

Editorial

Special issue: Turning the tides; the child and the political. Methodologies for integrated child politics in education

This Special Issue concerns the child and the political: the political child.

The call for papers asked for immanent and minor (transpolitical, transgenerational, decolonized...) perspectives in which child and childhood are seen as moulding collective futuring forces in a globalized world. The call asked to refrain from rights perspectives in a narrow juridical sense to avoid any type of categorization and compartmentalization. The call also asked to avoid universalized, major, or idealistic politics of the child, and as Marina Garcés (2022) asserts: “The western humanistic tradition must leave the expansive universalism and learn to think of itself from a mutual universality” (p. 92). Being human is thus seen as a collective and collaborative activity ultimately repealing any divisions between subject and object, adult and child, nature and culture, body and mind. What can children teach us about politics, we asked, and how can the child become more than an object of policies? Further, we asked what kind of childhoods are desirable, necessary, and possible to future?

Children are remarkable in educational policies mainly by their absence. Mostly unstated and unthought, the general picture is of a working assumption that children, except as objects of policy, are not relevant to the discourse. This is despite decades of hard work by researchers and policymakers to include children’s ‘voices’ and include them as stakeholders in education and educational policies. In the Nordic context, in which beliefs in- and links between research and governance are tight through the financial and technological or digitalized systems, we face subtle and not so subtle signs of blurring between research-based evidence-making and policy-based evidence-making which in the long run undermine our efforts to extend and politicize the concept

of the child and childhood as micro-political forces and agencies.

We believe that the concepts of 'the child' and 'childhood' should be extended and politicised. Moreover, educational policies should be minored to ensure children have the right to sensorial and agentic childhood(s); and professionals have the right and possibilities to create knowledge. We see this as a futuring turning of the tide concerning the child and the political, encouraging other ways of theorizing and doing methodology in educational research.

It implies a view of politics freed from connotations of the "immature", "innocent", "lacking", "wanting" or "helpless" state of child and accompanying presuppositions about prevention, protection, intervention, resilience, learning and even help permeating educational modern thought and politics. Such "not -yetness" of children speaks to a futurity that is already teleologically determined. As a political endeavour education must be first and foremost about fluid thinking - a resistance to thinking "in conformity" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004 p. 415).

The call encouraged contributors to trace entanglements that allow research and researchers to attend to the im/possibilities of doing 'childhood' differently, affording different responses to what it means to become child.

How to bring in the missing child in research and politics?

What can the child teach us about politics?

How can the child become more than an object of policies?

How might the child be seen as a collective futuring force influencing politics?

How might the child be seen as a collective futuring force influencing pedagogy and education?

What might doing childhood differently imply for the role and constitution of research and the researcher?

What might doing childhood differently imply for the relation between policy and research?

What kind of childhoods are desirable, necessary, and possible to future?

The first article is written by Agnes Westgaard Bjelkerud, Inland Norway University and Anna Rigmor Moxnes, University of South-East Norway. The title is *Re-turning the child in educational research methodology*, and it is a methodological exploration anchored in Manning's (2016) concept *agencement* and Barad's (2014) concept *re-turning*. By re-turning the soil of their doctoral projects and exploring agencement as a way of activating the child in research, Agnes and Anna 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. With this, Agnes and Anna re-turn their 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 research is done differently.

The second article is written by Bosse Bergstedt, Østfold University College, Norway. The title is *When the child's superposition becomes micropolitics*. The article is written in Swedish, but here is a short English translation: What can we learn from children's becoming with the world? Can it make us think about politics in a new way? The article explores what characterizes children's opportunities to become-with superposition, where everything happens at the same time as part of a constant repetition. A condition that is there before the child is placed in time and space. Based on pictures of Bosse and his grandfather, the article discusses how it is possible to understand children's future with the world with the help of psychoanalysis, quantum physics and poetry. And how the child's micropolitical actions can make us look differently at our time's established perception of reality and thus also rethink children and politics. The article builds upon Bosse Bergstedt's previous research by connecting perspectives from different scientific disciplines with artistic activities, thereby broadening the understanding of children's becoming.

The next article is titled *Under the table* and concerns *using video-creation to imagine gestures of the political Child*. The author is Soern Finn Menning, University of Agder, Norway. Centred around a short, one-minute film, the article explores how video offers the possibility to deconstruct and re-imagine taken-for-granted conceptions of children's agency and political participation. Sensitive to aesthetic dimensions of video, such research-creation emphasizes bodily intensities and collective vitality which often goes unnoticed in childhood research. Drawing on both a close and in-depth reading of Manning's (2016) minor gestures as political as well as Agamben's (1992, 1995) concepts of gestures, Soern argues that using the cinematic technique of montage enables the possibility of challenging dominant methodological discourses when children's agency is investigated. He claims that while the major gestures of *political Child* are often based on identifying children's individualized subject-centred and discourse-based agency, his multi-modal article explores how video as research-creation might contribute to reconceptualizing the *political Child* differently.

The fourth contribution is about *Slow and affective becoming-with in early childhood education as the initiation of cultivation*. Authors, Alexandra E. J. Nordström, and Sara Sintonen, are both at University of Helsinki, Finland. In their paper, they explore slow and affective becoming-with in early educational contexts as the initiation of cultivation, emphasizing the child as a futuring force rather than a future individual. A slow approach advocates varied pace and rhythm, diverging from goal-driven approaches. Affective intensities, including feelings, bodies, and sensory elements, challenge Western understandings of child and childhood, informing pedagogies and practice. Their starting point for the reconsideration is the Finnish scholar J. A. Hollo's (1895-1967) educational thinking. Exploring postqualitative and non-representational methodologies, Aleksandra and Sara focus on the messy and mundane in-betweens in early childhood education. That is, altering how they perceive place by refocusing their gaze from a physical location to intricate, intertwining becoming-withs. Aleksandra and Sara focus on slowing down in the here

and now, for moments of glow and enchantment - urging us all to think, see and feel with what child and childhood as a collective futuring force can do.

The last article is an essay about *The political child, life, philosophy, the political and science*. It is written by co-editor of this current Special Issue, Anne Beate Reinertsen, Østfold University College, Norway. The essay is an attempt to write an unruly force field in sustained expansions about the political child, life, philosophy, politics and science: the political child as a force and carrier of immanence, unencumbered, and an expression of a future. Or rather; it is an essay about the messiness of the real itself and its refusal to comply with coding. This implies a view of the child born with inalienable rights as a political subject and force of material and social transformation, and temporalities of writing being transformational techniques. Writing ultimately treated as an ecological practice and method that facilitates the production of collective subjectivities. Thinking the child, life, science, and the world politically means thinking with Chantal Mouffe's (2015) concept *agonism* in combination with *writing* as continual Deleuze and Guattarian (2004) becomings, active in life itself. There are thin walls between realisms, dreams and fabulations, and this essay is Annes's attempt to strike a blow for freer, humorous, more philosophical, and political mindsets in our pedagogical sciences and imaginations.

This Special Issue is aimed at academics who are affirmatively critiquing the discursive production of policies in attempts to create openings toward expanded meaning fields. The mattering and entanglement of child and childhood in the wider real/virtual web of existence and methodologies for decolonized child politics in education. It implies interrogating the societal implications of theoretical and methodological innovations as an ethics and consider the politics of introducing creative, innovative, and speculative methods. Ultimately, to tune in to or "intervene" by extending the possibilities of the role of the qualitative social sciences and humanities in societal change and futures. There is no conflict between documents and fiction, but a problem – perhaps – that affects the faculty of imagining. What is true? What legitimacy do we have to share realities that are not strictly ours? What truth can we share from what we do not have direct access to or have not experienced directly? Such questioning points towards an artistic, ethical and political problem conditioning the cultural, social and activist landscape today to such an extent that it needs careful, plural and creative reflection, a willingness to rework through writing words and materials together, and interacting with learners who are willing to engage in such adventures together. Starting with a *problem* in the Deleuze and Guattarian (1994) sense, as we do in this SI, one affirms the problem and the solution simultaneously. Problems are therefore posed in post-qualitative terms:

All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges. We are dealing here with a problem concerning the plurality of subjects, their relationship, and their reciprocal presentation. (p. 16)

Post-qualitative writing is a form of *non-knowledge linguistic activism* (Reinertsen, 2021) and a creation of a motley text of everything in an open humble way leaving the writer- ultimately the

reader, every subject, equally vulnerable in their judgements of the value of something or someone. Writing through this might thus be seen as a nonfoundational, stammering, exploratory, real and virtual affirmation of the possibility of context breaking and the necessity of emergence of the event. *Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 5).

Writing academics therefore begin where they are.

Writing academics listen to the sounds and things associated with them in the compositions.

Writing academics install themselves in the lives of those with whom they learn and research.

Writing academics develop sensitivity to elements or people who are not - or do not take part in the status quo. This is deterritorialization in process philosophy.

Writing academics search for research aspects that are, or have been, ignored.

Writing academics want a life of becoming rather than copying or reinforcing what is already there.

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