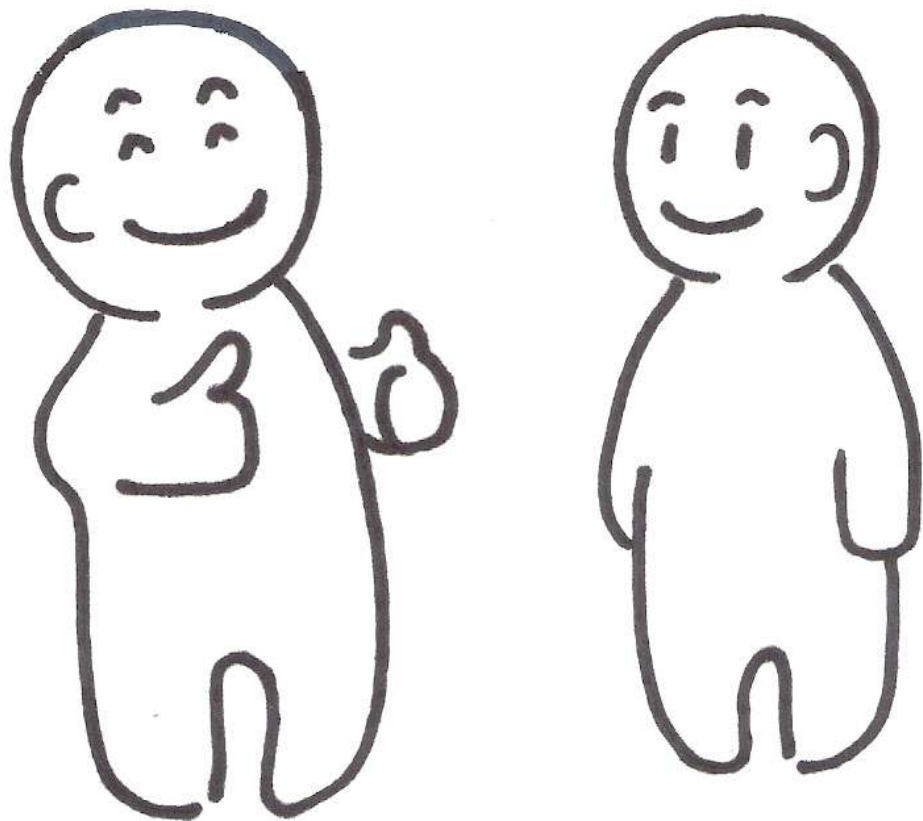


Lela, the detective of the day care center



Jyrki Reunamo

Forword for the teacher

Lets think of two children in a same situation. Both children happen to fail in a task of drawing a square. The first child adapts to the situation. Ok, I can't do it, I am no good at it. The other child sees the situation as changeable. I try anew; I will do it in another way. Both children's views change the educational setting. The first child may learn helplessness or the child may start to act as clown to compensate. The other child may seek adult's help or interactively seek a solution. Both children's views have an impact on the other children's experiences and adult's plans too – in spite of if we want it or not. Thus children's views change the actions in the day care center.

The children produce most of the actions in the day care center, and children's own views guide these processes. The question is not if the children have agency in the day care center or not. The question is, are the educators capable of reaching the dynamics of this process? Is it possible to get the things impacting the process, that is, children's different views of what is happening, into the open? These mighty powers are of no use unless the children and adults become aware of the effecting currencies. The children should not be shortened to learners or active processors; they are basically the creators or the learning content.

Children's ideas about the course of forthcoming changes are the key to the child's being and personality. How can we contact this most important factor, the agentive nature of children's views? One possibility is to take this creation seriously and process these impacts together with children. This is the first step of paradigm change in education: We will shift from learning of the world to learning to mould our own and others lives and the world. Luckily this often happens in the day care center.

Children rarely produce the future by using a curriculum or other official devices. Children's agentive power is situated in their relentless and ingenious production of everyday interaction. This is what humanity is about. And because it so near it so difficult to observe and become aware of.

There are so many people that have made this story possible. I would like to thank the day care centers Floora, Haukka, Herttua, Herukka, Hevossalmi, Hiekkalinna, Himmeli, Immola, Inkeroinen, Lehdokki, Nummi, Pasila, Puimuri, Ratamo sekä Terhi in Finland. I would also like to thank for the children and interviewers in Keski-Uusimaa that produced material for children's views. I would also like to thank our Taiwanese colleagues for widening the horizon, providing new questions and also for the simple but effective pictures.

Jyrki Reunamo

Some hints for the processing of the story:

1. *The story can be read one story at a time in successive day, for example during morning meetings. In this way the whole story is processed in three weeks. The first day takes about an hour. The following stories take about half an hour. Children's answers can be written down on a paper, but it might be easier for future processing to write the answers to a computer data sheet.*
2. *The story might be best to read in a small group to provide room for discussion. Especially small children benefit from enlivening, animation and working at the table.*
3. *For example, a sea shell and three envelopes tune children in. Leaving sea shells, boxes and other stuff for children to work further helps children to process the story further.*
4. *In the Finnish original text the name Lela was used because it had no indication of the gender of Lela. Both girls and boys could project their ideas easily. This has not been possible in English and Lela became a he. The teacher may need to check that girls are given equal amount of attention in their agentive ideas.*
5. *Sometimes the process of the stories seems to be going quicker day by day. Do not be fooled by this. Try to see each story as unique and children's views as unique and valuable too. The main idea is not to get the correct answers from children, but children's true ideas. The teacher is there not to teach, but to process and become aware of the real dynamics of human mind. It is really a matter of reality becoming aware of itself.*

Lela arrives to the day care center (day 1)

(Materials: Pen, four papers and four envelopes). In the sea there was the kingdom of fishes. The young baby and child fishes had so much fun. Everything was done by swimming. Fishes do not need the same kind of things people do, like pillows, forks, houses, bicycles, footballs, windows or bathrooms. The fishes have no kites, carpets, candles, refrigerators, food carriages, not even pants. Life under water is very different than on the ground. What kind of life the child fishes eventually have?

Once there was a rumor that soon spread around every corner of the kingdom of fishes. Nobody knew where the rumor had started or why. The rumor suggested that there was life above the water level too. Above the sea level there should be a magical place called a day care center. In the day care center things were done in a very different way than the fishes were used to. The fish children could not believe the outrageous descriptions of the day care center. The rumor even suggested that in the day care center the children did not float from one place to another, they just used the bottom of the day care center. It was called something like walking on the floor. Why not use all the space? Nobody could believe this. The fish-children started to think about the rumors. What would it be like to be in a day care center? The rumors grew every day. In the day care center there were done things that the fish children almost could not dream of. What does it mean that you drink water from a glass? How the children can go from one place to another if they have no fins? Crawling on the bottom? The mysterious day care center stole all the fish children's thoughts. If the fish children only knew!

The king of the fishes saw the curiosity of the children. He decided to help. He had magic potion that could change a fish to a human child. He could send one fish child to do some research in the day care center. Then they could find out if any of the strange rumors were true. The king decided to send Lela to the day care center. Lela had shown good detective skills in resolving the great shell stealing.

The task of Lela was to investigate the day care center as a human being and then come back to tell about his findings. There were three main questions that needed answering: What did the children do in the day care center? What does not happen in the day care center? Why things happen at the day care center?

In the morning Lela drank the magic potion and was transformed into a human being. Suddenly legs, arms, ears, hair, nose and many other strange things stuck out of his body onto strange places. The purposes of the bodily extensions were obscure at first. The purpose of the arm became obvious when Lela's nose started to tickle. Automatically the arm aimed the fingers at nose and the fingers started to scratch the nose! The purpose of elbows Lela could never understand. Lela climbed up to the shore and into the ground. He inhaled deeply. Not bad. Lela walked around. Eventually he saw a sign which read: (*say the name of your day care center*). Lela enrolled into the day care center. The headmistress was nice but she wondered why Lela had some seaweed on his hair. If she only knew! Lela took a deep breath and went into the room with other children. The new day was about to start.

Lela felt like he was hit by driftwood. What a place! The day care center exceeded anything Lela had imagined. Day care center was a wild, exciting, frightening, gorgeous and crazy place. And just when Lela started to get used to the craziness of the place, he found out that the day care could be also a peaceful, quiet, safe or mysterious.

Lela looked everywhere. He looked in closets, the yard, under the mattress. What did they hide under the carpets? The teacher did not let him to look at the chimney though. Maybe there was an ugly octopus ready to attack. He looked even into the toilet seat. There

was water in it, but only a little bit. What was the use of such small amount of water? It would be difficult to swim in a toilet seat.

Lela got to know the other children in the day care center. He was surprised when he got new and good friends. Lela tried everything the other children did and found out wonders after wonders. Lela acquainted with the adults of the day care center too. The adults did even more astonishing things. One teacher pushed on a button of a box and suddenly music started to play through the box. Another teacher pushed a button on the ceiling and the whole room became full of light.

Lela remembered that he should report of his findings to the fishes. Lela took out the envelopes and thought about the questions he had to find answers to. Lela started to think. What do the children do in the day care center? *(Adult writes something on a small piece of paper, folds it and puts it in the envelope. On the envelope the teacher draws a house. Adult looks at the envelope, waves it carefully and respectfully. The teacher gives the children a task: What did Lela write? What would you tell the fish, which have never seen a day care center? It is important that children think first quietly before the answers are collected. Thus the quickest children do not dominate the ideas and everybody's ideas get through as they come. After quiet thinking children's answers are collected one by one.)*

Lela thought about the other question: What did not happen in the day center? What things did not belong to day care center? What was never seen in the day care center? *(The teacher again writes something on a piece of paper looking mysterious and carefully encloses the paper into an envelope. What did Lela write? What is unheard of in day care center? What could never happen here? What could be a surprise? Children think about the writing on the piece of paper quietly for some time. The children describe their ideas one by one and the teacher writes down all children's answers.)*

Lela thought about the third question. Why things happen at the day care center? What was the purpose of the day care center? What was the day care center for? *(Thoughtfully the teacher writes something on the paper and puts the paper in the envelope. On the envelope the teacher draws a heart. What did Lela write? Why are the children here eventually? Why are the teachers here? Why are you here? After quiet pondering children's views are collected one by one.)*

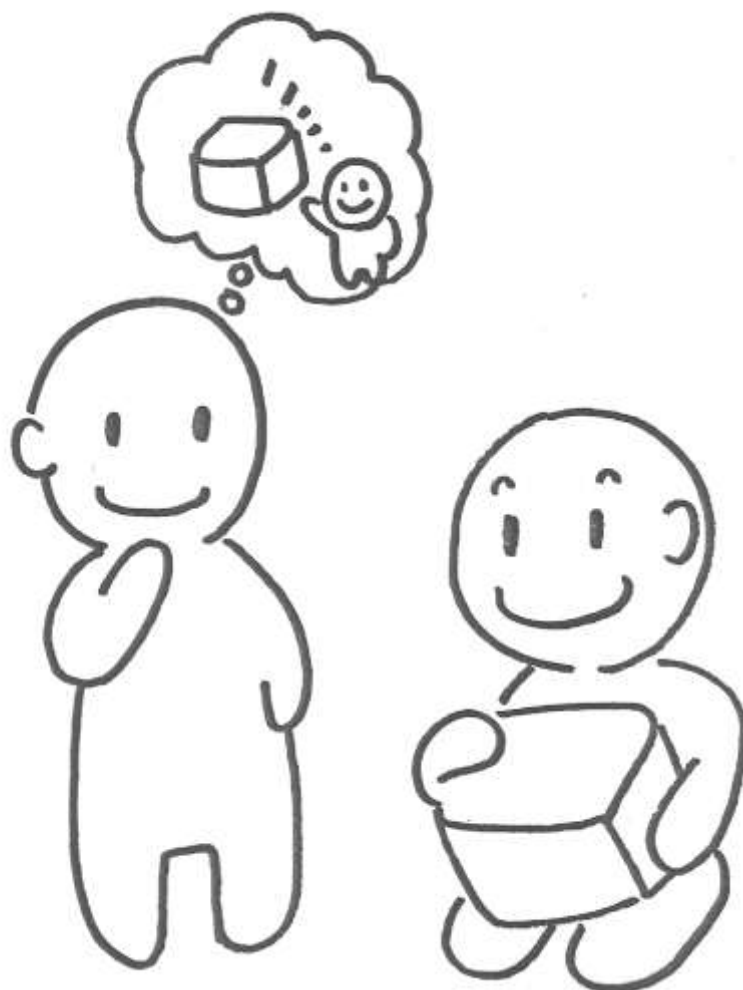
Personally Lela would have liked to have an answer to a fourth question also: What was the purpose of the gravity? The children seemed to go from one room to another room always through the bottom of the room – called the floor – and never floating around in the midair or walking on the ceiling. The children never used the roof for anything. But that was not why he was there and he had to concentrate on his detective work. Lela needed to do more investigating.

Lela and a strange toy (day 2)

(Material: To enrich the story e.g. a milk carton or other box can be used. In the box there is a secret object – a sea shell. During the telling the teacher can cut a hole on the box.) Lela looked at the unbelievable toys all around the day care center. They were very different than in the ocean. Home in the sea Lela's favorite toys were sea shells, because with them Lela could do almost anything. Once Lela had made a castle out of sea shells so big that he could swim in it himself. But the day care center was a different story.

Think that some toys had wheels! When you pulled the toy on the floor it rolled forward easily. Big toys had big wheels. Children could sit in the toys and let the toys roll. You could even speed them. Other toys were made for building, others could be used in a make-believe play. Lela had fun. He played with the toys together with other children.

Suddenly Lela found an interesting toy. The toy was blue, there was something in it and it had a small door. With that toy Lela wanted to play. But oh no! Now Nix noticed the same toy and took it. Nix started to play with the same toy that Lela wanted to play with. What does Lela do? Can you guess? What would you do? *(Children are instructed to think about the case for a while by themselves. After everybody has come up with a strategy, the teacher writes down every child's answer. The teacher is not after a correct answer or a proper strategy but is interested in all kinds of answers.)*



Lela wanted desperately to play with this wonderful toy. He could not resist and he snatched the toy from Nix's hands. Lela and Nix were ready to have a fight.

– Do not take my toy, said Nix.

– I want to play too! answered Lela.

– You may not! said Nix. Eventually Lela had to look beside when Nix played with the toy. Do I wait until the toy is free or do I go away? Lela thought impatiently. Nix looked at the suffering Lela. Eventually Nix softened and said: - Lets play together. Then Lela could also try the toy. Nix and Lela had fun playing together. Nix hid away a small treasure into the toy for Lela to find. Lela looked at the small door on the toy. Lela opened the door and inside was – a sea shell!

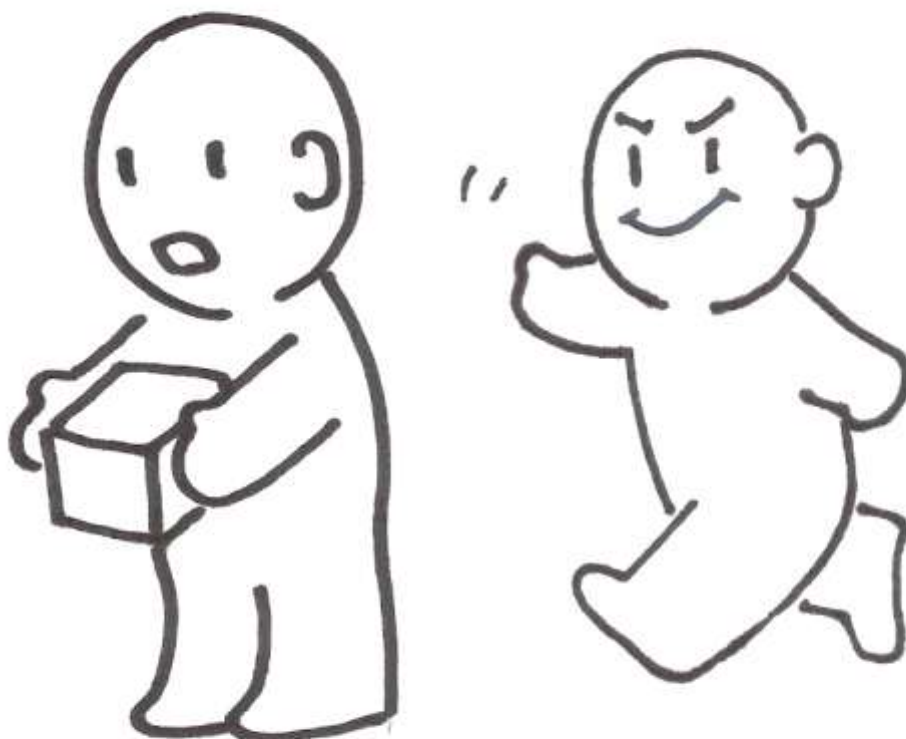
(Hint: Several boxes can be provided to the children. The children can do their own toy and make their own treasure in it.)

Lela's play (day 3)

(Material: a shea shell.) The blue toy was Lela's favorite in the day care center. He build a miniature copy of his own sea home. It helped with his home sickness. Lela put in there all the finest belongings and most exciting hideaways. Lela put some sand on the bottom of the box, because he liked sand most of all. Floor was not needed, what would the use of floor be to a fish? Lela's own favourite place in his sea home was floating near ceiling from where he could see everywhere. The seaweed could scratch his tummy.

The other children liked to play sea plays with Lela, because he knew so much exciting things about sea life. Lela could show them many new sea plays. Lela and other children had fun.

Suddenly right in the middle of a play Ipa came and started to disturb Lela's play. Lela cannot play peacefully when Ipa keeps stopping his play on purpose. What does Lela do now? What do you think? The play is stopped just when it is at its best. Who can guess? What would you do? *(Children's personal answers are valued and written down after some quiet thinking.)*



First Lela tried to ignore Ipa, but Ipa kept on pulling his finger through the door of the toy.

– Don't bother me, go find your own play! said Lela. Ipa took Lela's sea shell in his hand and scratched on it.

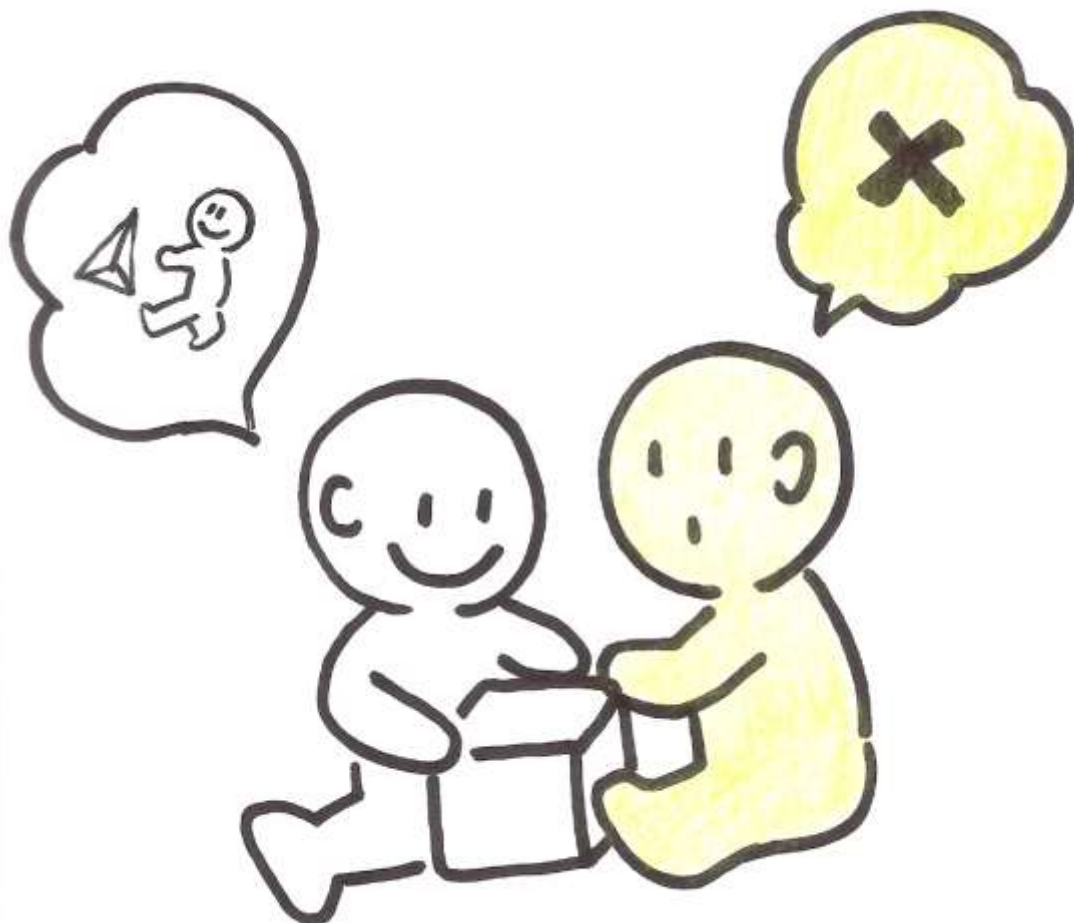
– Do I have to tell to the teacher? Lela said tiredly. Eventually Lela build a hut for himself and Nix. They used blankets that they put on the table. In the hut they could play without disturbances. In the hut it was almost dark. Nix invented that they could put a flashlight inside the blue toy. It was fun. Lela took the sea shell in his hand and put the shell on his ear. Very quietly but clearly Lela could hear a sound. It was a familiar voice, the ocean was sighing somewhere far away.

(Hint: It is exciting to build a hut of blankets after the story.)

But what do we play now? (day4)

Lela went to the day care center yard with other children. The yard was big. The yard was full of exciting things. There was some kind of rack or apparatus, on which it was possible to climb on and do tricks. There was a sandbox and the waves did not destroy the built stuff right away. It was possible to build a secret passage in to the sand.

Lela started to dig a hole in the sand with Nix. Lela had his treasure with him and they decided to bury it. Then they would fill in the hole again. Then nobody would know that they had a treasure hidden in the sandbox. They dug a very deep hole in the ground. Then they put the treasure in a small box and dropped it in to the bottom of the hole. Lela wanted to make a treasure map to be sure to find the treasure later. Suddenly Nix wanted to change to another play. Nix wanted to go and play with the buckets. What does Lela do now? He wants to keep on playing the treasure play, but Nix wants to go playing with the buckets. What happens next? *(Children give their views one by one. The consequences of different strategies can be discussed. There is no one right answer though.)*



Lela wanted to play with Nix. But he also wanted to finish the treasure play. I can't stop now when I am almost finished. I won't play with the buckets now when the treasure is almost safe! Lela filled the hole carefully and hid all the traces of the hole. Now nobody could now that there was a treasure deep in the sandbox. The treasure was safe. Then Lela went to see what Nix was up to. Nix gave Lela a bucket and filled it with water. Lela wondered about the buckets. If you turn over a bucket at the bottom of the sea, the bucket will not get empty. It is not possible to spill water in the sea. But here in day care center, turning a bucket over could result a real flood. There was no need for water pipes in the sea!

(Material: A bigger container full of water and a smaller container in it.)

Lela fails (day 5)

(Hint: The teacher uses pen and paper while telling the story.) After playing outdoors Lela came inside with the other children. Teacher told the children that it was time for a lesson. Lela was given a pencil, eraser and a piece of paper on which the task was supposed to be done. The pencil was an interesting device. If you scratched with the sharp end of the pencil on the paper, a black line was formed. Lela sat in his place and waited for instructions. Teacher told the children that they should draw a line on the paper through the points, in the order of the numbers beside the points.

Lela started to draw numbers from one point to another. Soon Lela found out that a straight line was a bit boring. Lela started to make curves and crossings. To bluff others Lela draw fake roads and dead ends that led to nowhere. Then he drew the day care center yard. He made a cross on the corner of the sandbox where the treasure was hidden. Soon Lela's paper was full of details and roads. Lela was proud of his work. *(Hint: The children can have a paper and pen and study for themselves where the line leads to, a pause in the telling.)*



Then children's exercises were checked. Lela found out that other children had drawn straight lines from one point to the next. Lela's paper was the only one that was full of wavering lines and mess. Lela had drawn a map. Lela thought that he had failed in completing the exercise. Lela's work was ruined. What does Lela do now? What does Lela do when he has done the exercise all wrong? *(Children's propositions are written on a paper one by one. The propositions can be read to the children and discussed. There is no right answer.)*

Lela wanted to throw his paper in the waste basket. – I don't want to have a lesson; I'll go playing, thought Lela. Nix gave Lela a new paper to make the exercise anew, but Lela hold onto his map. This is my map! Maybe they just don't understand it. Nix saw that Lela's lips started to tremble. Nix told others that Lela's work was a treasure map. Nix pointed on the yard and the sandbox. Everybody became curious. What was this treasure? Lela promised to show the treasure and took the children to the yard.

Lela's treasure is stolen (day 6)

In the yard Lela took the children to the sandbox. He showed others the cross on the map that was in the corner of the sandbox. Lela started to dig. Where was the treasure? The hole got bigger but the treasure was nowhere to be seen. Eventually the corner of the box popped up. Lela picked up the box and cleaned it carefully. Then he opened up the box. What was in the box?

It was a sea shell! But in the sea shell there was another surprise. Lela had put a pearl in the shell. The pearl shone and was almost transparent. Lela told the children that if you if you put the sea shell on your ear you can hear the ocean whispering to you. Lela let the children listen for the ocean one by one. Lela was right!

Children went back in. Raku thought that the sea shell was fine. He wanted to have it for himself. Suddenly Raku took Lela's shell and put it in his pocket. What on earth Lela does now? Raku has his treasure. What does Lela do? *(Children's propositions are written down. Different strategies are encouraged.)*



Lela tried to look the situation on Raku's point of view but he could not. It was his treasure!

– Give me back my treasure! pleaded Lela.

– Get yourself a new treasure, I want a treasure too, said Raku. Lela tried to take the treasure from Raku but could not reach his pocket.

Lela explained to Raku why the shell was his treasure. – Every time I get homesick I put the shell on my ear and my longing gets easier. Raku wondered about Lela's explanation. He gave the shell back to Lela.

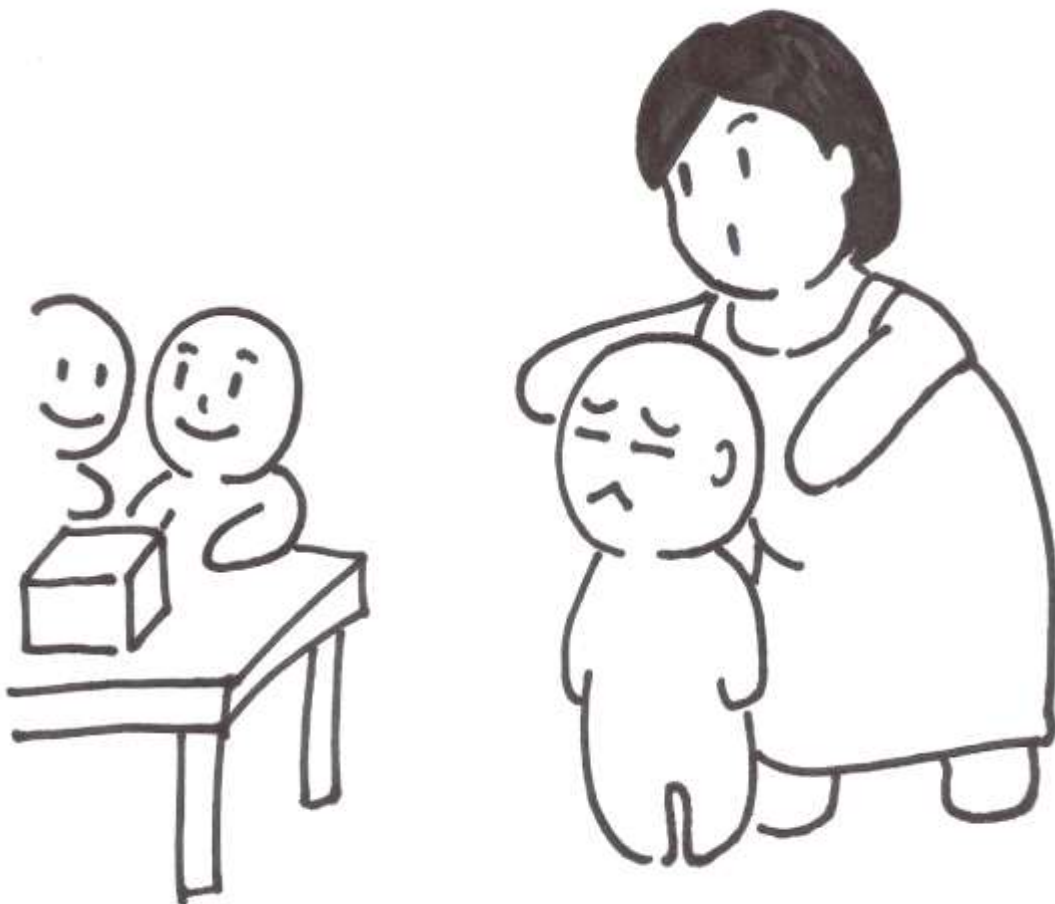
– How can the hum from a sea shell help with home sickness? asked Raku. But Lela did not answer. That was Lela's secret. (*Hint: Listening, treasure hunt.*)

The teacher gets angry (day 7)

(Hint: Something that can be used as a wig.) It was time for lunch. For lunch there was everybody's favorite spaghetti and sauce. All the children took plates full of spaghetti but there was more of it. The children talked and planned new things to do after the lunch.

Lela found out that it was possible to create a rope of the spaghetti. Lela noticed also that spaghetti could be brushed with a fork. The spaghetti started to look like a wig. It made Lela laugh. Suddenly Lela had an idea to try the spaghetti wig on his head. He lifted the whole spaghetti tangle on top of his head and shook his head. The spaghetti sauce flew all over the place.

The other children had never seen a spaghetti wig before. Lela looked real funny. The meat sauce started to run through Lela's collar. Children laughed on Lela's invention. Suddenly the teacher came back in to the room and saw the mess. The teacher became angry. The teacher was upset by Lela's carelessness and Lela breaking the rules. How could Lela make such a mess? Who would clean this whole thing up? Teacher scolded Lela. What does Lela do when teacher becomes angry? What would you do? *(After children's answers the teacher can describe his/her emotions too.)*



Lela did not want the teacher to get upset. – Should I run away? he thought.

– I did not do it on purpose, said Lela.

– Look at yourself! said the teacher.

I am sorry, said Lela. Teacher looked very serious. Teacher looked at the long spaghetti hair and the ketchup dripping from Lela's ears. Suddenly the teacher could not help herself, she started to laugh too.

– I have to admit you look delicious! said the teacher.

Lela had to take a shower to get the meat sauce out his hair. Then he put his clothes back on and went back to finish his lunch. Everything went well and everybody got their tummies full. Luckily there was not pea soup for lunch, Lela thought.

The game (day 8)

(Hint: Take a board game, a thief and animals on the table for manipulation as you read the story.) Lela saw many games in the day care center. His favorite game was *The star of Africa*. In the game the players tried to find a big diamond in Africa before others. The game was really exciting. In the game it was also possible to win a lot of money, although it was only play money. But there were mean thieves who could steal all your money. The thieves were annoying but made the game only more exciting. Lela laughed when Nix came across a thief and had to give up all of his money. Nix did not care and soon he found another jewel and became rich again.

In the game you could travel by boat or by plane all over Africa with the money. There were elephants and lions and it was hair-rising to travel among the animals. Lela and Nix played together and they had fun.

Just then a thief stole all Lela's money! That upset Lela. According to the rules you have to give away your money when you meet a thief, but Lela did not give his money away. Lela just kept holding his money and tried to keep on playing. Lela was breaking the game rules. Nix looked at Lela. What will happen now? What Nix does when he sees Lela breaking the rules? What would you do? (Children's answers are collected.)



- Hey, you are not obeying the rules! said Nix.
- I don't care about the rules, tried Lela.
- You have to, what is the point of the game without rules? said Nix.
- What if we invent new rules in which the thieves are monkeys that give us bananas?

said Lela.

Getting richer all the time started to interest Nix too. – Okay, we can get filthy rich! agreed Nix. And we have money to fly as much as we want.

Lela and Nix continued to play according to the new rules. (*Was Nix too kind for Lela?*) They decided that one day they would travel to Africa for real. And ride with a camel in the desert. They looked at the picture of the camel. Lela got the impression that the camel maybe did not brush its teeth carefully enough.

The bottom of the sea (day 9)

(Hint: You can build the bottom of the sea while you tell the story.) Lela was on the yard playing. He was again together with Nix. They had become good friends. Lela had many new friends and there was very little trouble. Now the two friends build the bottom of the sea into the sandbox. It was going to be a maze!

Here we will put a cave. Octopussy lives here. The corals protecting baby fishes can grow beside the cave. A mean shark is attacking, fast to the cave! The twigs and grass were good material for water plants and algae. Lela took the sea shell from his pocket and put it next to the corals. Now the seabed was perfect.

Nix went inside. Otto came to see what Lela was up to. He became jealous of the perfect seabed. Suddenly Otto stepped on the algae and kicked it.

– Do not tease me! Lela said to Otto. But Otto would not listen. He kept on kicking around the sandbox. Otto was destroying everything. Lela's and Nix's work was ruined. Otto was teasing Lela on purpose and did not stop. What does Lela do now? What if somebody comes to tease you? What would you do? *(What happens if you try to adapt to the teasing or try to reason with the teaser? What if you resist the teaser or try to avoid him or her?)*



Lela got angry. He pushed Otto. Otto pushed Lela.

– Don't break my play! said Lela.

– Your play is stupid, answered Otto.

Lela tried to calm down. Should I go and tell the teacher? Or should I leave and play elsewhere? But then Otto left without looking back. When Nix came back, he saw the destroyed seabed. The seabed was just a mess of twigs, grass and stones. Lela and Nix decided to build a playground for the fish children. After a while Otto came back and looked at Lela and Nix playing. He became jealous again. Lela was not angry anymore.

– You can join our play, we need help in building the maze, said Lela to Otto.

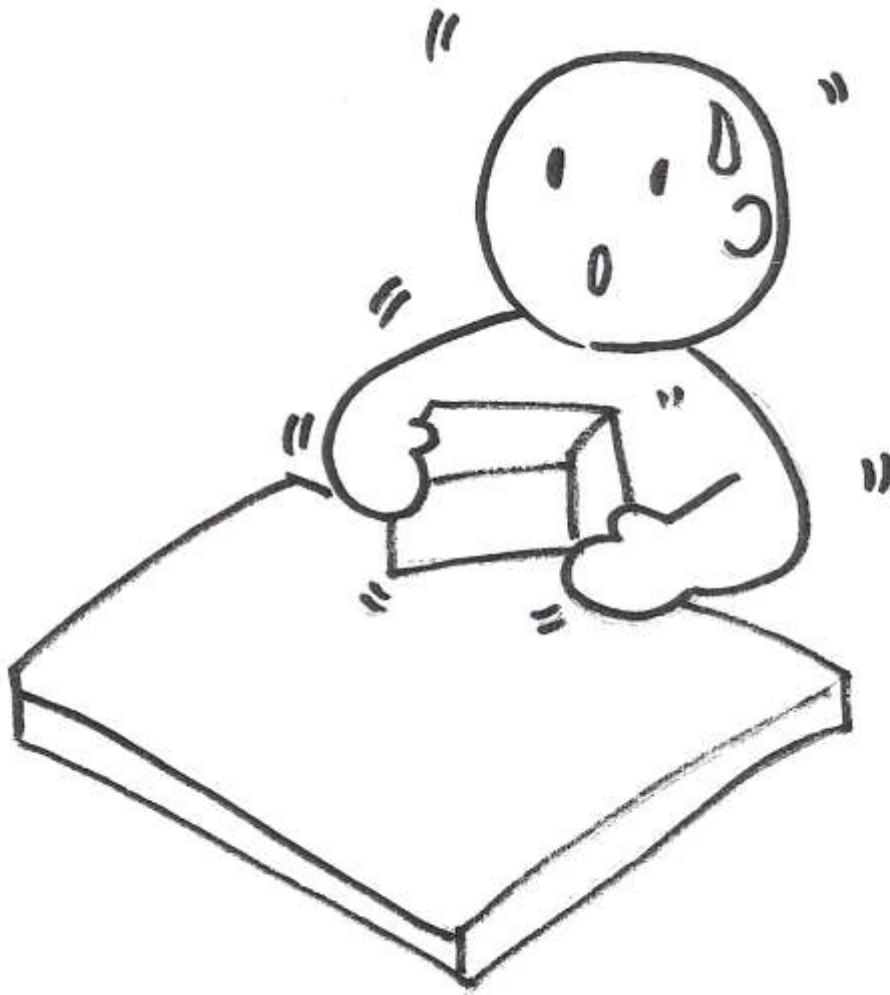
Now Otto could enter the cool play. That's what Otto had wanted all along. Were Lela and Nix too kind for Otto? Anyways, the fish-children's playground became their best play ever.

Chasing the peas (day 10)

(*Material: Tweezers and peas.*) Teacher gave the children an exercise to work on. The task was difficult. The children should move ten peas from one cup to another with tweezers. Tweezers were like small pliers with which children should pinch the peas.

Lela tried to grab a pea, but the pea escaped. Lela tried again. He got hold of a pea, but the peas were very round and rolled off easily. Lela started to get frustrated. He tried to get a hold of himself and tried to concentrate. Lela chased a pea and eventually got one between the tweezers. Now carefully. He started to raise the pea from the cup. Lela became nervous and his hand started to shake. The pea fell back to the cup.

– I can't do this, thought Lela. I am not as good as the others. Lela looked at May, who seemed to have no trouble in picking peas. What does Lela do now? He has got an exercise he cannot do. What happens? (*Children's views are collected and discussed.*)



The teacher did not seem to have time to help Lela. The peas were slippery. Lela took the cup and poured the peas into the other cup.

– You should use the tweezers, said May. May held a pea between tweezers.

The peas should have a hook attached, thought Lela. Lela imagined that he had a big digger. With the digger he could move a bucketful of peas and more. Lela imagined himself as a digger driver. The tweezers were his digger. He imagined the peas to be big stones that must be moved from one from hole to another. Lela found out that he was a skilled digger. He could move the big stones with his powerful digger. Soon all the big stones were in the other hole. The teacher came to look.

– You completed the task already, you were very fast, said the teacher.

Only then Lela saw that he had succeeded. He became happy.

– I will buy me a digger when I grow up. Teacher could not understand why Lela was talking about diggers during a math lesson. But Lela had learned a new thing, or maybe two.

Lela does not agree (day 11)

In the sea there was no outside or inside. It was all the same sea. What would it mean to go out to play when you are swimming in the sea? That was not possible for a fish. That's why Lela was interested in people going indoors and outdoors. The teacher decided when it was time to go out and when it was time to stay inside. For Lela it was difficult to follow those strange orders.

Usually the children adapted easily when the teacher told them that it was time to go out. The children collected their toys and started to prepare for outdoors. The children had to obey the teacher. Even if the children were in the middle of an interesting play they usually gathered their things and went out, even if it was cold outdoors. The children just put more clothes on. If it was raining they put on a raincoat and boots. If it was hot and sunny the children put on some sunblock and out they went.

Lela and May were having a tea party indoors. Lela was baking a cake. It would soon be ready and then they would have a ball. May was preparing the tea and setting the table. Just then teacher came and said it was time to go out. Oh no, not now! thought Lela. He did not want to go out when all the preparations were almost ready. Oh no, Lela wanted to stay inside with May and have a tea party. And it was cold and raining outside. What does Lela do? Lela does not want to follow teacher's orders. What happens? (*Adult collects children's ideas.*)



Lela understood that there was a lot of arranging and cleaning to do before going out. All the dishes need to be put back in the closet.

– I do not want to listen, thought Lela. Or maybe I pretend that I did not hear teacher's orders. Lela looked at May whose tea was ready.

– I do not want to go out! said Lela. Teacher's lips became thin. – It is time to go!

– No!

– Please can we just play a little longer, the cake is almost ready, pleaded May.

– But children need fresh air, said teacher tiredly.

May looked at the teacher tenderly and understandingly. – You look tired and hungry, we will give you a piece of cake. Sit here and relax for a minute, said May gently and stroked teacher's arm soothingly. Teacher was surprised and confused. She sat down and Lela brought the cake to the table and May poured tea for the teacher.

– Oh god, it is good to sit down for a while, said the teacher.

– Lift up your legs, said Lela and started to massage teacher's toes. It felt so good. The teacher relaxed and they had the best tea party. After the tea Lela looked out of the window, the sun had started to shine.

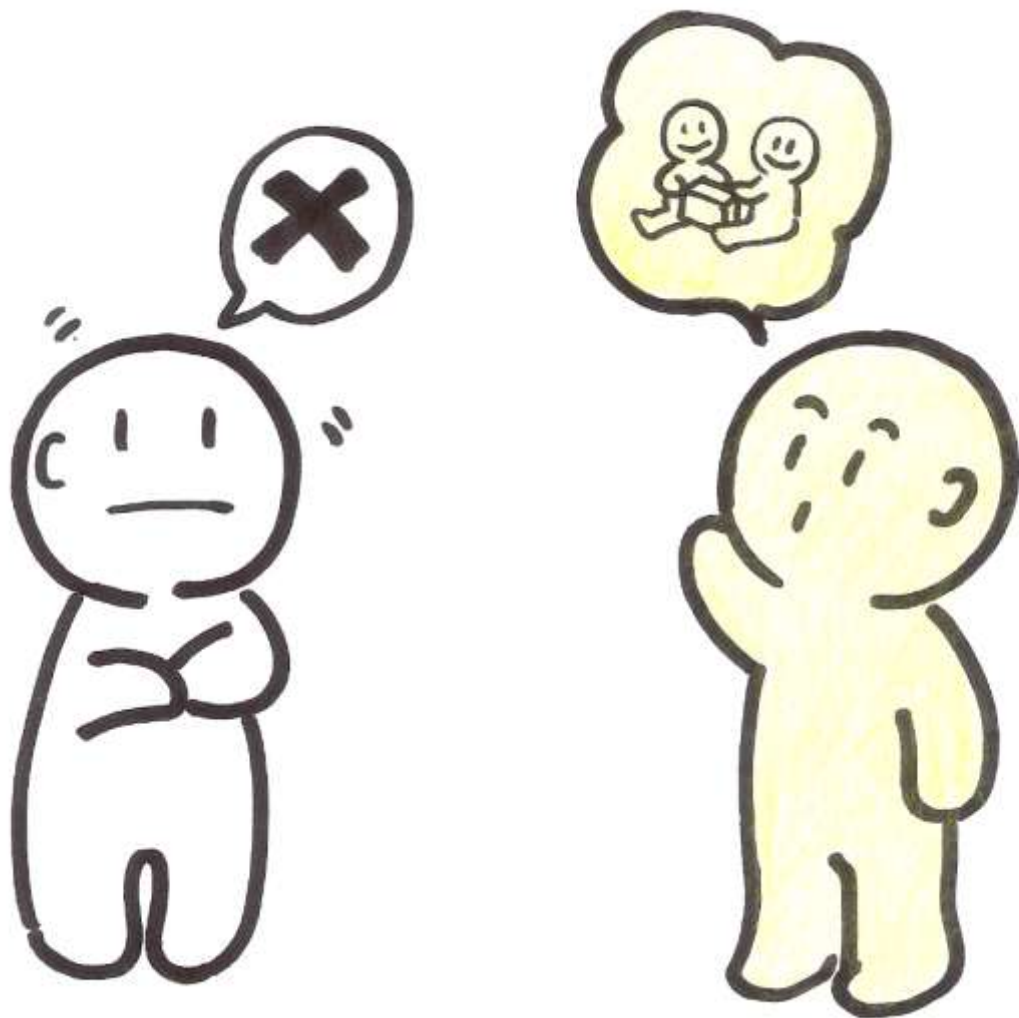
– And now, let's go out playing, I can make a mud cake! Lela shouted.

Girls' toys and boys' toys (day 12)

(Material: Different toys) When playing with Barbie Lela found out that there were boys' plays and girls' plays. In girls' plays they were more often princesses and hairdressers. Some girls played with ponies and some girls liked to take care of animals. Lela liked to play animal doctor with May. Lela wanted to cure the puppy's paw. With May they also cured the wing of a young bird. Lela thought that one day he would become a real animal doctor.

Lela and May started to play with Barbies. Barbies had a lot of important equipment like combs, make-up and handbags. Lela was dressing up a Barbie in pink shoes. Nix walked by and saw what Lela was doing.

– You are playing with girls' toys, laughed Nix. What does Lela do now? Nix is laughing at his play. Lela feels confused. What happens next? *(The teacher takes different toys to the table. How do the children feel about these toys? Teacher collects children's ideas.)*



Lela felt ashamed. Do not boys play with Barbies? Why not? Should girls and boys play different plays?

- Why can't boys play with Barbies? asked Lela.
- Of course boys can play with Barbies, said May.
- But I feel ashamed to play with Barbie now, said Lela.

May looked at Lela for some time. Then she gave Lela a robot. With the robot Lela and May could continue their play. In fact the Barbie and the robot fit quite well together in the same play. Girls and boys can very well play together, that Lela understood. But Lela never again played with Barbie.

- Why don't boys play with Barbies, asked Lela.
- Yes they do, answered the teacher.
- I am the only one, why, asked Lela.

The teacher was silent a while: – I really do not know.

Now here was a mystery! Even the teacher does not know everything!

Somebody is left alone (day 13)

(Material: Sea shell, a small stone from the yard.) Lela's time at the day center was ending. At night he would go back home to the sea. He would tell everything about his exciting experiences. Lela had had so much fun! Lela had met new good friends that he liked a lot. And they had done so many funny things! Suddenly Lela saw that Jan was standing alone by the fence. Did Lela see right or did Jan have tears in his eyes? Lela saw that in the day care center it was possible to be also lonely and full on sadness.

Jan had no friends. Jan didn't even have nothing to do. Jan just stood by himself and looked at the ground. The other children did not seem to even notice that Jan was there. Lela went to Jan and spoke to Jan. What did Jan tell to Lela? What does Jan do? *(The situation of Jan is considered. The dire situation of Jan does not need to end happily right away.)*



Lela comforted Jan. Lela revealed a secret to Jan. He said that he would go back to sea at night. The sea was Lela's real home. This made Jan sad again. Jan did not want to lose Lela, but Jan promised to Lela that he would keep Lela's secret. Lela gave Jan his precious sea shell as a gift.

– When you listen for the sea sighing in the shell, the sorrow fades away, instructed Lela. Jan tried to listen and found out that the distant sea really comforted him. Jan felt better. Jan gave Lela a stone that he had found on the yard. You could almost see through the stone.

Back to sea (day 13)

(Material: The envelopes with children's views collected in the first day.) At night Lela said goodbye to the children and adults. He found out that he was getting sad when it was time to leave. But in the same time Lela knew that he was expected in the sea. This adventure surely was something to tell about!

Lela took the envelopes from the shelf and went back home. *(Adult picks the envelopes to the table one by one.)* In the sea all fish children gathered around Lela and his envelopes. They wanted to hear everything about Lela's adventures. Lela started to tell about the astonishing and sometimes even heart-breaking things in the day care center. The fish children listened in awe. Many new things were revealed. For example the secret of a washing machine raised a lot of wonder and discussion. The children laughed at Lela's description of a scooter. The curtains in front of the day care windows were uncomprehensible for the fish children. The description of socks raised a lot of laughs within the fish children. The idea of rain was very exciting.

But what was written in the envelopes? What did the children do in the day care center? What does not happen in the day care center? Why things happen at the day care center? *(The envelopes are opened and the teacher reads the children's descriptions. The descriptions are discussed.)*

After a long night Lela eventually went to sleep. He sighed happily but then he had to inhale deeply. Lela looked at the stone Jan had given him. He looked at the transparent stone. He could have sworn but he was sure that he could see Jan waving at him. Jan was smiling. Lela himself did not know how he was feeling – it was not possible to feel tears in the bottom of the sea.

(The stories might start to have a life of their own in children's plays as the story and discussions advance. Children's views can be written on the wall for all to see. How children's views could have an impact on the curriculum? The story works well also in the parents meeting. Children's answers give parents concrete examples of important everyday decisions their children need to make. Children's views reveal important aspects of children's everyday beliefs that have an impact on the action. Children's views give concrete glimpses to the children's life. Children's descriptions reveal children way of producing and making new content for early childhood education. Merging the story with a shared project, e.g. The Treasures of the Sea, the processes may be worked even further. The idea could be that the stories invoke ideas for which the teacher provides motivation, material, support and continuity.)