

# Making culture

Children's and young people's leisure cultures

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# Preface

The Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (Kulturanalys Norden) has been tasked with producing statistics and knowledge useful for policy makers who want to develop Nordic cultural policy and strengthen cultural life in the Nordic countries. Through statistics and analysis, we highlight questions regarding the conditions of cultural life in the Nordic region. The Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis was initiated on behalf of the Nordic Ministers of Culture and is financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Our host organisation is the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis.

During 2018 and 2019, the Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis has worked with a knowledge base on the cultural habits of children and young people in the Nordic countries. The report, *En gemensam nordisk undersökning av barns och ungas kulturvanor* [Joint Nordic Studies on the Cultural Habits of Children and Young People] was a first step in this work, and the present research anthology is a further development and deepening of this work. The texts in the anthology illustrate and describe different examples of cultural practices among children and young people in the Nordic countries. In focus is children's and young people's leisure culture. Cultural habits of children and young people are, however, an extensive field of research, and the anthology does not give a complete picture, but instead seeks to raise questions and themes about the cultural life of children and young people who to date have had a relatively hidden away place in cultural policy discussions. This book therefore contributes reflections and revitalises the dialogue and discussion about children's and young people's cultural habits.

There were several guiding factors when producing this anthology. The first was to present a book with a broad Nordic representation. The texts address examples of children's and young people's leisure culture in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, and Greenland. Another aspect important in the selection of texts and themes was to capture the political cross-sectional perspectives. Therefore, the anthology chapters address leisure culture of children and young people in relation to LGBTQ issues, gender, functional diversity, and ethnic minorities. Another important point of departure has been that the research anthology shall contribute to the visibility of present-day activities and that it should be a special focus on children's and young people's own creation and how children's and young people's own creation is integrated with their consumption of cultural experiences.

The Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis sees several themes in the texts that should be relevant to recognise within cultural policy and research as well as by those who work on cultural policy evaluation and follow-up in the Nordic countries. One example that is important primarily from a cultural policy perspective is the pervasive impact of digitisation on the cultural habits of children

and young people. Digitisation can often contribute to the increased inclusion of marginalised groups and can enable self-expression and visibility of experiences that would otherwise not be allowed to emerge. There are several such examples presented in the anthology, but there are also examples indicating that digitisation might be associated with barriers and exclusion, which is addressed in the chapter on the use of social media by young Sámi people. In this context, there are important social and geographical aspects to consider – not all groups and locations are affected in the same way by new technologies; for example, it depends on which (language) group you belong to or where you live or spend your time.

Another discussion that should follow from the texts in the anthology, and that is relevant to cultural policy and for those working with the evaluation of cultural habits of children and young people, is how the concept of culture today should be understood and operationalised. Quantitative surveys of cultural habits are available in the Nordic countries, but they differ in both content and form and do not provide a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the cultural habits of children and young people. There is too much that risks falling outside the scope of the measurements being done. The anthology therefore contributes with complementary and deepening knowledge about what the cultural habits of children and young people look like today, which includes both new activities and new perspectives on how cultural habits should be understood. The texts also show how integrated children's and young people's own creation is with the consumption of cultural activities and how relational the cultural life of children and young people is and how it transgresses age. These are questions and lessons that the Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis perceives as important to address in cultural policy, in cultural habits surveys, and in research.

In the work with this anthology, we have had a very valuable collaboration with the external editor, Professor Anna Sparrman at the Department of Thematic Studies–Child Studies of Linköping University in Sweden, the contributing researchers, and our scientific board. The researchers themselves are responsible for the content in their respective chapters.

Gothenburg, September 2019

Sverker Hård

*Head of Agency*



# **I. Introducing the topic**



# Children's and young people's leisure culture

Anna Sparrman

## Introduction

This is a research anthology about children's and young people's leisure cultures in the Nordic countries. Children's and young people's practices take centre stage in this book for the purpose of exploring culture from within their own practices, focusing on what they *do* (Sparrman, Samuelsson, Lindgren & Cardell 2016; Sparrman, Sandin & Sjöberg 2012). In this book, this is expressed through, how leisure culture creates social mobility, how children move between and multitask digital technologies and platforms, and how they on a regular basis are engaged and active in multiple cultural activities such as going to the theatre, singing, or online gaming. It also engages with leisure culture in terms of venues where people, objects, ideas, imaginations, and pleasures move in and out of one another. The concept of culture is in constant motion through the chapters entangling social processes with cultural processes, cultural heritage with popular and digital culture, doing and making in practice with place, and markets with cultural policies. This collection demonstrates that leisure culture gets its meanings in and through social relations and is not solely the expressions of individual identity work.

To understand this heterogeneity, Tony Blackshaw's (2010) concept of "liquid leisure" is handy.<sup>1</sup> The concept emphasises and takes into consideration that leisure practices are complexly set up. They are in constant motion and are unstable, they flow and are fluid, moving and mobile in different ways along with the brittleness and breakability of social relations. We need to be open minded and follow the liquidity of children's and young people's leisure cultures if we want to understand the whats and the whys of their doings and how they explore and exploit their freedom. To stay with this unruliness opens for seeing and highlighting new aspects of leisure culture such as how pleasure, happiness, and imagination matter to children and young people when engaging in cultural activities.

The aim with this book is to make visible aspects of children's and young people's leisure cultures that public cultural policy seldom highlights. We ask: How and with whom are children and young people engaging in leisure culture? Where and when is this being done, and why? These questions feed into the central message of the collection, that we have to understand children's and young people's leisure

<sup>1</sup> In his development of the concept, Blackshaw (2010) draws on Zygmunt Bauman's (2004) concept of liquid modernity.

cultures in and through the practices where they are being performed and done (Sparrman et al. 2016; Sparrman, Sandin & Sjöberg 2012).

The outline of this introduction sets off with a historical contextualization of child and youth culture to situate the actions performed by children and young people in the book. Following on this is the exploration of the three key aspects of “aged by culture”, “the pleasure of culture”, and “configuring the doers”. The last and third aspect will be discussed in the concluding chapter of the book, “Configuring the doers”, which reflects on the heterogeneity of the “doers” (children and young people), what and who turns them into “doers”, and what this implies for our understanding of children’s and young people’s leisure cultures. To conclude the book with the doers is a way to encourage the reader to hold on to, and keep thinking about, the complexities of leisure cultures from the point of view of children and young people themselves.

There are multiple ways of reading this book. Some texts are short and some are long. The (s) in the list of contents marks the short texts. Read as a unit, these short texts build a story that challenges concepts or ideas that we take for granted about children’s and young people’s leisure cultures, while the longer texts immerse the reader leading us deeper into what is continuously ongoing in children’s and young people’s everyday leisure cultures. The introduction and concluding chapter can be read as one piece making a larger argument situating the book. It is also possible to just straightforwardly follow the layout of the book and read it from cover to cover. The book is divided into five parts. Part I introduces the topic of the book by situating it theoretically and statistically. Part II-IV brings together issues on creativity, cultural pleasure and finally cultural participation. The final part V brings the book to a closure. Each section begins with one of the shorter texts broadly situating the other chapters. It should be clear, though, that each chapter stands by itself and that some chapters are more essayistic and others more scientific.

## Child and youth culture

To understand the leisure cultures discussed in the chapters of this book, it is necessary to get a picture of the history of the concepts of child and youth culture.<sup>2</sup> The concepts of child culture and youth culture have different historical and theoretical backgrounds. While child culture was established during the 19th century, youth culture grew out of the new category of teenagers during the 1950s (Hebdige 1979; Klein 1998; Sparrman et al. 2016). Youth culture for many equals sub-culture, resistance, and subversion, while child culture’s genealogy derives from the establishment of compulsory schooling, children’s separation from labour, and the need for keeping children off the streets (e.g. Cohen 1980; Hebdige 1979; Klein 1989; Sparrman et al. 2016; Willis 1977). The aim with establishing

<sup>2</sup> Youth culture here covers the category of youth and young adults.

children's books, playgrounds, camps, and toys was to make children more child-like and make them, or give them, the position of being worthy of protection (Klein 1989).

This historical process of change in what was perceived to be good (schooling) or bad for children (unsupervised street life) might be one reason for why the notion of child culture still seems to personify goodness (Sparrman et al 2016). Instead of goodness, youth culture's subversive characteristic links to the modern idea of the "wild" teenager. The point here is that child and youth culture is morally charged through social contextual aspects, as well as through how we define words like child and youth.

"The child" and "the youth" in child and youth culture derive from different theoretical traditions; child culture draws on the innocent child and developmental psychology, while youth culture sees youths as political and social actors sprung out of sociology (Jenkins 1998; Klein 1989). These theoretical starting points affect how we then understand the culture made for and by children and youth. While youth culture stands steady in sociology and cultural studies, child culture over the last 15–20 years has developed through the interdisciplinary field of Child Studies and the notion of children as social and cultural actors situated *in* society (Mouritsen & Qvortrup 2002; Sparrman 2002; Sparrman 2011; Sparrman et al. 2016). Children's actions constitute, at the same time as they are constituted by, society (James & Prout 1990; Prout 2005). This "new" sociological approach theoretically brings child- and youth culture closer to one another than they have ever been, and both traditions now focus on children and young people as cultural producers rather than passive consumers of culture. This is an aspect emphasised in this book.

An important contribution of this anthology is that it focuses on topics, contents, and groups of children and young people that usually have a hidden position in cultural politics. This book takes a broad and inclusive approach to leisure culture and has as an aim to include as many categories of children and young people as possible. By this, we embrace the less-abled bodies of children and youth (Gustafsson this volume), we look into LGBTQ+ children's and young people's literary re-writings (Duggan this volume), we acknowledge indigenous children's and young people's cultural engagements (Montgomery-Andersen; Ní Bhroin this volume), and we point out how children's and young people's leisure culture is gendered beyond the young, white, abled man (Björnsson; Buhl; Landwehr Sydow this volume). In other words, we emphasise all children's and young people's right

to cultural participation (Hultgren this volume).<sup>3</sup> It is feminism that has made it possible to embrace and include more groups and people into leisure research helping us see that everyone's perspective matters if we want to know something about societies in general, and the meanings of leisure culture more specifically (Henderson 2013).

Focusing on the practices of what children and young people do, this book challenges and makes visible those norms and values that are taken for granted about child and youth culture. It illustrates how values are enacted by children and young people as such, as well as by their leisure activities. Some of the book chapters are explicitly written in contradiction to taken-for-granted norms and morals of good and/or bad (Buhl; Duggan; Gustafsson; Hrechaniuk; Landwehr Sydow; Ní Bhroin; Söderman; Vestad this volume). The point is that child culture does not come with intrinsic values of goodness or that all young people's cultural activities are subversive or even have the aim of being subversive, there are always children and young people who seriously explore life through culture. This collection contributes an understanding of children's and young people's leisure cultures as ongoing and situated in their lives while also questioning perceived pre-defined values as well as any potential marginalisation of their actions.

## Aged by culture

Age has implicitly in different ways already been touched upon as the concepts of child culture and youth culture signal age distinctions. Organising cultural activities in accordance with a biological age linearity starting with the child, moving on to the youth, and then to the adult is a common strategy (Sparrman et al. 2016). What we discover when we look at this linearity is that culture follows a developmental pattern, as well as that adult culture is the norm against which child and youth culture are measured (Sparrman et al. 2016). Children and young people are often talked about in terms of age. They can be too young for their age, not acting their age, too old for some things, or aged by culture through their perceived inabilities (Sparrman 2018b).

Children's and young people's leisure cultures are consequently what we can call "aged by culture" (Gullett 2003; Sparrman 2018b). To be "aged by culture" means focusing on how established organisations such as, in this case, national cultural policies or markets use age to segment consumers or to measure visitor groups.

<sup>3</sup> See also Article 31 the UN Convention on the Right of the Child:

*"1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. 2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity."* (United Nations 1989).

Age is thereby not an objective stable category its meanings are always negotiated in and through practices.

In statistical measurements of cultural habits, age is dominant (Björnsson; Merikivi, Myllyniemi and Salasuo; Ólafsson this volume). Age is in these cases a homogenising category presenting children of the same age as coherent cohorts doing the same things. It is therefore, just as pointed out in this book, important to take a critical stance to how statistics of children and young are organised and to ask ourselves what we are measuring, what we want to know, and what we find (Ólafsson this volume).

The fact that most statistical measures are based on self-reporting questionnaires also leaves out large groups of children and young who might not be able to read and/or answer questionnaires (Ólafsson this volume). Other methods are needed, for example, the qualitative ethnographic method studying small children who have not yet learned to read (Johansen; Vestad this volume) and children and young people with disabilities (Gustafsson this volume), both of which are groups of children and young people who have difficulties finding their ways into statistics or research. Measurements of cultural habits are in this way always selective.

At the same time, the surveys presented in this volume deflate preconceptions such as that children only hang out on digital media. They rather illustrate how children play theatre, write, and perform songs and how smartphones are broadly supplied by parents as tools for communication and control (Björnsson; Merikivi et al. this volume). Sometimes the division by age raises more questions than it answers. If young adults spend more time making music, is it because they play more music themselves or because they have become youth leaders for younger children? Focusing on numerical age hides information on who children and young people are doing culture with: by oneself, with peers, with people the same age, or with people who one shares an actual interest with regardless of age?

Age is also a market product, and many of the objects and commodities used by children and young people in their leisure cultures are age related. Products like computer games and films come with age restrictions, while children's books have age suggestions (Sparrman 2018a). In these situations, age is often used to protect children *from* culture until they reach a certain age, even, it turns out, if children might be performing in the production (Helander 2018). The idea of protecting children against culture, and we are not only talking about consumer culture, draws on a behaviouristic theory of children's cognitive maturation through developmental stages (Helander 2018; Sparrman 2018a). Today, critique has been levelled against this behaviouristic approach as being too inflexible. Still, age is, just like gender, a fundamental device for segmenting markets. That consumer objects are "aged" by the market does not, as this book illustrates, mean that children, young people, or adults use them accordingly in practice.

Age is a social, cultural, and material relation. There is what we, drawing on Blackshaw (2010), could call an “age liquidity” as people do not express cultural age loyalty. You can be 2 or 99 years old and visit and enjoy the same rock concert or meet across ages through digital gaming activities or social media. This accessibility thus cuts across generational orders.

## The pleasure of culture

Reading across the chapters of this book, it is obvious that children’s and young people’s cultural engagements are bundled not just with age, but also with pleasure in multiple ways. Children and young people express delight in gaming skills, show playfulness, enjoy winning, use their desires as creative forces, show content, enjoy fancifulness, and express passion; they plainly enjoy themselves. What do these emotions tell us about children’s and young people’s leisure cultures?

It has already been mentioned that child and youth culture as well as notions of “the child” and “the youth” are embedded in systems of social and cultural norms and values. Other values intertwining with child culture come from the field of education. It is more or less a standard that child culture gets its value through educational goals, or through solving larger societal and cultural problems like school bullying (Sparrman 2011).

Culture can of course have importance for dealing with challenging social problems like bullying. One of the chapters in this book, for example, emphasises how music can be an important tool for processing strong emotions of loss (Vestad this volume). Fear, anger, threats, and abandonment are often also central in cultural productions addressing children and young people (Helander 2018). A question this book raises is whether pleasure, enjoyment, and the sublime can be equally important to our understanding of children’s and young people’s cultural practices as, for example, learning outcomes.

As pointed out by Sara Ahmed (2004), the language of emotions generally leans on the presumption of interiority rather than being described as a social and cultural practice that binds together and organises societies. Ahmed has developed what she calls the “outside in” model emphasising emotions capacities to bring people and societies together (Ahmed 2004, p. 9). Drawing on Ahmed this book explore how leisure culture is a mix of social relations, materiality, age, and emotions and that emotions, just like any other aspect, politicise leisure culture. For example, which emotions are allowed, and which are not? Is it morally acceptable to emotionally invest in being a “fan” (Buhl; Duggan this volume), to enjoy winning a drawing competition (Hrechaniuk this volume), or to be dismayed that your native language is not available on Facebook (Ni Bhroin; Montgomery-Andersen this volume).

Karin Helander (2018) discusses how emotions are, and have been, a recurring topic when the Swedish Media Council decides on the age limit for films targeting children and young people.<sup>4</sup> Possible emotions are then valued against the content of the film. This politicises what children and young people are presumed to be able to cope with emotionally (entangled with age!) or which emotions are acceptable from a political point of view. The Media Council, it seems, can in this way decide in advance the inner emotional processes a film can trigger and then decide against this emotion by classifying and hierarchising it in relation to other emotions as too strong, too scary, and/or too emotional. These rules or restrictions do not come from nothing; they come from ideas of what is emotionally appropriate or not for children and young people, as well as from which emotions are seen to be appropriate for these age groups. The Media Council's politics draws on an interior, individualistic and fractioned idea of emotions, rather than seeing emotions as Ahmed, as something that binds people together, even if the emotions are grim.

More than one of the chapters in this book approach emotions from the “outside in” (Ahmed 2004) showing that children's and young people's emotions are part of larger social and cultural systems (Gustafsson this volume) or by rules set up in relation to using cultural expressions like social or digital media (Arminen & Tiilikainen; Johansen; Merikivi et al. this volume). As two of the book chapters point out, pleasure and enjoyment can also have an impact on other life choices, like how the young woman Signe's engagement in cosplay leads her to enrol for a design course and a bachelor programme in Japanese Studies (Buhl this volume), and how hip-hop becomes a source for future economic provision and lifestyles (Söderman this volume). Pleasure and freedom have potentials in the hands of children and young people even when they explore culture without measuring it against learning outcomes.

Ahmed's (2004) “outside in” of emotions makes it possible to explore the complex and interesting emotional world of the everyday life of leisure culture without discarding or marginalising it. Instead, it facilitates (politically) raising the value of the emotive parts of not just culture, but of life in general.

## Looking ahead

This research anthology is a determined effort to show what children and young people do in their own cultural leisure practices. By doing this, the book brings an awareness to what children and young people across the Nordic countries engage with. The collection of chapters gives a broad, vivid, and exciting insight to how

<sup>4</sup> “The Swedish Media Council [Statens Medieråd] is a government agency whose primary task is to promote the empowering of minors as conscious media users and to protect them from harmful media influences. /.../ The Council also classifies films for public screening. The ratings reflect whether the films are liable to harm the well-being of children. The age ratings are ‘all ages’, 7, 11 and ‘not rated’, the latter resulting in a 15 rating.” (Swedish Media Council 2019).

children and young people make culture matter in their own and others' lives. The empirical examples in the book do not perform a special Nordic leisure culture, but rather they show that, depending on in which country, or where within in a country, you live, access to culture really differs.

What the Nordic children and young people share are the pleasure, the enjoyment, the struggle, and the responsibility of making use of the freedom they have in forming their leisure time. And they do! Yes, they do, but they are also circumscribed by norms and values linked to children, childhood, youth, culture, adulthood, age, emotions, and politics.

Children's and young people's own leisure cultures have a complicated position. The Swedish National Cultural Policy (2009), for example, emphasises children's and young people's right to culture by singling them out as a prioritised target group in relation to national cultural policy objectives (Swedish Arts Council 2019). All Nordic countries have also signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, United Nations 2019). One of the fundamental aspects of these rights is access to and participation in leisure culture (Article 31). Still, to single out children and young people in national and international policies also risks marginalising and isolating them as a group (Reynaert, Bouverne-De Bie & Vandeveldel 2012).

Sometimes groups need to be singled out to become visible at all, and this is often the case for children and young people (Sparman 2011). However, when after having done that we also need to reinstate them within the system again, and most importantly at a different position than they had before. Even though children and young people are singled out politically, their own leisure cultures are not necessarily per definition valued as important by public cultural politics. As pointed out in this introduction, child and youth culture often obtains its value through education. This said, there are important interconnections between culture, education, and learning.

The Swedish National Cultural Policy (2009), for example, finances cultural school projects to make sure cultural expressions and participation reach and involve *all* Swedish children.<sup>5</sup> We do not want to give way on that. This book wants to reinstate children and young people, and we mean ALL children and young people, at the centre of cultural policies, not at its margins, thus making their leisure cultures relevant for every one of us as they show us how to live in and through culture.

Just as research in youth culture has often been occupied with the subversions of youth, so has research on leisure for a long time singled out and focused on (young)

<sup>5</sup> For one such project, see Skapande skola [The creative school] <https://www.kulturradet.se/Skapande-skola/>, accessed 22/05/2019.



white abled men (Henderson 2013). This gives a quite one-sided understanding of leisure cultures. By including ALL children and youth and what they do in practice, this book presents us not just with complexity across different activities, but it also opens for an awareness of the complex, multiple, and thoughtful ways in which leisure culture is carried out by young people themselves.

The collections of chapters also show that there are benefits of bringing child and youth culture together in the same book because the practices of leisure culture accentuate that child and youth culture are bundled together through co-creation of culture across ages and generations and that they help and support one another making culture relevant to life, and similarly life relevant to culture. Even though this is the case, it is difficult to foresee that age will become a non-category in how children's and young people's cultural lives are organized politically. What would age be replaced by?

Finally, and maybe most importantly, this anthology demonstrates that pleasures and emotions are important to children and young people. In the future, we should explore not just what children and young people *do* in their leisure time, but acknowledge how children and young people *feel*, and what parts of their lives their leisure culture activities fulfil. In this way we can start to advance the question why. Why do children and young people do what they do, and what do they invest in these whys?

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# Children's and young people's cultural and creative activities

## Surveys from the Nordic countries

*Mats Björnsson*

### Introduction

In the Nordic countries, cultural habit surveys have been conducted for several decades. The surveys, although they differ in overall design and sample methods, are nationally representative surveys covering different aspects of the populations' cultural activities. Children and young people are included, but they are generally not in focus. The surveys revolve around the same issues, but there are considerable differences in what is exactly asked about and how the questions are formulated. This makes comparisons problematic. However, a core of questions concern activities such as how often the respondents have been to the theatre, opera, dance performances, movies, concerts, art exhibitions, libraries, or cultural heritage sites. There are often also questions about reading habits, TV viewing, radio and music listening, and activities like drawing, painting, singing, gaming, dancing, and doing handicrafts.

This overview is based only on the most recent (2012–2018) national surveys on children's and young peoples' cultural activities in each Nordic country. The extent of variables and questions varies between the countries, where some are extensive and others more limited.

In total, the measurements made in the Nordic countries comprise a huge amount of data, and this overview seeks to summarise answers to just a few questions: How do the results of each survey look broadly? To what extent do children and young people actively engage in creative activities, and how is this related to age and gender? Concepts like “cultural activities” and “own creation” are not easy to define; the approach here is pragmatic and connects to available data for each country. Important differences to keep in mind are that the Danish and Norwegian data include sports, while data from Finland and Sweden do not, and that Danish and Swedish statistics includes computer games, while data from Finland and Norway do not.

Because there are differences between the countries in how the surveys are conducted, they are not statistically comparable. This complexity is important and is reflected upon later in this volume by Kjartan Ólafsson. For Denmark, Norway, and Sweden the data sources are surveys of cultural habits via questionnaires, while in Finland they are leisure studies partly based on face-to-face interviews. In

Iceland, a few cultural habit studies have been conducted. However, only adults (18 years and up) were included in these. Documentations from these studies are only available in Icelandic. For the autonomous areas of Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Åland, data on cultural habits are missing.

A certain focus in this overview is on own cultural expression or own creativity. In this respect, some common patterns can be identified, as discussed in the final section. The surveys, presenting the latest data on cultural activities among children and young people in the Nordic countries, are described below by country. The tables below differ from country to country due to the available data from each survey.

## Denmark

Eight cultural habit surveys of the Danish population have been carried out since the 1960s. The most recently published nationally representative study was carried out in 2012.<sup>6</sup> It covered a wide field from music, performing arts, and movies to books, computer games, sports, and the Internet. The results are presented in two age groups, namely children (7–14 years) and adults (15 years and older). It is primarily for the group of children that information about their own creation is measured.

A vast majority of Danish children listen to music frequently, and almost half of them sing or play an instrument themselves. Four per cent create their own music or song lyrics. As for performing arts, more than half of the children have seen theatre, ballet, opera, or similar during the past year. However, in this survey it is not clear what proportion of visits are made through schools. Every seventh child has performed in a theatrical production or similar, and just over a tenth have worked on making movies or videos.

<sup>6</sup> Annual average data from a new Danish culture habit survey will be published later in 2019.

**Table 1. Denmark. Own creative/cultural activity by gender and age. The numbers are the percentages of those engaging in the activity within the past year.**

Area/activity	Gender		Age (years)		
	Girls	Boys	7–9	10–12	13–14
Writing stories, poems, etc.	39	15	27	29	23
Playing a musical instrument	25	25	20	29	26
Singing	41	17	35	30	22
Working with film in a leisure club or similar	8	8	21	11	1
Exercise, sports, etc., at least 3 days per week	45	54	35	55	58
Playing computer/digital games daily	48	75	52	71	59
Using the Internet daily	68	87	51	77	91

Source: EPPinion og Pluss Leadership 2012.

Four out of ten children had created visual arts or crafts during their free time, and a bit over every fourth had written stories, poems, or other texts. About half of the children practiced sports or exercised at least three days a week.

With regards to digital habits and the Internet, it was found that Internet usage was frequent and that more than six out of ten played computer games or digital games daily or almost daily.

Of young people aged 15–19, almost one in five sang or played a musical instrument, and one in twenty had composed or sampled music themselves. More than one in ten in the age group had participated in activities such as a theatre club or reading circle during the past year. More than one in four played digital games for more than an hour a day.

## Gender and age differences

For some of the variables, boys are more active than girls. In particular this is the case in terms of how often one practices sports or exercises and play digital games. In other respects, gender differences are small. When it comes to activities such as writing stories and other texts, dancing, singing, and acting, girls are more or much more active than boys. For example, one in five girls has been dancing in the past year, but only one in fifty boys.

There are no big age differences between children and adolescents when it comes to writing or playing instruments. As for the frequency of Internet usage and frequency of playing sports, the age group 10–14 years is more active than the

youngest (7–9 years). The opposite applies to activities such as singing and working with own movies/videos at the leisure club.

## Finland

In Finland, five studies since 1977 have been carried out on the population's leisure habits, the latest published in 2018 (Statistics Finland 2018). A total of 15,000 people aged 10 years and over were selected to respond to a questionnaire or to participate in an interview.<sup>7</sup> The form was comprehensive and included, for example, family relations and social habits, participation in associations and community life. Several questions related to what are commonly referred to as cultural habits.

In the case of visiting activities, a little more than every third Finnish child and young person (aged 10–24 years) had been to the theatre during the past year. The corresponding proportion who attended pop or rock concerts was slightly lower, while almost half had visited an exhibition or a museum.

**Table 2.** Finland. Own creative/cultural activity by gender and age (10–14, 15–19, 20–24 years). The numbers are the percentages of those engaging in the activity within the past year.

Area/activity	Girls/Women			Boys/Men		
	10–14	15–19	20–24	10–14	15–19	20–24
Playing an instrument	32	24	18	24	19	23
Composing, writing music	9	8	4	6	13	11
Drawing or painting	56	25	25	27	13	8
Making handicrafts (wood craft, sewing, etc.)	45	27	41	34	39	36
Writing stories, poems, or the like	20	12	9	3	4	5
Amateur theatre or the like	7	3	3	4	1	1

Source: Statistics Finland 2018.

Questions were asked about own creation or cultural hobbies. About 40 per cent among children and young people draw or paint. About one in four are involved in making handicrafts, and an equal share play an instrument. Only a few, around one in thirty, act in amateur theatre.

<sup>7</sup> Data from young children were collected by face-to-face interviews in order to ensure a good response rate.

## Gender and age differences

In terms of visiting activities, Finnish girls and young women are more or much more often active in going to the theatre, dance performances, exhibitions, and concerts of various kinds compared to boys and young men. In terms of own creation, the pattern is a bit more varied. Among young people aged 15–24, a larger proportion of boys and young men dedicated themselves to creating music or writing songs. The gender difference is small in the field of handicrafts, while girls and young women dominate when it came to writing stories, diaries, and poems as well as drawing or painting.

In many respects, activities related to own creation are more common among children than among young people. This applies to different types of visiting activities (e.g. theatre, exhibitions, movies), drawing/painting, writing, and amateur theatre. This pattern, though, is not as clear for composing music and making handicrafts.

## Norway

In Norway a cultural barometer is conducted every four years, where about 2,000 Norwegians aged 9–79 years are asked about their cultural habits. The latest was published in 2017 (Vaage 2017). The results are mainly reported for the age groups 9–15 years, 16–24 years, and 25 years and older. Most questions concern how often the respondent had been to, for example, the cinema, theatre, concert, exhibitions, museums, and libraries during the past year. An overall picture here is that almost all children and young people had visited the cinema and about half or slightly more had been to the theatre, a concert, museum, and library. Around one third visited an art exhibition, while fewer went to the ballet and only very few went to the opera. About half of the youth visited a cultural festival.

There are also some questions about their own cultural or creative activities like playing instruments, having participated in a theatre group, playing sports, or exhibiting their own art.



**Table 3.** Norway. Own creative/cultural activity by gender and age (9–15, 16–24 years). The numbers are the percentages of those engaging in the activity within the past year.

Area/activity	Girls/Women		Boys/Men	
	9–15	16–24	9–15	16–24
Can play an instrument	58	39	50	45
Plays instrument regularly	28	12	20	14
Participates in choir/orchestra	17	7	9	5
Makes visual arts/crafts	14	15	6	7
Participates in organised dancing	12	5	4	1
Participates in sporting events*	72	40	82	62

\* Refers to the past two years

Source: Vaage 2017.

Nearly half of Norwegian children and young people answered yes to the question of whether they can play an instrument, but a little less than one in five indicated that they play regularly. Around one in ten participate in a choir or orchestra, and about as many create arts or crafts. Approximately one in twenty participates in organised dance.

Questions about membership in associations, like a club, show that almost half of all children and young people are members of a sports club. About two out of three have participated in a sporting event (during the last two years). One in twenty has participated in an amateur theatre group and has also performed with a theatre group. About three per cent have exhibited visual arts/crafts, and a smaller percentage were part of an art association.

## Gender and age differences

In the case of visits to the cinema, museums, and concerts, the survey shows only small gender differences. As far as theatre, opera, ballet, and even library visits are concerned, these are more common among girls and young women. The same applies to visits to art exhibitions.

This overall pattern is similar to that of own cultural activities; in some aspects there are only small gender differences, and in others females dominate. The latter applies to activities such as participation in amateur theatre groups, participation in choirs, and regularly playing instruments. For example, one in six girls 9–15 years participated in choir singing, while the corresponding figure for boys was less than one in ten.

If we look at the areas called cultural activities, we can see that the 9–15-year-old Norwegians all in all are more active than those aged 15–24 years. This applies particularly to participation in sports clubs and participation in sports events and musical or singing performances, but also to some extent to amateur theatre, choir, and organised dance.

## Sweden

A range of different culture habit surveys have been conducted over the years. The latest involving children and young people was published in 2017 (Myndigheten för kulturanalys 2017). It was conducted in school classes, and over 13,000 students (grades 5 and 8 in compulsory school and grade 2 in upper secondary school) answered the questionnaire.<sup>8</sup> The questions ranged from visiting activities to own creative activities, games, and activities via digital media.

About a third of the children and young people in Sweden had in the past six months written their own stories and poems. About a quarter had written blogs or diaries, and a bit less had written other types of texts. A large majority had painted or drawn, and most also had created art with a computer or tablet. Almost one in three had created music, danced, made jewellery, or acted. Taking photographs and making movies was also common. Most of the students had also edited photographs or films.

**Table 4.** Sweden. Own creative/cultural activity by gender and school grade (5th grade and 8th + 2nd grade, see above). The numbers are the percentages of those engaging in the activity within the past year.

Area/activities	Girls/Women		Boys/Men	
	5th	8th+2nd	5th	8th+2nd
Create own music	41	22	32	25
Play TV- or computer games	82	60	96	94
Sing alone	75	82	51	57
Dance: practice, participate in a show	47	34	10	10
Draw, paint	97	80	83	57
Work with textiles (e.g. sewing)	56	28	30	10
Work with wood and metal	39	14	47	21
Sculpt	21	7	13	4

Source: Myndigheten för kulturanalys 2017.

<sup>8</sup> The normal corresponding age to grade 5 is 11/12 years, to grade 8: 14/15 years and to grade 2 in upper secondary: 17/18 years.

A large majority in all grades had watched movies, video clips, and TV shows and listened to music through different media such as mobile phones and computers daily or several times a week. TV- or computer games were also common, and around 90 per cent had played during the past six months. Nearly two out of three had played board games or role-playing games.

## **Gender and age differences**

Girls and young women are clearly more often than boys and young men devoted to activities like writing, dancing, acting, cultural school activities, and reading books. For example, almost twice as many girls and young women write stories or poems. However, working with wood and metal is more common among boys and young men. In general, gender differences are slightly less among the younger respondents in the survey.

There are no big gender differences in the proportion that play sports or exercise, but boys and young men do these more often. The same gender patterns apply to, for example, games on mobile phones, and boys and young men devote more time to video games.

From visiting activities to different forms of own cultural activity, the data indicate that the younger respondents are more active. This applies, for example, to writing, playing video games, participating in cultural school activities, and working on handicrafts. One of the exceptions to this pattern is the variable "Singing alone".

## **Nordic patterns and the need for future studies**

Children and young people in the Nordic countries seem in general to be 'culturally active' in many of the variables measured (see e.g. European Commission 2013). This applies to what we can call own creative practices, like singing, drawing, and handicrafts. The data indicate that a vast majority listen to music daily, and a majority play digital games daily or almost daily. However, it is not possible to determine from the available data the proportion of children or young people in a country who are "culturally inactive" and why. To obtain such information, access to identification data is required for each individual.

Some common Nordic patterns can also be discerned in terms of gender and age differences. Broadly speaking, the picture is that the youngest respondents in most measured respects are the most culturally active. However, to sort out what are "voluntary" activities and what are done within the framework of, for example, leisure club activities or the family is difficult.

It is also clear that girls and young women devote themselves to their own creation to a greater extent than boys and young men. Broadly speaking, boys and young men tend to more often devote themselves to digital/computer games and sports,

while girls and young women more often are writing, drawing, singing, dancing, and playing instruments. These age and gender patterns, if not new, are interesting to deepen in further investigations, as well as the issues concerning children and young people who are the least culturally active.

Because the surveys are conducted in different ways in the Nordic countries, any comparison must be done with great caution. However, they cover similar topics and seen next to each other they reveal patterns that could form the basis for further comparative research in the Nordic region as well as more detailed research into separate topics.

New media and changing leisure habits can make it difficult to categorise and distinguish activities, but it seems that technological development encompasses a high degree of cultural consumption as well as own creation via the Internet and the new platforms. Finding out what these new conditions represent in a wider formation and cultural context is an important issue for further investigation and research. Some of the chapters in this book will touch on this and give some answers.

Surveys such as those referred to in this article provide lot of representative information on which cultural activities are more common and which are less common among children and young people. Most of them also reflect trends and data on the general social impact on these activities. They do not give much information on exactly what children and young people devote themselves to, or who they do these things with or why they do them (Ólafsson this volume). Some of the questions that can be raised from the results of these surveys must be answered in terms of different kinds of qualitative studies, like case studies. This also points to the need of letting surveys and qualitative studies inform one another, just like in this anthology.

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## **II. Situating creativity**

# Children's creativity

*Yelyzaveta Hrechaniuk*

## Introduction

Creativity alongside play has become the western world's panacea (Cook 2018). Because of this and because ideas and ideals of creativity are rooted in children's everyday lives, it is important to view them critically. In this chapter, I ask: How can we think about children's creativity? The concept gives an impression of creativity being children's own and seems to indicate that children define and have command of their creativity. While this is certainly partially true, an adult – a parent or a teacher – is more likely to define who and what is creative or uncreative rather than the children themselves. When these adults have conflicting ideas about what makes an object or a person creative, the complexity of children's creativity becomes especially visible.

My approach in this text is that children are not born creative, but they become creative through everyday practices – not least through leisure activities such as competitions, arts and crafts workshops, and extracurricular activities. Children are thus made creative and/or uncreative by how they are spoken and written about and the praise and prizes they receive from families, juries, and teachers.

Using the example of a children's drawing competition, I will explore how different perspectives on creativity can simultaneously make the exact same drawing into a genuine imaginative expression and a seemingly 'fake' imitation. A discussion of one of the drawings from the competition on social media captures the tension between three versions of creativity, showing that the concept is far from universal or self-evident.

## Children's creativity in research

The literature on creativity and children's creativity encompasses fields as diverse as psychology, business studies, education, cultural studies, anthropology, and childhood studies. Theories of creativity are often contradictory, however. Take, for example, the arguments of two key figures in psychology and education – Jean Piaget (2002), to whom childhood is the most creative time within the lifespan of an individual, and Lev Vygotsky (2004), who argues that children's creative imagination is no richer than that of adults. For Piaget (2002), creativity is an "inborn aptitude" (p. 221), something the child 'has' and can potentially lose when they become socialised into norms and values. The inventiveness and curiosity that Piaget (2002) connects with creativity are only "deformed by adult society" (p. 229). Vygotsky (2004) argues against seeing creative imagination as an internal process and acknowledges the role of environment, although he still claims that a

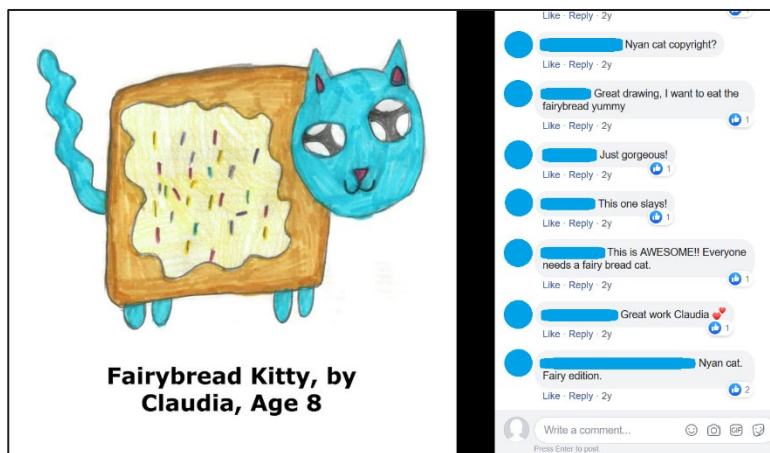
child's and adult's imaginations function differently. He connects creative imagination to experience and skills, which small children especially have less of simply by virtue of being young. In this line of thinking, imagination is "fully mature only in the adult" (Vygotsky 2004, p. 32). While Piaget's and Vygotsky's ideas have certainly been highly influential, I wonder whether creativity theories require an opposition between children and adults, measuring who has more or 'better' imagination. Is there a way to think about children's creativity other than in terms of age, development, or socialisation?

Most research seems to agree that in the western world children's creativity is considered 'good' and valuable (Aronsson 1984). Karin Aronsson (1984) notes that 'exhibiting' children's creativity – hanging children's drawings in the kitchen or living room – is a common and nearly compulsory practice in many western homes. However, for many immigrant parents in Sweden this is not a given, which shows how differently the (aesthetic) value of children's creativity is performed in everyday practices (ibid.). Outside of the western world, children's creativity is equally highly valued, but there might be less separation between children's and adults' creative activities (ibid.). What if we think about children's creativity as a space for both children and adults?

## Thinking anew

More recent theories offer an understanding of creativity as a social practice. This means that age or development are not seen as the main criteria for what counts as creative. Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (2007) argue that creativity is first and foremost a relational process that is part of our everyday lives. Creativity is not something to *have*, but something to *do* – it is distributed across everyday activities and practices. Because it is not contained either within the creative person or product, the burden (or privilege) of being creative does not fall on the shoulders of a single individual, whether a child or an adult. Instead, creativity is relational and collective and is done through engaging with the people, objects, and materials around us (Ingold & Hallam 2007). Rooting creative improvisation in everyday practices allows Ingold and Hallam (2007) to question the idea of novelty and to argue that imitation and copying are no less creative. 'Standard' psychological definitions of creativity tend to emphasise novelty as its defining feature (e.g. in Runco and Jaeger 2012), implying that creativity stands opposite to imitation. Instead, Ingold and Hallam (2007) say that imitation is not a mechanical process of making an exact duplicate but always includes improvisation. The following discussion shows what happens when these distinct perspectives meet in practice.

## What makes a child's drawing creative?



*Figure 1. Screenshot of the drawing on Facebook page of Ikea Australia, 29 November 2018, ©Inter IKEA Systems, B. V.*

One of the leisure time activities that many children engage in is competitions. I borrow an example from the international drawing competition organised by the Swedish company Ikea for children up to 12 years old. In the Australian round of the competition, one of the drawings published on Ikea Australia's Facebook page sparked a controversy (fig. 1). Some users commented that the drawing is creative and even ingenious, while others claimed that it is an uncreative copy. How can one drawing be both at the same time? This becomes less surprising if we look closer at the different ideas about children's creativity in the comments.

The drawing shows a character that 8-year old Stephanie (pseudonym) calls Fairybread Kitty. The character is a combination of a blue cat and fairy bread, a popular Australian dessert of sliced bread covered in sprinkles. Out of nearly 100 public comments on Facebook, the majority praise the child and her imagination: "Awesome design! Such a creative girl!" (Ikea Australia 2017). A smaller critical group of comments questions the creativity of both the drawing and the child: "Fairybread kitty is almost a copyright infringement! some kid has been watching too much youtube [sic]" (Ikea Australia 2016b). Several users have spotted a resemblance between Fairybread Kitty and the popular meme character Nyan Cat (Means TV 2011). But the resemblance only becomes problematic if imitation is opposed to creativity, if novelty and uniqueness define creativity. But if imitation is seen as equally creative, the question of who is copying what and which character came first is no longer important. Several commenters express this last idea of creativity, which is closest to Ingold and Hallam's (2007). They



acknowledge the similarity between two characters but do not deny Fairybread Kitty its creative value. What they praise is Stephanie's improvisation in adding to her character an 'Aussie' element, the fairy bread. Ikea's drawing competition is an example of how children's creativity is negotiated in practice by everybody but the children themselves. The controversy around Fairybread Kitty illustrates tensions between creativity as an individual property and a collective process. The adults' grappling with issues of originality, novelty, and ownership shows that the concept of children's creativity is diverse, conflicting, and fluid.

Children are continuously encouraged to engage in creative activities: at school and preschool, in supermarkets, and even churches many of which have play corners equipped with paper and coloured pens. Because ideas and ideals of creativity are rooted in children's everyday lives, it is important to critically view them in a similar way that child studies have scrutinised innocence, agency, and other normative ideas about children (see e.g. James & Prout 1997; Prout 2005). I call for the need to consider and reconsider what notions of creativity and children we bring into children's creativity both in theory and in practice. If children's creativity is disputed in practice, is there any reason why it should appear homogenous and stable in research, policy documents, and institutional practices? Ingold and Hallam (2007) offer a broad and inclusive notion of creativity as part of children's and adults' everyday activities and relationships. If we approach children's creativity as they do, it remains important to consider what notions of children and childhood we combine it with. Is it, for example, a passive or agentive child? There is a need for adults to keep on asking how creativity can be understood in relation to children and what claims it is possible to make about the role of creativity in children's lives.

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# Cosplay and cosplayers

## A global phenomenon in a local context

*Mie Buhl*

### Introduction

"Young people who appear in the cityscape dressed in strange clothes should rather concentrate on reality and do something better with their time."

This could be the obvious utterance from a sceptical outsider experiencing cosplayers. What is cosplay? Who engages in cosplay and what do cosplayers express? What are the drivers of cosplay? Quoting cosplayer and essayist Shelby Fawn Morgan (2015, p. 1), "Upon reflection, the act of cosplaying is a practice in finding truths, not manufacturing lies".

This chapter presents and discusses the phenomenon of cosplay – a contraction of 'costume' and 'play' – that is practiced in different situations and with different purposes all over the world. The aim is to reveal a small part of a global culture that plays out locally. The exploring of cosplay is based on a qualitative study of an ever-changing phenomenon that is difficult to capture and sometimes plays out unexpectedly. Thus, this chapter takes its starting point in my unexpected first experience of the phenomenon followed by more encounters and a re-visit ten years later. Here, interview comments from the Danish cosplayer Signe are the accompanying voice throughout the text.

### Getting acquainted with something unfamiliar

My first acquaintance with cosplayers is accidental and takes place in the city of Kassel in Germany in 2007. My stay in Kassel has a completely different purpose. I am on my way to the world-famous festival of contemporary art, documenta 12, to conduct field studies on visual cultures when I literally run into a group of people dressed in different costumes who have gathered outside my hotel. My immediate reaction is – is this some sort of bachelor party, and if it is the bride or groom to be they have an impressive circle of friends who make such an effort with their costumes for the event! As I move on to get to the target for the day's study, I stop and turn around. Maybe what I want to study might be outside documenta's exhibition sites? It turns out that the group of people I just met are on their way to an annual cosplay convention, the Animexx convention Connichi in the local community centre. I follow them there and have the opportunity to spend time with, photograph, and talk to them.

I am intrigued to pursue this unexpected meeting, and as a professional I am led by ethnographic and anthropologic research approaches. In particular, the Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup (1992) provides me with a fruitful distinction between the ethnographic presence and the anthropologic distance in order to study the phenomenon and maintain my curiosity towards the practices of the phenomenon. This approach provides me an opportunity to follow the manifold directions and to learn more about the particular cosplay association and their activities, and the study continues when I am back in Copenhagen. The particular group's homepage (<http://www.animexx.de>) reveals a world of cosplay activities like photographs of cosplayers, drawings of fictional characters, chat groups for exchanging ideas, and schedules for upcoming events that all revolve around the phenomenon of cosplay (Buhl 2009).

My next experience with cosplay is in their Japanese “homeland” as I visit Tokyo in 2008. Tokyo provides me new experiences of cosplay *walks* in the cityscape as I visit the famous Harajuku district, an area in Tokyo where cosplayers meet and make themselves available for photographing and encounters with a curious audience (Buhl 2012). The cosplayers I meet here appear to be professional performers and perhaps more individually oriented than the cosplayers in Kassel.

My third and Danish acquaintance with cosplay is from the side-lines in 2014, when a charismatic cosplay figure ‘the Catgirl’ appears transformed from a cartoon character into a Danish graphic novel character and appears as the only cosplayer in the story. This book example shows how Danish children access the cosplay phenomenon not only by taking part in communities, but also by reading about it (Buhl 2018). This shows that the cosplay phenomenon takes many forms, is wide spread, and has penetrated a broader cultural context in Denmark.

## Three encounters and the bigger picture

The three encounters above indicate cosplay as a multifaceted phenomenon that plays out in various contexts. They also represent three important ingredients that constitute cosplay culture: *the large-scale organised conventions* that constitute the core of the cosplay community, *the small-scale cosplay walks* where groups mingle with everyday practice, and the becoming of a *fictional character* surrounded by the activities of choosing the character and bringing it to life. The latter is further explored through my re-visit of the cosplay phenomenon in a fourth encounter in 2019 where desk studies and an interview with the experienced cosplayer Signe show a consolidation of the cosplay culture.

In the bigger picture, cosplay is a contemporary practice that continues a long tradition of dressing up in many parts of the world. What is special about cosplay, however, is that it specifically takes its point of departure in characters from books, cartoons and movies. Cosplay is characterised by the transformation of mediated characters into physical activities, and it is organised and partly enacted in social

media. It unfolds by connecting local settings with global surroundings and mixing different age groups. The following sections go deeper into the origin of the cosplay phenomenon and provide insights into how and why young people practice it.

## What is cosplay and where does it come from?

According to cosplay researchers Stephen Rosenberg and Andrea Letamendi (2018), cosplaying is basically:

a modern practice of wearing garments, accessories and makeup to represent a character from a particular genre, typically including science fiction, anime or manga, television/film and comic books.

The origin of the word ‘cosplay’ is traced back to a Japanese reporter, Nobuyuki Takahashi, who uses it in an article about a convention in Los Angeles in 1984 (e.g. Plunkett 2014). The place of origin of the practice of cosplay is discussed by, for example, Ogonoski (2014) to be either the US or Japan. He identifies differences between the two countries in the conducting of staged performances during cosplay conventions, the so-called masquerades, as either striking a number of poses for photographs (Japan) or performing short skits or sketches before posing for photographs (US).

Even though the origin of important cosplay characters derives from Star Trek and Batman in the US, the culture is mostly associated with Japanese manga/anime culture that has achieved worldwide popularity among children, young people, and adults alike. Mangas are Japanese comics and animes are their animated counterpart. Manga includes a broad range of genres such as drama, romance, crime, horror, erotica, mystery, and science fiction. It is read by people of all ages in Japan but has also become popular outside Japan and has found its way to the Nordic countries. Manga has a long prehistory as a particular artistic expression and is today related to a conforming style developed in the late 19th century (Ogonoski 2014). Young Japanese started to bring manga and anime characters to life in the 1980s by reproducing the characters’ costumes and acting out their personalities.

Cosplay is the result of numerous activities surrounding it such as fabricating the clothes and props as well as finding the right makeup and carrying out the photo-shoots, and this requires lot of work and the development of different skills. Cosplayer and blogger Hsing Tseng (2012) claims that cosplayers do what they do out of intense love for their character. They find great courage to cosplay while worrying about being acknowledged by other cosplayers and to what extent they fulfil their aim to copy their character as close to perfection as possible. Cosplayers are interested in exploring a character as a potential identity, and they do their utmost to look and act like the character (Lucas 2018; Mongan 2015; Tseng 2012).

## How cosplayers come together

Cosplayers organise in associations, and this goes across the Nordic countries. In Denmark the biggest association J-Popkai is organised as a steering group and is based on a membership of volunteers. The association acts upon a set of rules. Associations can also be found in Sweden – Svenska Cosplayföreningen – and in Finland – Cosplay Finland Tour (CFT) – which is in practice supported by the non-profit organisation Säätyyhteisö B2 ry. The scopes are a little different, but non-profit and voluntariness are the common thread through these associations. Memberships are open to everyone; however, convention competitions like the one in Denmark (J-Popcon) might only be for those older than 16–18 years for participation. Organising conventions is at the core of the associations' activities. However, other commercial stakeholders also host conventions. Cosplay conventions also take place in Norway, but there are no large-scale organisations like in other countries.

## Cosplay gatherings at conventions

The conventions are organised by associations or event companies either revolving around cosplay or with some broader scope of activities within Japanese pop culture, for instance, fan fiction (see Duggan this volume) or gaming. The annual conventions are festivals where cosplayers meet and share their passion for fictive worlds, costumes, and performances. Because of the importance of perfection in the execution of their costumes, cosplayers gather to see each other wear and perform with the costumes, show off for photo-shoots, and exchange ideas. Furthermore, competitions for making the best character – meaning being the best copy – are an important part of the festivals.

An example of a convention is the German Connichi convention held by the German anime association Animexx e.V. that I ran into in Kassel. The association was founded in 2000 and is today the largest association for fans of Japanese pop culture in the German-speaking world counting about 1,000 paying members and about 100,000 non-paying members (<https://www.animexx.de/verein/>). Animexx's organisation is similar to the Danish J-Popkai association and J-Popcon convention. The annual Connichi convention in Kassel provides a hub among like-minded persons to present and perform their inhabited characters. Walking among the very friendly and inviting group of participants in 2007, I experience how they talk, mingle, and pose for each other, for selfies – and for me. I also observe the activity of sharing and exchanging 'stuff' like props, images, and cards. Other participants attract the attention of the local press and the rest of the passers-by on the steps outside the building by adopting different poses. Later on, I learn that photo-shoots and taking selfies are an essential part of cosplaying.

During the festival, the participants carry out activities that have similarities to the activities that are offered and documented via the community's Internet site

(<https://www.animexx.de>), for example, the presentation of costume contest winners, the exposure of new outfits, and announcements of new events. The digital space is used as a showcase for performative selfies uploaded and categorised as favourites or trends, costume tutorials, or costume creations for sale as well as a map showing shooting locations.

From my interview with the Danish cosplayer Signe, I learn that the Danish convention forms the annual focus for her cosplay activities. She prepares for the upcoming event by researching and producing a new fictional character, and she starts the design and creation of her costume as she works to be ready to participate.

## Nordic conventions

The largest of three Danish conventions, J-Popcon, was started in 2000 and attracts about 3,000 participants to Copenhagen every year (fig.1). Conventions formalise the gatherings in the Nordic countries, and events similar to J-Popcon include Banzaicon in Larvik, Animecon in Helsinki, and NärCon in Linköping, which claims to be the largest in Northern Europe. NärCon also hosts the Nordic Cosplay Championship where the best cosplayers from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, and Latvia compete to become a Nordic Cosplay Champion.



*Figure 1. Participants at J-Popcon in Copenhagen 2019. Copyright: Kasper Jacobsen/Kenneth Vestergaard Wild Viking Photography.*

From Signe's point of view, the Danish convention stands out from conventions in other countries by focussing more on the social part of being together than on contests and competitions. To her, conventions are the place where cosplayers meet and make friends while sharing their passion for the characters they love, which is the most important motive for participating. Meeting like-minded people at the convention rewards the efforts of creating the right character. In our interview, Signe explains: "Being recognised as the character you play is really awesome". By this she emphasises that the target group for cosplayers are cosplay colleagues rather than external stakeholders, and thus her view is in line with Tseng's (2012) statement above.

## Cosplay walks – informal practices of cosplaying

One activity is the institutionalised gatherings at the conventions. When cosplaying is practiced in contexts less formalised than conventions, it is called cosplay *walks*. Cosplay walks bring the culture out of formalised events and into everyday life beyond the context of the like-minded. Practicing cosplay walks means meeting in groups and walking together in cityscapes and in parks. When doing walks, cosplayers meet in smaller groups and walk through an area where they can be seen by others in the cosplay community as well as watched by the general public. Thus, the walks serve both as a confirmation act among cosplayers and as an outward statement about diversity in lifestyle. On my visit to Tokyo in 2008, I go to the Harajuku district, which is the famous place to go if you want to meet cosplayers on walks. The cosplayers willingly pose for photo-shoots together with spectators passing by, and their costumes are in different styles with references to fictional characters that are impossible for an outsider to decode. One example of the opposite, however, is a cosplayer who appears as the pink teddy bear he brings with him.

Signe explains that she meets with her cosplay friends and then they go for these walks in Copenhagen. They wear their costumes, but that does not mean they perform the character all the time. They can go in and out of their character. The main purpose is just to walk and be together.

By walking in public spaces, cosplayers challenge conventional dress codes and ideas of appearance. By doing so they put up a mirror to our society and reflect our beliefs about what is normal and suggest alternative ways of being. By turning cartoon characters into flesh and blood, cosplay transforms two-dimensional media cultures into three-dimensional media and blurs the boundaries between physical and digital spaces.



## The significance of a cosplay character

Judging from the diversity of cosplay characters, the possibilities of choosing are extensive. One might wonder what makes a character significant and attractive to re-create? The fascination with the qualities of a character are an important driver for the choice and the work with developing the costumes, wigs, and props. As Signe explains, the character must be interesting to explore in order to adopt and embody it. I myself become fascinated by the catgirl character from the Danish book illustration because she possesses mystery and strength – and wears cat ears (Buhl 2018). Thus, she becomes an example of how a character might be investigated prior to the actual creation of a cosplay character. The catgirl represents the cosplay culture I learned about in Kassel and Tokyo, and this leads me to investigate the origin as well as to search for pictures of cosplayers posing as catgirls. In the Danish story, the catgirl character undergoes different transformations – a girl with cat ears, an actual cat, and a stuffed animal.

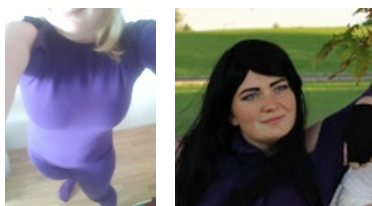
The cat girl character makes me curious about emergence and practice, and I soon learn from blogs and images that the cat girl phenomenon has many appearances from simply wearing ears to full costumes and interpretations from innocent natural creatures to sexualized objects of desire. However, the fascination with the cat as a mysterious creature is consistent in all cases. Catgirls are females who transform themselves into embodied cat cartoon characters and can be observed mainly in the cityscape in Tokyo. Catgirls are defined by their mimicry of a cat's movement and sound, by wearing cat ears and tails, and behaving like a cartoon cat.

The main props of the cat girl costume are the cat ears, and several suggestions have been made for what they represent. According to anime blogger Laura Orsini (2010), the cat girl phenomenon has many interpretations. Cat ears resonate with ancient human mythologies where cats were gods and were worshipped by the ancient Egyptians. Cat ears appeal to animal instincts and thereby emphasise the connection with the instinctual portions of the brain, like the fight or flight response. Cats can walk without making a sound and possess speed and agility and thereby possess the ability to escape from uncomfortable situations or to surprise their prey.

Cat girls might thus refer to earlier myths, but their visual appearance is a contemporary adaptation to the cartoon characters or features of cartoon cats. From a gender perspective, cat girls might be a manifestation of the woman who follows her animal brain, her immediate needs, and her desires, and such an impulsive woman unbarred by modern rules and morals is attractive. According to child culture researcher Anna Sparrman (forthcoming), a Japanese girl wearing cat ears means that she has not had her sexual debut. This is an example of a local interpretation that requires local knowledge, and cat ears may be worn without the knowledge of this subtext in other contexts.

## The becoming of a character

Cosplaying requires an in depth comprehension of the qualities of a character. The choice of character might come from the love to characteristics that a fiction character possesses like strength and courage. This is how Signe, whom I interview in 2019, describes the process of becoming a character to me. First she chooses a character that appeals to her due to personal qualities, which, she explains, can be intuitive or a well thought-out process. After making the choice, the developing process begins and she undertakes in-depth studies of the material in which the character appears. After that, she identifies details in visual appearance and movement patterns. Then she starts working on her costume, doing sewing tests followed by the costume production (fig. 2).



*Figure 2. Sewing test, makeup, and modelling Hawkeye. Signe Birch Jensen ©*

She searches for and works on the right wig and the right makeup. She tells me that she seldom wears makeup in ‘civilian life’ outside the character. For her first costume she needed help, but gradually she developed design skills, sewing skills, and makeup skills and now manages to create the right appearance on her own. Finally, she works on modelling the character and practicing it in different contexts (fig. 3).



*Figure 3. Becoming Hawkeye. Signe Birch Jensen ©*

She rehearses posing for photo-shoots and makes a photo series that is also being photo edited afterwards (fig. 4).



*Figure 4. Photo editing before and after. Signe Birch Jensen ©*

This has been a steep learning curve for her, driven by the urge to capture a character as close to perfection as possible, and even led her to enrol in a design course. Before she came that far, manga was the entrance to her interests for cosplay and Japanese culture. Altogether, the interests resulted in enrolment in a bachelor programme in Japanese studies and an exchange to Tokyo where she is staying as I interview her.

## Why cosplaying?

The pressing question is, why? Why do cosplayers do it? New emerging cultures are often questioned by the adult generation. Today, social media might offer us access to understanding the drivers of cosplay because of the easy access to sharing and exchanging images. Young people are offered a large number of possibilities to produce and view visual self-presentations through social media. The increasing access to ubiquitous technology blurs the distinctions between digital and physical experiences, and social life online might be just as real as offline. Social psychologist Edith Ackermann (2013) uses the notion of *sharism* to describe the new generation of digital users' urge to cross geographic and cultural borders and to engender a sense of belonging to a global village. By sharism, she refers to young people's new ways of relating by frequently making posts and attaining likes of pictures and messages and thereby making these a sort of life utterance and

life navigator. Ackerman claims young people's sense of self to be both multifaceted and fluid in the sense of being changeable. Using visual technologies like smartphones, cameras, and distribution platforms makes it easy to achieve, share, and attain likes of one's self-representations and rapid changes in visual appearance on social media. Her characterisation might be used to explain cosplay as the physical version of exploring the changeable self and as a way to participate in a community where one can be seen and acknowledged by likeminded people.

Furthermore, the access to a global visual repertoire such as mangas/anime provide inspiration and expands the possible contexts for experimenting with visual self-representations. Thus, mediated visual experiences are increasing, and diverse interpretations of cartoon characters can easily be accessed from various platforms and serve as inspiration for cosplays in physical spaces. This also implies the existence of characters that are difficult to place in a conventional boy/girl dichotomy or a conventional human/animal dichotomy – for instance when the cosplayer dresses up like the teddy bear that also hangs around their neck. This character is a variation of the catgirl theme of becoming a cartoon animal, but here in an asexual interpretation.

### **Escape, self-realisation, or both?**

The above characteristics of young people's behaviour only explain the access to and interaction with a globalised culture; they do not explain the desire to physically immerse oneself in a fictional character, to portray its attributes, and to play the character. My Danish cosplayer informant, Signe, explains that for her the costume is like putting on a suit of armour, and by wearing this she feels secure in playing out aspects of her personality that might be harder to do without the character. She likes that her character possesses qualities like strength that also becomes a part of her when she plays the character. Signe is not motivated by contests, but rather by the process of developing a character and being recognised by other cosplayers. She talks about her character with affection.

A similar affectionate attachment is described by the cultural researchers Osmud Rahman, Liu Wing-sun, and Brittany Hei-man Cheung (2012) based on their quasi-ethnographic study in Hong Kong where cosplayers explain how they keep their costume as long as possible, and if they have to give it away, the new owner's appreciation of the character is important to them. However, unlike Signe who sees her costume as an aspect of her personality, their study shows that cosplayers are using a specific character and place to construct their imaginative self and using it as a momentary escape from reality and an entrance into their ideal world. They emphasise the importance of using cosplay as a respectful and authentic practice linked to communal recognition and respect.

### **Cosplay as a gendered practice?**

A recent American qualitative study by sociologist Christopher Lucas (2018) discusses the complex gendered relationships of welcoming and resisting male

attention that arise when women cosplay. He claims that the female cosplayers' own voices are not heard in studies on the matter despite the prevalence of gender studies and debates. From his on-site observations of three conventions and in-depth interviews with female cosplay participants, he concludes that the women do not see themselves as subjects to male control or feel they are performing for men. They experience the attempts with stigma that are plentiful in terms of harassment, but they also show a strength in being a part of their own communities of fellow cosplayers, and they claim to be too busy enjoying cosplay and the authentic expression of the self to acknowledge such attempts.

The women interviewed explain how cosplaying provides the opportunity to not only perform as characters, but also to perform as themselves. They can perform aspects of themselves that might be unaccepted by people outside a convention environment or aspects that they feel uncomfortable expressing. For some, the experience of performing in cosplays inspires advocacy for their personalities. Lucas argues for a female agency and draws on feminist researcher Judith Butler (1990), who argues that all performance is gendered.

Lucas (2018) suggests that female cosplayers both perform and resist gender. He exemplifies this by showing that they fulfil the stereotype that women enjoy wearing makeup and dressing up, and they do not consider themselves subject to the male gaze or as being objects sexualised by men. Although emphasising the methodical limitation of his study, he finds the results applicable for contemporary efforts to deal with gender issues.

These qualitative studies confirm the immediate presumptions that aspects of cosplaying are motivated by the desire to escape from everyday life and that problems related to sexual harassment exist at cosplay conventions. But the qualitative study also reveals a more profound suggestion of cosplay culture as a case of personal development both in terms of psychological self-awareness, design and production skills, and social performance. The studies, however, are American. A Danish and Nordic study and thereby differences in political, economic, social, and cultural upbringing might show other results of performed gender roles both in and outside the cosplay environment. Thus, gender studies in a Nordic perspective might provide new insights into motivations and benefits from joining the cosplay phenomenon.

## So what is cosplay about?

The attempt of capturing what cosplay is about poses further questions because the topic affects life issues such as self-realisation, sociality, gender, identity, sense of belonging, and power relations. Cosplay concerns the cultural heritage locally and globally that comprises imaginary universes and fantasies as well as the practice of cosplay that occurs in both physical and digital spaces. Cosplayers are not only subjects for investigation – they also explore the phenomenon themselves by

blogging about it and expressing their opinion on public homepages like, for example, the Danish National Museum's website. On the website, a cosplayer from Japan states: "Cosplayers want to become someone else than they are in real life. They think: 'If I can just be like my idol, or dress more sexually, or have a big sword.' They want to transform themselves and become almost too cute, handsome or strong. I think that's a big reason they cosplay" (Toshi). A Danish cosplayer takes the opposite stand: "Nobody really knows what cosplay is. They all want us to be the kind of kids that just want to dress up to escape real life. But most of us think: 'No, that's not what it's about. I'm fine with my life. I just enjoy dressing up'" (Julia). This exemplifies two different local interpretations of a global phenomenon, but they do not offer a clear explanation of the cosplay phenomenon. Instead, they articulate the dynamic of what the culture might be about.

My three different encounters with cosplay over a ten-year time span together with my recent re-visit show cosplay as a consolidated culture that engages its community members in a broad range of activities and skills. Research on the subject reveals diverse aspects of what cosplay is and how and why it is practiced. Furthermore, desk studies show that the practitioners of the culture take an active part in discussing and thereby contributing to expanding the knowledge of cosplay as a human activity in contemporary society. By engaging in diverse expressions of personalities, cosplayers illuminate the limited expressions most of us perform as societal participants. Perhaps cosplay might open our eyes to new aspects of 'being' in late modernity. Rather than being a subject for investigation and explanation, cosplay might serve as a laboratory for exploring what it means to be human. How do we become who we are? We already act out many versions of ourselves such as citizens, children/parents, colleagues, bloggers, and employees. So why not learn from cosplayers and acknowledge more aspects of our personalities? Cosplay culture shows potential to contribute with an expanded and nuanced approach to societal diversity and thus to offer new insights into contemporary life styles.

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# Fanfiction: Remixing race, sexuality and gender

*Jennifer Duggan*

## Introduction

Young people who identify as part of an LGBTQ+ or ethnic minority group or who ally themselves with minority political causes have, in the twenty-first century, been waging a campaign to promote positive, diverse, and individuated visibility through transnational online fan networks known as *fandoms*. A fandom is a community of fans of a media object, such as a television or book series. Fandoms operate socially through, for example conventions and online communities (e.g., Hellekson & Busse 2006). In online fandoms, fans often create content that transforms, enacts, or expands the narrative of their favourite media object. Such fan works include fan art, fan videos, and - the subject of this chapter - fanfiction (Hellekson & Busse 2006; Jenkins 2013/1992).

*Fanfiction* is fan-authored fiction that reimagines or expands the fictional universes of popular texts. Written by fans and circulated within transnational communities of fans, it usually focuses on the main characters of a specific series or text (Hellekson & Busse 2006). Fanfiction is often transformative; that is, it changes the focus of the original media text or the characterization of key characters, often in ways which highlight the lack of diverse characters in commercially published popular media texts (Jenkins, 2013/1992). As such, through fanfiction, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority individuals are writing their mirrors into popular cultural narratives (e.g., Fowler 2019; Thomas & Stornaiuolo 2016; Tosenberger 2008). Because fandoms' move online in the late 1990s has resulted in their overall diversification, including an increase in young people's participation in organised fandom, (Hellekson & Busse 2006), many fan communities organised around fanfiction include young people. This chapter provides a short introduction to why fanfiction matters to minority young people.

## The politics of fanfiction

Even today, the majority of texts produced for young people continue to focus on white, upper- and middle-class, heterosexual, nondisabled men (Crisp et al. 2016; Tyner 2018). Although texts portraying minority experiences exist, they infrequently make it into the hands of young people, even within the Scandinavian context (Sigvartsen 2013). For many of the young people who read and write fanfiction in online communities, minority visibility is important. Indeed, Swedish youth who engage with online fandom have reported that they do so in direct response to the lack of LGBTQ+ visibility in commercially produced children's and youth media

(Wikström & Olin-Scheller 2011, p. 92). Reading and writing fanfiction is a reparative practice that allows LGBTQ+ youth to insert their mirrors into the popular texts from which they have been erased and to correct negative or stereotypical depictions of LGBTQ+ individuals (Willis 2006). Similarly, youth of colour and their allies use racebending, or the practice of rewriting white protagonists as ethnic minority protagonists, to resist their misrepresentation in and erasure from mainstream texts (Thomas & Stornaiuolo 2016), while some use intersectional approaches to increase the visibility of, e.g., queer people of colour (Fowler 2019). For example, many Harry Potter fans depict the titular protagonist as both gay and of either Southeast Asian or African descent. In doing so, they not only represent the plurality of modern identities but also question and subvert the presumed heterosexuality and whiteness of children's literary protagonists (Fowler 2019).

Many platforms are used to house fanfiction online, including fanfiction-specific sites, such as Fanfiction.net, and social media platforms like Livejournal or Tumblr. Specific fandoms, such as the *Harry Potter* fandom or the *SKAM*<sup>9</sup> fandom, may also have series-specific sites, such as The Leaky Cauldron, a popular site used by many Harry Potter fans (Walton 2018). Different sites may take on varied “gatekeeping” and “policing” practices regarding who can take part and which fan-authored texts ought to be shared or promoted (Walton 2018), and as such, fandoms can at times seem factional, with some sites and fandoms more likely to marginalise minority groups (e.g., Walton 2018). Despite this, it is clear that fanfiction in general tends to subvert norms and to challenge oppressive and exclusionary practices, conventions, and social structures (De Kosnik & Carrington 2019).

## Fan-authored texts

Globally, minority youths rarely come across texts that reflect their own experiences and feelings. Most commercially published texts aimed at young people which include LGBTQ+ characters continue to be dominated by stereotypes or negative effects (e.g., Trites 1998), while many contemporary texts also provide clichéd depictions of ethnic minorities (e.g., Bradford 2010), with the lack of diverse representation often compounded by the belief that there exist limited “right” ways to depict specific ethnic or cultural collectives (Coats 2018).

One example of transformative fanfiction that is LGBTQ+ inclusive is slash fiction, which emphasises homosexual male romance. Slash is particularly popular and has long been a central topic of fan studies (e.g. Hellekson & Busse 2006). Through slash, fans share revised, altered, or expanded versions of their favourite texts in which homosexuality is clearly and positively depicted rather than elided and in which homosexual romantic intimacy is emphasised (e.g., Tosenberger 2008). Slash forces texts to keep the promises that they make to queer children in their subtexts by allowing those children to confront and challenge the invisibility

<sup>9</sup> A Norwegian multimedia youth series.

of queerness in youth media and “refusing to submit to their effacement of homosexuality” (Willis 2006, p. 161). Thus, reading and writing fanfiction becomes a reparative practice, a practice of negotiating the “painful gaps” left in the encounter between a reader’s “felt desires and the read text” (Willis 2006, p. 166). Moreover, slash can take an intersectional approach to identity by focusing on queer characters of colour (Fowler 2019).

However, although there is some limited acknowledgement of young people’s engagement with slash (e.g., Tosenberger 2008; Willis 2006), there remains relatively little research on young people’s engagement with slash, as most research has focused on adult readers and writers of fanfiction. We know from qualitative studies that young people actively engage in fandom and that some young minority individuals rely on fandom as a source of positive self-affirmation (Fowler 2019; Wikström & Olin-Scheller 2011; Willis 2006), yet research is limited. Further research is required should we wish to know more about fans’ ages, genders, sexualities, and ethnicities, as well as the varied roles fanfiction may play in fostering positivity among minority youths in various local and transnational online communities. It would also give us insights into reading and writing processes.

## Conclusion

Given that LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority youths, and particularly queer youths of colour, continue to experience discrimination in Scandinavia and elsewhere, creative endeavours that emphasise positivity amongst minorities are essential to their emotional and social wellbeing. This text has shown why fanfiction is an important medium of expression and self-affirmation for young minority individuals.

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# Make it or break it

## Grappling with inclusion in the maker movement

Sophie Landwehr Sydow

### Introduction

*A while ago I met former Makertjej Simone Giertz – who is nowadays a successful YouTuber and self-described “Queen of Shitty Robots”. As the name suggests, Simone builds robots. Not those scary ones taking over the world as seen in slick science fiction movies, nor clunky household assistants or fluffy toys – she builds robots for the fun of it, for her own enjoyment, and those robots are often not very good. Her first project was a toothbrush-helmet where a robotic arm moves downwards to perform a brushing movement, more often missing than succeeding with the task of cleaning her teeth. Here she wanted to try to see what she could do with an Arduino (which is an open-source micro controller) and to create something fun! Another project that brought her international fame was the “wake up machine”, where a rubber glove hits her hard in the face when the alarm clock goes off. Here she connected the glove to a coil around her alarm clock. In the process of making those “shitty robots”, she learned basic programming and developed an understanding of robotics, and by posting the videos online they even kick-started her social media career.*

The vignette above highlights the success of *making* and its main purpose, which is to explore tools and indulge in materials that have become affordable and accessible to a wider group of people. The so-called maker movement is a contemporary subculture that has in the last 10 years spurred a wide range of interest in academia (e.g. Tanenbaum et al. 2013; Rosner et al. 2014; Roedl, Bardzell & Bardzell 2015; Smyth et al. 2018), in industry, and in broader society. This global social artisan subculture formed from the bottom up around practices of *making*, which show similarities to hands-on approaches such as hacking, tinkering or inventing.

*Making* can hereby act as the intersection of hacker culture (formerly engaged and limited to software) with handicrafts fused with up-and-coming high technology, such as wearable technology or 3D printing (Ames et al. 2014). Key to the maker movement is the creation of new devices, the rediscovery and repurposing of existing objects, and the re-using and reshaping of things, structures, and systems. This mash-up of interests and different skillsets has created a unique melting pot of people coming together and connecting with each other. Here backgrounds such as artists, designers, engineers, developers, builders, teachers, students, entrepreneurs, and many more meet under one big overarching umbrella. Open to people of all ages, a connecting *maker* mentality expects everyone to be open, to

be passionate about the things they create, to learn from one another, and to share knowledge. Individual makers, such as the Swede Simone Giertz mentioned above, popular YouTuber Colin Furze in the UK, or Adam Savage, who is known from TV shows such as *Mythbusters* and *Tested* in the US, might be colourful front figures of the movement – but a large majority of the people contributing to and standing behind this subculture – activists, dedicated hobbyists, doers, dreamers, and tinkerers – are not that visible.

In this chapter, I am focusing on a group of people who call themselves *Makertjej*, and I ask how participation in the maker movement can be understood from a gender perspective. The word *Makertjej* hereby combines a maker identity and the word *tjej*, which is Swedish slang for girl.<sup>10</sup> The initiative started in 2015 when active members of different makerspaces in Sweden formed a collaborative workgroup to highlight the imbalance of male and female participation in makerspaces as well as to further collaboration amongst each other.

Hence the *Makertjej* initiative grew bottom-up from within the maker movement in Sweden, where members described their activities as being of a separatist nature.<sup>11</sup> The collaborative's goal was to reach out to likeminded people who identified as females by sharing inspirational content and concepts with one another. It also sought to create and make use of collaboratively developed material and to get more women and girls interested in making. Before moving on to *Makertjej* and questions around participation, we need to understand a bit more about the maker movement in general (see e.g. Anderson 2014; Hatch 2013).

## Understanding making

To make something is fun. Building a robot, creating a fantasy creature for a game, creating a design for cosplay (see Buhl this volume), or losing yourself in an artistic project is both a rewarding way to spend leisure time as well as fulfilling on a personal level. Of course, there is the aspect of learning and worth in achieving a finished object, but my research shows that this is more of a by-product than making's actual purpose (Landwehr Sydow et al. 2017). Far more important is that making should be a passionate and enjoyable way of doing things by yourself (also called DIY), which in return provides an outlet for creativity and self-expression and a possibility to share the results with others. Hence making is not driven out of necessity but builds upon interest and a passion for material exploration. It combines the fascination (and rediscovery) of old handicraft practices and tools with advances in new technology. The resulting hybrid materials might then take

<sup>10</sup> See <https://sv.wiktionary.org/wiki/tjej> and <http://www.makertjej.se/om-makertjej/>; accessed 01/07/2019.

<sup>11</sup> Separatist groups practice a form of identity politics, or political activity, founded in the shared experiences of injustice visited upon members of certain social groups to provoke change. In this case these are related to topics of gender and inclusion. (Source: *Identity Politics. Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University, 2007).

shape in hobby projects, as part of peoples' self-expression, through personalising, repairing, or improving already existing objects, or through the invention of something new (Zoran 2015). It is certainly possible to visit a makerspace and build something all by yourself, but what attracts people to join and contribute in makerspaces is the motivation to meet and share projects, to collaborate, to teach or learn from one another, and to be inspired.

By building upon open-source principles, which strive for open information, transparent sharing, and collaboration, makerspaces are communities formed around a common purpose beyond just sharing tools. Collectives within making therefore often set up general rules to make sure everyone is welcome and follow the leading ideas of a shared manifesto or ruleset (Hatch 2013). Openness is a characteristic held in high regard in most maker communities and can be found in most of the statutes and ground rules of the movement.

There is a popular, but also criticised, claim made by Chris Anderson (2014, p. 20), where he states that “everyone is a maker”, thus opening for everyone to make things and to turn from consumers into prosumers (Silver 2009; Smyth et al. 2018).<sup>12</sup> What needs to be put into perspective here is that Anderson's context builds upon the environment and possibilities given within the demanding but ever-thriving Silicon Valley in the US, which is the living and embodying promise of an entrepreneurial dream.

Similarly, the maker-mecca Shenzhen in China provides an ecosystem where the success of major Asian technology companies and leading manufacturers of technological parts provide a fertile ground for an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit, where the process from idea to product is astonishingly swift (Lindtner 2014). While Silicon Valley and Shenzhen play in a league of their own, they represent the pinnacle of maker ecosystems and we should expect them to differ from local and regional maker endeavours because access and affordance varies. Let us instead move towards a more local setting and ask:

### **What are makerspaces and how are they organised?**

Makerspaces are physical sites that house communities around making and their tools (Kuznetsov & Paulos 2010). These sites are often created bottom-up based on grassroots approaches and can be found in garages, in shared community spaces, in workplaces, or as parts of libraries or museums. Makerspace communities build on active participation, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among individuals. The materials used in makerspaces range from wood, metal, paper, or textiles to emerging materials in computing and electronics, advanced sensor technology, laser cutters, and 3D printing. The combinations and varieties

<sup>12</sup> *In the context of making, this could be blueprints, layouts, or tutorials or a further developed technological component that is then shared.*

of different tools, techniques, and materials make it extra exciting and are key factors of the maker movement.

Starting in the US around a decade ago, the number of makerspaces has been growing globally and gaining popularity in (Western) Europe and Asia – with a steadily developing foothold in the Nordic countries (Rosa et al. 2017).<sup>13</sup> In Sweden, there are currently up to 20 active member-driven makerspaces, which vary in size, scale, and organisational approach.<sup>14</sup> Makerspaces are community-driven spaces that require the active participation of individuals to run smoothly. The researchers Austin Toombs, Shaowen Bardzell, and Jeffrey Bardzell (2015) claimed that makerspaces are “not merely a physical location where makers happen to work, but [can be seen] as a representation of the sociality of their community, one that plays a vital role in its maintenance” (p. 629). The general understanding is therefore that the people using the space are also the ones running it.

Organisational and structural forms differ from space to space and depend on the opportunities the active members see for themselves. Spaces are hereby either crowdfunded or partly or totally sponsored by a financing partner. The financing, aim, and purpose vary accordingly and depend on whether makerspaces are connected to a supporting and financing entity or not. Community-driven independent makerspaces survive through paid memberships, while tools and equipment are purchased with the help of crowdfunding and donations.

What all makerspaces have in common is that they provide access to tools that previously were limited to industry or university laboratories and that now have been opened to a wider public (such as 3D printing technology), downsized (laser cutters and CNC<sup>15</sup> mills), and shared through blueprints, design layouts, and how-to videos online. A number of scholars therefore argue that the maker movement leads to a democratisation of technology (Tanenbaum et al. 2013; Kuznetsov & Paulos 2010). While this process describes the increasing number of people gaining access to technology, it does not say much about who those people are.

Morgan Ames and Daniela Rosner (2014) state that people who call themselves makers and who are “drawn into the maker movement at large are mostly from middle and upper classes, and the presence of women and other minority populations remains low” (p. 360). Similarly, Sarah Fox, Rachel Ulgado, and

<sup>13</sup> Several incidents such as expiring technology patents, the RepRap 3D open source project, and the forming of trademarked Make media point towards a starting year around 2007/2008.

<sup>14</sup> An approximate, as collected in interviews with key informants from Swedish maker communities as well as sources online <https://wiki.hackerspaces.org/Sweden>, accessed 01/07/2019.

<sup>15</sup> CNC – stands for computer numerical control, and means the machines are automated and work with precise specifications by following programmed instructions. They can work, for example, with metal, plastic, wood, ceramic, or composite materials.



Daniela Rosner (2015) consider the shifting concerns of female hackerspaces around questions of access by asking “who is included” in the maker movement and around a recognition of “who is visible” as a reaction to analysed populations of ordinary hackerspaces and makerspaces (ibid., p. 56). In relation to that, my own ethnographic research in local Swedish makerspace settings showed that maker activities both offline and online generally had about 80 % male and 20 % female participation.<sup>16</sup> An overarching question is, therefore: How inclusive is the maker movement? The following case sheds some light upon questions raised from within the Swedish maker movement in relation to gender balance and the need for a separatist safe space.

## Introducing Makertjej

The non-profit initiative *Makertjej* was created in March 2015 in Stockholm, Sweden, by a small group of active female makers who were mainly between the ages of 20 and 40 when the movement started, with some younger (18 years) and some older (75 years). The activities of the initiative addressed foremost girls from the ages of 7 to 17 regardless of their background or previous skills within making. An important factor was that the people who organise activities within *Makertjej* or act as spokespersons must identify as females in order to act as role models in the otherwise male-dominated field within maker environments.

*Makertjej* itself was formed in response to a request from a technology festival for young girls. Organised for the first time in April 2015, the Tekla festival was initiated by the Swedish pop-artist Robyn in collaboration with the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH).<sup>17</sup> Two hundred girls between the ages of 11 and 17 years had the chance to join and take part in a variety of different workshops, lectures, and performances. For this, a varied group of people from a local makerspace volunteered and created their first workshop content – and simultaneously the idea to *Makertjej* took shape.

The initiative proved to be successful at the festival itself, but it also pointed out the necessity for an active agenda working with questions around inclusion within the makerspaces in Sweden, which led to the bottom-up formation of a small group of female makers who wanted to address such issues hands-on. Alma, a 31-year-old entrepreneur and engineer who at that time had a coordinating role within the initiative when asked about *Makertjej*’s aim said:

<sup>16</sup> Hereby relating to observations where participants identified themselves as either male or female.

<sup>17</sup> Tekla festival was hugely popular during that first year, and thousands of girls applied for two hundred spots, so the Swedish Television network SVT spontaneously decided to broadcast the entire day, ensuring wider access to the event. Festival entry was free of charge and was financed with the help of sponsors. The festival was slightly reshaped in 2016 and 2017 and is now announced again for 2019. More information can be found here: <http://www.teklafestivalen.se>.

The key is to create a protected environment where girls and young women can set the groundwork and develop the self-confidence required to dare taking their place in environments that can be experienced as tough for beginners.

Soon after the Swedish Tekla festival, a group of female makers within that group applied for and were awarded with funding from the Swedish governmental innovation agency Vinnova. *Makertjej*'s goal was from that point on to create and establish a nationwide network of female makers and supporters both within and outside makerspace environments in order to stimulate young girls' interest in making and creating as well as broadening and diversifying participation in the maker movement.

Soon the *Makertjej* initiative had gained active makers and facilitators from more than 11 makerspaces nationwide where activities were held independently. Previously only present in Stockholm, the initiative subsequently acquired representatives in Malmö, Norrköping, Linköping, Göteborg, Luleå, Skellefteå, Umeå, Trollhättan, Helsingborg, Upplands Väsby, and Alingsås. Thus, the initiative had established itself as a national network of female makers to share and spread knowledge, to support each other, and to highlight issues around equality within their active makerspaces and projects. *Makertjej* itself has never been owned or been driven by one individual, despite coordinating roles, it has always been seen as a collective endeavour, and responsibilities have been changing and shifting throughout its existence.

During the timespan of one year, between November 2015 and November 2016, I conducted a qualitative participatory study of *Makertjej* by following their activities and events in and around Stockholm along with visits to Malmö and Göteborg. As well as observing and taking notes, I was partaking in discussions and some of the organisation and planning online. I followed up on organised activities, which included workshops for girls of different age groups, observed the design of workshop kits, followed social media activities, and documented the media outreach and collaborative work on *Makertjej*'s identity and vision.

Two national meetings took place both at the beginning and the end of the conducted study, and corresponding online surveys were conducted. The first survey was answered by 14 of 22 participants at the national *Makertjej* meet up event held in Stockholm in November 2015. The 14 participants indicated connections to nine different makerspaces from all over Sweden. The follow-up survey after the second national meeting was conducted at a national maker conference in Malmö in October 2016. Here 19 participants from 10 different makerspaces all over Sweden answered the survey.

## Towards inclusion in the maker movement

Drawing upon the *Makertjej* case sheds light on the effects of both structural and organisational elements of making. In the following section, several strands from both surveys are mapped out and accordingly related to. The examples presented provide close insights into who is included and excluded in the maker movement and why. The responding survey participants are anonymised, all names are fictional and all participants expressed being part or affiliated with the *Makertjej* network.

What became salient is, that the first hurdle to getting people to join a subculture or movement is to get them to access in the first place. Several participants who answered the questionnaire mentioned for example that people who are interested should just “dare to come” which suggests that not all people do. Carin, who has been part of the movement for several years, stated it is “almost always necessary for someone to hold people's hand a bit” – meaning that it is important for people coming for the first time to find someone there they can ask questions to and rely upon. Nadia, another participant with knowledge of several makerspaces, stated that there is “need for financial stability if it is going to work long term”, pointing out that the organisation needs to be stable and that the group a maker is joining should also be trustworthy. Experienced maker Anna agreed by stating that it is difficult to get girls and women to participate with continuity – and that it easily turns into “a one-time deal” instead of committing to the cause. Due to heavy industrial machines and sometimes noisy equipment, makerspaces differ from other creative labs in terms of where they are located, such as in basements or garages and often at the city's periphery or within industrial surroundings. The location as such plays a role, even if a minor one, but access, care and a welcoming attitude are key factors to get diverse members interested.

Restraints to participate in makerspaces are mostly connected to expectations and observed preconceptions about the spaces and their members. Maren for example expressed she has experienced people having a “fear for making mistakes” and that “some spaces have an exclusionary ‘professional culture’ that focus on expertise rather than the community as such”. Sara similarly argues:

I think there are some expectations about what a 'maker' is, like when it comes to what a 'gamer' or 'hacker' is. (...) Subcultures can be very exclusive, and those I just mentioned are generally considered to be 'male'.

Here our preconceived idolised vision of the male inventor, who comes up with ingenious ideas all by himself behind closed doors, still shapes how we relate to game-changing inventions, even if practices in i.e. software and hardware design, look rather different. Researchers Morgan Ames and Daniela Rosner (2014) identify in their conceptualisation of childhood, empowerment, and technology how participants describe narratives of what it means to be a “tech savvy child with

an immense drive to take things apart and to explore” (ibid, p. 358). Here they conclude that ideas and histories around learning and childhood shape how we envision technological development today.

When I asked what the *Makertjej* representatives think about advantages the organisation of separatist activities provide, they mentioned inspiration, and survey respondent Maren specified: “the exchange it provides between us in creating the activities”, in other words the companionship. A reoccurring notion by the respondents was “the safety to explore and discover freely” and the possibility this gives one to fail or to do wrong without judgement in addition to showing respect for one another. Anna for example stated that it is important to be able “to find an individual way into the expertise of technology beyond stereotypes of what ‘girls should like’.” Pia, who has previously been building up collaborations between makerspaces and companies pointed out:

It might seem like girls need a sheltered workshop to do things. Obviously, that is not true, but to catch up with the head start that many boys and men have, it is important to give them the environment they need and a possibility to develop the skills needed to feel confident in mixed groups.

She recalled one of her encounters in a *Makertjej* workshop open only to young girls, where 11-year old participant Eveline shouted out loud: “Girls don’t need pink, makeup, or fashion to like technology; we only want to discover it in peace and quiet”. This is again echoed by Pia:

The advantage is that girls get a chance to try things without feeling pressured to do the right thing or to have to grapple with male members of the space who put pressure on you and want to have the tools and machines to themselves, or who simply want to help and show how to handle the equipment based on their skillsets that might not be shared by the girls in the group.

Many of the arguments raised here relate to expertise and lack of experience with certain tools in makerspaces. The participants pointed out various ways of how to tackle inequality and exclusion. Hedwig, who has led *Makertjej* activities said:

It’s of utmost importance that in those situations we act as female role models that the girls can identify with.

This notion was echoed by several other survey participants. Further, Maren pointed out that the “environment should have the motto ‘To try to fail’ and that everyone is wrong sometimes, because if you don’t make mistakes you cannot develop”. Similarly, Lotta who has been active in a few different subcultures advocated “a great mix of knowledge levels while clarifying that everyone can differ” and that the community in general should be “open to all kinds of interests, not just professionals, not just engineers”.

However, several of the survey participants raised issues that separatist activities reconfirm and sometimes even boost stereotypes instead of diminishing them. When activities are framed as typically ‘female’, this can strengthen stereotypical conceptions. Survey respondent Kristina argued that the only way forward to make progress is that “girls have to take over areas where they normally aren’t associated with” and in that way normalise who is allowed where and accordingly act the way they find appropriate.

On my question of whether separatist activities have been negatively commented on, 8 out of the 14 survey participants answered that they have been questioned and criticised. One reappearing argument is that by working for inclusion you exclude others, but both respondents Sara and Carin agreed that “A separatist activity should be an organisation that picks up everyone who otherwise remains excluded”. Pia said:

Many see it as unequal to separate. Mostly guys see a disadvantage in this and think it gives bad vibes and takes the focus off the maker activities as such.

However, Berta concluded that it is not about exclusion; instead, it focuses on “getting one group to feel safe and welcome and above all to take the first step into a new environment”. She continued, “When our makerspace members are introduced and more used to the maker environment, they will continue to contribute to a mixed environment accordingly” which would lead to a more diverse and inclusive outcome. The *Makertjej* survey respondents provided suggestions on how to work more inclusive in maker contexts, such as introducing playful activities without external goals, packaging activities so they are aimed towards the act of creation and interaction, and creating a feeling of a welcoming “family” – which as Anna pointed out requires “time, commitment and if possible paid employees in combination with enthusiastic volunteers”.

## Concluding discussion

Most leisure time activities connected to the maker movement in Sweden are directed at children and teenagers between the ages of 7 and 17, with a focus on introducing creative programming tech events, including digital and physical materials or robot building clubs. Many have local connections and in larger Swedish cities are supported by municipalities, but they still rely heavily on help from volunteers. Courses involving technology in the school and afterschool curriculum are still predominantly utilised by a young male audience, just as the IT and technology-related fields continue to be male-dominated industries.

In the past five years, some initiatives in Sweden have therefore begun to specifically target a young audience whose members identify as females. Some of these initiatives are trying to convince more girls to become interested in technology studies and to pursue their interests in coding or game development,

while others seek to show career paths within the IT sector or to create specialised holiday camps that combine music and technology.

The initiative *Makertjej* as featured in this chapter was formed to specifically address the demands of the maker movement by moving forward and acting as a guiding example for more diverse participation. They did this by highlighting inspirational projects, supporting each other through their created network, and upholding female role models. They spread fun and passion for “making” through their social media platforms, their national and international collaborations, and the organisation of numerous hands-on activities, events, and workshops throughout Sweden. The maker movement in Sweden has therefore been positively influenced through *Makertjej*’s vivid, colourful, and ground-breaking efforts.

The takeaways from the surveys are that the Swedish maker movement as observed in its current shape is not equal, no matter how contemporary or innovative it might be. Many of the used tools and practices are gender-coded and still seem to belong to or tag along with certain areas of expertise. This could mean that machinery around metal work is still considered as a more male practice, while work in the textile room appeals to female makers. Even if makerspace communities already tackle different approaches to address these demands, similar underpinned understandings and preconceptions remain present and are reproduced by newcomers as well as by experts within the movement.

As the survey participants stated above, there is a need for girls to take over areas they are not normally associated with and in that way normalise who is allowed in such spaces by indulging in all sorts of maker practices (heavy machinery, arts, and technology alike) and feeling at ease within those contexts. There is hope that those stereotypical boundaries will continue to decline as new generations of makers question and contest those lingering norms.

Further, the surveys point towards the importance of skills and expertise, which are still connected to how individuals experience inclusion or exclusion from activities, tools, or topics within makerspaces. Makers with high skillsets and knowledge to share are, unsurprisingly, less affected by the experienced demand compared to makers who are in the beginning of exploring makerspaces’ possibilities and who express limitations. However, most of the survey participants felt that ownership and their experiences of a communal connection are vital components for successful inclusion. Norms around doing the right thing and being open for failure without judgement are other important takeaways for a more inclusive and forgiving environment. Here, ways of making the makerspace welcoming and inviting with the help of supportive systems, a low threshold for participation, and effective role models can provide a different environment altogether.

The maker movement highlights how we think about the things around us, makes us aware of our resources and introduces an alternative way how we can treat materials and tools. While it inspires us to rethink how things are made and to evaluate how long they last and inspires to take activities around repair and reuse seriously – the bottom-up initiative *Makertjej* shows how a subculture can address issues around inclusion from within. Insights on this counter movement sheds light on internal struggles and shows ways to create a separatist arena to provoke change. In this case, it provides a safe space for likeminded people to collaborate and exchange ideas and experiences, and by leading the way for a younger audience through positive examples.

*Makertjej* serves an overarching purpose: to make the maker movement subculture in Sweden more accessible and inclusive. Hopefully its takeaways might be helpful to subcultures and movements with similar challenges.

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# Small children's use of digital media

## Consuming or creating?

*Stine Liv Johansen*

### Introduction

Young children are using digital media and technologies at home as well as in institutional settings. Most often this use is consumptive rather than creative, and apps and streaming platforms have become children's preferred points of access to video content, games, and online social networks. To reverse this development requires active support and engagements from adults – especially parents and caretakers. As this chapter shows, such support is not equally distributed and available for all children but is dependent on socio-economic background and to some extent on gender. The chapter focuses specifically on the media use of children aged 5–6 years, and it raises the overall question of how young children's media use is related to becoming active citizens in an increasingly digitised society (Johansen & Larsen 2016; Bindselev, With, Winnie & Brixtofte Petersen 2018). It also asks: How can structural inequalities be overcome and how do children develop a critical and reflexive media literacy.

### Media use and playfulness

Young children's lives with media have in many ways radically changed over the last decade (Lemish 2015; Piotrowski & Valkenburg 2017), and the emergence of mobile and digital media platforms has transformed the supply of media content as well as patterns of use among children throughout the Western world – and specifically in the Nordic countries. Strong public service traditions in combination with relatively relaxed and pragmatic attitudes among parents towards children's media use means children in the Nordic countries grow up with easy access to a broad range of media products on different platforms.

Previous research has shown how media plays an important role in children's play and play culture (Lemish 2015; Aarsand 2016; Johansen 2017). Firstly, the intense and intensified relationship between media's narratives, schemes, and logics and children's (role-) playing practices should be acknowledged. Children nowadays turn to television content, commercials, and YouTube videos to get inspiration for play (Marsh 2016). Secondly, media might function as play tools in themselves, and iPad games, game consoles, and merchandise are used directly in playful practices, and children do not distinguish between digital and analogue play tools per se, but combine them as they find useful (Johansen 2017).

There is reason to believe that these relations will intensify further in the years to come as new media products, like robots and internet-connected dolls, blur the distinctions between toys and media and introduce new forms of play (Mascheroni & Holloway (eds.) 2019). Still, there is a lack of empirical studies on how these play engagements take place in children's daily lives and a lack of scholarly explorations of how media use at a young age and critical media literacy are related (ibid.).

## Young children's media use in the family

In one study, we used family interviews and room-tour methods to describe and understand young children's use of digital technologies in the family context (Johansen & Larsen 2016). The study was part of a cross-European study involving 21 European countries (Chaudron et al. 2018). The Danish study was based on visits to 10 families with children aged 5–6 years and gave important insights into the negotiations, concerns, and uses of digital technologies within the family context (Johansen & Larsen 2016). In the Danish society, in which 95 % of children under the age of seven have access to tablets in their homes, parents overall had a relaxed and pragmatic approach to their children's use of media. They were aware that their children would – at some point – need specific digital skills, but this was not high on their agenda in relation to their (then) 5–6-year-old children. For most children in the study, there were no strict rules regarding their use of media, except for general rules of thumb like 'no iPad before breakfast'.

Danish parents' approaches to their children's media use is reflected and nuanced in a recent study made by the Danish NGO Børns Vilkår [Children's conditions] in collaboration with the Media Council for Children and Youth in Denmark (Bindslev et al. 2018). This combined qualitative and quantitative study shows that the majority of parents have no rules regarding, for instance, the time that their children spend with digital media. The majority of parents do, though, regulate and frame their children's media use in other ways, such as using technical parental controls in apps or webpages or by referring to age classifications on content (Bindslev et al. 2018).

Both Johansen and Larsen (2016) and Bindslev et al.'s (2018) studies describe how the 5–6-year-old children are primarily using apps, streaming services, and video sharing platforms and show that their use is generally consuming rather than producing and creating. Factors such as parents' level of education and the way they themselves use media as well as whether the child has older siblings have a direct influence on the level of the creative use among the children. Children with parents who are more highly educated and who actively use media themselves and children with older siblings are more likely to use digital media and technology in productive and creative ways (Bindslev et al. 2018).

The majority of children (about 90 %) watch video content and play computer games, and a smaller percentage use tablets or smartphones to take photos and make video themselves, but very few use digital technologies such as programmable robots. More boys (22 %) than girls (13 %) use robots, while more girls (69 %) than boys (63 %) take photos or produce videos (Bindslev et al. 2018). Presuming that there is a link between producing and creating in relation to digital media and the development of critical digital literacy, Bindslev et al. show how children have different opportunities for this development and that, for instance, boys more often experiment with and therefore acquire skills related to the technical aspects of technology, while girls acquire skills that are more related to aesthetic expressions via digital technologies (ibid.).

## Building a reflexive digital literacy

Most of the parents in the Johansen and Larsen (2016) study acknowledge the importance of children acquiring more formal skills in relation to media and technology. Their arguments for letting their children use their devices for playing games mostly refer to fun, relaxation, and engagement with siblings and friends. The children themselves, while also expressing playful engagements in media, are eager to understand the logics of the media themselves, as well as the rules and restrictions their parents lay out for them. This sometimes leads to conflict, for instance, regarding the type of content parents find appropriate vs. the type of content children are interested in. These conflicts might lead to regulations regarding the time spent and the apps available to the child. Livingstone et al. (2018) point to the fact that overall, and especially when watching TV, most families generally use media and technology together, which ‘brings the family together’. Neither Johansen and Larsen (2016) nor Bindslev et al. (2018) found much evidence of shared, playful, or creative media engagements between children and their parents. Only a few families play computer games together or use digital technologies to create their own content. This can be seen as problematic because it is precisely these types of practices that might lead to reflexive digital literacy.

In an ever more digitised society, play and playfulness should be in focus if all children are to be enabled to become digitally literate citizens and not just media consumers. Therefore, the structural differences related to socio-demographic factors and gender should be addressed, not least in relation to play. Bindslev et al. (2018) find, interestingly, that with active pedagogy gender differences in relation to the use of media and technology are non-existent in pre-schools. This suggests that the use of technologies in this specific pedagogical context might be important for overcoming structural differences among children. This requires that preschool teachers do not only have the above-mentioned insights into media practices in everyday life, but also substantial knowledge about media-related and mediated play. Adults should to a much greater extent be able to support and engage themselves in these practices. When socio-demographic differences between

children manifest themselves in concrete media practices, I argue that the role of the early educational system becomes even more prevalent in attempting to overcome and compensate for these differences.

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### **III. Cultural pleasures**

# On the possibilities of saying 'No'

## Reimagining 'meaningful leisure time' at a summer camp for disabled children and youths

*Daniel Gustafsson*

### Introduction

In this text, I want to invite you to reimagine what 'meaningful leisure time' might imply to disabled children and youth in a world that is structured around able-bodiedness as the norm (McRuer 2006). I will do this by focusing on how the possibility to say 'No' to participation in activities might empower and awaken the creative desires among this group (Deleuze & Guattari 1983). Although this essay is set in a camp environment, as you read it ask yourself: Is it possible to create such territorial milieus as in the camp elsewhere in society?

### (Dis)ableism and meaningful leisure time

The concept 'meaningful leisure time' has been a feature in both Swedish press and international public media. Sometimes a lack of meaningful leisure time is used to explain the unruly behaviour of young people in 'troubled' suburbs, but it is also defined as the remedy to stifle the very same behaviour - often through suggestions of more public resources for youth centres (Josefsson 2013; *The Guardian* 2011). Further, what is *meaningful* in leisure time constantly seems to be at the centre of the debate on children and young people's geographical whereabouts, physical state, and social relations when it comes to out of school activities (see e.g. Holmberg 2018). In other words, where, how, and with whom leisure time is being spent seem to be prerequisites to determine if such leisure time is meaningful. However, no matter what our answer might be, this debate is rooted in the idea that the child or young person doing meaningful leisure time is able-bodied (McRuer 2006). Such a normative understanding of the body is further symptomatic for most research conducted in the field of leisure studies where the body spoken of and engaged with is one of normative physical and mental abilities, or a body that through leisure activities (or rehabilitation) can transform into the 'ideal' way of doing body (Aitchison 2003; Aitchison 2009; Hodge & Runswick-Cole 2013). The structural consequences of this way of thinking result in most leisure activities being socially, materially, physically, and visually ordered around an *able* default body (Campbell 2009), including playground designs that assume that the child is able to climb and coach-led group activities where the child is expected to be able to follow instructions, stand in line, and keep quiet.

Consequently, what follows is a *disabling* of children and youths who diverge from the normative ways of doing leisure.

Previous Nordic research (see e.g. Melbøe & Ytterhus 2017) as well as reports from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) show that disabled children and youth participate in leisure time activities to a lesser extent than their able-bodied peers in the same age category (MUCF 2012:3, 2014, 2017:2). They further also conclude that this group tends to play sports or engage in other leisure activities on their own rather than in organised settings (MUCF 2017:2). Based on this participatory asymmetry, the Swedish report *Young people with disabilities (Unga med funktionsnedsättning*, MUCF 2017:2) states that more needs to be done to support “the process that leads to a meaningful leisure time and an active engagement in civil society” (MUCF 2017:2, p. 15).

One practical measure through which meaningful leisure time is being specifically administered to disabled children and youths in Sweden is through weekend and school holiday camps arranged by the social administration centres in the municipality where the child lives (see e.g. Gnesta kommun 2019; Sundbybergs stad 2019). These camps, with some local variations, are offered to disabled children and youths between the ages of 7 and 21 who still live with their legal guardians and who have been granted access to the camp by a local LSS administrator.<sup>18</sup>

In the summer of 2018, I conducted a short-term ethnographic study at a municipal camp called The Owl (cf. Pink & Morgan 2013). Based on my collected material, I want to invite you to think of the camp as a unique social environment, while exploring what *meaningful* in ‘meaningful leisure time’ might imply to a disabled child or young person in a world of able-bodiedness.

## ‘No’ and the superpowers of desire

When we think of desire, we often think of it as a feeling directed towards something that we lack and therefore want or need (Colebrook 2002). Another way to think of desire, though, is to view desire as a creative, vital force through which we strive to expand and improve ourselves (Deleuze & Guattari 1983). It is with this latter understanding of desire in mind that I want to explore the possibility of saying ‘No’ to cultural leisure activities as an entrance to self-expansion among disabled children and youths.

The examples below are taken from a group interview with three staff members at The Owl on Saturday, June 30, 2018:

<sup>18</sup> *The Law regulating Support and Service to Persons with Certain Functional Disabilities.*

**Mina:** You can help them find their superpowers, but they have so much in them that ... that has been suffocated. Just because they have constantly been forced to do things that they feel that they are not very good at. So ... as little pressure as possible and as much pep as possible! [...] Very often the strategy that works ... if you cannot suggest [an activity] that they seize on ... since, saying 'No' is very often a form of hang-up for many ... that their first reflex is to say 'No'. What works is rather not to suggest anything, but to just mention what's up and wait ... and eventually they often come up to you and want to join in.

What Mina's quotation initially describes is one of the consequences of compulsory able-bodiedness being a norm. That is, because many children and youth with functional variations are strong-armed into participating in activities that are arranged around the idea of an able body, saying 'No!' to participation in order to circumvent embarrassment and the feeling of inferiority becomes a reflex. The difference between the camp milieu and the world outside of The Owl, though, is that all participants have the right to say 'No' to participation in the camp activities. They can choose freely what activities they want to engage in compared to, for instance, activities in school. This right to say 'No', though, was not only empowering to the children and youth at The Owl, but also gave them respite to explore their own creative desires and what was meaningful to them. This became further evident as staff members Embla and Rasmus spoke of how one participant found her desire:

**Embla:** She was really struggling at times and had really low self-esteem since ... well, she had been forced to hear from anyone and everyone that she was troublesome. But then ... Rasmus and this girl discovered baking together and ... although they were basically baking the same thing every time [...] Well, I think that she felt that she had found her superpower in doing that.

**Rasmus:** [...] And then she wanted ... She said ... 'I want to call my mom, because I normally call her to complain, but now I have something positive to tell her'. That was one of my best moments at the camp ... and then it just repeated itself, over and over again.

By reimagining the concept of meaningful leisure time as social environments where disabled children and youths may say 'No' instead of being forced to engage, where repetition of the same activity is understood as a way of exercising one's superpower(s) rather than doing something destructive (see Bertilsdotter Rosqvist 2018), and 'doing nothing' is viewed as time spent finding one's own creative desires (Hodge & Runswick-Cole 2013). Is it, I ask, possible for other institutions outside of The Owl's borders to be socially restructured beyond compulsory able-bodiedness? If so, this would be a step towards a possibility for disabled children and youths to be more actively engaged in civil society.



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# Children's media music

## An aesthetic device for pleasure

Ingeborg Lunde Vestad

### Introduction

*A 5-year-old girl is sitting on a big sofa in front of the family's television set. Her face has a very concentrated look – almost like in a trance. She is watching the main characters of the movie Mamma Mia sing songs from the sound track, which remind her mother of her own youth. These are fond memories, and the mother finds it pleasurable and rewarding to share the experience with her daughter. After a while, the child leaves her quiet mode of concentration and sings along with the music, first quite silently, then more loudly. She has seen the movie and listened to the soundtrack several times, so she knows it well by now. Sometimes she moves her body along with the music's rhythm, surrounded by the sofa's soft cushions. Other times she dances along with the music in the spacious family room. Her mother joins in and they sing and dance together. The joyous sentiments make up for the fact that some of the content of the movie is definitely aimed at an older audience.*

In this chapter I look into the aural cultures of childhood. More specifically I discuss what children of 2 to 6 years of age do with children's media music in their everyday lives. In general, to study children's aural cultures encompasses studies of children's media music as cultural and aesthetic products, as well as studies of how children use media music in their everyday lives. In this chapter I focus mostly on the latter of these two. I take as my point of departure that children's musical cultures – that is, what kind of music is available for children to listen to and how they use it as a device for pleasure in their everyday lives – are co-productions between children and the world around them. In other words, what children do with media music is deeply embedded in complex networks of social, cultural, and material settings and practices of meaning-making. In this text I focus on the child's surroundings in terms of their parents and siblings. I describe and discuss how children use media music in their families and how the children themselves and their family members describe and legitimise these uses.

Media music is an accompaniment of children's everyday lives in a vast variety of settings, from early morning until bedtime. Children listen to music while engaging in daily routines such as getting dressed in the morning and having breakfast, while waiting for their parents to get ready to take them to school or waiting for them to prepare meals, while sitting in the car on the way to school and home again, while playing with friends at school and at home, while playing or relaxing alone at home, while “hanging out” at home with family members, while getting ready for

bed, and finally while going to sleep (Vestad, 2010; 2013). In this chapter I argue that in these settings children use media music as a means for aesthetic and affective agency, based in Tia DeNora's (2000) descriptions of musical agency. Thus, I will discuss four aspects of how children use media music: How do children use music in their leisure time in ways that 1) transform moods, 2) mirrors emotions, 3) constitute relations, and 4) serve as an entry ticket into social relations with other children?

I base these four ways of using music on three sets of empirical data generated for a previous study on how children use media music in their everyday lives (see Vestad 2013). The primary data for this chapter are data generated by observations and interviews in nine family homes. The data consist of video recordings of the family's everyday music lives. Each family was lent a camcorder that they kept for a week and was asked to record anything that happened that had to do with music in their home during that one week. Based in the recordings, I conducted an interview with each family. We watched the family's video recordings together and discussed the child's uses of media music. In my study I mapped children's ways of acting in and around music, as well as the children's and parents' ways of talking about and describing the child's engagement.<sup>19</sup> In their talk and in their ways of acting as gatekeepers to children's media music, the parents revealed interpretations of the value of music in a child's life. Taken together, the children's engagement in music, their talk about what they were doing when listening to music, and the parents' talk about the children's uses of music provide insights into how children use media music. The primary data are supported by observations and interviews conducted in preschools. This second set of data was generated by me sitting with a camcorder in my lap at the nine children's preschools, observing when someone put on music of any kind. A third set of data was generated from self-interviewing conducted in the beginning of the research process (cf. Widerberg 2007). In this kind of self-interviewing, the researcher writes down as detailed as possible experiences from their own life that are relevant to the topic under study.

## Transforming moods with music

Music is described as an aesthetic vehicle by which people can transport themselves from one mood to another (DeNora 2000). DeNora demonstrates that people put on music to support their energy and mood, for instance, to relieve stress or to make boring activities more fun, such as cleaning the floors, as well as for doing physically demanding activities such as aerobics. On a group level, music works in certain ways when fans sing the national anthem before their favourite football team plays an important game, and when the host puts on slow and calm music at late night gatherings after a party. These are all examples of how music

<sup>19</sup> I engaged in a method of combining ethnography with discourse psychology, and interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell 1987) served as an important analytical tool (Vestad 2013).

changes people's agencies, that is, their power to feel, act, and behave in certain ways in specific situations (DeNora 2000). "Music is in dynamic relation with social life, helping to invoke, stabilize, and change the parameters of agency, collective and individual", DeNora explains (p. 20). By agency she means "feeling, perception, cognition and consciousness, identity, energy, perceived situation and scene, embodied conduct and comportment" (DeNora 2000, p. 20).

Thus, DeNora describes music itself as an agent that performs work on the listener. In a sense, music invites people to think, feel, and act, and these invitations involve bodily aspects as well as emotional aspects. The fruitfulness of this approach is convincingly demonstrated in the observation data of my study – children seem to be invited by the music to dance, jump, feel, play, sing, listen and calm down. In the next paragraphs I will discuss how children use media music to work on their agencies, in particular how music changes their mood and how they behave.

*From playful to calm.* In order to transform people's moods in a gratifying way, the music needs to "fit". That young children can consciously reflect on how certain pieces of music fit with an intended function is revealed in an interview with Emil, a 4-year-old boy. The video recordings made by his mother show the boy neatly tucked in bed while calm lullabies come from the CD player in his room. In the interview, Emil was eagerly occupied with showing me his Captain Sabertooth music, which was described by him and his parents as his favourite. On my question of whether he listened to Captain Sabertooth when he's going to sleep, he firmly declined my suggestion, and followed up by saying: "I can't stand it then". Emil explains it is too noisy. His mother confirms that although he often enjoys the music of Captain Sabertooth during the day, in order to put himself in the necessary mood to fall asleep, he finds the Captain Sabertooth music not fitting.

*From boring to pleasurable.* A video recording from the home of a 5-year-old girl features a sequence of getting dressed in the morning, accompanied by music played from an old cassette deck. In the interview with the family the mother expresses that by listening to music, the routine situation becomes more pleasurable. In the recording the girl participates in the music by dancing and singing, shouting some words of the lyrics out loudly, and laughing and conversing about the music with her mother. While she is doing all this, she is putting on her tights, which are pretty tight and long and require a lot of work. In parts of the recording, the mother and daughter sing loudly along together. Throughout the sequence the daughter's facial expressions, the timbre of her and her mother's voices, and the laughter clearly suggest that they are having a good time. The girl continues the act of putting on her clothes throughout the video recording, but she is continuously interrupted by her engagement in the music. Some minutes into the recording the mother encourages the daughter, with a somewhat impatient voice, to put on more pieces of clothing.

The choice of music here resembles the reason given for the choice of Mamma Mia in the introductory vignette. The songs are from the mother's youth, as she explains in the subsequent interview. She knows the songs very well and she still enjoys them. She finds it rewarding that she and her daughter can sing these "old songs together," and accompanied by music getting dressed becomes an arena for doing music together. From the child's interested and eager smile, it is easy to conclude that she is enjoying the situation. The music invites them both to sing and dance, and a routine activity is by aesthetic engagement transformed into a rewarding moment. This analysis is supported by the mother's description of the music as having a *hygge* function in the sense that it transforms the routine act of getting dressed, into something cosy, rewarding, and joyful, much in line with how DeNora (2000) describes that music might work.<sup>20</sup> From the mother's slightly irritated voice at the end of the sequence, however, I gathered that a downside of using music in this situation is that getting dressed takes a lot longer with music than without. That is, listening to music becomes the main activity instead of being solely a facilitating accompaniment for getting dressed (see also Lamont 2008). In the subsequent interview, the mother confirms that they do not listen to music like this on weekdays when they are going to preschool. It simply takes too much time, she explains.

## Working on emotions and coping with life

DeNora (2000) describes music as a mirror, which can be held up metaphorically, so that the listener might "see" their emotions, understand them better, and explore them further. The next example of children's use of media music is a strong example of how music helps a child to understand her emotions better and to cope with life. The music brings her comfort and contentment. It involves a 6-year-old's use of music to come to terms with the loss of a loved one,<sup>21</sup> and the music she used was the song "Tufsa danser" [Tufsa dances] from the children's television series *Jul i Blåfjell* [Christmas in the Blue Mountain] (Hagen and Ringen 1999). The series is about *blånissene* – a kind of little elves with blue clothes and top hats – living inside a mountain, *Blåfjell* [Blue Mountain]. The main character is the elf girl, Turte. Music plays a significant role in the series by providing an aural representation of the personalities and emotions of the various characters, such as the Blue Elves, a Red Elf girl, the people from the nearby village, and the short-sighted garbage tenders who empty the village's garbage in Blåfjell. A recurring scene of suspense of the series is that of the Blue Hour. Every day in December Turte's parents pour blueberry juice on a certain stone in their cave so that the mountain opens up and the elf children can run out and play in the snow. But this is risky and the children should not go very far, because when the mountain closes

<sup>20</sup> According to the English Oxford Living Dictionaries, "hygge" is a "quality of coziness and comfortable conviviality that engenders a feeling of contentment or well-being. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hygge>."

<sup>21</sup> For a more thorough analysis of this case, see Vestad 2009.

itself once the Blue Hour is over, whoever has not managed to get inside “disappears in thin air”, which is the Blue Elves’ expression. Turte and her twin brother Tvilling are playing and fooling around and get stuck in the snow, so they have to struggle to get back in time. Their parents stand in the opening of the mountain, fighting to keep it open with their bare hands, while the mountain makes loud rumbling noises. Luckily, it ends well every time. The Blue Elves’ fear of disappearing is well-rooted in reality.

Early in the series the audience is presented with the old elf Erke’s grief over losing his wife Tufsa the year before. The mountain closed itself before she could get in, and the next time the Blue Elves could go outside, she was really gone. When Erke wakes up from his autumn sleep on December 1, he is in a very bad mood. His heart is ill, the beautiful and wise Queen Fjellrose explains. Turte sits with Erke and helps him fall calmly asleep and comforts him with a lullaby. By the lyrics, Turte explains to the child audience how Erke in the end comes to terms with his loss:

**Tufsa danser** [Tufsa dances] (tekst: Gudny Hagen)

Nå sover Erke  
og i søvnen  
danser Tufsa rundt og rundt ham  
på bare ben

[Erke sleeps now  
and in his sleep  
Tufsa dances around and around him  
on her bare feet

Hun løper over lyng og lav  
og ler  
og han ser  
at hun er rund og rar og pen

She is running in the heather and  
moss  
and smiles  
and he sees  
that she is chubby and funny and  
pretty

Hun plukker røde tyttebær  
og rekker ham og sier:  
“Kom og dans med meg!

She picks red lingonberries  
and hands them to him and says:  
“Come and dance with me!

Nå skal jeg bo i hjertet ditt  
og du skal bo i hjertet mitt,  
for jeg er glad i deg”

Now I will live in your heart  
and you will live in mine,  
because I love you”

Nå bor hun inni hjertet ditt  
og hun har deg i hjertet sitt  
og hun er glad i deg

Now she lives in your heart  
she keeps you in her heart  
and she loves you.] <sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Author's translation.

As a spin-off product of the series, a CD with the sound track was produced, and in the 6-year-old's home she and her sister used the CD as a sound track for playing, dancing, and acting out the scenes from the series. In the 6-year-old's school, the teacher sang a few of the songs, including "Tufsa dances", with her class, and they performed some of the songs for the parents on the last day before the Christmas holidays. During the holidays the message came that their schoolteacher had gone missing under dramatic circumstances. When school started again candles were kept burning for hope in the classrooms. Weeks went by, and the hope of finding her alive was eventually lost. The headmaster decided to arrange a memorial ceremony in the school's gym, to bring closure for the children's sake. At the memorial ceremony, the song "Tufsa dances" was performed by a group of the lost teacher's pupils. The 6-year-old was among the audience. For the 6-year-old, however, the memorial ceremony did not bring closure; it was as if something opened up. She had insisted on keeping a candle burning at the family's dining table during the Christmas break, but it was not until after the memorial ceremony that she cried – she cried for days – and she asked many questions. Her parents tried to comfort her and answer the best they could, but in the end, it was she herself who found the consoling explanation: "Mom, you know what? [She] disappeared for us, just like Tufsa disappeared for Erke." A little later she added yet more from the song's lyrics to her explanation: "Now she's going to live in our hearts, and we are living in her heart". After this, the parents did not observe her crying over her loss.

The meaning of a particular song in a child's life is clearly illustrated in this example. However, the meaning the song had for the child in this setting was the end point of a series of experiences with the song – in the television show, at home with her sister, singing it in school with the teacher and class mates, and experiencing it at the memorial, and then finally she used the song to mirror and come to terms with difficult emotions. She knew the song well – emotionally, bodily, and cognitively – and her relationship with the song included all of these kinds of experiences.

## **Fuelling family bonds with music**

The concept of constituting relations is about creating and sustaining emotional bonds with other people. Indeed, the data confirm that music is used as a device for creating strong family bonds, and "bonding" was an Anglicism used by the parents I interviewed. In line with the mother in the dressing example, another mother also expressed that their family music was "an important thing to do together". To listen to music together was experienced as "a way to create emotional bonds", she continued. In other interviews, music was talked about as a kind of glue that bonds families together. In the dressing example, the mother focuses on the family's joint experience when she explains the family's music listening in the car:



Well, I think it's really fun and nice that we can sing songs we have in common. To sing the old ones ... I have a son who is 20 years old, and all three of us can sing some of these songs together. It's very cosy and nice. It's the classics, in a way, right? It's almost part of the general education to know these melodies and lyrics.

The music is from the 1980s and 1990s and is shared between the mother and her children who are quite far apart in age. In one of the other families, a teenage sister and her little sister of 5½ years fuelled their relation when the younger sister was allowed to crawl into her teenage sister's bed and listen to "her music" together with her. The younger sister expressed smilingly and with content that she found this "very cosy" and described her sister as "very kind". Moreover, media music brought from one generation to the next is sustaining bonds between current and previous generations. Grandparents' childhood musical repertoires are sometimes available as media music, and a mother and her 4-year-old daughter both showed their astonishment in their home video when they suddenly and unexpectedly discovered a particular piece of the grandmother's repertoire when listening to a CD (see also Vestad & Dyndahl 2017). The piece was a traditional children's song and was ascribed value in the interview for its historical significance. However, the mother's personal and emotional relationship to the song stood out as far more important when she explained what the song meant to her. The home video documents that the unexpected encounter with the song from her childhood leaves the mother touched and teary-eyed. The child is tied into the family bond by being introduced to the family's repertoire of music, witnessing the mother's experience of it, and hearing her spontaneously conveyed story about the song's presence during her own childhood.

## Technological agency: Listening for pleasure and social inclusion

By their daily experiences with music, most people can probably relate to the description that there sometimes is a kind of resonance between a particular piece of music and a person. It might feel as if there is something in the music that triggers something in the person and as if there is something in the person that is mirrored in the music (Clarke 2005; DeNora 2000; Ruud 2013). In short, the music 'hits you' and you might feel that a song speaks directly to you, as in the example of the 6-year-old and the song "Tufsa dances". People, including children, can also be triggered by 'something' particular in the music, such as a sound effect, a cool guitar riff, a rhythmic feel, or the timbre of the vocals. "It can be that little thing [in the music]", one mother explained, that the children find intriguing and want to listen to over and over again. Being able to manage technological devices available for music listening enhances children's possibilities to stage and regulate moments of aesthetic enjoyment. Thus, operating such devices is an integral part of children's agency in music; it is part of their power to act. Even quite young

children can operate devices to play music on their own, and to illustrate this, I include here an observation from one of the preschools:

A 2-year-old boy reached into the top drawer of the kitchen counter in the preschool setting, picked out a music CD, and ran quickly into one of the smaller rooms of the preschool centre. A CD player was left there on the floor by the 5-year-olds, and the 2-year-old sat down in front of it, pushed the button so that it opened, and put in his CD. He skipped forward and listened to the music for a couple of seconds before he skipped to the next track. After 4-5 tracks, he smiled when he heard the first tones of the next one. He sat back on the floor and listened, his body rocking steadily with small movements back and forth to the music's rhythm. His serious-looking face cracked up in a smile a couple of times when he glanced to his side at me, but he was mostly watching the CD player or looking into the air with a happy, content expression.

From the overall situation, I later gathered that some of the boy's contentment probably stemmed from the fact that the children were generally not allowed to fetch a CD from the drawer themselves, but had to ask a member of staff. A sense of having succeeded was evident from the observation of the boy, a feeling that also seemed to stem from the fact that he managed to put on the CD quite easily and managed to find the music that he liked. Nevertheless, while these analyses point to agency and skills in handling the technical side of things, the boy's contentment was clearly also related to the actual music listening. This short excerpt demonstrates that music is about the capacity to feel and act (cf. DeNora 2000). When children listen to music that brings them pleasure and contentment, they experience a resonance between themselves and the music (cf. Clarke 2005). DeNora takes this further in terms of the impact of such experiences on people's identities: "As this music happens, so do I", she writes (2000, p. 158), and brings out the significance of moments of emotional resonance. Those are moments in which children's identities happen. The next example elaborates on experiences of agency. The participant is a 5½-year-old girl who expresses clear thoughts about how YouTube offer possibilities of making her own choices:

The 5½-year-old girl is sitting on a chair facing the family computer. She is watching music videos on YouTube, and her face is glowing. Her mother seems surprised when the daughter tells her she is watching the 'football guys', and the daughter adds that she has changed her favourite. She shows the mother the line of icons on the right side of the screen, which features photos of various artists of MGPjr [the Norwegian children's version of the Eurovision Song Contest]. Eagerly, she explains and shows her mother that all one has to do is to 'click' on the photos, and then one gets to watch another 'film', which is the girls' expression. 'Isn't that nice!' she exclaims and continues: 'Then you just do what you like!' Then she takes out a microphone from a drawer, and they are talking about how she is pretending to be the girl who is singing in the music video. She is sitting tight on the chair, singing loudly, and she is also 'dancing'

while sitting down. Most of the time she is smiling happily, and sometimes her face has a concentrated expression while watching the visuals and listening to and singing the lyrics.

Again, we are witnessing a child deeply engaged with media music. Her experience of being the master of the situation and her joy of being able to make her own choices is evident. Another layer of her experience is brought out when taking the data from her preschool into consideration. From my observations in her preschool, I learned that knowing the songs from MGPjr was – at least in that period and setting – an important ticket of entry for joining the play of the other children. In these play settings, groups of 5–6 children were allowed to engage in activities of their own liking, and this girl and her friends were often asking to bring the preschool’s CD player into one of the smaller rooms of the facility. They closed the door and put on a CD, either brought from home or owned by the preschool.

The girls were singing along and pretended to be the various artists. From their conversation I learned that the person who knew the songs the best got to be the lead singer. The others had to stand behind her and sing a little less. Those who did not know the song in question at all were assigned even smaller roles. Thus, engaging with MGPjr at home was not only pleasurable in the moment. It also served a social purpose and helped this girl gain admission into the children’s culture at preschool.

For some of the children I observed, entering the play with media music in preschool was difficult because they lacked the joint references of the other children. In one observation, when a group of girls discussed who to include in a role play supported by the soundtrack of “Jul i Blåfjell” [Christmas in the Blue Mountain] the argument that “she doesn’t know ‘Jul i Blåfjell’” was explicitly given as the reason for not asking one particular child to join (Vestad 2014a; 2014b). In short, putting on a music CD and allowing children to engage in music together in free play does not cover up socio-cultural backgrounds to ensure participation on equal terms for all. Music is a device for pleasure and for creating and sustaining senses of belonging, but it might also be excluding if not everyone has access to it.

## Music as pleasure

Listening to music can be just something you do, which does not affect you so much, but it can also be about deeper emotions and needs. The examples discussed in this chapter feature young children’s deep and committed engagement with music in their everyday lives. Music is “arguably the cultural material *par excellence* of emotion and the personal”, DeNora argues (2000, p. 46), and she asserts that music is about space to act and power to act. In this chapter I have discussed how children use music in their leisure time in ways that transform moods, mirrors emotions, constitute relations, and serve as an entry ticket into

social relations with other children. In order to work as a device for the emotional, personal, and social, the children who participated in this study as well as their parents stress that the music needs to “fit”. It has to fit with one’s musical taste, but even more with how one feels, how one wish to feel, and how one needs to feel in particular situations.

As such, children’s media music serves as a toolkit for moods, emotions, relations, and identities. As the examples of this chapter show, children use media music to do emotional work on themselves and to perform actions. They use music to put themselves into different moods and modes of being. They use music for going to sleep and to mirror emotions so that they can understand their emotions better and cope with life. In the surroundings of their families, children perform their musical agencies supported and guided by their parents’ and siblings’ ways of acting and being in music.

Young children take part in how music creates and sustains relations with other people, and they learn music on their own in order to fit in with other children. There is a tight and quite strong connection between music and identity. Young children’s engagement in music is important identity work, and they use music as a device for becoming who they are and who they need to be at different moments of everyday life.

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# Folkbildning and creativity in leisure time hip-hop

## Towards a pedagogy of trust

Johan Söderman

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the global youth culture of hip-hop and its links to the Swedish tradition of *folkbildning*. The Swedish *folkbildning* tradition can be described as an idea, a philosophy, and an educational theory, but it also functions in institutionalised form as folk high schools and study associations.

The overall aim is to discuss key aspects of hip-hop under the direction of study associations as an organised recreational activity for young people. Hip-hop culture emerged as a youth culture in the socially disadvantaged area of the Bronx, New York, in the 1970s, and still encompasses, in addition to four artistic elements, rapping, DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti, an approach to knowledge sometimes referred to as the fifth element (Chang 2005). This approach to knowledge is often summed up with the motto "Each One Teach One" and has many similarities with the Swedish tradition of *folkbildning*, for example, through the idea of apprenticeship based on social pedagogy (Söderman 2007). This social pedagogy, stressing the importance of learning from each other on an individual level as well as collectively is evident both in hip-hop culture and in the tradition of *folkbildning* (Sernhede & Söderman 2010).

In Sweden today, institutionalised *folkbildning* is part of what is known as civil society, i.e., the third sector between the public and the private spheres (Trägårdh & Wijkström 2012). Over the past decade, hip-hop culture has become an established part of civil society organisations, and this is particularly evident in the Swedish study associations (Söderman 2016). In the urban youth associations, which are part of the so-called "ortenrörelsen" [the united suburbs movement], hip-hop also has a central position as a recurring feature and activity (Sernhede, Rosales & Söderman 2019). The pedagogical ambitions of hip-hop culture help young people who start participating in organised hip-hop activities to eventually develop and take on different types of leadership roles. The young people described in this text are mainly between 13 and 30 years of age and are either participants or leaders or have both roles at the same time. Key aspects of hip-hop as an organised recreational activity are described in this chapter in relation to three thematic perspectives; *Nursery-garden*, *Springboard*, and *Junction*.

The empirical aspects discussed originate from four different studies, including a research project on urban associations in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö (Sernhede, Rosales & Söderman 2019) and three evaluation projects of hip-hop activities in study associations [studiecirklar] (Lundin & Söderman 2012; 2016; Söderman 2016). These studies were based on ethnography and qualitative interviews with children and young people who had been participants and leaders in these organised hip-hop activities.

## The emergence of hip-hop culture – from the Bronx to Swedish civil society

Hip-hop culture developed in the 1970s as an aesthetic and creative alternative to violence and social decline, which was the reality surrounding the living conditions of children and young people in the Bronx (Chang 2005). Hip-hop's story of creation is still a central part of hip-hop culture, and in recent years this story – now spanning four decades – has been described and portrayed in, for example, the Netflix drama series *The Get Down* from 2016. The series narrates, among other things, the story of how hip-hop pioneers created musical instruments with ordinary turntables and started spending time with, and challenging, each other through so-called 'battles' in culture and arts. This was at a time when the media described certain residential areas as pure war zones ravaged by gang activity. Today, the creation story of hip-hop functions like fuel and inspiration for young people all over the world. Examples include the Tunisian rapper El General's significant role in the dramaturgical narrative on how the protest wave of the Arab Spring first started. Hip-hop's creation story also has similarities with other global popular movement stories, such as the story of the Salvation Army where working-class women in 1850s London were able, through their songs, to both help the poor and practice arts through guitar playing and singing.

In addition to the four artistic elements, hip-hop includes a marked tribute to the teacher and those who shoulder a teaching leadership. These *organic educators* do not have formal teacher training, but act in accordance with the hip-hop philosophy of "Each One Teach One". This is a form of apprenticeship, which means that those who are older and more experienced are given the task of teaching those who are younger. Afrika Bambaataa is one of the key figures in hip-hop, and he spoke early on about the importance of knowledge and has argued that knowledge is the fifth element of hip-hop (Sernhede & Söderman 2010). Bambaataa argues, however, that knowledge in the form of *understanding* is insufficient. Instead, people should strive for *overstanding* – a state in which knowledge and understanding are incorporated in the individual to the extent that they can be used as a springboard for more influence in society and personal empowerment over one's life situation. These ideas about knowledge as the path to empowerment and influence have a long tradition in African-American culture. Russel Rickford (2016) argues that African Americans have considered education a way to liberation ever since the

days of slavery. In his classic book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B Du Bois (1903) describes how the strong importance of music is a result of African-American slaves being denied traditional schooling, and therefore music became a central channel for communication with the outside world.

In a Swedish context, the pedagogical philosophy of hip-hop can thus be understood in relation to learning theories that classical *folkbildning* activism stood for historically in the context of the classical popular movements (the temperance, labour, and revival movements). In these popular movements there is a narrative of how *folkbildning* has provided a way forward for various marginalised groups in society. In the light of this knowledge tradition, the recent emergence of a new Swedish youth movement, the united suburbs movement [ortenrörelsen] can be said to be evidence of the renaissance of *folkbildning* (Sernhede, Rosales & Söderman 2019).

Also, within this new movement, education in the form of empowerment and knowledge acquisition forms part of the activities that involve the movement's young people. A. Dee Williams (2009) identifies similarities between hip-hop's use of the circle shape to breakdance or rap – the so-called cipher – and Paulo Freires's pedagogical ideas about so-called culture circles. Both of these have distinct similarities with the study circle as a pedagogical form and method of Swedish *folkbildning*. The study circle, with its relatively few participants, can in itself be perceived as a democratic form of education that contrasts with traditional educational structures where the teacher stands in front of the class. Thus, the egalitarian ambitions within the pedagogical philosophy behind study circles entail that all participants are expected to listen and learn from each other and that conversations are a dialogue, as opposed to traditional, more monologue teaching methods.

## Young people in Sweden identify with African-American experiences

In the 1990s, Sweden was transformed into a multicultural society, and the suburbs were perceived in the public debate as the scene of this new Sweden. This change meant that young people in Sweden, often those who had their roots in other countries, could identify with African-American experiences. They began to relate to American hip-hop, which they came into contact with, for example, through the television music channel MTV. The so-called million programme areas in Sweden's major cities could be compared to African-American residential areas that were separated from the white majority population. Through their songs, the Swedish hip-hop group *Latin Kings* established new words in the Swedish vocabulary, sprung from the Swedish multicultural suburban culture. A new sociolect, a kind of dialect within a specific socio-economic group, with distinct similarities with Black English, arose in the suburbs and came to be referred to as million programme Swedish, Rinkeby Swedish, and/or Kebab Swedish (Kostinas



1998). When European young people began to make their own hip-hop music, they did not simply imitate American hip-hop, but rather created new variants of hip-hop with a distinctive local touch (Bennett 1999). On the Swedish music scene, hip-hop grew in popularity among children and adolescents at the end of the 1990s when the rapper Petter started rapping in Swedish (Strage 2001).

For young people with immigrant backgrounds living in Europe, exclusion has become particularly blatant as a result of high unemployment and feelings of not being a part of society. In the last ten years, there have been fires and riots in Paris, London, and Stockholm in immigrant and socially disadvantaged suburbs. Thus the research on social exclusion described already at the beginning of the 2000s by, among others, Ove Sernhede (2002) is still highly relevant.

## Non-formal learning and (*folk*)*bildning*

Knowledge is an ever-present part of hip-hop culture as well as a central aspect of the study associations in Swedish civil society. Historically, study associations have been associated with the Swedish popular movements and the tradition of *folkbildning*, which in turn have been crucial for the development of Swedish democracy. An educated and enlightened people were seen early on as the very premise upon which Sweden would be able to evolve from a poor and late industrialised country into a thriving democracy (Bjurström & Harding 2013). Former social democratic prime ministers, including Tage Erlander and Olof Palme, therefore advocated that the Swedish democratic model should be based on the collective pursuit of knowledge by citizens in study circles, which would provide them with a good basis for participation in the democratic conversation. Learning is central as both an approach to knowledge and as a philosophy in *folkbildning*. The concept of learning is often contrasted against the concept of education, where education is characterised by a clear beginning and a clear end – as opposed to learning, which is a life-long process. Swedish advocates of learning, such as Hans Larsson and Ellen Key, were early on critical of the cramming methods of schools and instead praised a self-learning ideal where lustful and voluntary learning was the focus of the individual's development into an emancipated citizen (Burman & Sumit 2010).

In addition to learning and commitment to individual issues, music has always been a central part of Swedish popular movements, and Bengt Göransson (2010) describes how people joined popular movements precisely because of their extensive musical elements. Sture Brändström, Johan Söderman, and Ketil Thorgersen (2012) write about *musical folkbildning* from a historical perspective. They focus on how children, young people, and adults in Sweden have been able to learn music through involvement in popular movements and in study associations and centres for over 100 years. There is still a musical infrastructure within institutionalised *folkbildning* (see Nylander 2014). Sven-Eric Liedman

(2012), who is one of the foremost advocates of *bildning*<sup>23</sup> of our time, has emphasised the importance of arts, believing that a one-sided emphasis on traditional and instrumental school subjects and methods is harmful. In arts, there are elements of knowledge that are the very essence of what learning can be, and the individual is given different possibilities of expression than in traditional areas of knowledge such as reading, writing, and arithmetic (Söderman, in press).

*Folkbildning* can be described as helping people develop their way of thinking – from being able only to express opinions to the higher stage of learning that deals with insights into the complexity of existence. The word '*folkbildning*' [popular education] emphasises the egalitarian aspects of learning. "Folk" [popular] suggests that it involves grassroots learning, in contrast to formal education that has historically been open mainly to those belonging to the upper strata and the elite of society. Despite the clearly emancipatory knowledge ideals, *folkbildning* has been used to discipline the people by replacing old habits with more cultivated ones, for example, in the temperance movement (Ambjörnsson 1988; Elias 1989). *Folkbildning* therefore has a dual function. The right culture, taste, or behaviour should be conveyed to the people, but the emancipatory power of education and knowledge is equally important.

The hip-hop activities described in this chapter can be seen in the light of the Swedish tradition of *folkbildning* and take place in young people's leisure time, but in an organised form, which means that they can be considered as non-formal (Eshach 2007). Although hip-hop activities have a definite framework, there are no definite objectives such as a curriculum or policy. When young people get involved in various activities within the framework of civil society organisations, they do so because they have joined without any pre-established or pre-determined goals or objectives on what to learn. The study association is also a prerequisite for many young people to be involved in the artistic activities that are available (most often with an emphasis on the artistic elements of hip-hop culture). They want to start writing hip-hop lyrics or engage in music production early on. While these artistic processes have intrinsic value, the activities that take place in the association also become examples of non-formal learning.

<sup>23</sup> The Swedish word *bildning* relates both to the verb "to form" as well as the noun "picture". Its meaning lies close to the definition of the German concept of *bildung*, and thus involve educational aspects of human development, formation and cultivation. In Swedish, the word *bildning* differs in meaning from the word education (*utbildning*) which implies learning that has a beginning and an end. This contrasts *bildning* which is a life-long, ongoing process.

## Nursery-garden, Springboard, and Junction – hip-hop as part of recreation

In my analysis, three thematic perspectives emerged: *Nursery-garden*, *Springboard* and *Junction*. These three themes will be discussed below and represent three different ways of looking at recreational learning in hip-hop activities in civil society. With the perspective of the *springboard*, the focus is on relatively fast processes where the association or study association's hip-hop activity forms a kind of platform for individuals. The *nursery-garden* is understood in parallel with the springboard as a process that takes longer, and thus has similarities with the more traditional images of association activities. As a thematic perspective, the *junction* puts the focus on what is happening at the intersection of the springboard and the nursery-garden and helps to understand the position of hip-hop activities in relation to the surrounding society and to understand the relationship between the individual and the collective.

### Nursery-garden – hip-hop meets the traditional third sector

The *nursery-garden* involves a certain amount of fostering into a kind of respectable culture within hip-hop and is imbued with trust in the young people involved. For example, leaders support participants' to take on responsibilities and to develop a sense of responsibility for their own lives. A hip-hop leader in a study association describes this pedagogical view as follows:

In this way, the [participants] are given the opportunity to continue to grow and develop. It shows that they are doing something really good, and they'll be able to show it in another city. That 'we believe in you, we think you are really competent and that is why we put you on a plane or a bus or whatever, so you can go somewhere else and show what you can do'. And it's not those who are the best that get to go. It's the ones who are most keen. Those who behave. Those who really need it sometimes. You see it sometimes, that some people need it to grow, and you can't see it if you are far from the group or your members. It's only because we're here and in touch with them all the time. You boost them and then suddenly they start performing. So the exchange stuff is really important (Lundin & Söderman 2012, p. 12).

Many of the enthusiasts and educators in Swedish study associations have in some ways attended the same type of nursery-garden in relation to the general activities of the study associations. The founder of the hip-hop association in Malmö, who has no background in the tradition of *folkbildning*, said that the hip-hop association is not intended to produce the next great hip-hop star, but rather Malmö's future local politicians. At the same time, paradoxically, one of the most popular rappers in Sweden in 2018, Ozzy, started his career in this association, showing how the association's nursery-garden can also be a step on the way to a career in hip-hop culture, but possibly with knowledge other than pure arts relating to hip-hop.

The nursery-garden is a way of understanding the possible learning process for a child or youth who starts participating in organised hip-hop activities for fun and is gradually given – and also takes on – increasing responsibility, which can gradually lead to a leadership role. This process raises aspects of relational social capital (Putnam, 2000). Relational social capital means, among other things, that internal trust is created within the activities, mainly between leaders and participants. In hip-hop associations, the process of developing relational social capital, for instance occur when participants are given a place on the board after a period of time, and therefore get the opportunity to learn third-sector management and meeting techniques. Hip-hop culture's "Each One Teach One" philosophy can also be understood as a central aspect of hip-hop as a nursery-garden, while there are similarities with a kind of corporate approach (Brändström, Söderman & Thorgersen 2012), which involves a strong ideal of moving up within the organisation, that is to start "on the floor" and work your way up in the organisation and possibly end up in a management position. In other words, hip-hop as an organised recreational activity also features a social pedagogical approach that can help to create conditions for associations and hip-hop to serve as a nursery-garden for individual careers. The apprenticeship philosophy that emerges through the ideal of moving up and shouldering new roles becomes part of hip-hop in the DNA of recreation.

### When hip-hop becomes a springboard

In the empirical study upon which this chapter is based, there are various types of examples of how hip-hop activities can also be viewed as a *springboard*. On the one hand, hip-hop is, for some individuals, a step on the way to something else, while on the other hand there is a relationship between the individual and the collective hip-hop activities. A central aspect of understanding the *springboard* aspect is about how experience from hip-hop activities can serve as bridging capital for individuals (see Putnam 2000).

Through hip-hop, young people who participate can be given an opportunity to create networks, both locally and nationally, in civil society organisations or with other associations. There are several recurring examples of young people who have started out in hip-hop activities and moved on to, for example, writing chronicles in the daily press, lecturing, and becoming (social) entrepreneurs. For hip-hop, this means that young people who remain behind, and new ones who start, constantly get new role models to look up to and be inspired by. A good example is the formation of the feminist hip-hop network Femtastic, whose founders and leaders have developed from being just local hip-hop artists to nationally famous hip-hop performers. Through a study association, they were able to build their own pedagogical model to inspire young women around the country to devote themselves to hip-hop.

For the founder of the hip-hop association in Malmö, hip-hop has also acted as a springboard to gain legitimacy both as an activist and as a celebrity with several occupations. After having founded the association, for example, he competed in Melodifestivalen, participated in debating programmes, and even participated in the expert group that developed the Green Party's cultural policy in connection with forming the government in 2014. One of the leaders in the same association began with hip-hop as a child and has since had a similar career and has been seen in a number of different public contexts.

The springboard perspective contributes with an understanding of how it is possible to establish relatively quickly, through hip-hop, a platform where it is possible to make one's voice heard while cultivating a personal brand. The responsibility, learning, and cooperation made possible during leisure time through hip-hop activities can thus be central to individual participants making a name for themselves and then moving on to other spheres of activity. In relation to hip-hop activities in the urban association in Malmö, the specific circumstances surrounding the association and its relationship with local politics also contribute to the fact that this pattern is possibly more pronounced than in other similar associations. In Malmö, the hip-hop association can be viewed as part of the brand building of Malmö city, which is evident on social media where the Malmö hip-hop association and municipality logos are often seen together (Söderman & Söderman, in press). The association's activities can thus be understood as a way for the city of Malmö to showcase the image of a young and creative metropolis where social problems are solved by releasing young people's creativity (see Florida 2006).

### **Hip-hop – A junction for young people in civil society**

The hip-hop activities I study are very much a junction between young participants and different actors in civil society. There are a number of examples where hip-hop activities become a meeting place marked by creativity, responsibility, and community. In the Malmö hip-hop association, the activities are referred to as a creative youth recreation centre. This means that it should be possible to just "hang out" and remain on the premises, but unlike a traditional recreation centre it should also be possible to develop in artistic areas. The association thus becomes an activity at the intersection of a school and a recreation centre.

A participant in hip-hop activities in a study association tells how, through hip-hop practice, he became acquainted with young people with a completely different background from other districts in the same city. Newly arrived unaccompanied minors lacking language skills have also, through recreational hip-hop activities in the study associations, as well as in some sports associations, acquired a base where they can meet other young people with similar interests (see Söderman, 2016; 2018). The language development potential of hip-hop makes it possible to

use Swedish, English, and local languages in the practice. A leader in a study association express this linguistic diversity as a positive aspect of hip-hop:

Some sing. Some use [their] own languages. And I feel like 'Wow, they can rap both in Swedish and their own language'. I think it's so cool. So I think it's pretty easy to develop (citation from Lundin & Söderman 2016, p. 11).

One of the country's major study associations has, in an overall project on hip-hop practice, linked various hip-hop activities, which means that young people from all over the country can get together at organised meetings. There are often also collaborations within hip-hop activities in municipal youth recreation centres that include children and adolescents who are interested in hip-hop. The leaders' networks also become an important hub because their personal contacts with, for example, established nationally known festivals lead to opportunities for participants to perform. Within the framework of hip-hop activities, young people establish new relationships with others that they meet in study circle leadership training.

Contrary to the rapping and music creation dominated by boys, dance in the activities is often more mixed where boys and girls dance in the same groups. There have been both collective and individual trips to Malmö, Stockholm, and Gothenburg as part of the study associations' hip-hop activities. This has created networks that are not limited to Sweden, and there are international contacts with hip-hoppers in Poland and Russia, for example. In this context, the Internet plays an important role. Young people from several hip-hop groups say that networks of contacts are established and grow in particular at breakdance competitions. The thematic perspective of the junction is therefore characterised by both bridging and relational capital (Putnam 2000), and clearly many participants perceive hip-hop within a study association as part of a larger popular movement:

I think of some kind of popular movement, a DIY (Do It Yourself) concept. Not so much the music, but whatever you do, you do it in a hip-hop way – yourself and with curiosity. This is hip-hop for me. Hip-hop is a way of thinking, about your fellow humans and art in general. Not a method, but more a way of thinking. If you have ever identified with hip-hop – whatever you do, it's "hip-hop". You are part of a greater loving movement (citation from Lundin & Söderman 2016, p. 8).

This quote from one of the participants expresses that hip-hop is seen as something more than just a musical style and a subculture. It is about being part of something greater that includes a way of being, an identity, and an approach to art and culture.

## Concluding discussion

The overall purpose of this chapter is to discuss hip-hop as an organised recreational activity for children and young people. Based on previous studies, three analytical themes and perspectives emerge – the *nursery-garden*, the *springboard*, and the *junction*. However, these thematic perspectives are not static categories, but rather central aspects of what appears to create meaningfulness for young people involved in organised hip-hop activities. The three themes also make it possible to shed light on the complexity and interaction between the individual and the collective where rapid and slow processes are taking place simultaneously.

The Internet and social media is a central arena for everyday life. Nanna Gillberg (2014) paints a picture of what she calls the Renaissance man of our time – a key player in the so-called attention society in which digital visibility, for example, is highly valued. Gillberg describes the Renaissance man of our time as an activist with many occupations, a social entrepreneur who is visible on social media and whose main asset is their personal brand. This perspective makes it possible to understand that a certain type of springboard is facilitated in hip-hop activities for young people. It is also in this particular social climate that the role of the multi-tasking hip-hopper emerges. This is illustrated in particular by the hip-hop entrepreneurs of the 1990s, especially the famous rapper Sean "P Diddy" Combs, who already 20 years ago, in parallel with his music career, began to build his own business. In Sweden today, similar tendencies can be seen among rappers who build personal brands by publishing autobiographies, writing chronicles, or having their own wine collections, while showing strong commitment to political issues.

At the same time, it is possible to see how Swedish hip-hop, paradoxically, in parallel with the springboard, also serves as a nursery-garden where it is possible to develop at a slow pace as an individual. In contrast to what the springboard illustrates, it is therefore possible to perceive elements of classical learning activities in popular movements and associations. This can be linked to Putnam's (2000) theories of bridging and relational capital where the springboard means the ability to establish contacts outside the business, while the nursery-garden creates the conditions for relational capital in hip-hop activities, which creates trust and a familial atmosphere. In this meeting, or junction, opportunities are created for both stronger cohesion within the group as well as opportunities for establishing contacts outside the activities.

The apprenticeship philosophy that emphasises the ideal of moving up and taking on new roles in the activities is more or less integrated into today's hip-hop activities. It becomes a model success story reminiscent of the connotations in the expression "the American dream", and which is actually, to a large extent, reminiscent of the meaning of the classical journey of *bildning*. It is about emancipation and rising above one's own conditions – against all the odds. As a nursery-garden, the association can be seen as a precondition for such an

educational journey. While traditional associations could be said to prepare for a position or career in other organisations or associations, the type of learning that takes place in hip-hop activities can be perceived both as such a slow nursery-garden and at the same time a faster springboard. Commitment and learning within hip-hop as a recreational activity can thus be understood as personal emancipation, including competencies that might be relevant to education and professional life.

Hip-hop as an organised leisure activity is *folkbildning* in the sense that it contributes to the development of creativity, social capital, and administrative skills among young people under more free forms. This is done by also taking responsibility for the indirect aspects of being a participant in such contexts, such as organising events and gigs, but also the daily responsibility for the premises and equipment for the activities (see Fornäs, Lindberg & Sernhede 1995). Swedish institutionalised *folkbildning* is sometimes described as conservative and might also primarily reach groups that already have their educational needs met. However, hip-hop as an organised recreational activity is evidence of on-going *folkbildning* innovation by making it possible to reach new groups with outreach activities. There are examples of a hip-hop bus managed by a study association, which, instead of waiting for young people to come to the association's activities, travels to different areas and districts to pick them up. This is similar to the idea of book buses as a kind of outreach library.

A type of "pedagogy of trust" is recurrent in the studies that form the basis for this chapter, and this is illustrated by the joy and pride that young people expressed when they said that they had been contacted by a study association and asked to lead their hip-hop activities (Söderman 2016). Study associations can thus be seen as a civil society actor that trusts the newly recruited leaders who in turn trust the young participants. There is thus a chain of pedagogical trust from the management of the study association, its leaders, and participants, and this creates trust in recreational hip-hop activities. The interdisciplinary arts highlighted in the creation story of hip-hop create choices for participants so they can find their way to their own form of self-expression. In this context, it can therefore be relevant to discuss freedom as a prerequisite for creativity and the importance of creating conditions for free space where creativity and self-education can grow.

Hip-hop makes it possible to explore the ability to think about and develop an understanding of the complexity of existence. In this way, hip-hop has implications for citizenship, democracy, and education.

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# Smartphone kids

## Digital media use among Finnish children

*Jani Merikivi, Sami Myllyniemi and Mikko Salasuo*

### Introduction

The amount of time children in Finland spend consuming broadcast media has not changed much since the 1970s, and it was and still is less than two hours a day (Central Statistical Office of Finland 1978; Määttä et al. 2016, p. 491-502). While the hours have remained the same, the media themselves have not, thanks to the emergence and proliferation of smartphones (IROResearch 2019). However, what children use smartphones for is less visible.

A few years ago, when teenagers found Musical.ly (now TikTok) – a short-length video streaming application – it was not even used by young adults. Today, this application has over 500 million active users worldwide, most of them still in their teens. Some of them, like the now 18-year-old German twins “Lisa and Lena”, who have over 30 million followers, have also become influential social media ambassadors. Once they or other popular users upload a new video on TikTok, it might easily receive more than one million likes (Robinson 2017).

Seeing children using their smartphones is merely touching the surface, and thus having missed the so-called TikTok phenomenon, or that the children have become substantial influencers online, is not surprising, but it raises a question: What else do we not know about our children’s smartphone use?

### Children’s media use

In this chapter, we are particularly interested in how children have adopted smartphones and what they use them for. Because parents play such an important role in acquiring and regulating children’s use of smartphones, we also focus on parents and their perceptions of their children’s smartphone use.

To add to this awareness, we analyse a sample of 569 Finnish children aged 7–17 covering their smartphone use during their leisure time. The sample, which draws upon a survey design, was originally collected and published by the Finnish Youth Research Society (Merikivi, Myllyniemi & Salasuo 2016). The sample is representative with respect to gender, age, and mother tongue. Respondents aged 10 years or older were interviewed by telephone, and younger respondents were interviewed face-to-face.

These interview methods both have their pros and cons. On the one hand, the methodological experiences of the ‘Finnish Child Barometer 2018’ show that the children being interviewed face-to-face tend to answer more openly than those being interviewed over the telephone. On the other hand, children interviewed face-to-face tend to give more positive responses than those answering the questions over the telephone, indicating that telephone interviews might be worth considering, particularly when exploring children’s experiences of sensitive issues (Tuukkanen 2018).

Children’s voices are both important and challenging, but methodological research that addresses populations such as children or young people, remains an underdeveloped area (Powell & Smith 2009). New communication technologies, such as web-based approaches incorporating video-enhanced, animated, and gamified interviews might have potential when interviewing younger children – which is quite unsurprising when considering the findings of this chapter.

The first half of the chapter explains how children use smartphones and why they acquire them at such an early age in Finland. While children have access to many other technological devices in their early years, smartphones are something that most children in Finland come to own at the age of seven as they start school. When the parents give their children a smartphone for communication and security reasons, children take it as a gateway to their own social space online (see Wilson 2016). From this perspective, smartphones represent a rite of passage (Lorente 2002).

The second half of the chapter presents what children use their smartphones for. We find that they are primarily used to access the Internet, and this applies to all children irrespective of their age. What they do on the Internet, however, varies considerably. We will, for example, show that they not only play games and watch videos, but also listen to music and communicate with their friends and relatives. In addition, children also tend to develop an interest in news and magazine programmes. In general, we find that children’s smartphone use differs from what their parents had in mind when purchasing them their first mobile device.

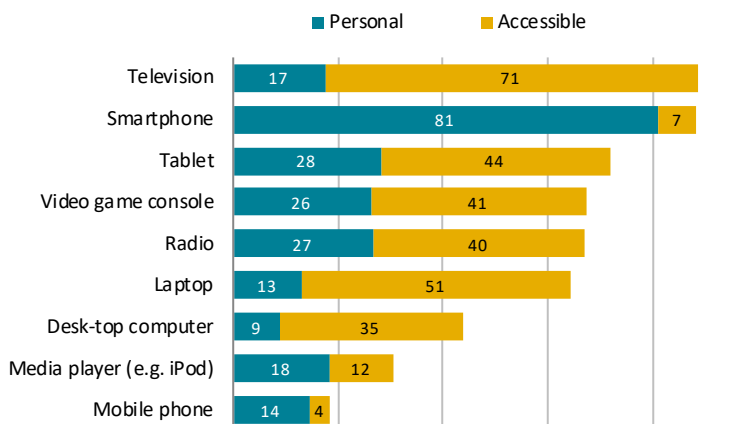
## **Smartphones as a gateway to one’s own space**

In general, our analysis reveals that most Finnish children aged 10–17 seem to spend their leisure time around various digital technologies. More than two thirds of them use these technologies for more than two hours a day. As a further matter, their use increases with age. Approximately one third of the children aged 15–17 appear to spend over four hours per day of their leisure time using various technologies. For some, technology use might exceed six hours a day – a finding that is in line with other studies (Hakanen, Myllyniemi & Salasuo 2019).

When looking at the results in more detail, we can see – as discussed later on in this chapter – that most of their time is spent on smartphones.

As for the youngest children in our sample (aged 7–14), the findings show that besides smartphones (88 %), television (89 %) is another popular media device used in leisure time (see fig. 1). Other common devices are tablets (72 %), video game consoles (67 %), radios (67 %), and laptops (64 %). When switching the vantage point from access to ownership, we see that almost everyone with access to smartphones actually owns the device. This is an interesting finding because other media devices to which these children have access are mostly shared.

### Technological devices that the respondents either own or have access to on their leisure time (% ,aged 7–14 years )



**Figure 1.** Media device ownership and accessibility among children aged 7–14 years.

The reason behind this finding is perhaps because smartphones – unlike the other accessible media devices (e.g., television) – do not have a shareable interface.<sup>24</sup> The ownership seems to correlate with media devices that are perceived as non-shareable, such as smartphones, mobile phones, and media players, which offer their users a private, isolated, and safe “cocoon-like-environment” (Ito, Daisuke, & Anderson 2009, p. 67-88).

<sup>24</sup> By shareable interface we refer to media devices that facilitate multi-person interactions. That is, their use is designed for more than one person (e.g., television and video game consoles allow simultaneous use and personal computers facilitate multiple non-simultaneous profiles, whereas smartphones are for the most part non-shareable).

Rather than contributing to social routines at home, it is as though smartphones insulate the children from “the harassment of daily life” as The Washington Post columnist George Will (1987) put it when he described people who wanted to keep the modern world at bay. But instead of longing for traditions or escaping the world, children might take smartphones as their life’s remote control for retreating to a space of their own (Lieberg 1995). When not within eyesight, parents might use smartphones to track their children’s whereabouts (IROResearch 2019), and one should remember that it is not the children who acquire their first smartphone but their parents.

Owning a smartphone at a young age might at first sight appear unusual, particularly if one compares Finland to Germany. In 2016, 18 % of German children aged 8–9 owned a smartphone (Statista 2018). About 33 % of six-year-old Finnish children own a smartphone, but when they turn seven, the share suddenly increases to 69 % (DNA 2017). This is because many children tend to get their first smartphone when they start school at age seven. They get it because they go to school on their own and their parents want to be able to keep in touch with them. That is, parents feel smartphones add to their and their children’s security (DNA 2017; see also Tapscott 2009).

Having a regular mobile phone is likely to have the needed effect to boost security, but because parents can escape their children’s imminent appeals by simply buying them a new or second-hand smartphone at an affordable price, few are able to resist the cry (IROResearch 2019). Also, when other children at school already have a smartphone, the social pressure grows greater among parents of children without a smartphone – mostly because parents want to offer equal access to features only smartphones can offer (Salasuo, Merikivi & Myllyniemi 2019).

Still, smartphone ownership is not a must unless parents want the smartphone to symbolise a rite of passage (Lorente 2002). That is, giving their children their very own smartphone is like giving them a key to a world that they so far have only accessed with someone else’s key (see more about rites of passage in Van Gennep 1909). Having this key would thus be comparable, for example, to getting a driver’s license, thus allowing young people more freedom in their lives.

This freedom, however, comes with an increased responsibility, which 20 %–40 % of the parents think their 10–14-year-old children have not fulfilled. That is, the parents see that rather than using digital media, also including and mainly concerning smartphones, responsibly, children are overusing them. When looking at our results, we find that the parents’ perception of overuse corresponds to children using their smartphones once or several times a day.

When children were asked the same question, only one out of six said that they think they use digital media too much.

The results support smartphone overuse, particularly if the overall time spent on digital media has increased, but they also suggest a change in the way children use digital media. That is, if they, for example, prefer to play mobile games instead of video console games, listen to music on headphones instead of on speakers, or watch mobile television instead of a television set, their leisure time becomes more individualised – not just more mediated.

In summary, smartphones, which most Finnish children have from the time they start school, are gateways to a private space they visit often in their leisure time. This is why we have previously called these children members of the “smart device generation” (Salasuo, Merikivi & Myllyniemi 2019, 134-156).

## What do children use their smartphones for?

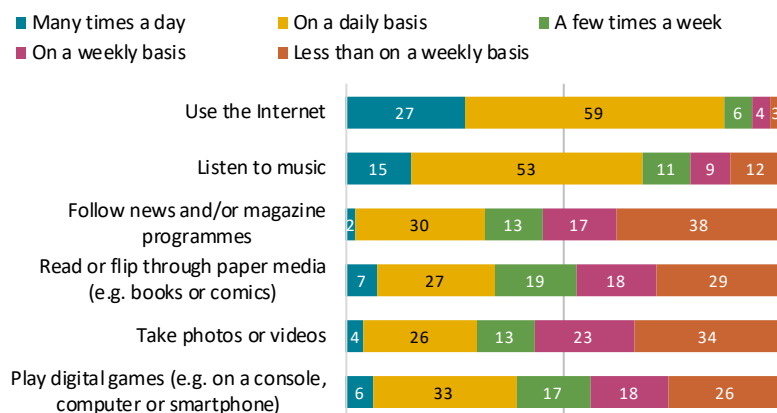
For children aged 7–9, consuming digital media content already makes up a substantial part of their leisure time activities. Nine out of ten children say that they play digital games, listen to music, use the Internet, and take photos or videos. Only a third of them mentioned that they follow news and magazine programmes, and so we assume that children under 10 are still mostly using their digital media devices for pleasure.

When looking at the older children (aged 10–17), we find that they also like to spend their leisure time using the Internet and listening to music. Playing digital games is another popular activity, but only 39 % of the older children do this on a daily basis. Given that playing games gives way to following news and magazine programmes, the results indicate a change in their interests.

Also, the comparison between smartphone and mobile phone use underlines that smartphones are employed for more than mere phone calls and text messages. All children use them primarily to access the Internet (see fig. 2).

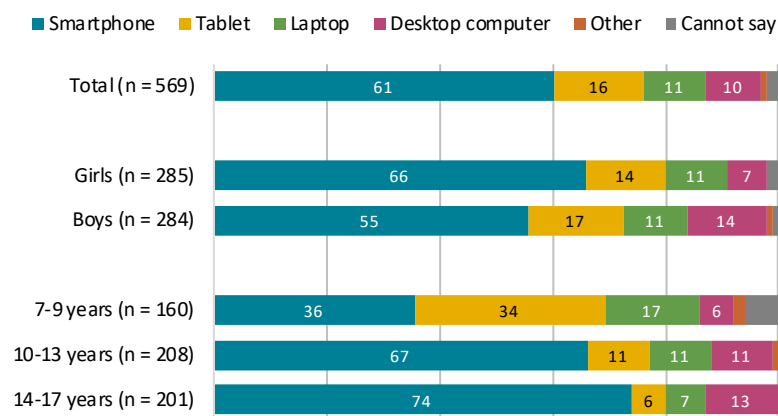
If we study the various devices children typically use to access the Internet in more detail, we can see that the smartphone dominates in both boys and girls and also across all age groups. While smartphones and tablets are still neck and neck among children between 7 and 9 years, the preferences change dramatically among children between 10 and 13 years. Of them, 67 % are using a smartphone to access the Internet, while only 11 % are using a tablet to do so. This also indicates a change in preferences for media devices as children grow older.

## "How often do you engage in the following?" (%, aged 10–17 years)



**Figure 2.** Media use types among respondents aged 10–17 years.

## "What device do you typically use to access the Internet?" (%, aged 7–17 years)



**Figure 3.** Most common devices to access the Internet among respondents aged 7–17 years.



Our analysis reveals that children aged 7–9 use the Internet mainly for five reasons – they consume user-generated data, play games, search for information, share pictures in private, and chat with friends. Given this, they seem to use the Internet for entertainment, information, and social interaction. Except for playing games, girls and boys in this age group are using the Internet in similar ways. Girls (84 %) are playing games more than boys (70 %), which is surprising, although this difference disappears as the children grow older.

## Concluding discussion

In Finland, smartphones became common among children around the middle of the 2010s (Salasuo, Merikivi & Myllyniemi 2019, p. 134-156). Nowadays, more than eight out of ten children in the age span of 7–17 years have their own smartphone. Most of the children get their first smartphone when they begin school.

In our survey, most children used smartphones for more than two hours a day. Smartphones provide a gateway to a private space where children often spend their leisure time. This private space has been described as an isolated and safe “cocoon-like environment” (Ito, Daisuke & Anderson 2009, p. 67-88) where children play games, listen to music, use the Internet, and take photos or videos.

All children use smartphones primarily to access the Internet. Especially among younger children, the Internet is used for social purposes. Our analysis revealed that younger children use the Internet mainly to consume user-generated data, play games, search for information, share pictures in private, and chat with friends. Older children also begin follow news and magazine programmes on the Internet.

This chapter shows that children are interested in various content and that their interests vary across age groups and genders. We found three typical use types, namely gaming, information searching, and social interaction. Gaming peaks in teenage, whereas social interaction, and especially information searching keep on gaining popularity as children grow older.

When asked if they were worried about the overuse of digital media, only one out of six children said that they use digital media too much. Parents, however, were more worried than their children, and almost one third thought that their children use digital media too much. Therefore, it is no wonder that the use of smartphones and the Internet is a constant debate in many Finnish families (Salasuo, Merikivi & Myllyniemi 2019, p. 134-156).

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# Befriending through online gaming

*Ilkka Arminen and Sanna Tiilikainen*

## Introduction

Today children are increasingly spending time and making friends not only face-to-face, but also online (Ferguson & Olson 2013). Children's online gaming, referring to playing games with others participating over the Internet (Zhan & Chan 2012), is an activity that expands the things available for children to engage with. We call these online gaming environments digital playgrounds, and we consider them a digital extension to physical playgrounds, where children can join gaming groups for casual play sessions. Equal to co-present playing, digital online gaming also constitutes social play-realms, even communities that overcome physical boundaries and are accessible also in the privacy of the home (Helgesen 2016). Therefore, online play-realms and communities can also be conceptualised as virtual extensions of the home (Ruckenstein 2013). In this text, we discuss some of the opportunities and risks of these new, evolving digital playgrounds.

These digital playgrounds constitute a profound change to children's culture by forming an extension to children's social arenas. They come with many opportunities, such as enabling easier access to friends over a distance (Ferguson & Olson 2013). In physical playgrounds, children form spontaneous playgroups among those that just happen to be there at the time (Owen et al. 2010), and the Internet facilitates this spontaneity even further (Suler 2004). In this way online gaming encourages the forming of casual acquaintances out of a practically unlimited pool of people, which might lead to both positive and negative outcomes. We also propose that the befriending activities in online gaming environments should receive attention because they come with both opportunities and risks for children.

## Children's befriending through online gaming

Drawing on video recordings from inside real family homes, we can see that digital playgrounds are one recurrent arena for children's social befriending activities in homes. Children's gaming groups are often based on their existing networks of acquaintances, but the online playground extends their contacts to also include previously unknown persons who are strangers to the children (Ferguson & Olson 2013).

Digital playgrounds tend to comprise both a shared physical space, such as the home, where some of the players reside, and the digital online network, where the actual game takes place in the form of avatars or digital representations of the

gamer online (Greitemeyer & Mügge 2014). Avatars bring an enhanced element to children's games, as a player both is, and is not, the avatar, which creates a new dimension to the gaming experience (Burn & Schott 2004). Also, in physical playgrounds the game realm pre-empts the relevance of players' social attributes, such as social status, sex, or age, so that the "grandma" may be equally well played by a two-year old boy or a middle-aged preschool teacher (Pursi & Lipponen 2018). In digital playgrounds, the fields are also opened beyond physical proximity and the role distance between players and their game categories is stretched maximal as that of the distance between the player and the avatar.

In physical playgrounds, children are often guided by rules, often set by parents, discouraging them from interacting with strangers (Sacks 1992). However, children playing online might lack the consideration or technical skills in how to apply these kinds of restrictions and might therefore accidentally end up disobeying parental rules (Suler 2004). Therefore, it is important to study how children make friends online in order to better understand the befriending process and its outcomes.

In our empirical material, two ten-year-old boys encounter contact from a newcomer, an anonymous person, who wants to join their game. The boys are at home, sitting on a living room couch playing *Burnout Paradise*, an online multiplayer car racing game. The boy at whose home they are playing the game first tries to orient to their home rule that they should not allow strangers to join their play, but the boys fail to block the intruder despite their repeated attempts. First, the boys respond by calling her/him "intruder" and trying to block her/him from the game. However, because they fail to block her/him despite their repeated attempts, the boys and the newcomer continue playing the online game through their car avatars. Eventually, the newcomer becomes tolerated by the boys as a playmate, and finally becomes welcomed as a friend because the boys are eager to learn new tricks through the driving performance of the newcomer's avatar. Thus, the newcomer gains the status of a friend by persistently hanging around in the game and demonstrating being a beneficial co-participant with impressive gaming skills, that is driving.

Our example shows how the boys are approached and then joined by an anonymous player, who is first treated as an intruder, but eventually is recategorised as a friend as she/he teaches the boys new gimmicks. The boys themselves end up being delighted by their new friend, but, on a closer look, the case opens up several salient issues about children's culture of befriending online, with potential opportunities and risks. To start with, the example provides a glance at opportunities related to befriending in digital playgrounds, where joining the play group is thoroughly disembodied and relieved from the effects of gender, language, culture, and demographics, which is in stark contrast to the children's physical playgrounds, where exclusion, prejudice, and discrimination can hinder befriending (Goodwin 2006). In online games, the sharing of expressive actions of

gaming capabilities becomes a basis for collaborative action leading to befriending (Bennett & Segerberg 2011); in our case, the boys let the newcomer stay in the game by her/his gaming skills alone. Our case shows how this online befriending is first of all expressive and disconnected from permanent social identities. This development can enlarge the social circle of befriending because game-related qualities and avatar-concealed identities overcome prejudice and discrimination. Unfortunately, this also opens up for the risk of grooming, where adult child predators, masked by the anonymity provided by the online environment, first befriend children and then try luring them into participating in illicit and non-age-appropriate behaviours (Fleming et al. 2006).

## Concluding discussion

Online games can blur the boundary between the home and the outside world, connecting children into a digital playground environment where the children are simultaneously at home and out there in the outside world, playing with participants from both worlds. In online games and related activities, the players can succeed in shifting smoothly between the face-to-face and online realms, satisfying the requirements of both environments and thus enjoying enhanced social contacts and relationships (Tiilikainen & Arminen 2017).

In this chapter, we have shown how the children's befriending in online gaming, based on expressive gaming skills alone, has both opportunities and risks. In addition to enabling enhanced befriending as a by-product of gaming, it also enables anyone to approach children over the Internet concealed behind their avatar. Even though in our example the parents warned the boys about gaming with strangers, the boys lack the capabilities and skills to exclude the newcomer – they recurrently try and fail to limit the game only to themselves by attempting to block the newcomer, who keeps hanging on in the game displaying great gaming skills. This leads to the boys to befriend her/him and willingly play with her/him.

Our example shows how children's lack of judgement of online actors' motivations might make them quickly forget the parental warnings, which might leave them vulnerable. In our case, the boys later terminated the gaming session and exited the situation safely. However, blurring the boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour with repeated attempts is also one of the tactics by which predators hunt for children in the Internet (Fleming et al. 2006). Our case shows how this process can be facilitated by the fact that to keep on gaming, the boys also have to accept the new player as a friend because they do not know how to exclude her/him and they in the end find gaming with this newcomer pleasing. This way, children's befriending in online gaming might indeed make the risks of succumbing to unwanted and risky behaviour even more pronounced (Suler 2004). We conclude that this tension between the beneficial and undesired outcomes of the children's online befriending culture is why it is important to focus on the befriending process.

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The background of the slide features a complex, abstract geometric pattern. It consists of several large, interlocking triangles in a teal color, set against a white background. The triangles are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some pointing upwards and others downwards. The pattern is most prominent on the left side of the slide, where it forms a large, irregular shape that extends towards the center.

## **IV. Cultural participation**



# Enabling cultural participation

## The case of Swedish children's libraries

*Frances Hultgren*

### Introduction

As public and cultural institutions, libraries are required to enable children's participation through the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities (Art. 31, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)). Concurrently and in line with current and ongoing digitalisation processes, the public library is evolving from its traditional position as a repository for books to becoming a space for cultural engagement. This movement has been coined as the move from "collection to connection" (Hvenegard Rasmussen & Jochumsen 2010) and reflects the public's increasing interest in cultural experiences and social meeting places. In this light, the library's role moves beyond providing access to books and other media to enabling cultural participation.

In this text, cultural participation is contextualised to the children's library and with a focus on young children. However, the issue of what participation is in practice has been raised by libraries ever since the UNCRC's ratification. Using two participative research studies where practitioners were seeking ways of enabling young children's participation (Johansson & Hultgren 2015; 2018), this text will suggest how cultural participation can be enabled for young children within a 'best practices' framework. The research projects were situated in the city libraries of Malmö and Borås in Sweden and the approach described below is a synthesis of the research findings of both projects. The approach has three interdependent levels – the child citizen level that positions children as citizens with equal rights, the policy level, where ambitions for children's libraries are formulated locally and an implementation level where, drawing on the other levels, cultural participation can be enabled through the activities and space of the library.

### The theoretical level

This level is grounded in a view of children as equal members of society with the right to participation. Participation is defined by Moosa Mitha (2005, p. 375) as "the expression of one's agency in the multiple relationships within which citizens are present in society".

The library staff in Malmö worked in research circles where they studied theories of childhood, children's culture, play and participation and this in turn informed how they thought about the library and children's participation: "Participation isn't

really about physical objects and resources, it's really an approach to our work" as one librarian put it (Hultgren & Johansson 2018, p. 6).

## Including children – the policy level

Swedish cultural policy emphasises children's right to culture and the importance of enabling children to participate in culture (Regeringens prop. 2009/10:3, *Tid för kultur*). However, national policies must be implemented at the local level and it is only at this level that manifestations of cultural participation can be observed (or not). Concepts such as cultural participation do not really mean much before the question of "how" is answered. Policy is put into practice firstly by translating it into mission statements for local children's libraries. An example can be found in the manifesto for Malmö children's library, which was published on their blog:

- Children and their adults can influence our activities in different ways.
- We take their views and suggestions seriously and reflect them in what we do.
- Our visitors can and do leave an impression.
- Participation is a relationship.
- Participation is about listening, showing respect, inclusion and communication. (Malmö stad, 2015, author's translation)

Several aspects of participation are encompassed above, namely inclusion, by welcoming caregivers without whom children cannot visit the library, influence, agency, respect, and communication. Childhood researcher John Wall (2010) argues from a rights perspective that adults have a particular ethical responsibility to recognise, accept and confirm children by communicating with them. The manifesto constitutes a commitment to participation as an ongoing relational process between the institution, the space, its contents and the children and their caregivers.

## Implementing policy in practice

The final stage in enabling children's cultural participation is the transition from policy to practice. In the research project it was found that the library staff worked systematically with participation in terms of four interdependent themes: *inclusion*, *inspiration*, *involvement* and *challenge*. *Inclusion* is a prerequisite for participation and entails being included in the library's target groups. It also involves developing methods for observing and communicating with both children and caregivers in order to develop flexibility and functionality in the space and the activities. Activities are free of charge and opening times are adapted to the routines of families.

*Inspiration* involves offering experiences and activities attractive to young children. According to Owain Jones (2000, p. 30), attractive spaces that stimulate creativity should be “otherable”, i.e. unfinished and alterable in interaction with specific situations and specific groups or individuals. For instance, activities should challenge children’s ideas of what is possible rather than offer defined outcomes. An example is provided by Borås’ children’s library where a space was created that is largely empty and thus open for different types of activities - a storytelling event or exploration or play (Hultgren & Johansson 2015, p. 9). The walls can be used for different film projections, for instance, a brook in the forest. Sound and light can be used to create different atmospheres and artefacts can be placed in the room to attract children’s attention. The space in itself is always recognisable to visitors but at the same time ‘otherable’ and open to offering new challenges and experiences. For libraries working with participation, it is important for them that both activities and spaces are framed within the overreaching cultural aesthetic of the library, i.e. stories and storytelling but what children do with this aesthetic is open.

*Involvement* In Malmö the design of the children’s library was inspired by workshops with preschoolers who suggested a forest setting with dens. Involvement requires the staff’s sensitivity to children’s interests and ways of communicating. The staff systematically experimented with communication; for instance, they wore ‘animal’ slippers to attract children’s attention thus initiating conversations:

It was clear that the type of conversations we had with children changed when we walked around in animal slippers and it’s been fun to joke with them and contribute to a more fanciful milieu (librarian in Johansson & Hultgren, 2018, p. 35).

The staff also systematised observations (once every two weeks) in order to heighten awareness of how library space was being used by visitors.

*Challenge* can entail that the library space is open for interpretation and reinterpretation by the children and signals that there is more to explore, experiment with, understand and define. The following observation from Malmö children’s library encompasses a variety of interpretations:

A dad is sitting on the green carpet with a little child who is gazing through the floor-level window at passers-by. ... a boy with a pacifier in his mouth is pushing in all the dvd-films on a shelf within his reach; he seems to be enjoying himself. A mum and a child are playing with the puppet theatre. Two siblings have squashed themselves into a little alcove with a large Alfons doll. A girl goes by dragging a large Winnie-the-Pooh and throws it on the floor; another girl soon picks it up. A two-year-old has climbed up on a stool and is making growling noises (Johansson and Hultgren 2018, p. 27).

The space and the things in it bear messages signalling different possibilities – a carpet can be sat on, a low window can be looked through, dolls can be dragged and carried, a stool can be climbed on and DVDs are attractive not only for their content but also for their materiality. Being able to play in the library is important because children are inspired by stories offered through a whole range of media platforms – films, computer games, TV series, apps, books and toys.

Enabling participation requires a listening and trustful approach to children that acknowledges their agency. This acknowledgement is made manifest in how the library is organised and designed for meeting children and in how staff work in interaction with children's desires. Finally, children are free to avail themselves of the cultural affordances of the library to whatever extent they desire. The goal of the library is to enable them to do so.

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# Indigenous, Nordic, and digital?

## How Sámi-language users negotiate access to digital media

*Niamh Ní Bhroin*

### Introduction

In the Nordic countries, the Internet is widely understood as a resource that young people can access to engage with and participate in digital culture and society (Helsper, Kalmus, Hasebrink, Sagvari & de Haan 2013). Recent research from Norway, for example, indicates that 96 % of children aged 9–17 have their own mobile phone. Norwegian children also spend on average a little under four hours per day on the Internet (Staksrud & Ólafsson 2019). Similar findings are reported across the Nordic region (Kupiainen, Suoninen & Nikunen 2011; Svenskarna och internet 2018).

Can we therefore assume that all Nordic children and young people enjoy equal access to the Internet and to the opportunities for participation in the digital culture that such access facilitates? In order to answer this question, I invite you to think about what equal access means for you. Do you think that all Nordic children should have equal access to opportunities to express their culture and identities, regardless of which language or languages they use?

In this chapter I consider these questions and the implications of their answers for Sámi youth and young adults. I present interview material gathered during 18 months between 2012 and 2014 with four young Sámi women and three young Sámi men (aged 20–35 years). The interviews explore how these young adults use social media to create new opportunities for communication in their languages. By engaging in this socially innovative media use, these young adults negotiate access to digital media both for themselves and for other young Sámi-language users. The interview data introduce some of the ways in which these Sámi young adults experience inequality of access to the devices, applications, and infrastructures that constitute the Internet. I submit that this inequality relates to opportunities to communicate through Sámi languages and to aspects of Sámi culture and identity.

### The Sámi languages in the Nordic region

The Sámi people have the status of an ‘Indigenous people’ in the Nordic region. Their homeland spreads across parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia.

While the Sámi have no ‘home state’, the areas in which they live are referred to as ‘Sápmi’ (Moore, Pietikäinen & Blommaert 2010).

Since the Second World War, approaches to population measurement in the Nordic region have avoided differentiating between people on the grounds of ethnicity (see Lie 2002). It is therefore unclear how many people self-identify as Sámi. Estimated numbers vary across sources. Rasmussen (2018) estimates that 100,000 Sámi people live in Sápmi and that around 30,000 of these can speak a Sámi language. The majority of these (between 70 % and 90 % depending on the source) speak Northern Sámi (Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes 2011).

The Sámi have been subjected to processes of cultural and linguistic assimilation across the Sápmi region (Brantenberg 2014; Minde 2005). The main vehicle for this assimilation in each country has been the education system. In Norway for example, between 1850 and 1880, a policy of ‘Norwegianisation’ of the Sámi was implemented “with school as the battlefield and teachers as frontline soldiers” (Minde 2005, p.7 citing Nieme 1997). Between 1889 and the late 1960s, education in the Sámi languages was forbidden in Norway (Helander 2005). Many Norwegian Sámi children were taken from their parents and sent to boarding schools to ensure their assimilation, and funding was provided for this purpose by the Norwegian government (see Minde 2005).

Efforts to reintroduce teaching in the Sámi languages in Norway commenced only at the end of the 1960s (Helander, 2005). This expanded in very small increments. The Norwegian Central Statistics Office records only 814 children educated in Sámi in Norway in 2016 (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2018). Similarly, in Sweden, education in Sámi was provided from 1950 (Svonni, 2001). In Finland, the Sámi language received official status in schools within the Sámi area only as late as in the 1980s (Saukkonen & Pyykkönen 2008, p. 52). Consequently, many Sámi people have not had any formal education in reading or writing their mother tongue.

Between 1973 and 1993, Sámi delegations, and later parliaments, were established in Norway, Sweden, and Finland to represent the interests of the Sámi communities within the broader national contexts in which they were situated (cf. Pietikäinen, Huss, Laihiala-Kankainen, Aikio-Puoskari & Lane 2010). Language acts also established administrative areas where it was possible to use Sámi languages to interact with public authorities (cf. Pietikäinen et al. 2010). These developments drove an increasing political recognition of the benefit of respecting the distinction of Sámi culture and of preserving, and in some cases reviving, Sámi languages.

Despite a sense of shared culture and identity, the everyday lives of Sámi people continue to be influenced by different language policies and legislation in each of the countries that constitute Sápmi. In 1986 the need for a common Nordic Sámi Convention that would harmonise legislation and regulations relating to the Sámi in the Nordic region was raised. Since then, the Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish

Sámi Parliaments and the respective national governments have worked to develop the Convention. The text includes a chapter on Sámi language and culture. This specifically provides that the Nordic states will ensure that programmes in the Sámi language are broadcast on radio and TV and that the publication of newspapers in the Sámi language will be promoted. The final text was agreed on in January 2017 but, 30 years after the need for this convention was recognised, it has not yet been implemented (Regjeringen.no 2019).

## Sámi media

As an audience, Sámi youth have historically been overlooked by traditional media services. Rasmussen (2018), for example, found that media provision for Sámi youth across the Nordic region has historically been very low and inconsistent. The Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish Public Service Broadcasters combine to provide a broadcasting service to the overall Sámi community. While the Internet and radio services provide coverage in both the majority languages and in Sámi languages, the extent of TV coverage is limited. Very little children's programming is produced. Similarly, although some newspapers and printed publications are produced for the Sámi community, very little of this content is aimed at children or young people (i.e. under 18 years of age) (see Rasmussen 2018).

The Internet and digital media therefore potentially offer new arenas for communication and content distribution that are particularly salient for Sámi children and young people. Some independent Sámi services have been established on the Internet. These include the youth newsletters *Jurddabeassi* (2019) and *Nuorat* (2019). Both services are produced by independent organisations and have provided content in the Sámi languages. They also create new opportunities to use these languages online. *Nuorat* has received some funding from the Swedish Sámi Parliament and the Swedish Ministry of Culture. Apart from these services and the Public Service Broadcasters' Internet sites, very little content is provided in Sámi on the Internet.

While broadcasting and print media have for the most part been funded by the governments of Nordic countries via Public Service Broadcasting or subsidies for print media, the diffusion of the Internet and related devices is largely driven by global media corporations. The standardised technologies they introduce influence the norms of communication that evolve around them (cf. Shrock 2015). These norms are further influenced by the commercial contexts in which these products and services are designed. This has particular consequences for how young people participate in society and negotiate and construct their identities (Livingstone 2008).

So, what then happens when the language and culture of Sámi youth is absent from the devices and infrastructures that they use to engage with the world? I argue that while the Internet might present new opportunities for engagement in digital culture, these opportunities are not equally distributed. Young Sámi people often

have to adapt new digital devices and applications in order to access opportunities to communicate in their languages and about their cultures.

In the next section, I present some of the tactics that young Sámi adults (aged 20–35 years) engage in when negotiating access to digital media. While they create new opportunities for themselves and for Sámi children and young people to participate in digital media, these opportunities are not incorporated as default options in the platforms and devices that Sámi children and young people use. Consequently, opportunities to use Sámi languages in digital media need to be negotiated on an on-going basis.

## Negotiating access to digital culture

### Localising platform interfaces

In 2019, the most popular social media platforms amongst young people in the Nordic region are Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter (Ipsos 2019). All of these were originally designed and launched in English. Over time, some of the corporations behind these platforms developed different strategies to localise their interfaces to a range of languages, including the majority languages in the Nordic region – Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and Danish.

In 2008, for example, realising the commercial potential of providing localised interfaces, Facebook developed an application where groups of users could register and collaborate to localise the platform. According to David Kirckpatrick (2010, p. 277) the translation tool was one of Facebook's greatest product innovations and had a huge impact on its global growth. Facebook is now available in over 100 languages, although the extent and quality of these translations vary (cf. Lenihan 2014).

The success of these translation projects was initially dependent on the voluntary input of each language community. Facebook's interface, which in 2008 consisted of 300,000 individual words and phrases, was initially translated to Spanish by 1,500 people in four weeks, to German by 2,000 people in two weeks, and to French by 4,000 people in less than two days. The site has expanded rapidly since 2008, and translation to the majority of languages available via the Facebook interface is now undertaken by artificial intelligence (Pino, Sidorov & Fazil Ayan 2017).

Currently, the only social media platform that has a Northern Sámi interface is Facebook. The other platforms have not opened up their interfaces to either crowd-based translation or translation by artificial intelligence. Therefore, at this level of platform design Sámi language users are not offered equal opportunities for participation when compared to their Nordic peers.

The development of Facebook's Northern Sámi interface is dependent on Sámi people using their own time and skills to translate key terms or 'strings'. The group



of users contributing to the project is small, and as a result most of the strings have not been translated. The top user and translator has contributed over 2,700 translations, but the majority of users have contributed fewer than 140 (Facebook, 2019).

A young female research participant, Áila (aged 31)<sup>25</sup>, actively contributes to the Northern Sámi translation project and regularly promotes it to her network. She does this because she would like to be able to use the interface in Northern Sámi and because she believes that it is important to contribute to this kind of project if the language is to be considered relevant and used by future generations. She also finds it interesting to work with the technical translation of the interface.

However, not all of the young adults I spoke to considered that they had the time, resources, or competence to contribute. Lájlá (female, aged 28) told me that she did not participate in the translation project primarily because she did not consider it relevant to communicate in Sámi on the Internet:

First and foremost, I can't bring myself to use that kind of service, either in Sámi or Norwegian. I think it is mostly because I have been so active on the Internet, since the end of the nineties, and for my part I think that the Internet should be in English.

Here Lájlá reveals how strongly she is influenced by the norm of English-language communication that she has encountered in Internet-based communication. This has consequences for the language choices she makes when communicating with others online. Lájlá also states that she does not think that she has the necessary skills to contribute to the translation project:

I don't have that richness of language that would make me feel comfortable with contributing to such a translation. If it was about translating something from Sámi to English, then I would be the first person to get involved because that is something that I can do. That is something that I'm good at, that I'm very good at. So that wouldn't be a problem. But the other way around, I know that there are people who are much better at Sámi than me. So, if they asked me if I could help, then I would of course do some kind of rough work, but I would not be able to deal with all of these small nuances, and that's what I think translation work demands, for the most part.

Lájlá's comments reveal the extent to which the Northern Sámi community on Facebook is under-resourced when compared with other language communities – such as the examples of Spanish, German, and French presented above. The most recent estimates indicate that between 20,000 and 25,000 people can speak Northern Sámi (cf. Rasmussen 2018). The number of these people that consider

<sup>25</sup> Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of the research participants, however the age and gender of the participants is indicated.

themselves sufficiently skilled to participate in a crowd-sourcing translation project is therefore likely to be relatively small, and assigning the responsibility to complete the translation project to the available ‘crowd’ of translators is therefore unrealistic.

This lack of resources is also reflected in the following comment from Mathis (aged 31). He told me that he would not participate in this translation project because he already works as an editor for an online educational resource. He translates content into a number of different Sámi languages every day, and he could not consider taking on additional translation work in his leisure time.

I work with three Sámi languages in our interface, and there’s a possibility that we will add another two. So, it’s really enough.

Although Mathis has the necessary translation skills to participate in a crowd-translation project, it is difficult to expect that the work required can be undertaken during leisure time, and in particular as unpaid work.

To summarise, Nordic youth and young adults can access all of the most popular social media interfaces in Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish. However, Sámi youth cannot access any social media interfaces, apart from Facebook, in their language. The Facebook interface is also only partially translated to Northern Sámi and is not translated to any of the other Sámi languages. Consequently, Sámi youth do not have the same access to opportunities to engage in online culture as other Nordic youth. This situation is further complicated by the design of the communication devices that Sámi youth can use to connect to the Internet, as discussed below.

Two significant factors therefore contribute to the current situation where Sámi children and young people cannot access digital media in their own languages, namely the small size of the language community (and the related number of skilled translators) and the fact that the work required to translate the relevant interfaces is unpaid.

## Mobile keyboards

Towards the end of the 1990s, a committee established by the Norwegian Sámi Parliament succeeded in establishing a standard Nordic keyboard that included the characters required to write in Northern Sámi for computers that used the Microsoft, Apple, and Linux operating systems (Stortinget.no, 2019). Consequently, a keyboard that supports the Northern Sámi language is available on computers and laptops sold in the Nordic region. However, a similar arrangement was not undertaken for mobile phones and tablet devices. It took until December 2014 to make a keyboard that supports the use of the Northern Sámi language accessible on all mobile devices (cf. Sametinget 2014). This is in spite of

the fact that the first mobile phone with a keyboard was developed by Nokia in 1996 and the first Apple iPhone was introduced to the Nordic region in 2008.

Technological innovations result in the continuous diffusion of new communication devices in the Nordic region. Recent examples include the Apple Watch, the PlayStation 4, and the Chromebook. If these devices do not use operating systems that support writing in the Sámi languages, there is at best a time lag between the diffusion of the device and the possibility for Sámi youth to use it in their language. At worst, this option is never made available. As discussed in the case of Lájla above, when a language, such as English, becomes the normal language of interaction on the Internet, it can become less relevant to consider using other languages, such as Northern Sámi.

Today, most Nordic children and young people use their mobile phones as their primary point of connection to the Internet (cf. Staksrud and Ólafsson 2019, Svenskarna och internet 2018; see also Merikivi et al. this volume), but the keyboards provided on these devices do not facilitate writing in Northern Sámi as a standard option. Between 2011 and 2014, the mobile phones my participants used did not include a Northern Sámi keyboard at all. This meant that they could not update their status, write a tweet, or send a text message in their own language. In order to write in Northern Sámi they therefore developed a range of different tactics.

Some participants accessed three different mobile keyboards. Even at that, one of the characters they needed to complete the alphabet was missing. Others copied and pasted the characters they needed from previous interactions. Still others replaced the missing characters with the most similar characters on the standard Nordic keyboard. When I asked whether this situation influenced language use, Áila (31) answered:

Yeah, I think so, because in my, our, dialect we say ‘maŋe’, but I have no ‘ŋ’<sup>26</sup> on my phone. So, I have started to write ‘manne’. Really, I should write ‘maŋe’ but because I can’t write ‘mana’, when I should write ‘maŋe’, I have to have an ‘nn’ there so that people can understand what I mean. And that in fact, that influences the language, and I didn’t think so before. ... It will happen that these languages, I mean these sounds that we have, will disappear. The ‘ŋ’ will disappear, and I think that’s sad. I don’t want them to disappear.

Áila has developed a tactical response to the fact that she cannot access the characters she needs in order to write in Northern Sámi. However, it makes her sad

<sup>26</sup> *In order to insert this character here, I have to access the ‘Norwegian Sami -PC’ keyboard in my computer preferences menu. I can then use the ‘alt’ key to type ‘ŋ’.*

to think that this can result in certain letters and sounds disappearing from the language in the future.

Asta (female, aged 28) also discussed how she used her phone to write in Sámi:

It is possible. But you have to be diligent and shift between different language options on the keyboard. I have em, Icelandic, Czech, and there are some other ones. You need to have to all the letters. ... The only one I haven't found is the 'ŋ'. That isn't anywhere. But nowadays we're all used to seeing things written without the Sámi letters. And we just guess what it means. ... So it's possible – but you need to be a bit clever about how you go about it.

Asta confirms that the practice of replacing characters with those that are most similar is common and that this is something that 'we're all used to'. Would this situation be acceptable for Norwegian, Swedish, or Finnish language users? Why should Sámi youth not have the same opportunities for communication as their Nordic counterparts?

Mathis (aged 31) had designed a keyboard for the iPhone in an attempt to resolve this dilemma:

Mathis: I have programmed the Sámi letters for the iPhone myself, so it is ok.

Niamh: Ok, so you have all the letters on your phone?

Mathis: I had, but I found out that it was much easier to use the Serbian keyboard in combination with the Norwegian one.

Niamh: Ok

Mathis: Then there are only two letters that are missing.

Niamh: Which ones?

Mathis: 'ŋ' and, what was the other one? The t with the line over it, 'F'

Niamh: OK. But for example, when you are going to write in Sámi, and you use the Serbian and Norwegian keyboards, and you don't have the 'ŋ' and the 'F', what do you do then?

Mathis: I write a normal 'n' and a normal 't'. I actually do that most often with the other letters too.

Mathis had both the skills and motivation required to programme a keyboard for his iPhone so that he could access the characters he needed in order to write in Northern Sámi. In spite of this, he still regularly resorted to replacing the characters he needed with the most similar characters on the standard keyboard. This further indicates how the standards and norms of communication that the use of these technologies and devices establish influence the everyday language choices of their users.

Mathis also told me that he had tried contacting Apple and the Sámi Parliament to ensure that the Northern Sámi keyboard would be made available on the iPhone. He wanted the keyboard to be available as part of the standard offering:

Mathis: I have tried to contact Apple in order to, to get Sámi back. Because it was there once. It was on the first version of the iPhone.

Niamh: Oh, and have you made progress?

Mathis: Sort of. I spoke to the developer in Europe, so yes.

Niamh: And are there any others who are pursuing this or how does it work?

Mathis: I have tried to get it organised through the Sámi Parliament.

The quotes above reveal the precarious position of the Sámi language. It is not prioritised as an option by the designers of the iPhone. Mathis was keen for the Sámi keyboard to be available as a default keyboard on the iPhone interface in the Nordic region. In spite of his efforts, it took until 2014 for the Northern Sámi keyboard to be reintroduced. It is still included as an optional additional keyboard, rather than a default keyboard, on the iPhone.

Sámi youth encounter technological barriers when trying to use their languages on mobile phones, and they do not have the same opportunities to communicate as other Nordic youth. In each of the cases presented above, the participants are determined to overcome the communication dilemmas that they encounter. They search and find the characters they can on a range of different keyboards that are supported by their phones. They even design keyboards that they can use in order to resolve this problem. However, the dilemmas they encounter are not fully resolved. The kind of communication they could engage in led to what they perceive as a general acceptance among their fellow language users of misspelt words. Some of the participants wondered what consequences this might have for their language and felt sad about the fact that different letters and the sounds they represent could disappear from use.

## Concluding discussion

In this chapter I discuss how young Sámi adults negotiate access to digital culture. In some cases, the tactics these young people engage in result in new opportunities for communication for themselves and for other Sámi children and young people. However, in spite of their actions and their engagement with these media, the interfaces of the most popular social media platforms are not available in their languages. Furthermore, the primary communication devices that they use to access the Internet usually do not provide a default keyboard that facilitates communication in their languages. At best, there is a time lag between the diffusion of a new device and the potential to use that device in order to communicate in a Sámi language. In contrast, these opportunities are available by default to other Nordic youth who communicate primarily in Norwegian, Swedish, or Finnish.

The Facebook interface is the only interface that offers a Sámi language option, and this is only partially translated. The extent of this translation is dependent on Sámi people contributing their own time and resources to the project. Given the relative size of the Sámi community, it is unrealistic to expect that they will be able to complete such a vast localisation project in their leisure time.

But should Sámi youth have the same access to social media interfaces as their Nordic counterparts? I argue that the only obvious rationale for the inequalities these young people experience is commercial.

However, if it is assumed that Sámi children, youth, and young adults use the Internet in the same way as their Nordic counterparts, then they use the Internet every day, and on average for up to four hours per day. It would therefore seem that participating in digital culture is a central element of their everyday lives. Is this commercial rationale therefore acceptable? Article 25 of the proposed Nordic Sámi Convention indicates that the Nordic States should, to the extent that it is possible, and with respect to the independence of the media, ensure that Sámi people are given the opportunity to create and use their own media (regjeringen.no 2019). Considered in light of this proposed provision, the inequality that these young people experience would seem unacceptable.

It is also important to note that the young people I spoke to went to significant lengths in order to use their languages online. It might be the case that their actions have positively influenced other Sámi language users, including children, and encouraged them to communicate in their languages on the Internet. However, more research is required in order to explore the extent to which the diffusion and appropriation of the technological infrastructure that constitutes the Internet influence the language choices of Sámi children and young people in general.

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# Windows, holes, and touchstones

## Creating cultural expression in Greenland

*Ruth Montgomery-Andersen*

### Introduction

The meeting with culture must leave holes in the fence where the thoughts can slip through. Culture must be visible and accessible in all education, but it is through the holes in the fence that any horizon expands (Lundberg-Hansen 2017: 1-8, author's transl.).

In Greenland, the indigenous people perceive cultural identity as a gift from their forefathers and as a way to give children a window to society. Culture can be understood as an art form and from its place within cultural heritage (Banks-Wallace 2002; Trondheim 2012). Metaphorically, it is through this window that Greenland develops as a nation.

One of the defining factors for the Greenlandic identity is the language. Use and understanding of language is connected with historical, political, and social issues and is centrally placed within the Greenlandic understanding of autonomy and nation building. Greenland's culture and its cultural expressions are ethno-culturally connected with the Inuit peoples of Alaska, Canada, and Siberia not only in terms of language, but also in terms of a relational worldview of spirituality and traditions. This underlying concept of "relational worldview" is built upon qualities such as balance, intuitiveness, and multifaceted relationships. The concept is often presented as four equal quadrants – context, mind, spirit, and body (Montgomery-Andersen 2013). It is a way of understanding the world, and it is a window to how many Greenlanders relate to their country, to traditional Greenlandic culture, and to the process of globalisation. It is a holistic reflection of the harmonious balance between the attributes that influence values and choices within an indigenous context (Smith 2012; Montgomery-Andersen & Borup 2013).

I, as do most researchers today, believe that children are able to create culture and are not only recipients of culture, as shown by Stine Lundberg-Hansen (2017) in her book on art and education in Denmark and Greenland. By giving space, holes, windows, and mirrors to our children, they are able to become the creators of culture. JoAnne Banks-Wallace (2002) presents the storyteller as the catalyst for collaboration between themselves and the audience, and together they create something real, something touchable, touchstones (Montgomery-Andersen 2013,

p. 92). Following Banks-Wallace's train of thought, children's cultural narratives reflect their realities, and their stories are touchstones from their lives as they see and experience them. Children and young people understand each other and understand each other's stories, and today the sharing of these stories is made possible through social media. Children and young people create their touchstones with their peer audiences, but also with other members of the community that touches their lives.

This chapter seeks to create 'holes', as mentioned by Lundberg-Hansen above, to broaden the knowledge of cultural expressions and heritage among young Greenlanders. The chapter will focus on how children and young people in Greenland use filmmaking as touchstones – as ways to create stories and to be part of and to some extent also influence cultural policy development.

## The setting for children and young people in Greenland

### Greenland, an indigenous country<sup>27</sup>

Greenland is one of three independent constituencies connected to the Nordic countries and the only area that has an indigenous majority. In Greenland the Inuit people are the majority, with a thriving language. It is my opinion that for many Greenlandic people the word "Indigenous" does not coincide with their own self-image. However, it is used here for the sake of positioning and to acknowledge the unique cultural, historical, and political background of Greenland.

Kalaallit Nunaat is the Greenlandic name for Greenland, an autonomous constitutional constituency under the Danish Monarchy. Greenland is a 2.7 million square kilometre island with little or no infrastructure, that relies on planes and boats as transportation between some 23 larger localities. With a population of approximately 57,000 people, children and youth under 19 years of age make up approximately 30 % of Greenland's population.

The sustained Danish and European influence has resulted in social, cultural, economic, and genetic mixing between persons of Inuit and European ancestry. Eighty-eight per cent of Greenland's present population are of Inuit heritage, and Kalaallisut (*Greenlandic*) is spoken by over 80 % of Greenlanders as a first language. Kalaallisut is the official language of Greenland and of the people, with approximately 40 % of the population being bilingual and speaking Danish as their second language (Greenland Statistics 2018).

<sup>27</sup> *I acknowledge the people of Greenland for giving me the possibility to present parts of their culture. I am honoured and grateful to the many children, youth, and elders who have opened a window into the culture and cultural expressions of the Kalaallit.*

Greenland's digital infrastructure was established with the laying of fibre-optic cables in 2009 and 2017. This has had an influence on children and young people's access to the Internet. Until the opening of the cables, there was no high-speed Internet in Greenland. As of 2017, 87 % of the population has access to high-speed Internet (Telepost 2019), although this does not necessarily mean that there is access to the Internet in their homes, and they would possibly have access in their schools and youth clubs.

In small societies in Greenland, schools are not divided by age, and younger children, older children, and youth are often together and sharing stories, which can be a cultural tool. Stories are created, and children and youth use the tools that are close at hand to create small films that they send to their classmate sitting right next to them. Thus, children and youth themselves become the determining factors in the development of cultural practices.

### **Socioeconomic challenges**

The infrastructural and economic limitations of living in the Arctic and living in remote areas have an influence on how and what socioeconomic development looks like in Greenland. Greenland's socioeconomic challenges are in evidence in all areas of life in Greenland, and they also have an influence on the speed at which new policies can be implemented, both locally and especially nationally. The effects of marginalisation within their own society and living in poverty and in unsafe settings are the major challenges for children and youth, affecting approximately 30 % of all children and youth in Greenland between 0 and 18 years of age (CSR 2019).

Greenland has a historical connection to Scandinavia and has the possibility for collaboration and funding within Nordic partnerships (Montgomery-Andersen 2019). The socioeconomic situation of Greenland is not equitable to its Nordic counterparts, though, and this has a major influence on children's ability to exercise autonomy.

Every city, town, village, and settlement in Greenland is isolated, and this puts the population at the whim of the wind and the weather and forces them to rely only on the resources that are available in their own locality. The fact that no roads exist between communities, a real lack of infrastructure, a lack of educational access, and a lack of economic funds has a direct influence on children and young people's rights and abilities to exert influence over their own lives (MIO 2018).

### **Barriers for cultural participation and expression**

Accessibility and language are both important elements in cultural practices, development, and participation. However, because Greenland's population is so small, the breadth of Greenlandic children and young people's TV, radio, theatre, dance, and films is narrow and can be argued to lack both quantity and quality.

Therefore, children and young people in Greenland are to a large extent referred to culture produced in other countries and in other languages, similar to the situation in the Faroe Islands and Iceland. The challenge of this poor accessibility is acknowledged and is taken seriously by the government, but has not yet been solved.

Danish is often children's and youth's second or third language, and English is their third or fourth language. Because of this, it is difficult for children to go into depth when using the available digital platforms or tools in other languages than Greenlandic. With Greenlandic as a mother tongue, it is seldom that children can understand plays, movies, and performances in other languages, including Danish, other Scandinavian languages, or English.

With very few cultural experiences - such as dance, film, theatre, for or with children in Greenland due to the practicalities mentioned, children are not being given a pallet of cultural experiences that are created for their age groups and language abilities. Instead they "make do" with what is available, for example, on YouTube, but in other languages. The lack of programmes, games, films, and products in Greenlandic geared to children is one of the reasons that Greenlandic children mainly watch international children's films and programmes. These programmes are in languages that the children have little or no proficiency in (to begin with), and the cultural contexts differ from the children's everyday lives.

## **Children as cultural architects**

There is little or no research around culture and almost no information about the cultural practices of children between the ages of 11 and 15 in Greenland. With one third of the population of Greenland being children and adolescents, it is imperative for Greenland to create dialogue, consciousness, and documentation of how children themselves experience and create meaningful cultural experiences. Since 2011 there has been a focus on cultural programmes and cultural practices. During the spring of 2014, the Minister for Culture, Education and Church invited cultural actors to discuss the future of cultural policy in Greenland. During the conference and in the resulting document, several cultural markers were discussed, including literature, media, dance, and not least film (Cultural Policy Document 2013).

## **Film making as cultural and artistic expression**

Film is a tool that children and young people are used to through their encounters with, for example, YouTube, vloggers, Snapchat, and Instagram, and has had a great effect on children's and young people's access to film as a medium for cultural expression. Since 2009 there has been a change that includes high-speed Internet, access to electronic devices, and knowledge about how to use them. With the growing access to the Internet, the children and young people are using the art of storytelling through film to create and recreate their experiences. The children

learn from their elders, but develop their own expression. Statements and feelings can be presented to a larger audience uncensored in film – to friends, family, and peers (Banks-Wallace 2002).

Children and young people in Greenland are creating films as a form of ‘play’. This is in the widest understanding of the word ‘play’ and refers to children between the ages of 11 and 15 enjoying themselves together, meeting, and planning experiences together. Marc Fussing-Rosbach (2018) explains that this includes exploring concepts, pushing borders, and creating meaningful stories. The creation of film and video is self-regulated and coincides with the individual young people and children’s understanding of self and self-expression (Fussing-Rosbach 2018). Through the sharing of stories, whether they are stories of challenges or of triumph, the stories take on their own lives and become new knowledge and “touchstones” for the storyteller and the listener (Banks-Wallace 2002). It becomes ways for human beings to recreate self through pictures, movements, and words. When storytelling is put in the hands of children and youth, it metamorphosizes.

### Previous examples of filmmaking

The use of film as a touchstone can be found within young people’s cultural expression in Greenland’s two largest cities, where young artists have refused to be weighed down by economic and cultural norms. Ujaarneq Fleischer was taking a year off from school and decided to get together with some friends and make some funny films. Using a borrowed camera and editing on his own computer, the 18 year old created a Greenlandic underground classic *Tikeq, Qiterleg, Mikileraq, Egeqqoq* (2008). Some years later, the 25-year-old artist Pipaluk Kreutzmann Jørgensen (2012) started using mixed media in her production *Oqarit Inuullutillu* focusing on telling socially realistic stories about suicide, sexual abuse, and loneliness; a first generation of young Greenlanders presenting their own stories within their own contexts and with their own conclusions using visual culture as a tool. Fussing-Rosbach, a young Greenlandic filmmaker, in an interview for *Cinema Scandinavia*, states, “The most important reason for making film in Greenland is to create a space where young people can see and learn about their own culture. This is a way forward and a way to sovereignty for Greenland” (Marc Fussing-Rosbach 2018, interview). This is, in my opinion, the way that children and young people are taking control where they can – they create their own stories and express their own desires and dreams.

Another example is the making of the film *Inuk*, which was produced by the Children’s Home of Uummanaq and was the start of a video workshop at the Children’s Home.<sup>28</sup> The children at the home have created several films working as videographers, editors, and scriptwriters. The children of the home tell stories

<sup>28</sup> *Uummanaq is a town of fewer than 2,000 people in Northwestern Greenland. Uummanaq Children’s home is Greenland’s oldest children’s home. It was an orphanage and now is open for children not living at home with their parents because of neglect.*

that often are factual and reflect the stories and plights of many children in Greenland, including exposure to alcohol, substance abuse, and violence. Other films from the children and young people of the home are mystical stories or fairy tales that incorporate the use of drawings, films, and puppets. What is important is that the children themselves choose the subjects, create the stories, and write, act, and film the sequences. These films were created and developed together and with the support of the workers at the Children's Home. The equipment the children used was purchased by the Children's Home, and the language used in the productions was Greenlandic.

## Cultural policy development

In 2014, Greenland held a cultural symposium to develop and present a culture policy document that was to be ratified by parliament (Culture Policy document, 2014). The document highlighted several cultural areas, including film. Film as a cultural instrument has been supported, and it has been very successful in engaging and inspiring children and young people. The document states that the Government of "Naalakkersuisut"<sup>29</sup> wishes to support Greenlandic produced and directed films, especially by ensuring knowledge transfer and development of local competencies. This is meant to include young filmmakers. This cultural policy symposium was a direct result of the government's reaction to a manifesto presented to them in 2011.

UNICEF together with the Greenlandic Office of the Child's Ombud created the Greenlandic Children's Council called Nakuusa. In 2011, Nakuusa produced a national manifesto called *Nakuusa - We will and we can* where children from all over Greenland aged 13–15 years came together for one week and discussed their dreams for a healthy, just, and inspiring Greenlandic society. In the manifesto, one of the major points was the children's desire for the possibility for cultural and artistic expression. Their thoughts in their final document were expressed as such: "Dear Naalakkersuisut and Inatsisartut"<sup>30</sup>: We young people in Greenland ask you to act on the following wishes: /.../ Children must be able to educate themselves in the subjects they are interested in. For example, a dance school, a music school, and a sports school (not just football). Swimming pools, cinemas, etc., should be created in the major cities" (Nakuusa 2011: 14-20). Children from all over Greenland were invited to apply to be a part of the conference. The group of 38 young people held their own conference together with mediators from UNICEF Greenland, and they documented the conference with short film clips and presented their finished document to the parliament in 2011.

This work carried out by Nakuusa has been the main catalyst for the development and establishment of the National Film Studio/Workshop. Simultaneously, young film professionals, together with the Arts Guild in Greenland, have been in dialogue with the Department of Culture. In 2018 Greenland opened its first film

<sup>29</sup> *The Government of Greenland.*

<sup>30</sup> *The Government and the Parliament of Greenland.*

studio/workshop for young Greenlandic filmmakers, which marked a milestone for Greenland. This is a start for young Greenlanders to experiment with film and vignettes, and it coincides with the establishment of a film production and editing room in a space at the NUiF (Nuuk Ungdom i Fremdrift) youth centre located in Nuuk. Both of these are a meeting place for young people interested in working with film. However, due to the geography of Greenland and the challenges it presents, not all children and young people have the possibility to access the centre.

Film as a cultural instrument is acknowledged and supported, and it has been very successful in engaging and inspiring children and young people in Greenland (Cultural Policy Document 2013). This includes support for films produced and directed in Greenland, especially by ensuring knowledge transfer and the development of local competencies. It also supports the concept of cultural development being in the hands of young Greenlanders themselves: “It is possible to inspire and teach young people about our culture. Not only the historical culture, but what our culture looks like today” (Culture Policy document 2014, p. 15-16). And yet it seems that it is the children and young people themselves who are engaging and inspiring the choices of culture instruments.

This type of cultural development is not only relevant for young filmmakers, but has its counterpart within the dance community in Greenland. Cultural initiatives within the government have been inspired by the young people themselves, and thus cultural policy and cultural initiatives are initiated bottom-up and not top-down by policy makers.

## Nation building

Cultural policy in Greenland has been an important benchmark in Greenland’s road to independence and as a nation-building tool. The government’s focus is on creating a nation that embraces its global space and protects and develops its cultural uniqueness and that can be a role model for other indigenous peoples (Sowa 2013). The concept of Greenland as a nation and its cultural development is inherently interconnected and reflected in the development we see in film, music, dance, and performance in Greenland. The government and the community at large are concerned with the development and sustainability of culture and cultural expression as well as Greenland’s ability to create and protect its own culture (Sowa 2013). This not only pertains to the population at large, but also to supporting cultural experiences for and with children and young people.

The lack of infrastructure in Greenland makes it more difficult for Greenlandic children to learn from other children outside of their local home communities. This is compounded by the language aspect and the lack of cultural programming in Greenlandic, making the challenge of creating and finding support for the individual child’s artistic outlets even greater. The Greenlandic film arena is proactive, and peer-to-peer support is growing at a slow but steady pace

(Montgomery-Andersen 2019). This is maybe one of the most important aspects for the stable and healthy development of cultural expression among children and young people.

As Greenland strives to set itself on the global map as an independent entity, it does so not only by protecting the cultural expressions that are uniquely Greenlandic, but also by creating and re-creating the Greenlandic reality and self-understanding. Greenland is aware that it is the combination of cultural uniqueness, and embracing its global space will be a deciding factor in the development of an independent nation. The definition of nation-building is fluid, and within many indigenous communities this is connected not only to autonomy, but also to the ability to see oneself, one's uniqueness, within the global arena (Sowa 2013). The Greenland government is interested in presenting its own culture (Sowa 2013) and together with its "communities seeks to create its own cultural self-image both within and outside Greenland" (Asii Chemnitz Narup 2016, interview).

## Concluding discussion

Access to the Internet and electronic devices has changed the lives and possibilities for Greenlandic children and young people immensely over the last 5–10 years. The Internet has had a great effect on children and young people's access to film as a medium for cultural expression. This in turn has had an influence on children's use of the Internet to explore and create films. Access to the Internet shows children possibilities beyond their own cultural practices, giving them tools to express themselves and to learn about their own culture as the digital tools are used to explore their own everyday life, politics, and cultural expression.

Greenland's government floats between wanting to give young Greenlanders the same possibilities as other children in the Nordic countries, and at the same time they worry whether or not these very same opportunities are ruining Greenland's 'own culture' by supporting cultural endeavours that are not strictly 'traditional'. However, in Greenland children are taking control where they can; they create their own stories and express their own desires and dreams – and they are being listened to. Politicians, policymakers, and workers within the local and national governments listen and attempt to find a balance.

In order for children and young people to exercise their abilities, they need to be given space, tools, and the possibility to use those tools. As this text shows, film can and is being used as such a medium, as a touchstone, for children and young people to express themselves and to make statements about their own lives in and through culture.



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# Survey-based research

## Challenges when studying children's and young people's use of culture and media

*Kjartan Ólafsson*

### Introduction

Surveys are used extensively in all research on human behaviour, and studies related to children's and young people's use of culture and media are no exception. A review of more than 1,500 studies focusing on children's use of online technologies in Europe conducted in the years 2000–2013 found that some 78 % of those studies used a quantitative approach, and the majority of those studies relied on some form of surveys (Ólafsson, Livingstone & Haddon 2014).

The widespread use of surveys should come as no surprise. Surveys provide a relatively simple way to generate data that allow for systematic comparisons and generalisations to whole populations. In this respect, survey-based research approaches have three important features that make them very appealing. First, survey-based methods are in fact very versatile, and a well-designed survey can be used to increase the understanding of just about any social issue. Second, survey-based methods lend themselves well to probability sampling, which in turn allows for generalisations to larger populations. Third, surveys are a cost-effective method for data collection compared with many other approaches.

Surveys do have their limitations, though, and these are important to note. Many of the criticisms of surveys are, however, based on a misunderstanding of what kind of information surveys can actually provide. A survey might thus be good for estimating the number of children who play certain types of computer games, but not so good for finding out why they play them. A survey might also be good for estimating the number of children who have had negative online experiences and what they did as a consequence, but not so good for finding out why they did what they did or if what they did was helpful and in what way. Despite these and other limitations, surveys are a widely used and important tool in social science research.

Survey design involves a range of different decisions, many of which greatly affect the accuracy of the results. Most of these challenges are not unique to research on children and young people, but working with this particular group does indeed add a layer of complexity to the mix. As an example, trying to obtain accurate information on how much time adults spend using social media might be tricky. Obtaining such information for teenagers adds a layer of complexity because parental permission might be required before asking the teenagers to participate in the survey. Trying to then obtain such information from small children who are not

able to work with written text adds another completely different layer of complexity. Working with the particular topic of media and culture adds a somewhat different layer of complexity to the mix, or as Sonia Livingstone (1998, p. 437) has put it: ‘Studying media is to some extent about studying a moving target’. The pace of technological change means that using fixed ways of measuring key concepts is not always an option. As an example, the 2010 EU Kids Online survey did not ask about the use of *smartphones* because that term did not really exist at the time but instead asked about *portable handheld devices* in a rather cumbersome attempt to capture a future that seemed to be on the horizon.

There are various ways of defining good survey research. Technical details aside, good survey research aiming to measure children’s and young people’s use of culture and media should do the following:

- Build on theory and be designed to answer specific research questions.
- Use proper sampling techniques and aim for equivalence.
- Ask questions that the respondents can understand and answer.
- Provide some level of comparison across culture or over time.
- Store the data in a safe place and allow others to make use of it.

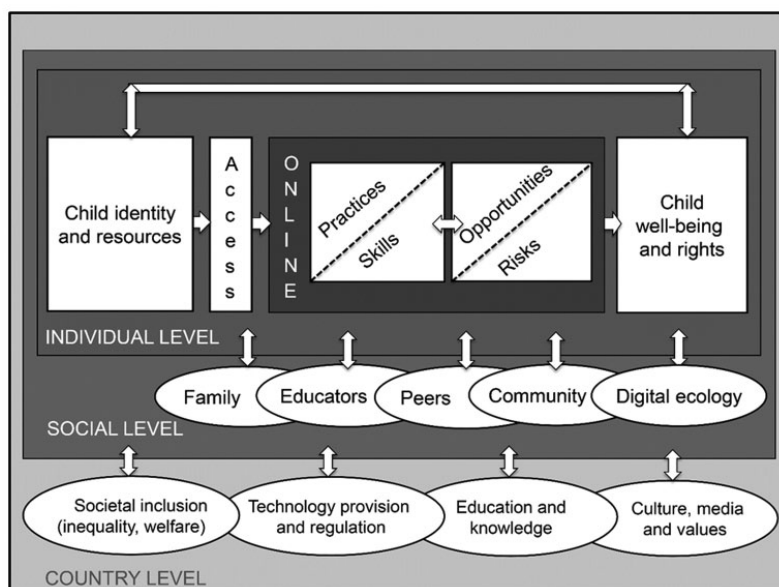
This chapter will discuss some of the challenges of survey research in relation to the above-mentioned characteristics for research on children’s and young people’s use of culture and media.

## Building on theory

Surveys can broadly aim to address two types of fundamental questions – what is going on (a descriptive approach) and to a more limited extent why it is going on (an explanatory approach). In this respect, the overall aim of surveys is to both describe and understand society (de Vaus 1996). The quality of any survey is thus ultimately judged by its ability to provide meaningful answers to particular research questions. This in turn means that a clear theoretical framework is essential to designing a good survey, and approaching the survey design from the viewpoint of a clear theoretical model helps in defining research questions, formulating hypotheses, and setting out a clear path from conception to operation.

An example of how a theoretical model might guide the selection of questions and key concepts in a survey can be taken from the EU Kids Online network, which has developed a model (see fig. 1) for its research of children’s online risks and opportunities in Europe (Livingstone, Mascheroni & Staksrud 2015). The underlying idea represented in the model is that the overall outcome of media use, such as child well-being, is influenced by the opportunities and risks encountered. These in turn are influenced by online practices and skills that depend on access and on various characteristics of the child. As indicated by the various arrows, this process is not only seen as being linear and one-way, but also to have important

interactions, such as between practices and skills. The process is then seen as existing in a social context and within a framework, for example, a regulatory framework, that operates on a national level.



**Figure 1.** The EU Kids Online revised model of children's outcomes of Internet use. Source: Livingstone et al. 2015.

Fitting all the concepts presented in figure 1 into one survey would probably be impossible. Even though the model only lists 16 main concepts, looking more closely at each of these will reveal nuances that can be seen as different dimensions of that single concept. Access can, for example, be seen through devices of use, places of use, and type of Internet connection. Online practices can be seen through different types of activities, such as communicative, creative, recreational, and learning (Hasebrink 2012). Skills can be further divided into operational, navigational, informational, social, creative, and mobile skills (van Deursen Helsper & Eynon 2016). In addition, each dimension of each concept can then be measured in a range of different ways, from simple to more complex. In the 2010 EU Kids Online survey, online practices were measured by asking 17 questions (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Ólafsson 2011), but in a revision of the questions in 2016, the Global Kids Online network suggested that up to 35 items could be used to measure online practices with 15 items suggested as a minimum (Globalkidsonline 2016).

To help maintain a focus on the theoretical model, many surveys use a modular approach. The idea is that for each part of the theoretical framework there will be a survey module, and within each module a range of questions allows researchers to examine a topic. This approach is used by the Global Kids Online network (Globalkidsonline 2016) which also offers a suggestion of core and optional questions for each of the different themes covered by the questionnaire.

In research projects with a more formal structure, some survey items might be defined as mandatory so that everyone intending to use that questionnaire is required to use a minimum set of questions and is then free to add optional items.

In comparative studies, where many researchers are involved, ideas for new survey modules will almost certainly arise on a regular basis. The European Social Survey project (ESS) even has an open call for proposals for new modules before each new round of the survey. Questions from this open call are then selected for inclusion in each new round of data collection. The idea behind this is that each new round will include both a set of core questions, which are stable over time and allow for comparison over time, and rotating questions that allow for a more in-depth analysis of certain topics (see <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>).

The study on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) has a set of guidelines for those wanting to promote new items or survey modules. The process involves extensive pretesting and evaluation of the proposed items such that implementing such changes takes a minimum of eight years (Roberts et al. 2009). Such a strict approach would hardly be feasible in a study focusing on children and media because of the fast-changing nature of the field. Still, some kind of testing of the possible effect of changes in the research design, should always be done.

## Sampling properly and aiming for equivalence

To draw relatively accurate conclusions about a certain population, it is not necessary to measure or interview everyone belonging to that population. It is enough to study a sample from that population, and if the sample is correctly chosen and large enough then the results will be fairly accurate.

Surveys focusing on children and young people face mostly the same challenges as surveys for adults. However, surveys on children and young people also have some features that are less common in surveys for adults. One is the extent to which the data collection is done through schools with the resulting clustering effects. An example of where clustering effects might be of importance could be a survey that aims at measuring the prevalence of online bullying where such behaviour might be more prominent in some schools or classes than in others. Furthermore, surveys on young children sometimes use proxy respondents, for example, where parents are asked to report on the behaviours and attitudes of their children.

## Error components

When working with survey data, it is good to remember that all numbers obtained through surveys contain two error components to a varying degree: *random error* and *systematic error or bias*. When designing a survey, the goal is then to limit and control these two sources of error.

Random error is present in all data obtained by drawing a sample from a population, as is almost always the case in surveys, and it is the random difference between the sample value and the ‘true’ population value. The random error is simple to deal with because it is directly related to the sample size and can be reduced by increasing the effective sample size. The random error can also be easily estimated and controlled for with significance testing.

Systematic error or bias is more difficult to deal with because it stems from the research design and is the result of several factors that might be difficult to estimate. The various sources of systematic error mainly fall into two categories – errors resulting from the sampling and data collection procedures and errors resulting from different measurements and data processing. An example of sampling error would be if certain groups in the population were less likely to end up in the sample. Online surveys, for example, include only those who have access to the Internet – everyone else is unable to participate. In a cross-national comparative study of countries with different levels of Internet use, this would result in between-country variation that could be partly caused by differences in selection bias between the countries and would therefore provide limited information about children even if the age group were the same.

Measurement errors resulting from question design are probably the most easily identified source of systematic error, and research projects focusing on comparison between countries or over time will invariably put serious effort into limiting this error. As studies grow in size – be it in terms of the number of countries involved, the number of data collection rounds in a long-term study, or just in terms of the number of people involved in the data analysis – it becomes increasingly important to have clear procedures for coding and data handling.

## Cross-national limitations

There is considerable variability in the methods used to achieve comparability in cross-national surveys, as pointed out also by Björnsson in this volume. A higher level of control of the survey process should result in better data quality, but opting for an approach of minimal specifications can also have advantages. Such an approach will reduce the workload of the individuals and organisations involved, and in the case of a cross-national survey project this might encourage more countries to participate. Also, reducing the amount of work devoted to data collection might leave more time for data analysis.

In studies involving comparisons between countries or over time (the same applies for all quantitative research), the research design aims to limit both random error and systematic error or bias. In comparative research, the overall goal of limiting errors has to be obtained while at the same time striving for equivalence (van de Vijver & Leung 2011). Equivalence broadly means that in all aspects the survey as a measurement tool works in the same way across countries or over time. The goal of equivalence applies to all aspects of the research design and has important implications for decisions made in the design process. It also applies to the data collection process and the ways in which fieldwork is conducted.

As outlined above, errors caused by the research design are most frequently related to systematic error bias in point estimates. However, it is also important to keep in mind that the research design – in particular, the design of measurements – can result in random measurement error (Saris & Gallhofer 2007). This does not affect point estimates because this kind of error results in random fluctuations around the true value, but it can seriously limit the strength of correlations observed in the data. This type of random error might be seen as equivalent to the white noise in audio recordings or broadcasts that makes it difficult to properly hear the music or the spoken word. In survey research, random measurement error reduces the observed strength of correlations, leading researchers to underestimate the importance of variables in the analysis (Saris & Gallhofer 2007).

## Asking questions that can be answered

Theories of the process of answering questions, and the various rules for the design of good questionnaires, have developed significantly since the mid-20th century (e.g. Bradburn et al. 2004; Saris & Gallhofer 2007; Tourangeau et al. 2000). However, the main body of research has been developed in surveys for adult populations and in studies that do not involve comparisons over time or across countries.

Regarding the quality of questions in a survey, Jon A. Krosnick's (1991) theory of 'satisficing' provides a useful starting point. The satisficing theory is an extension of the classical model of the question-answer process that identifies the following four steps when people answer questions: (1) understanding and interpreting the question, (2) retrieving information from memory, (3) making a summarised judgement, and (4) reporting this judgement (Tourangeau & Rasinski 1988). The satisficing theory distinguishes between two approaches in the question-answer process. The first, optimising, is when the respondent consciously goes through all four stages needed to answer a survey question. The second, satisficing, is when the respondent gives a more or less superficial answer. From the researcher's point of view, ideally all respondents would use the optimising approach, but satisficing can be related to three dimensions in the question-answer process. The first is the motivation of the respondent, and here the idea is that as respondents are more



interested in the general topic of the survey the more likely they are to provide an optimised answer. The second is the difficulty of the questions, and here the idea is that the less effort it takes for respondents to provide the information requested the more likely they are to provide an optimised answer. The third is the cognitive abilities of the respondent.

Based on theories of cognitive and moral growth, the general assumption amongst survey researchers seems to be that children aged ten and older are capable of answering survey questions (Borgers, DeLeeuw & Hox 2000). The extent to which this is in fact the case and how large the effect might be has, however, rarely been estimated. Fuchs (2005) tried to estimate some of the effects by experimenting with question order, response order, and length of response scales in surveys with children and young people aged from 10 to 21 years old. The results indicate that younger respondents do struggle with more complex forms of questions, but the characteristics of questions proving to be more problematic are in fact the same as have been shown to be problematic for adults. In that sense, it is not fair to say that children are inferior to adults as respondents in a survey. They might, however, be more sensitive to poorly designed questions. Questionnaires intended for children should thus be adapted to the age group for which they will be used. It must also be kept in mind that although children of a certain age might be able to answer a question, it might be ethically unacceptable to ask them to do so (Berman 2016).

## Comparing across cultures or over time

Comparisons over time and across countries have always been at the heart of social science research (Przeworski & Teune 1970). Perhaps the most obvious reason for doing comparative research relates to the question of universality and, simultaneously, the uniqueness of findings based on nation-specific data or data obtained at one point in time. However, against the obvious advantages of comparative research it is necessary to consider the various difficulties of drawing a coherent picture from research conducted in many countries, using different methods, and published in many different languages.

During the past decades, the amount of cross-national comparative research has increased considerably (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Harkness 2005; Smith et al. 2011). Several processes have contributed to this trend, including the gradual internationalisation of the academic community and the removal of political barriers. Funding bodies and policymakers have also called for comparative research, and that call seems to have been readily heeded by researchers who find themselves both initiating and participating in multinational collaborative projects. Corresponding with the overall growth in the field of cross-national and comparative research, there has been considerable development in the methods and techniques for coordinating data collection and analysis in such research projects (see Jowell, Roberts, Fitzgerald et. al. 2007). It is particularly important for

research on children's and young people's use of culture and media to take on board the lessons learnt, both in the field of comparative research in general and from specific research projects in the field of children and media.

Research aiming for comparison over time has also increased in popularity but still only accounted for a handful of studies on children's use of online technologies in Europe conducted in the years from 2000 to 2013 (Ólafsson, Livingstone & Haddon 2014). This might be partly due to the popular idea that research projects using repeated surveys as a method for measuring social change should aim to minimise changes in the research design. Duncan (1969) laid down this principle in simple terms by pointing out that 'if you want to measure change, don't change the measure'. However, it might prove difficult to adhere to this principle when studying constantly evolving media. If studying children's media is 'to some extent about studying a moving target' (Livingstone 1998, p. 437), the principle of not changing measurements between consecutive surveys becomes difficult to uphold. This is perhaps one of the reasons why longitudinal designs are so rarely used for children's media and media research more generally. This challenge is likely to increase when the time span of a research project is extended. In such a case, the ideal of standardisation will eventually conflict with the need to collect meaningful information from the respondents or participants in the study.

To demonstrate the problem with the idea of not changing the measurement, a somewhat extreme example can be taken from the Icelandic long-term research project *Children and television* where in 1968 – when data were first collected – the respondents were asked simply 'Do you watch television?' and the most extreme response option of *I watch pretty much everything shown on TV* could be translated into a maximum of little more than 20 hours per week (Broddason 1996). To use the exact same question in a survey today would probably not result in very meaningful answers.

The field of comparative survey research has developed considerably since the early 1980s when the first large-scale cross-national studies started to emerge (Harkness, van de Vijver & Mohler 2003). These early studies focused on issues such as health and well-being, values, and attitudes. As such, even though it does not target children and young people, the European Social Survey (ESS) is a worthwhile starting point for anyone wanting to do comparative research. In terms of specifications for the survey process and quality control, the ESS (see <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>) is amongst those projects having the strictest requirements. Not only does it have a detailed protocol for the survey process, it has also been at the forefront in developing methods for cross-national comparative research since its inception in 2001 (Jowell, Roberts, Fitzgerald et al. 2007).

A notable early example of a cross-national research project focusing on children is the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study (see <http://www.hbsc.org>). Dating back to the 1980s and initiated by the World Health

Organization, it is one of the first international surveys on adolescent health. The study was set up as a monitoring tool for policy development but has also contributed considerably to adolescent health research (Roberts et al. 2009). For many subsequent projects, the HBSC project has served as a useful model in terms of general methodology, and several of the measurements used in various surveys on children's use of media have been adapted from this study. One example is the ways in which time spent using various media are measured where children are asked in two separate questions about time spent on a certain activity during normal school days and then on non-school days (<http://www.globalkidsonline.net/tools/survey>).

## Sharing data

Carefully collected survey data are a valuable resource, and making data available for further analysis should be standard practice in any research project. Careful documentation of the survey process is crucial in cross-national surveys and in surveys that include repeated rounds of data collection. As a rule of thumb, the greater the number of people involved in a survey, whether in data collection or data analysis, the more important it is that every step of the survey process be carefully documented. For large-scale projects such as the ESS, the sheer volume of such documentation can be almost overwhelming, but it should be remembered that it has two distinct purposes. For those participating in a research project, clear documentation can be used to improve consistency and to prevent tacit knowledge being lost if key people leave the project. Those outside the project might use documentation of the survey process to replicate or evaluate the study.

Research data are a valuable resource that is costly and time-consuming to produce. Survey data can have a significant value beyond the original research, and so there has been an increased emphasis on sharing data. Several data archives offer researchers the possibility of having their data professionally curated so that it becomes easily accessible, both in the short term and in the future. New and innovative research can then be carried out based on existing data, and results can be verified by repeating an analysis. One example of a public archive providing researchers with the possibility of archiving survey data for future use by other researchers is the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) (see <http://www.nsd.no>).

If there is a desire for data to be shared, this should be made clear at the outset so that the survey can be designed and prepared with this in mind. Some public funding agencies insist on data being made available, which can be a challenge in cross-national surveys – if funding bodies in one country insist on data being made publicly available, this might create challenges for others involved in the research. Data sharing might not be possible unless it has been stated clearly in applications to the relevant ethics committees.

When data are shared through data archives, certain documentation of the survey process will be required. The relevant data archives will state clearly the minimum documentation required, and in most cases a variety of additional documentation can accompany the data (see, as an example, the record for the 2010 EU Kids Online survey in the UK data archive at <https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/#6885>). If data are to be submitted to a public archive, the data will obviously have to be anonymised. Due care must also be taken in the level of detailed information provided in certain variables that might allow individuals to be identified through a set of variables such as age, gender, municipality, school, and parent occupation.

## Concluding discussion

Researchers often conclude by stating that ‘more research is needed’, and this is probably always true to some extent. But different research is also sometimes needed, and the need is also for better research. In their review of research on children’s use of online technologies in Europe conducted in the years 2000–2013, Ólafsson, Livingstone, and Haddon (2014) found that in this field of research surveys were the most common form of data collection. This reliance on survey data has consequences for the kind of knowledge that becomes available and the age groups that are studied.

Most surveys use questionnaires for the data collection. This means that in order to include children younger than nine or ten years old in a survey researchers either have to use proxy respondents with parents (or other adults answering on behalf of the child) or use face-to-face interviewing. Using proxy respondents raises questions of validity, and using face-to-face interviewing is vastly more expensive than using, for example, self-administered questionnaires in schools. These characteristics of survey research are very visible when looking at the availability of research. In the case of research on children’s use of Internet and mobile technologies (Ólafsson, Livingstone & Haddon 2014), relatively little information is available on children under the age of nine years, whereas teenagers are studied much more.

Surveys are also limited in their ability to describe complex processes because most contain only a cross-section of measurements at one moment in time. This is again visible in the overview of studies on children’s use of online technologies in Europe (Ólafsson, Livingstone & Haddon 2014) where a large share of studies are descriptive reports of access, activities, and risks.

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The background of the slide features a complex, abstract geometric pattern. It consists of several large, interlocking triangles in a teal color, set against a white background. The triangles are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some pointing towards the top and others towards the bottom. The overall effect is a modern, minimalist design.

## **V. Concluding remarks**

# Configuring the doers

Anna Sparrman

The aim of this research anthology is to make visible different aspects of children's and young people's leisure cultures that public cultural policy seldom highlights. In the final words of this book, we therefore want to underscore the configurations of children and young people as 'doers', by focusing on the relations that enable and constrain them as doers.

To accomplish this endeavour, we draw on the concept of 'configuring the user' (Woolgar 1991, 1996). Configuring the user emphasise on what identifies, defines, constructs, enables and constrains users (Woolgar 1996; see also 1991).<sup>31</sup> In this text, however, 'user' is replaced with 'doer' as the book focuses on what children and young people *do* and not only on how they use something or become users. Consequently, the focus is on who the 'doers' in the book are and how, by what, and by whom they are configured, as well as their capacities to configure themselves as 'doers'. The anthology displays the heterogeneous ways in which 'doers' come about in practice and enables us to reflect on children's and young people's leisure cultures.

All the examples in the book show that the configuration of the doers is made through material, social, and emotional relationships. A rich and varied set of doers is present: online gamers (Arminen & Tiilikainen), age cohorts (Björnsson), cultural architects and nation builders (Montgomery-Andersen), digital users, consumers, and creators (Johansen), Sámi translators (Ni Bhroin), fanfiction writers (Duggan), 'no'-sayers (Gustafsson), 'Each One Teach One'/hip-hoppers (Söderman), child citizens (Hultgren), cosplayers (Buhl), media users/populations (Ólafsson), music users (Vestad), makertjejer/entrepreneurs/builders/developers (Landwehr Sydow), the creative child/designer/innovator (Hrechaniuk), and smartphone kids/populations (Merikivi, Myllyniemi and Salasuo).

The enumeration of doers above is based on the activities they engage in and the materials with which they work. It is a multifaceted and incoherent way of lining up the doings, but it clearly displays that culture impacts what kind of doer we are talking about; is it smartphone users, visitors to the library, or a participant in a drawing competition? Each leisure activity is bounded in its own specific ways, and we need to account for its possibilities and delimitations on its own terms (Woolgar 1991).

<sup>31</sup> *Within media research there is a wide scope of literature looking into children and young people as media users. See, for example, Nordicom's publications on children and young people: <https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en>. The reason for using the concept of configuration is its focus on social as well as material components. It better follows the focus on practice presented in this book.*



Where and with whom you are doing your leisure activities is another important aspect of the configuration. The three survey studies presented in the book cannot give us any information about with whom, where or why children are doing their cultural activities, it can be with classmates, friends, alone, in school, public places, or at home.

The chapters in this collection, show for example that parents have a significant role, especially in configuring the youngest children as doers. If a young child does not get help from a parent to submit a drawing to a drawing competition, it might never happen. The parent is a facilitator to make the doing possible (cf. Cardell 2015; Sparrman, Cardell, Lindgren & Samuelsson 2017).

The rules parents set up for computer gaming are another configuration that limits what is possible or not to do for children and young people. At times, though, parents perform culture on equal terms with their children, for example, when they sing contemporary and old songs together at home. In these cases, parents are configured as peers rather than facilitators.

The configuration of less able-bodied children and young people as leisure-culture-doers is for some done through their relationship with a personal assistant (PA). To make leisure culture happen, the PA is a facilitator, a co-doer, a peer, and a professional employee. The configuration of the child doer in this way comes about through a process of the children, young people, and the PA moving in and out of different positions of ability and disability enacting shared and independent actions. The configuring capacities of the relationships between children, parents, and PAs outlines what enables and constrains doers (Woolgar 1996).

Children and young people also carry out their activities with peers – some who are known and others who are unknown. Today the online environment is a place where children and young people meet peers. For some, this is even *the* place for meeting people with shared interests. These cases demonstrate how the configuration of the doer is made through multiple relations – through the possibilities and limitations of the technology, the interest in the topic, the invisibility of the interactive peers, the physical environment, and if the activity is physically carried out together with someone or by oneself. This illustrates how many choices, skills, decisions, and competences are involved in becoming a doer and how children and young people in this process configure and are configured by their leisure cultures (cf. Mackay, Carne, Beynon-Davies & Tudhope 2000).

This links into the topic of access to culture. Who has access and to what? To have access can be, as has been pointed out, to have the help of a parent or a PA to at all be able to participate in the leisure cultures you as a child or young person are interested in. A prevailing consensus of children's and young people's 'right' to culture can easily reproduce the idea that all children and young people have access to culture (cf. Reynaert, Bouverne-De Bie, & Vandeveldel 2012).

To have the right to, and use the strategy to, say no to participate in leisure culture is also a way of configuring oneself as a doer. Sharon Stephens (1995) emphasises that children and young people ought to have the right not to be constrained by culture. She then relates to, for example, religion and cultural ancestral traditions. Her argument points at the importance of being configured as a leisure-culture-doer through the freedom of choice. However, sometimes the lack to access is beyond the individual choice, as in the case of Greenland where the geographical infrastructure limits what children and young people have access to. In this case a nation configures the possibilities of being a doer.

Lack of technological development is another delimiting factor resulting in configuring children and young people as 'prosumers', that is intersecting the role of being a consumer with that of a producer (Humphreys & Grayson 2008). For example, when social media platforms like Facebook lack the Northern Sámi language interface, the doers become configured as crowd-based translators. Crowd-based translating is dependent on skilled Sámi people using their own leisure time to fill the gaps in the technology for the purpose of making the language accessible. Facebook then configures Sámi people as skilled translators.

In the best of worlds, the company and the translators are co-creators of values. A not as positive interpretation is that the company benefits financially through free labour. A similar approach can be seen in Ikea's drawing competition discussed in the book. Ikea configures the competing children as prosumers (creative designers and innovators) without financial pay offs (Humphreys & Grayson 2008).

In both cases the translators and the designers are carrying out their activities in the name of helping others. Young adult Sámi people want to make the Sámi language accessible on social media and pass it on to younger generations, and the children participating in Ikea's drawing competition help other children by helping Ikea conduct charity.

This responsibility for change – for themselves and other people – is also important for the young female adults who engage in 'makertjejer'. They configure themselves as role models and young girls as makers. Again, the concept of facilitator springs to mind, not youth leader, and this looks more like the apprentice set-up of 'Each One Teach One' in hip-hop, where the more skilled ones pass on knowledge to the less skilled ones. Here skills and social relations configure the doers.

Configuring the doer is a way of approaching leisure cultures in and through the practices where they are being done. To focus on the social *and* the material aspects of doing questions predefined categories like age, power, consumer, and user. The concept of 'configuring the doer' helps us see how leisure culture is multi-directional and is fundamentally based on varieties of relational work. To be a doer is more complex than being a user or a prosumer in the sense that leisure culture is

performed across markets, public cultural policies, and private homes. The reciprocity of who and what configures who and what is fundamental for understanding children and young people as ‘doers’.

To focus on ‘doers’ highlights that all Nordic children and young people do not have the same opportunities and access to leisure culture. Still, children and young people do not lack imagination or inspiration. This book demonstrates that Nordic children and young people take responsibility for the freedom, sometimes out of necessity, they have to engage in leisure cultures to make life entertaining and liveable.

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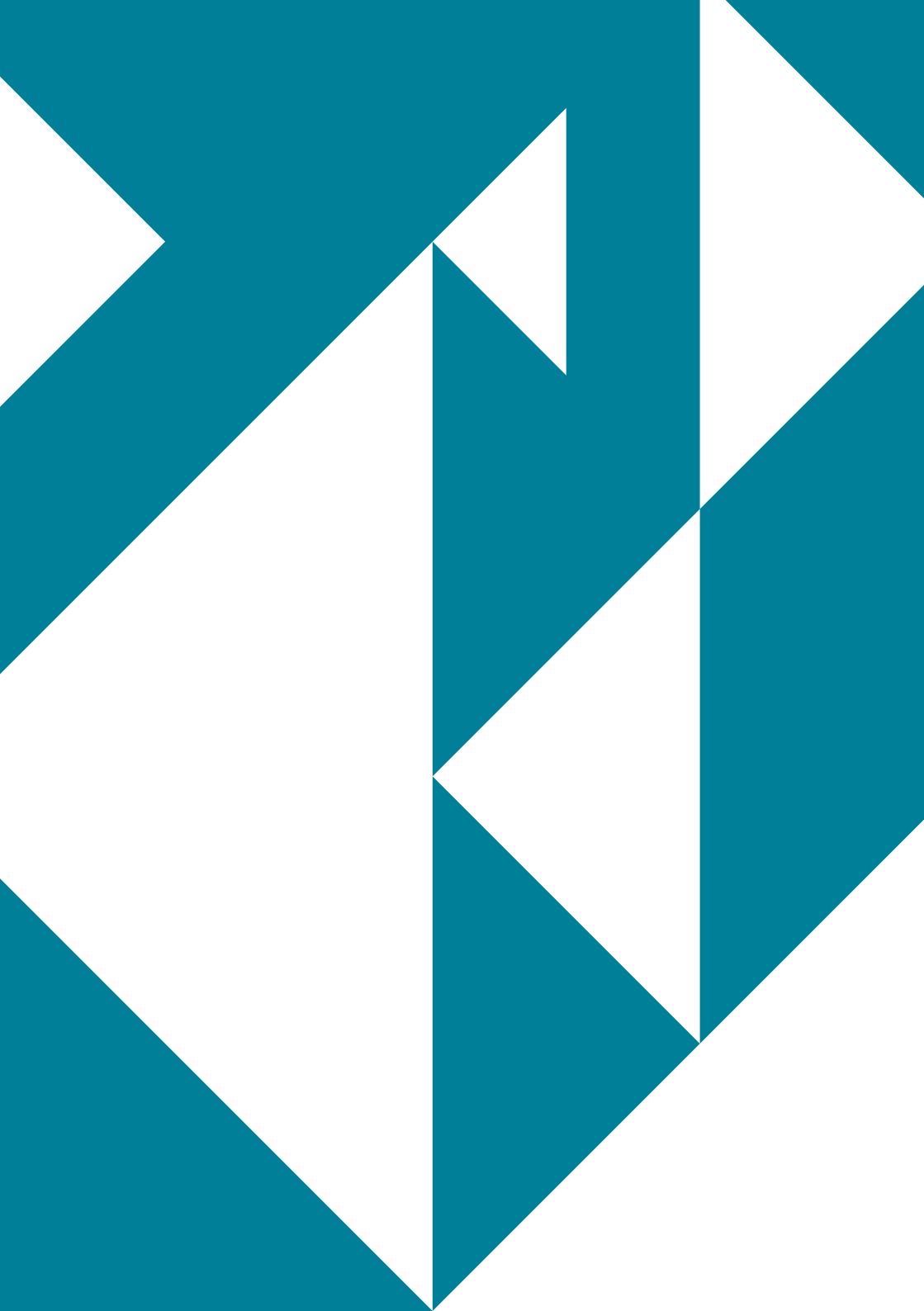
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*Making culture* is a research anthology focusing on children's and young people's leisure culture. Nineteen researchers from the Nordic countries have been invited by the Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (Kulturanalys Norden) to explore, describe and analyse how children and young people act as cultural 'doers'. The anthology provides researchers, policymakers and practitioners with insights and analyses on children's and young people's culture.

Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis generates statistics and other knowledge of relevance to Nordic cultural policy. Our assignment is to generate knowledge that is useful to decision-makers seeking to advance Nordic cultural policy and enhance Nordic cultural life.

