

Re-turning the Child in Educational Research Methodology

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Abstract

The methodological approaches we explore in this article are anchored in Manning's (2016) concept agencement and Barad's (2014) concept re-turning. By re-turning the soil of our doctoral dissertations (Westgaard Bjelkerud, 2022, Moxnes, 2019) and exploring agencement as a way of activating the child in research, we draw attention to minor issues within the ecologies of research practices. According to Manning the minor works through the major as a force from within, problematizing the major's standardisations, opening norms and experiences to variations and potentialities. We re-turn our doctoral projects to actualise minor events by discussing the child as knower; childspacesmattering and child-events. Hence propose the child as political through agencement, and from this thinking of the child in research differently.

Keywords: Agencement, Ecology of practices, Minor events, Children's participation in research, Matters of concern.

Haunting, Returning, Re-turning

It's haunting, it haunts us the passage with the child.

We return to it, but it also re-turns us. Rattling in the nerves, the bones, the body.

But why does it rattle? What's that rustling? Skeletons of what? Skeletons of our dissertations?

The child who unfolds in the conversation asserts itself, asserts professionalism, asserts early

childhood teacher education - nightmares, dreams.

The child, the early childhood teacher or student teacher. Dreaming.

How does the child assert itself in research?

Whose matter matters?

DreamTeam - the skeleton, the child, the kindergarten teacher, the student teacher, the researcher.

Haunts us, me. And haunting, frustration, horror. Lures in the memory, in the body. Opens space, pores in research - fills it with new modes and manners.

Lodging the research in new ways. Lodging the researcher in new ways - hope, future.

Dream on - DreamTeam.

Introduction

What if we lived in a world where children had sustainable possibilities to influence research, as part-takers and participants, in ways that cared for their matters of concern? If we allow ourselves to dream with the thought of how that could contribute and offer new insights into the world of research, we wonder how it might be possible to understand children's participation differently. The focus on children's participation in research has through the last decades increased, and scholars such as Blyth & Aslanian (2022), Bodén (2020), Moxnes (2022), Osgood (2020), Spyrou (2016) and Pesch & Sundelin (2024) offer some examples of a larger field of researchers pointing to the importance, but also the more challenging sides, of listening to children and including their voices, interests and activities in research. This research field is of importance to highlight that doing research *with* children is possible, necessary, but also complicated. However, in this article we aim to discuss yet other possibilities by returning to and re-turning our previous doctoral dissertations on an adventure for reconceptualising *the child* in research where children are not directly involved.

In 2014 Norway included the UN's *The Children's Rights Act* into *Norwegian Constitutional Law*, determining how children should be included in research, pedagogical activities and play in early childhood settings (Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). The Norwegian *Act relating to kindergartens* (the Kindergarten Act), emphasises children's right to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten, to regularly be given the opportunity to take an active part in planning and assessing the activities of the kindergarten, and to be given due weight according to their age and maturity. Accordingly, the Norwegian *National Ethical Research Committees* (NERC) highlight some issues necessary to which attention should be paid when including children in research; consent and competence to grant consent, weighing of benefit or harm due to children's participation, and confidentiality. Hence children's agency is highly regarded (Backe-Hansen, 2016). On the other hand, NERC also defines children as a vulnerable

group with the right to protection (NESH, 2022). These rights, of participation and protection, might at first glance seem contradictory. However, putting both rights at work demands careful consideration, since children's participation and the child's implications have consequences for what kind of questions we can ask and how we can ask them.

In this article we regard both The Norwegian Kindergarten Act and NERC's guidelines for research including children in relation to what Manning calls major politics. Manning (2016, p. 1) explains the major as structural tendencies that work to organise itself in relation to pre-definitions of values. The act also relates to *agency*, as it highlights children's right for participation. Manning refers to agency as "a category (...) used to place the action of volition in a subject or a group." (2016, p. 123). She combines the use of the concept of agency in academic discourse to give voice to underrepresented groups. As children included in research might also be thought of. Nevertheless, according to Manning (2016) agency bears connections to identifications of predefined categories and expectations, such as the child as either participant or in need of protection. Pushing the complexities of power often highlighted through the concept of agency further, Manning (2016, p. 14, italics in original) suggests *agencement* as a concept which allows us to: "move from the idea that the act must be directly allied to an individual's volition toward an account of *agencement*". With *agencement* Manning (2016, p. 3) moves away from agency and into making "everything an event", stressing that an event is where *agencement* is actualised through an ecology of practices. Manning (2016, p. 123) connects *agencement* to an ecology of practices by which it shakes the foundations of predefined identifications and rather opens rooms for new modes of existence. We combine Manning's thoughts of ecology to Stengers' (2005; 2010) ecology of practices which she strongly relates to and elaborates in relation to the field of science.

As a methodological re-turn towards actualizing the political child in research, in this article we connect the child to *agencement* and ecologies of practice when returning to our respective doctoral dissertations (Westgaard Bjelkerud, 2022; Moxnes, 2019). We do this to explore further how the child might alter and contribute differently to Nordic research perspectives and politics. Moreover, we do this to grapple with the political child through minor events of children and to make these grapplings matter. The guiding concern that this article seeks to address is: *how to make children's matters matter to, and in, research projects where children are not directly involved, but where the research is nevertheless matters of concern for children?*

We think of matter firstly with Barad (2007, 2017) who connects matter to time and space and to world making and what is excluded and included in processes of world making. Furthermore, we have found Stengers (2018) work, and her elaborations on the Latourian concept *matters of concern* fruitful, relating this to Manning (2016) who connects matter to the minor, and to material forces. This leads us to propose questions such as how can we think of the child in terms of *agencement* rather than through the child's agency? How can this shift contribute to enhancing the child as the knower in research? Hence, opening children's contributions towards the pre of categorisation and to that which is still in formation (Manning, 2016, p. 123).

Re-turning the child - a methodological issue

We consider the working issue through a methodological approach which allows us to re-turn minor events, or what we also think of as agencement, in our previous doctoral projects. Hence, our re-turnings are with the soil of our doctoral projects and are methodologically rooted in Barad's research practice of re-turning (Barad, 2014; 2017). Re-turning is conceptualised in Barad's writing as not only a practice of going back, as a return, but rather as a practice of turning over and over, of airing, opening, and breathing in new life. Günther-Hansson et.al (2021, p. 24) build on Barad and clarify how re-turning differs from returning, writing: "if returning implies going back, re-turning means iteratively entangling and intra-acting to iteratively create something new or different". Furthermore, "[r]e-turning is a troubling matter, a matter of troubling" (Barad, 2017, p. 81), since it forces us to go back to something, to re-membering, a bodily re-turning-act. Barad (2017) connects *re-membering* to memory, a non-individual memory that connects time and space, matter and meaning.

Re-membering involves grounding ourselves to "reconfigure the spacetime-mattering" (Barad, 2017, p. 84). Connecting past to present and the future, where time, place, and the material discursive are dynamic (Juelskjær, 2019, p. 27). Spacetime-mattering became a fruitful thinking tool for us, since our re-turnings of the child forces us to not only go back to, and re-turning, our doctoral dissertations, but also to attune to our feelings, thoughts, and more bodily memories from our writing-practices and here-and-now, and again how this might matter for the child. Barad (2019, p. 539) stresses re-turning and re-membering as justice-to-come, as "a material set of im/possibilities with-in (of!) the world, what the world calls out for is an embodied practice of tracing the entanglement" (Barad, 2019, p. 539). Furthermore, she points out that re-membering is an embodied practice and a practice to:

[w]eather about the material re-configurings of spacetime-mattering in ways that attempt to do justice to account for the devastation wrought as well to produce openings, new possible histories/futures by which time-be-ings might yet have found/find ways to endure (Barad, 2019, p. 539).

As we work through re-turning and re-membering new possible histories or/and futures emerge. Manning (2016; p. 50) writes about the memory of the future, as "an attunement, in the event, to futurity not as succession but as a rhythm: the future pulses in experience in-forming". And it is these pulses of something that might open for new possible future histories, we explore as micropolitical events and hope might contribute to relocating the child and inspire future explorations in research. Our re-turning is happening some years after we wrote the dissertations, and as such we bring past memories, thoughts and feelings into the present, and further into an attunement with past events that can agitate some pulses for the future.

The two dissertations differ in both subject and structure. Agnes writing a monograph where the project evolves as a reconceptualisation of professionalism in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Anna writing a dissertation by publication with an extended commentary, about reflection and diffraction in Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE). As a strategy for exploring the child in

research we firstly returned to our dissertations and located different excerpts to copy apart from the original text and bring into this article, then allowing the excerpts to intra-act and entangle with concepts such as minor, agencement and ecologies of practices. The aim of these moves was to search for how to make children's matters matter. We are not searching for the child as an active participant in our research, participating with their opinions, doings, or sayings, but as a *force* in our past doctoral projects. The child as a force indirectly touching into our past projects. Through this force the child works not as an individual subject, but with Mannings (2016) vocabulary: the child as agencement. What matters is the child, but not necessarily a particular or specific child, rather it is the child as material discursive phenomena (Barad, 2007, p. 153) coming into actualisations as agencement (Manning, 2016).

Doing our re-turnings both correspond with and differ from what Osgood (2020, p. 113) describes as an ethical motion, being in the thick of things, actively participating in world-making processes. Our returnings might be regarded as a move away from the thick of things, since the excerpts from our dissertations are not generated from direct encounters with children. Still, we will argue, we are being in the thick of things, focusing on our sensations of the child through our attunements towards 'thinking par le milieu' (Stengers, 2005), to what is being produced by and through our re-turnings. Re-turning as always in relation between the middle and the surroundings, in what is able of becoming. As mentioned earlier, we consider this as at the same time productive openness and responsive connectedness, as paying attention to that which is being produced in these connections.

Return to and re-turning two doctoral dissertations

To do the re-turnings and explore the political child through minor events and make these events matter, we decided to return to our doctoral dissertations. As mentioned, Agnes's doctoral work concerned exploring how professionalism might be conceptualised otherwise within early childhood settings, specifically the Norwegian *barnehage* (kindergarten). By visiting EC teachers in their daily work in barnehage and carrying out co-creative conversations with them between the visits, the project implied being with children in the barnehage, but without them being what Agnes paid most attention to. When returning to Agnes's dissertation, doing a search on the child, the word appeared over fifty times throughout the dissertation. Both in relation to the visits, the co-creative conversations, and otherwise. Anna's doctoral work was about reflection and diffraction in ECTE, and as such not concerning children and pedagogical work with children directly. In what follows we will pay attention to Anna's extended abstract, a metatext called *kappe* in Norwegian. In the *kappe* children are only mentioned seven times, and the child two times. Neither in the *kappe*, nor in the four articles that the *kappe* covers, are there any observations of children or interviews with children, nor experienced EC teachers. Engaging with the child/children, in this article we attune to how the child/children propel affects, agitate rambles and reverberates through our dissertations, coming to the fore and making themselves felt.

In alignment with the article's guiding concern, in the following three sections we explore how to

make children's matters matter in research when children are not directly involved. By traversing the two dissertations we try to make minor (child-)events felt, as Manning (2016) emphasises, as an entry for thinking otherwise about children's participation in research. Our re-turnings have taken us into three subjects: introducing the child as knower; childspacematterings; and child-events as response-ability and hopefulness. Through these re-turnings of the child, we search for conceptualisations of the child in research which extend our thinking, hence expanding methodological considerations towards minor political issues and the political child.

Child as Knower

The first time the child appears as a force, rather than through descriptions, in Agnes's dissertation is in an interstice paragraph, an iteration, taking form as an autoethnographic field note written as she was trying to get a grip of Deleuze's (1993) concept of the fold, by drawing folds. She writes:

As I begin to draw, I become concerned with how I can make the folds work as if moving on, I become concerned with how the light falls on some parts, while the shadow settles elsewhere. In some places the sheet remains almost untouched in a lit field, while in others it completely covers, and I have to draw over several times to achieve the opacity created by the shadow and the inside and bottom of the fold. I pay attention to the formations, to turns and arches and bends. And I am suddenly struck by perceptions of what a child feels like when it wriggles out of my arms holding it in my lap, where it has been sitting listening to a book. How it slides off the lap and onto the floor. It is a sensory perception. The child's back arching like a suspended and tense bow with arms stretched above the head, while the movement, the sliding down from the lap, is almost imperceptible. I begin to think of how Deleuze (1993, p. 139) writes about baroque folds and how they autonomously flow and ripple over and surrounding the body in ways that do not reveal or betray the body beneath and cannot be explained. It makes me think about the dim interior of the fold and about the autonomy of the mind, about the fact that we cannot know for sure why the child slides down from the lap, what we see is what is expressed in and by the space, the unfolding between the child's mind and its body (Westgaard Bjelkerud, 2022, p. 89).

Reading this again, our attention is drawn to what knowledge of the sliding child might be. What can be known? What kind of micropolitical event actualizes itself here? To conceptualise knowledge and experience otherwise and work with another entry for approaching children in research, agencement allows us to more than "value modes of experience backgrounded in the account of agency" (Manning, 2016, p. 123). Manning (2016) offers agencement as what she calls the interstitial arena of experience, an in-process-of-formation-field. In this regard, agencement works as a force of movement and becoming. Furthermore, Manning proposes agencement as a concept which foregrounds a shift from the agency of an acting individual, acting upon an event, towards the operations of the event and how these operations affect how the event "comes to expression" (2016, p. 6). Agencement, she writes, "carries with it a sense of mobilising - its

movement-toward has an undeniable effect on the conditions of experience in their unfolding.” (Manning, 2016, p. 134). Since what we address in the article opens up questions as to how the child comes to matter in our dissertations, we explore conceptualisations which allow us to connect with the sliding child even though it was never actually present in Agnes’s study. Or was it not - always already? As past-present-future mattering? Re-turning the presence of the feeling of the sliding child from the excerpt above, the child is already latently present, actualizing itself in a moment of sensuousness.

Stengers (2010; 2018) argues, it matters how knowledge is produced, and who produces it. She claims that “[t]he answer to the question, ‘Is it a fact?’ belongs to those for whom this question is a matter of concern” (Stengers, 2018, p. 83). This brings to the foreground that what counts as matters of concern for the child should be regarded as highly valuable. On this ground Stengers might argue for the child as a knower, as connoisseur. Drawing on Stengers, Elkin Postila (2023, p. 27) posits the child as “a knower of who has knowledge about a specific question, problem and phenomenon.” Considering the child as the knower, the one to whom our research projects are a matter of concern, has made us re-turn our dissertations to look for how our projects may relate to pedagogical matters and children’s lives. Wandering further along the search results from Agnes’s dissertation, we were drawn towards how frequently the child seeped into and impregnated the matters of concerns of the EC teachers’ conceptualizations. It is as if the child affected how the EC teachers conceptualised professionalism, and made the child matter (Barad, 2007; 2017). Several times the teachers' thoughts on professionalism emerged through stories of discomfort, restlessness and challenged encounters with the child, showing us how these encounters themselves become re-turnings in and of their pedagogical work.

When I listen to the EC teachers, and hear them talk about their professional work, I often hear it said that most of the pedagogical work and alterations of this is about knowing the child. To know the child so well that you know what it needs and can adapt this to the individual child, but also that you know it in ways that allows you to know how and where it moves (Westgaard Bjelkerud, 2022, p. 182).

To know - the word used in the Norwegian version of the excerpt is *kjenne*. This word *kjenne* includes both to know and to feel, touch and sense. Re-turning the excerpt awakens a curiosity towards the child's implications and the Norwegian concept of *kjenne*. It is a short paragraph. But it still awakens an upwelling of different experiences, perceptions and impressions of knowing and feeling, of not knowing, of being moved, touched by the EC teachers’ engagement for to *kjenne* the child - and perhaps these impressions can be thought of in relation to differentiations between the child's agency and agencement? Considering the risks of knowing and not knowing, the risks of paying attention and of *kjenne*; concerned with how the child becomes the one that creates a need for particular forms of professionalism. In this way, the child, even though we initially didn’t consider the child as that significant for Agnes’s study, became important for conceptualising professionalism.

Millei and Rautio (2017) point to a need for careful attention to how research events, such as the child-matter-events in the excerpts from Agnes's dissertation, reflect and produce children's lives. This is not a simple matter since it can lead to and create issues where children's lives may oblige us as researchers to ask ourselves how it is possible to become someone's or something's spokesperson (Westgaard Bjelkerud, 2023). When discussing notions regarding children's participation in research Johannesen and Hellstrand (2023) expand this when they ask whether we, as researchers within common worlds, can bear to listen, pay attention, and connect to children's lives and matters. And we ask ourselves, can we bear to relate to what the child, as agencement, awakens?

Childspacematterings as 'causes' to think

Thinking with the child as agencement bestows a way of thinking of experience as in the interstices, in life and in what Manning (2016) and Stengers (2005) call ecologies of practices. Or, the child as part of a larger assemblage, as Malone, Tesar and Arndt (2020) write, which requires reconfiguring children's agency from the individual to the hyper relational. As such, the child as agencement moves towards thinking of the child and the expressions, perceptions, and impressions the child creates in and through our dissertations, in relation to ecologies of practices (Manning, 2016; Stengers, 2005). Furthermore, how these interact and diffract with each other and at the same time create and compose what we will call childspacematterings.

When suggesting how ecologies of practices might be thought of into the field of science and research, Stengers (2005, p. 187) points towards what Deleuze calls 'thinking par le milieu', highlighting the French doubleness of the concept of milieu both as a middle and as surroundings. This has led us to think of *the child as agencement* as that which is being produced and unfolds through relations, and to pay attention to both what is happening 'in the middle', and to what 'that which happens in the middle' relates to. Paying attention here is aligned with what Stengers (2005, p. 188) speaks of as a matter of pragmatic ethos, a way of paying attention which is also obliged to risks, and to the force of thinking. Connecting to the child as agencement in our dissertations opens for possibilities to reconfigure and relate to the child-event's surroundings and further into the interrelations of major and minor politics, to knowledge, floors, hopes, and the relevance of research. This will or obligation to pay attention and connect, or rather to pay attention to what the connections do and create in their unfolding's are, according to Stengers (2005, p. 191), the 'causes' for thinking: "You think when you are forced or obliged to think. You do not think without a 'cause'." Hence, paying attention to relationalities within the ecology of practices as a tool for thinking aims at "conferring to a situation the power to matter in its particular way" (Stengers, 2005, p. 192).

One example of such an approach in research is made by Lerbak et.al (2022, p. 36) who activate sensory attentiveness as *something* that happens between a child, a stepladder and a researcher. This way of paying attention, is to open up to the not-yet-known. When we, in this article, turn the lenses towards the child as agencement, we learn from Lerbak et.al (2022) the importance of being sensible, and attune to material matters. Paying attention to the child and what happens in

the middle is also about childspacematterings, we argue. Such matterings appear already in the introduction to Anna's dissertation, (2019, p. 2), she wrote as follows:

As a kindergarten teacher, I am concerned about the ways in which children inhabit kindergartens. Relatedly, the goal for ECTE is to prepare graduate students to work on the floors of kindergartens, and engage in practices of exploring the world with children. Teachers are expected to play, care, learn with, and make use of teacher-skills to create interesting play and learning opportunities (Moxnes, 2019, p. 2).

Anna wanted to inspire future teachers to work on the floor, to be as close as possible to what she sensed mattered for very young children. To play, care, learn with, and make use of teacher skills to create interesting opportunities, to give children various rights to participate and be listened to. Reading the lines from the dissertation awakens in-act bodily affects (Manning, 2016, p. 20), and invites re-remembering (Barad, 2017) the touch of kindergarten floors against our bodies. A pressure against the backbone and thighbone, which feels different from sitting on a soft office chair. Other bodily re-remembering is also acting in. We can hear, sense, and feel sounds, scents, and movements from young children inhabiting previous kindergarten-floors. Anna writes in her dissertation about how she became aware of the value of sitting on the floor late in her teaching career. Being part of a childspace as being on the floor, in regard to research, is about making the researcher available. For Anna this was also an important realisation of the professional role. The floor somehow turns into being about what is happening 'in the middle', and to what Stengers (2005, p. 188) explains as a way of paying attention which is obliged to risks; a space where the child was, is and still might continue to become a force in research.

The above excerpt about the floor connects to what mattered when Anna was teaching in barnehager, what mattered when she wrote her dissertation, and what still might matter for children, and herself as a researcher (e.g. Moxnes, 2022). Re-turning the memory makes the floor blurry, tilting it further into non-individual memories of floors. Long, hard corridor floors in airports. Wooden floors on terrasses or in an expensive living room; warm or cold tile floors on a bathroom; dirt floors in small cabins; or soft sound dampening floors in a barnehage recently visited. Also, university floors, often hard floors not meant to sit on, or stand on for too long, act-in on our thinking of childspacefloorsmatterings. Waterhouse et.al (2022) reminds us of the urgency when following the risks of adventurous research with children. Re-remembering involves risks since it might take us in new and unforeseen directions. The childspacemattering of the floor also becomes emergent and awakens re-rememberings for Agnes. Making forgotten floors from Agnes's doctoral project, which didn't find its way into the dissertation, reappear. While re-turning Anna's excerpt during a conversation for this article, she recounts:

Anna, when you write about floors, it brings to me a memory from the first time I visited one of the barnehager in my Ph.D.-project. You know, I entered the front door and came into a cloak room. Just inside, a child came to me pointing at a yellow taped line on the floor in the doorway leading further into the barnehage.

The child explained to me not to pass the line with muddy outdoor shoes. Even though the Ph.D.-project was about EC teachers' professionalism, I entered children's spaces and everyday lives in barnehagen, and I think that the approaching child made me think of this more expansively in the Ph.D.-project than if it hadn't claimed the floorspace in this way. (Conversation between Anna and Agnes, November, 2024).

In this recounted re-turning, childspacemattering floors create an event, or a 'cause for thinking' in Stengers' (2005) words: forcing methodological re-considerations and re-formations. Perhaps a 'cause' for strengthening the floor as a mattering childspace, where the child might partake in research in ways that cares for their matters of concern?

To think methodologically about children playing on floors, running over floors, jumping, rolling, crawling, or just sitting on a floor, watching life go by, the 'cause' can perhaps also be to create multiple spaces to think-with the child. The floor is a site for an ecology of practices, as somewhere that works as something that makes something happen. As such, childspacematterings urge us to connect our bodies to the ground, turning attention to "the everyday habits, ordinary routines, and mundane materials that make up life in early childhood contexts" (Osgood, 2020, p. 113). Through bringing the barnehage floor into the discussion and letting it matter, we both connect to previous practices and let the floor become a reconfiguration of a childspace that mattered and still matters, as a 'spacetimemattering' (Barad, 2017, p. 84). Stengers' (2005, p. 191) perspectives on 'causes' for thinking helps us to connect the past, to both present and future, becoming something to continue to think from. The floor might become a space for a political child, the child as knower (Stengers, 2018), to emerge. But also, a site for memories of the future, as "an attunement, in the event" (Manning, 2016, p. 50), a rhythm from bodies moving on future floors. Hence, reminding and re-memembering as a methodological practice of justice-to-come (Barad, 2019).

Child-Events as Response-Ability and Hopefulness

Through our re-turnings, thinking of the child as agencement has become a driving force for thinking ethics in terms of - an at the same time - productive openness and responsive connectedness, always in relation between the middle and the surroundings, in what is able of becoming (Manning, 2016). The ethos is thus spun out of, and produced through, the surroundings of and through connecting with the child-events in our dissertations. As we see it, this relates to Manning's thoughts on minor gestures as: "[...] the pulse of a differential that makes experience in its ecology felt. It is the generative force that opens the field of experience to the ways it both comes together and subtly differentiates from itself" (Manning, 2016, p. 64). Hence, thinking of the child as agencement also opens for making the child felt in different ways through our dissertations, reminding us of different matters of concerns, and making connections between the intelligible and sensible, making "(...) the attunements of an emerging ecology felt" (Manning, 2016, p. 65).

The quotation above about the floor made us more aware of floors and made us pay attention to the childspacematterings of floors as, hopefully, a site for ethical response-ability caring for children's matters of concern. Ethical response-ability is about the ability to respond (Haraway, 2016). Moreover, to connect response-ability to hope is not to cloud or befuddle the responsibility that signifies response-ability, but to consider hope as a driving force for working towards becoming response-able, or able to respond in research. Anna writes:

The hope is that multiplicity in teaching and student active methods open for a sustainable pedagogy for the children of tomorrow's kindergartens (Moxnes, 2019, p. 79).

The excerpt is connected to a discussion about student active methods in ECTE. The excerpt troubles us, as re-turning may be a troubling matter (Barad, 2017). For how does the child take part through this excerpt? What response-abilities might the children of tomorrow's kindergartens have, when not being the subject of the research and without being directly involved? Re-turning the excerpt makes us wonder how multiple ways of enacting the child in research might open for response-ability and sustainable research methodologies for change? Sensing the child in research through an excerpt concerning teaching methods in ECTE might be a troublesome matter. However, if persevere, maybe this could bring something different, some new pulses for the future, into methodological matters? Maybe the child, through this dreamwork, is strengthened as a political force, since both the pedagogical teaching practices in the excerpt and our discussions of research methodology are aiming for change.

Through further re-turning the excerpt, the child in research is connected to another central word, hope. Anna was hoping for better practices in tomorrow's kindergartens when writing her dissertation. According to Haraway (2016, p. 114) hope operates as a "rapidly mutating virus". Returning to hope and reading the hope for better practices as a spreading and mutating virus, invites us to re-think hope as a powerful force, a force that spreads, creating worlds (Osgood, et al., 2022). Or as Taguchi and Elkin Postila (2023, p. 239) discuss, hopeful entrances to critical worlding-knowing. Hope as a force that mutates into several forces to think differently about children's participation in research. Ulla & Larsen (2021, p. 2) connect hope to temporality and point out that temporality creates different potentialities for hope. Maybe here, in an awareness of the mixture between hope and the temporalities of child-events, is where sustainable research practices that matters for the child emerges?

Returning to the dissertation, Agnes re-encounters a quote from Deleuze and Parnet (1987) she considered important for her project. They write about professions as rigid systems, but also as that which: "happens beneath it, the connections, the attractions and repulsions, which do not coincide with the segments, the forms of madness which are secret but which nevertheless relate to the public authorities" (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 125). To Agnes the already available theoretical framework of professionalism wasn't enough to conceptualise what she thought of as urgent within EC teachers' work. The quote from Deleuze and Parnet (1987) addressed this urgency of the complexity and emergence of everyday life in the barnehage. However, in this

article's re-turning, the quote renews itself in relation to being professional as a researcher in combination with this excerpt from Agnes's dissertation, from a conversation with an EC teacher about her relationship to a particular child:

There is a small pause in the conversation where the EC teacher leans a photograph against a glass of water, the picture facing her. She sighs, and the sound of the glass scraping along the table and the sigh fills me again with a slightly solemn mood, as if she wants to include us in something important. She barely lets us see the picture and I think it's for the sake of the child, it's a picture of her and a child.

My spontaneous reaction is to express that it was a nice picture.

[here comes a longer paragraph where the EC teacher tells us about how the child has taught her how to be an EC teacher, and how this relationship now guides her pedagogical ways of building relations with other children]

Listening to this audio recording awakens something in me as a researcher. I notice that it is becoming difficult to maintain a neutral, scientific distance. This disturbance started already when we sat there in the conversation but was renewed when I listen to the recording again. There is something moving about this, it is as if what seems important to the EC teacher spills over and becomes important to me. Through what she says, it becomes clear to me that her professionalism has evolved together with the child, but that it may also have jeopardised her collegial relationships and her "reputation" as a professional and as an EC teacher (Westgaard Bjelkerud, 2022, p. 184-185).

The quote from Deleuze and Parnet and the excerpt from the dissertation, re-turns, folds and unfolds feeling the child's vitality, not the child's agency, but it's agencement, as child-events. As something that both attracts and repels, creates joy and unrest, haunts and lures us and research methodology into adventures. Adventurous stories from practices we have never been part of, involving children we never have met, evolving implications on the research both then and here-and-now, in the future. The story entails discomfort and restlessness. These bodily reactions are what we re-turn, hoping it will make the child's matters matter. And maybe transform the child's micro political events in the excerpt into a driving force for more affirmative and response-able methodologies?

Children's response-abilities require as such research practices where participation is an agencement, a force of temporality (Ulla & Larsen, 2021), movement and becoming (Manning, 2016, 123). Through these paragraphs, we have tried something, but when we meet resistance, do we go on; or do we lose motivation and give up? And how is this ethical - response-able or hopeful? We also raise another nagging question: if children's voices and children's matters in barnehager were of such great importance to us, why did we not write about children? How did we end up somehow smuggling in small glimpses of children's daily barnehage lives in our

dissertations?

Hopefulness moves us from past child-events, and past writing-processes with our dissertations and propel into our writings for this article. It mixes up Anna's ideas of hopeful future practices that matter for children, and Agnes's troubles of being a professional researcher. According to Ulla & Larsen (2021, p. 8) "Hope presents variations of knowing and not knowing, of being and becoming. Hope becomes present and distanced in instant and humble modes". When we hope for research practices caring for children's matters of concern, we try to re-think hope as a powerful force, a force that mutates and opens to think differently about children's voices, matters and futures.

In-conclusion: Re-discussing children's matterings in research

According to Manning the minor works through the major as a force from within. By re-turning the soil of our doctoral projects (Westgaard Bjelkerud, 2022, Moxnes, 2019), Manning's words about how the minor works through the major, inspired us to ask: *how to make children's matters matter to, and in, research projects where children are not directly involved, but where the research is nevertheless matters of concern for children*. We have tried to draw attention to minor events, or what comes to matter when involving the child without focusing directly on the child when doing the research. In the introduction we also pointed to the UN's *The Children's Rights Act*, and the child's right to participate, and the child's right for protection. Stengers (2005, p. 187) writes: "Now, in order to propose thinking in the minor key, it is not sufficient to avoid the major one. If the ecology of practices is to be a tool for thinking, it will understand that avoidance is not the renunciation of any major key (...)". The discussions have created formations of the child as knower, childspacesmatterings and the child-events hence propose the child as political through agencement. This article is thus a proposition to activate an ecology of practices as a tool to think how the minor works from within. Through our discussions the child's matters have moved from not being the core of our dissertations, to becoming a force for further thinking.

What we initiate through the shift from agency to agencement, is that thinking with the distinction between these two conceptualizations gives impetus to thinking otherwise about the child in research, opening our research projects towards what Manning refers to as minor gestures. Thinking of the child as agencement points to how intensities emerge when re-turning (Barad, 2017) with and through our dissertations and how these intensities are non-intentionally directed by the child in the texts, creating compositional movements which again alter our experiences and our thoughts. Opening children's implications towards the pre of categorisation and to that which is still in formation (Manning, 2016, p. 123), awakens different experiences and impressions of knowing and feeling, of not knowing, of being moved, touched by the EC teachers' engagement to *kjenne* the child, to how floor becomes childspaces that matters, and creates hopes through response-abilities. The child in research doesn't have to be someone we have met, or someone we are close to. It can still be a child we can *kjenne* and be affected by. Actualising the child as agencement has driven our thoughts on children's matters towards a process of values and valuations through Barad's call for an embodied practice of tracing the ecological entanglements

and Mannings call for attunements to the ecologies affectively felt. Or even more so, towards making children matter in and for a justice-to-come (Barad, 2019).

Our discussions have expanded our understanding of how research might be of relevance for and with children. In relation to educational applied sciences the claim of relevance is highly valued. The question of relevant and useful knowledge production for practical applications is a question in demand coming from different angles, both political and from the fields of practice. Although these current demands related to the term of relevance often are associated with improvements in ways of doing research, in this article we have pursued a different entry. Thinking of relevance as an adventure of what comes to matter immanently with and from the world (Savransky, 2016), or as we have pointed out earlier; being in the thick of things (Osgood, 2020). To make what might matter for the child or making the child the one who knows its field, to again create research that matters for the child. When a child is sliding down from a teacher's lap, something other than the teacher matters more. Maybe the floor, bodily materials, or other materials is what matters and might matter for future children? Maybe this is all about response-able methodologies?

Implicating Barad's re-turn for this article has made us reconsider methodological questions of "What happened to us?". What happened to us during our doctoral projects, and what happened now when doing the re-turnings of our doctoral dissertation in light of micropolitical events considering children's participation? These are questions that might prompt explanations. However, in her Whiteheadian account, Stengers (2011, p. 14) suggests that the question "What happened to us?" works as a resource for telling stories in other ways: "...in ways that situates us otherwise - not as defined by the past, but as able, perhaps, to inherit from it in another way". In this way the questions are rather openings towards adventure, to that which might come, the advent, rise and emergence of things, senses, and thoughts. Following Stengers further, she states that adventures raise another question: "What does it [the adventure] make matter?" (2011, p. 19). Through re-turning excerpts from our dissertations where the child, in various ways, has become visible, we have turned the stories over and over again, problematising the content and re-created some non-individual re-rememberings that can connect time, space, matter and meaning (Barad, 2017).

As an introduction, we allowed ourselves to dream: What if we lived in a world where children had sustainable possibilities to influence research, as part-takers and participants, in their ways and in ways that cared for their matters of concern? By challenging our methodologies through an adventurous re-turning, we have discussed how the child contributes and reverberates, offering new insights into the world of research. Furthermore, how might the child's everyday practices matter to letting the child become political in research and in further pedagogical practices? According to Stengers (2010, p. 180) "All narration, if we are not careful, will follow the slope that leads back to ourselves. It ignores uncertainty because it knows the answer". Where does this take us? Although through the processes of writing this article we have tried to allow ourselves to explore and dream with the thought of what might happen if children had sustainable possibilities, our re-turnings have given us no concrete answers as to how to make children and children's

matters matter. Rather it has left us with some propositions, more questions - and this call from Stengers (2010, p.180) haunts us:

“I, on the other hand, want to “slow down” the movement, make interesting the moment when the various ingredients of an ecology of practices come into play: requirement, value and obligation.”

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