi vet att pengar kan vara ett dilemma…" (Participant 4 3: 18).

5.2.2. Processes of will, inner change and honesty (p 50-51)

"…det vet jag är jätteviktigt att förändringen ska komma inifrån för att det ska vara hållbart. (Participant 4 4:21)" "Men om vi generaliserar så skulle jag säga att det är avgörande att man verkligen vill. Jag brukar säga så här att det börjar ju ofta med en tanke så här att som det gjorde för mig…vi kan kalla det en tanke om att bli drogfri och det utvecklas till en önskan om att bli drogfri och sen förhoppningsvis övergår det till en vilja att bli drogfri. Men även vilja är liksom, vilja är ju en process… (Participant 3 2: 23)"

"Göra den här stigen själv, för det är det man behöver göra i kanske en återhämtning de andra kanske var ett stöd…men sen måste du springa själv

att man möjliggör förändring" (Participant 4 5: 30).
"man får hitta sin väg liksom" (Participant 2:1 14:30)

"… den där riktigt ärliga kontakten av en förändring…" (Participant 2: 2 15:8), "… man måste vara väldigt, väldigt ärlig man måste prata om sin egen problematik … man måste ha vad vi kallar ett öppet sinnelag." (Participant 3 p 3:5) "… Klienten måste äga sin egen förändringsprocess" (Participant 4 4:36)

"Alltså att plocka bort alla idéer att man är fel och ful och dum och allt vad det är och så försöka bygga upp idén om att man är värdefull, att man gör skillnad och har en betydelse och så. Det blir väldigt konstigt att samhället i sig trycker på oss de här idéerna…" (Participant 3 8: 7).

5.2.3 Different aspects of time within recovery (p. 51-52)

"Många som kommer hit har bestämt sig för att skapa förändring, då ska alla bitarna falla på plats bara säg till mig vad jag ska göra…ah men det här kommer ta tid, att låta förändringen ta tid." (Participant 4 4: 37). "… rätt vad det är så faller det ett träd på stigen och då…måste man stanna och så här komma tillbaka till de här besluten som man fattade i början" (Participant 2:2 12:39). "Så det här hållande stödet och att vara på behandlingshem det är ju väldigt mycket värt… det gör ju att processen blir mer intensiv och därigenom går fortare" (Participant 3 2: 35).

"…att sänka tempot och våga ta det lite långsammare, släcka fight och flight responser…" (Participant 4 2:44)
"Stress, alltså om man lever i missbruk så är ju stress, man blir ju sönderstressad. Om man är för länge ute i kriminalitet och missbruk det är som att vara i krig säger de … och man har väldigt svårt att gå ner i varv" (Participant 3 7: 17). "det här med stressen som stressar, alla de här negativa tankarna som hela tiden är där och (oehoeh)" (Participant 2:1 7:6).

"en ökad sensorisk medvetenhet … och det vet vi är väldigt hjälpsamt i behandling framförallt när man ska börja ta hand om sina signaler" (Participant 4 3:3). "Jag kan ju känna igen mig i klienterna hur de slåss med sina förklaringsmodeller och sina förbehåll och så där sina rädslor…det är ju väldigt mycket det, det handlar om." (Participant 3 2:17)

"Det här gör vi tillsammans tills intresset blir så viktigt för dig att du vill behålla det, att du vill utveckla det." (Participant 2:2 p 20 r 7). Att se förändringar i små steg är också viktigt för att tänker man på att belöningssystemet eller dopaminsystemet som vi möter här är ju helt ur balans och man vill ha de här snabba lösningarna, de snabba belöningarna och man bara yes jag fixade det här. (Participant 4 5:6)

"… tillåta sig själv att sörja det, inte så att man vill ha det tillbaka men det var ändå en del av mitt liv " (Participant 4 4:43). " En sak som vi säger här är att dina gamla lekplatser funkar inte längre så du ska undvika dem" (Participant 3, 4:32)

5.3.1 Time aspects of change in experience of nature mirroring processes of change within the recovery process. (p 53-55)

"nä, men liksom det är ju jättebra att få vara ute helt enkelt men man fattar kanske inte det när man är i det där, när man liksom precis har kommit ur ett missbruk jag tror inte att man ser naturen som återhämtning, det kommer kanske lite mer senare när man vaknar upp lite grann eller beroende på vad man vill och hur motiverad man är till att sluta (Participant, 2:1 p 9 r 5"

Det första behandlingshemmet där jag tillbringade de första fem-sex månaderna så var jag ju alltså jätteledsen och miljön där var inte så lugnande… om man säger naturen där hade inte den rogivande effekten på mig. Sen var det ju också så att det var de första månaderna och jag menar den första tiden utav ens drogfrihet så är det ju mycket känslor som kommer upp alltså efter missbruk så är det ju så att man dämpar sina känslor. Själva drogen i sig gör ju det med en, ja. (Participant 1: 1 p 3 r 15).

.. så här naturen och sånt liksom … man fick mer upp ögonen för det. Innan har det ju varit andra saker, men nu är det ju så eh det är liksom mera, tar en annan plats i ens liv (Participant 2:2 p 4 r 38) Om man väl tar sig ut vill man komma till en sån här plats (refers to the place we are at during the interview) … det blir väl något lugn på äldre dar (skrattar) om man skulle komma hit och ha samma sinnesro när man var 20 eller 15 eller så liksom, jag tror inte det… Men det är nog sånt som jag har börjat tänka på så här efter att man vart 30 år kanske. (Participant 2:2 p 4 r 32)

Maria- (student); Kan du minnas, är det något, när du tänker på den förändringen som skedde där vid 30, är det något speciellt?

Participant 2: Ah men det är väl mer den här drogfriheten såklart det är väl den som står främst liksom…. men jag kan nog tänka så här att den här platsen på behandlingshemmet det var också väldigt så här…. Naturen gjorde en väldigt oh shit, du vet… så man kan bli så här wow. Så där liksom men det krävs lite vatten och lite jord och träd och så liksom som ger en sån känsla liksom (Participant 2:2 p 5 r 10).

"man hittar ju sättet man ska vara på den platsen (the treatment centre), alltså så att man kan vara trygg. Men sen efter ett tag så lämnar man ju den platsen och så måste man återskapa den här tryggheten igen någon annanstans… men jag tänker att ett ställe som var bra i den här fasen efter institutionen … ett gym, en cykel alltså för mig var det. (Participant 2:1 p 1 r 28)

"… nästan varje lunch och i stort sett varje kväll så gick jag ut till en sjö där. Vi hade en båt liggande där så jag rodde ju ut med den båten och fiskade…men det betydde väldigt mycket för mig och just fiske betydde väldigt mycket för mig de första sju eller åtta åren (my note: of their recovery process). (Participant 3 5: 2)

5.3.2 Outdoor environments providing space within the boundaries of an institution. (p 55-57)

…Nej det är stor skillnad (mellan två behandlingshem) även om det också var natur där va, men det var ju inte liksom vi använde inte naturen. Vi var inte ute, nej vi tog inte tillvara på naturen. (Participant 1:2 p 18 r 9)

Jag mådde psykiskt dåligt på det förra behandlingshemmet, det försvann sakta men säkert på detta behandlingshem. Ganska så snabbt och jag menar det är klart att man gör inga associationer direkt så där ja det är för jag har hamnat i naturen som det…utan det är ju sånt som kom med tiden. De reflektionerna får man ju i efterhand alltså varför känns detta så annorlunda jämfört med det förra behandlingshemmet och det kopplar jag till naturen. (Participant 1:2 p 9 r 35)

Man var tvungen att göra något annat och då kunde man gå och ställa sig och kratta någonstans, klippa buskar eller så, det var liksom lite peacefull och sen snacket i de här grupperna är mycket så om droger… hitta något där man mår bra i sig själv för att stå och snacka sån där snack, du vet, det blir bara såhär, kändes meningslöst liksom. Sista gången (they where within a treatemnt) var man ju tvungen, man har ju varit där och snackat skit också med det var inget som gav mig något bra (skrattar) Men ah, precis så rökrummet är inte ett bra ställe för återhämtning (Participant 2:1 p 18 r 1).

… för mig har det ju varit man står och jobbar i de här trädgårdarna … det är ju liksom en aktivitet, det här gör vi på dagarna och okej då fixar man det liksom. Men sen märker man att ron kommer till en på något sätt… det var ju många gånger som jag stod själv och jobbade för det fanns inget att göra liksom, fördriva tiden med det här. Det här var ju man såg en början och ett slut…Sen när man ser en förändring, när man jobbar i naturen med trädgårdsskötsel då ser man ju en skillnad liksom och då var man nöjd med det. (Participant 2:1 p 9 r 29)

…vi hade ju våra aktiviteter om du nu var i växthuset eller centret överhuvudtaget ... och så hade vi våra fria timmar ju… man kunde promenera runt där och njuta av naturen där och det gjorde man ju, jag gjorde det jättemycket. Promenerade upp där och vi hade en byggnad som låg uppe … jag kunde sitta där i flera timmar när jag var ledig och bara tänka. (Participant 1:2 p 18 r 16)

"Jag köpte till och med en båt då ute på en av öarna här och var väldigt mycket ute och fiskade…det gör ju livet meningsfullt att det fått ett syfte, att jag vet vad jag håller på med." (Participant 3 5:4)

…det ska vara tillgängligt. Det är ju svårt när man är i sånna processer liksom med ah nej men när man är på sånna institutioner så finns det regler och så kanske det är någon som säger ah men jag skulle vilja cykla liksom ut i naturen och "nej det gör vi inte, vi gör inte så här". Sen kanske man vill göra det individuellt med det går inte för vi gör allting här i grupp… alltså ja det kan ju ställa till det så att det låser en… (Participant 2:1 p 14 r 33).

…Jag hittade väl det där på något sätt liksom sen hur man ska ta sig ur sin grop eller vad man nu ska kalla det för. Man får göra, man får hitta sin väg liksom… (Participant 2:1 p 14 r 29).

5.3.3 Movement of change and change as a movement requiring space. (p 57-61)

Så det är mycket gråt och mycket, okej på detta behandlingshem var jag väl också ledsen i perioder, va, men det är det jag menar man kunde gå runt där och promenera runt och njuta av naturen där och känna ett lugn. (Participant 1:1 p 3 r 23).

Ja, men det är väl en plats där själva aktiviteten är en återhämtning…och den där platsen har lite mer värde liksom, man anstränger sig lite mer för att komma dit, liksom (Participant 2:1 p 2 r 33). …det här med återhämtning och att komma ifrån då nått så här, ja, missbruk, eller så här psykisk ohälsa det är, det har ju varit förenat med någon slags fysisk aktivitet. (Participant 2:1 p 3 r 12).

… Att man får vara och att man bestämmer själv vart du ska och hur länge du ska stanna på en plats (Participant 2:1 p 4 r 26). Det är väl det som håller en levande lite så att man kan, att jag kan ta mig den turen och tiden och ja, nu sticker jag. … jag tänker att det är mitt sätt och liksom, det här med återhämtning och hämta energi ... För mig, det är med rörelse vid, ja, man är ute efter så här att hitta ett lugn liksom. Städer och så här dras jag inte till. (Participant 2:1 p 5 28).

… ja men för mig är ju förändring, det är ju det här med att växa och få andra perspektiv liksom på tillvaron och livet och relationer till människor … Förändring innebär jättemycket ju, för mig gör det, det i alla fall … och det är något som är viktigt i livet tycker jag att man känner att man förändras och inte stagnerar. Det är ju det att det måste hända saker runt omkring en för att liksom för att man ska förändras… som väcker någonting hos en. (Participant 1:1 p 4 r 19).

Man ser förändringarna i naturen och så ja man förändras hela tiden. Man tänker mycket när man cyklar. (Participant 2:1 p 9 r 27)

"… allting består ju egentligen av relationer och relationer är ju otroligt viktigt i livet. Det är där man får energi, det är där man får sin mänsklighet… så att få tillbaka sina relationer att skapa relationer som är baserade på mänskliga värderingar kan man väl säga det är väl väldigt väsentligt tänker jag. (Participant 3 4:26)

"Det där cyklandet bidrar till att du måste fatta en massa snabba beslut hur du ska undvika problem och det kanske man gör sen i…vad ska jag säga i … vad ska jag göra för att inte hamna i problem? (Participant 2)

Det där är ett problem (pekar på en trädrot) och det där är ett problem (pekar på en stor sten på stigen) … man måste fatta snabba beslut… du vet så här det här undviker jag snabbt. Ehhh ska jag

ta droger, nej det gör jag inte… det där undviker jag…jag ska igenom. Vi går där (pekar rakt in i skogen) (Participant 2:2 p 8 r 1-14).

Man måste vara här och nu i de besluten för du tar dig, det är tre meter per sekund om du cyklar liksom och då måste du fatta "rrr" eller bara stanna och kolla om man inte är erfaren "oh shit, var ska jag ta vägen" …. Du gjorde så på skogsstigen kan du inte bara implementera det om vilken partner du ska välja, eller vilket jobb eller vem du ska hänga med? … Ja, men du har ju en dialog med sig själv liksom. Åh det här riskerar jag inte… (Participant 2:2 p 12 r 18).

"Alltså det blir lite svårt lite grann att associera till, du förstår det va? Jag menar jag blir ju nästan ledsen när jag ser hur det har sett ut en gång och nu är det helt nerhugget. (Participant 1:2 p 13 r 27)

Alltså när jag har varit ute och rest va, och olika ställen jag har bott på så har, jag menar det har alltid gjort att det har hänt saker som har förändrat mig. Lärde känna människor från hela världen och det är intressant alltså jag menar det tycker jag är jätteroligt. Jag älskar det livet. (Participant 1:1 p 5 r 1) … här är det svårt att inte stagnera för här gör jag inte mycket just nu och har inte gjort på länge….

5.3.4 Supportive outdoor environments and natural elements bringing calmness. (p 61-63)

Det är lätt att sätta sig …någonstans där det bara är jag och naturen och meditera… det händer jättemycket med en när man lyckas få upp det här lugnet så att säga så att man någonstans försvinner från sig själv…det jag menar med att försvinna från sig själv det är när inte en massa onödiga tankar snurrar i huvudet på en. Participant 1:1 p 6 r 7)

… man hoppar väl över det här med stressen som stressar. Alla de här negativa tankarna som hela tiden är där oheohe) och är du ute och cyklar i jättefin natur …här i skogen är det ju lugnt liksom. (Participant 2:1 p 7 r 6).

"Då är det ju viktigt att det finns så lugnande signaler som möjligt runt omkring en så att säga och då är ju naturen och den här lantliga miljön, det är ju väldigt bra att ha det." (Participant 3 7:28)

" … det finns ju platser där man kan göra vissa saker på ett bättre sätt… om man tänker så här ute i naturen. Jag hittar ju gärna också sånna platser där det rinner vatten… man bara gillar platsen att det finns, alltså i en skog då är det en skog, träd och en stig, stenar och mossa och så här liksom men när det kommer in vatten då är det ett till element helt enkelt, det känns mer komplett". (Participant 2:1 p 2 r 19). Sånna platser som jag gillar är inte så här konstruerade heller av någon utan det är bara naturliga platser (Participant 2:1 p 3 r 23)

”… det är högst ovanligt för jag brukar ju få så här nästan andnöd om inte havet är nära mig. Men inte på behandlingshemmet, det störde mig inte ett dugg alltså. Faktiskt, nej jag har inte gjort några direkta reflektioner över varför men det är mycket möjligt att då det låg liksom uppe, uppe på så man såg ut över en dal på något sätt va, man kunde se jättelångt. (Participant 1:2 p 14 r 35).

"… där jag gjorde behandling var ju i skogen vid en sjö det var ju perfekt liksom" (Participant 3 7: 7)

"Men att vara i solen och andas hyfsat frisk luft är ju betydelsefullt och det dämpar väl någon ångest, jag kan inte påstå att jag har så där jättemycket ångest men jag skulle få ångest om jag satt inne och såg en film när det är sol ute" (Participant 3 6: 14)

Ja, man hamnar ju alltså, omedvetet är det ju från början att man hamnar i ett meditativt tillstånd. Det är inget som man är medveten om från början egentligen. Jag tror inte jag var medveten om det den första tiden, jag blev det senare därför det inträdde ett sånt lugn i mig (Participant 1:1 p 9r 31).

…man får ju lite energi men det är ju inte så där att alla de där tankarna och besluten och allt det där som vi pratade om … det bara händer i stunden och sen kan man ju prata med någon om det här så här (as we do in the interview) men det är inte sånt som man liksom, som jag i alla fall tar upp och pratar om så mycket. Man bara nej, jag cyklade i skogen… men det finns ju så mycket under den rubriken…folk ”ah jag är ute och går i naturen” och jag vet att det händer en massa grejer där. (Participant 2:2 p 16 r 28)

5.4.1 Becoming aware of embodied experiences and bodily movements. (p 63-63)

"Ja, det vi märker är ju att det saktar ner tempot…just det här att sänka tempot och att våga vara lite långsammare. Släcka fight och flight responser, liksom ta det på jorden lite lugnare, det ser vi jättetydliga effekter av. (Participant 4: 4 r 36)" "Det var en klient som du vet ältar på allt hela tiden så här och så har man cyklat där på stigarna och så har man tagit en paus liksom och ""Hur känns det…? Ah men man vet att man lever liksom man andas och puh man är trött och jag visste inte att det var så här"" (Participant 2:1 6: 24). "Det är ju lugnande, det är lugnande att vara här alltså man känner ju det när man kommer hit att det liksom är avstressande. Jag tror det är väldigt viktigt, det är väl ingen tillfällighet att de flesta behandlingshem ligger på landet…det är ju otroligt viktigt att det finns så många lugnande signaler som möjligt runt omkring en." (Participant 3 7:5).

5.4.2 Presence of nature or being present in nature (p 64-66)

"Om jag skulle presentera skogen så här… den är helt underbar varsågoda på eftermiddagarna får ni gå ut hur mycket ni vill alltså…. då spelar det ingen roll att man säger att vi ligger naturskönt och du kan få avkoppling när du kommer ut i naturen för då är det inte integrerat som en del i vårt förändringsarbete som ska stötta deras processer." (Participant 4 5: 25)

"Man behöver nog stöd liksom. Göra det på helt egen hand är nog svårt eller så har man liksom det i sig och bara gör det, eh, men det är ju ah, det finns ju bara där, det är ju där ute det är bara att gå till ett träd liksom." (Participant 2:1 9:24)

"Jag tycker det är väldigt viktigt att folk kan gå ut och gå och ströva i områdena…att naturen finns tillgänglig men vi, jag kan inte påstå att vi integrerar… om jag har tid över någon gång då kan jag gå in till deltagarna och fråga, ska vi gå ut och gå en sväng. Vi tar en lång promenad … man kan gå till älven där borta, alldeles vid mynningen av älven…jag försöker få med mig deltagarna att gå dit och tillbaka." (Participant 3 6:31)

Alltså lite för vi gör aktiviteter för att våga vara i trygg, komma in i trygghetssystemet…där är naturen och miljön extremt viktig. (Participant 4 6:44).

"… vad fint att du har kommit till den vackra naturen nu kommer du må bra och känna dig trygg eh det får vi inte heller lägga på en person utan verkligen möta var och en där de är annars så blir det inte läkande." (Participant 4 4:9).

"… samtidigt som vi vet at naturen är läkande i sig sälv eh vi kan skämta och säga att du kan få gå ut i naturen och få vara hur arg och sur som du är. Du behöver inte gå ut och tänka att nu ska du njuta för ge det en chans låt naturen få vara som den är och du får vara som du är i naturen. Det hände saker ändå, liksom. Eh så samtidigt som vi vet om möjligheterna så är det viktigt att inte säga du måste eller du ska göra det här för det är jättebra för dig" (Participant 4 2:18).

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