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A Becoming, Humanist Child: An analysis of *Learning* and *Care* in the Swedish *Curriculum for the Preschool (Lpfö 18)*

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Abstract

A new, revised curriculum for the Swedish preschool came into effect in July 2019. According to the National Agency of Education, it differs from its predecessor by putting a greater emphasis on care and teaching. This paper studies how the child is conceptualized in relation to learning and care in the new curriculum. Informed by a posthumanist approach and childhood studies, it scrutinizes how the child is positioned as a being and/or becoming child, an entangled and/or separate child, and, an active and/or passive child. Furthermore, it explores how the child appears in relation to human and non-human agents. The dominant, recurring conceptualization of the child is the child as becoming and passive. Learning and caring processes mainly come across as unidirectional - from adult to child – and future orientated. Although the preschool child is connected to a social context, the child predominantly appears as separate from others rather than entangled.

Keywords: curriculum; early childhood education and care (ECEC); childhood studies; posthumanism; Sweden

Introduction

Sweden has provided government funded and subsidised child-care to families for decades. Today, 84% of all 1-5 year-olds and 95% of all 4-5 year-olds attend child-care (Skolverket, 2018), what in Sweden is known as preschool (*förskola*). The first Swedish curriculum for the preschool was introduced in 1998. It remained in force for 20 years with only minor revisions. A new curriculum, *Lpfö 18*, has been in effect since 1 July 2019. It is a revised version, and according to the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), it primarily differs from the old one by placing a greater emphasis on care (*omsorg*), children's rights, the preschool teachers' duty to conduct teaching (*undervisning*), and the rights of national minorities. Moreover, it emphasizes digitalization, sustainable development, gender equality, and children's rights to bodily and personal integrity (Skolverket, 2019). The Swedish curriculum for the preschool is the official document that stipulates and regulates the content of the preschool. Thus, this text is what local decision-makers, civil servants, practitioners and parents turn to, and interpret, for directions on what the preschool should involve. In this way, the curriculum affects the everyday life of Swedish children and their families as well as professional praxis. This calls for close scrutiny of this imperative document.

This paper explores how the child is discursively construed and conceptualized in the new Swedish curriculum for the preschool (Lpfö 18). Particular focus is put on *the child* in relation to the concepts of *learning* (including *teaching*) and *care* (including *compassion* and *empathy*). As previous studies have shown, the conception of the child in Swedish preschool policy has been influenced by childhood studies as well as posthumanist theory (Bjervås, 2003; Halldén, 2007; Lindgren, 2018). Here, we study how such influences evolve (or not) in the new curriculum for the preschool. While the concept of *becoming* is important for posthumanist thinking, the concept of *being* has been suggested and applied in childhood studies (e.g., James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998). In this paper, we elaborate on both becoming and being, and discuss how these concepts are related to notions of learning and care. We analyse how and if the child surfaces as a body entangled with human and non-human agents (posthumanist theory), or as a social actor (childhood studies).

Learning and care, being and becoming

Learning, rather than care, has been emphasised in policy documents and the political discourse on early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the last few decades. For example, the dominant concepts in the most recent OECD (2017) *Starting strong* report are *learning*, *teaching*, and *teaching workforce,* rather than words associated with care, such as *care*, *child minders* and *caregiver*. The predominant learning discourse has been critiqued for producing an instrumental and future-oriented view on childcare, rather than depicting learning as being entangled with and pertinent to caring (e.g., Bergnehr 2010; Buber, 1993; Halldén, 2007).

A large body of work on care in educational settings has been inspired by the 'ethics of care' proposed by Nel Noddings (2013), who argues that to *care* or *care for* is to act in order to provide a person with what she/he needs for her/his wellbeing and health. Care is seen as a relational, dialogical process in which the carer is sensitive to the responses, needs, and feelings of the cared for, and that care must

be accepted by the cared-for to be effectuated (Noddings, 2013). Care is also immanently human: "As human beings we want to care and to be cared for. *Caring* is important in itself" (Noddings, 2013, p. 7, emphasis in original). Thus, human development and interaction involve being cared for, as well as caring for others.

Recent posthumanist work and studies inspired by other theoretical approaches have highlighted the need for more reflection on care and love in ECEC (Aslanian, 2015; Cekaite and Bergnehr, 2018). It has been argued that organizational and material aspects of care are disregarded: "from an organizational and posthuman perspective, care also involves the ways ECEC educators shape and are shaped by the material environment and the organization of time and place" (Aslanian, 2017, p.324). However, while posthuman perspectives that illuminate organizational and material aspects have advantages (e.g. Aslanian, 2015, 2017), we suggest that they risk neglecting the point that care is fundamentally a social, between-humans phenomenon.

Posthumanist research has argued that learning is often defined as an inner, anthropocentric process, rather than something ubiquitously social and interconnected that is formed in relation to the material environment and non-humans (e.g., Bergstedt, 2017; Lenz Taguchi, 201; Snaza and Weaver, 2014). However, preschool policy in Sweden has been influenced by posthumanist thinking. Therese Lindgren (2018) detects two prominent contemporary policy discourses on the preschool child in Sweden: the socio-economic child, and the posthuman child. Despite their different ontological foundations, they both produce an image of the child as educable, and education (of the child) as the solution to societal inequalities and environmental problems. The child and learning are thus connected to the future and future objectives – to (future) salvation. It is the child as becoming rather than the child as being that surfaces.

The concepts of *being* and *becoming* have long been debated in child and childhood studies. It was argued in the 1980s and 1990s that it is preferable to conceptualize the child as *being* because that term puts focus on children as social actors and children's everyday lives and experiences in the here and now. Treating the child as *becoming* was critiqued for, and connected to, depictions of children as 'unfinished' and childhood as a temporary unwanted state that precedes completeness, i.e. adulthood (e.g. James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998; Qvortrup, Bardy, Sgritta, and Wintersberger, 1994). More recently, Nick Lee (2001), and others, have problematized the conceptualization of the child as being. Inspired by posthumanism and authors such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988), they have asserted that we are all becoming and incomplete; adults and children alike exist in continuous flow, entangled in constantly-transforming assemblages; both our physical bodies and our minds change over time. This, they argue, supports the notion of the child as becoming rather than being (Emma Uprichard, 2008). The (learning) child is thus a becoming child in posthumanist pedagogies. The child is conceptualised as a human organism entangled in complex, constantly fluid, and changing situations with non-humans that produce unstable multiple-constant-in-becoming subjects.

Recently, however, shortcomings with posthumanist thinking have been raised. Lenz Taguchi (2017), for instance, has argued that there is a risk of using posthumanist theories fundamentally rather than eclectically, and suggests novel approaches and self-criticism. Rather than focusing on non-human agents in order to equalize non-humans and humans, humans must be at the centre; anthropocentrism cannot be avoided. Humans are those who interpret, make sense of, and communicate their notions of the world to others – this, obviously, also goes for the (posthumanist) researcher. Therefore, language and humans are imperative and always at the centre (Lenz Taguchi, 2017). Lenz Taguchi (2017) has also proposed an "ultra-humanist" approach that helps illuminate and bring forward "silenced" voices and the lack of rights and recognition of human groups, such as women, minorities, and children.

In our analyses of the preschool curriculum, we study how the child is conceptualized in relation to learning and care. We study how care is described, and how the child evolves both as one who is cared for and as a carer, i.e. an agent capable of caring for her social, human surroundings (Cekaite and Bergnehr, 2018; Bergnehr, 2019) and for inanimate and animate objects. We scrutinize how the child is conceptualized (or not) in the here and now. Moreover, we study how, or not, the child appears as a social actor, that is, a body that influences her social and material surroundings concurrently as being influenced by other humans and non-humans (Bergnehr, 2019). The analytical questions we ask were: What kind of child appears? Is it a being and/or becoming child? Is it an entangled and/or separate child? Is the child described as active or passive in its relations and entanglements?

Method

The Swedish curriculum for the preschool (Lpfö 18) is a rich, wordy document. It is divided into two main chapters: '1 The fundamental values and task of the preschool', and, '2 Goals and guidelines'. The document brings up a number of issues under the following headings: 'Fundamental values', 'Understanding and compassion for others', 'Objectivity and comprehensiveness', 'An Equivalent education', 'The task of the preschool', 'Care, development and learning', 'The development of each preschool' (Chapter 1), and 'Norms and values', 'Care, development and learning', 'The participation and influence of the child', 'Preschool and home', 'Transfer and collaboration', Follow-up, evaluation and development', 'Responsibilities of preschool teachers in teaching', and 'The head's responsibilities' (Chapter 2). Chapter 2 contains enumerated goals and guidelines of what "the preschool", "the preschool teachers", or "the work team" "should" and "are responsible for".

The original analysis was conducted using the Swedish version of the curriculum, the only one available at the time. Since then, an official English version has been published, which we have used for quotes and references in the results section. The documents have been double-checked for linguistic nuances. In a first step of analysis, the researchers scrutinized the curriculum for terms and descriptions related or synonymous to learning and caring in an open and broad manner (cf. Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The analysis of the child in relation to *learning* also involved the concepts *education* and *teaching*, which are frequent in the curriculum, and terms such as developing skills and acquiring knowledge. The concept of teaching has been introduced in the new curriculum, which has been adverted to during the

analysis. The analysis of the child in relation to care also involved related concepts such as compassion and empathy, and health and wellbeing.

In the second step of analysis, a semantic field analysis was conducted, which is a discursive analytical strategy that focuses on the distinction between concept/counter-concept or generality/singularity (Andersen, 2003, p.33ff.). The use of posthuman concepts together with concepts from childhood studies emerged in an abductive process. How the child as learner and carer is construed in relation to other human and non-human agents was analysed. Analytical questions were asked: Does the child appear as active and/or passive – when, where and how in the text? Is it the child's initiative and agency that lies in the focus and/or the adults? Does the child appear as a *being child* or/and as a *becoming child*, as a social child or/and as a separate child – when, where and how in the text? The questions that we posed to the curriculum text were integrated into the CAQDAS application Quirkos, which also allowed simple quantitative comparisons of word frequencies. Questions of activeness and passiveness as well as present and future orientation were also approached using grammatical analysis, e.g. who or what is the subject respectively the object in a described relation? A similar approach to curriculum analysis can be found in Billmayer and Day (2018).

The current study focused on the curriculum document and our analyses therefore do not allow any conclusions about praxis, or the municipal decision-makers' or preschool staff's interpretations of the document. However, by close examination of this imperative text, this study offers pointers for discussion and reflection that can be of great value to practitioners and decision makers alike, as well as to the research community.

The child, learning and care

The child is primarily connected to the term learning when learning and care in the Swedish curriculum for the preschool (Lpfö 18) are analysed and compared. This mirrors the international ECEC discourse where education and learning are increasingly emphasized while care is given less attention (e.g., OECD, 2017). The following section presents our analyses of how the child is conceptualized in relation to learning and is composed of two parts: 'Human and non-human relations', and, 'The being, becoming and active child'. This is followed by the part where the child in relation to care is scrutinized, 'The child and care'.

Human and non-human relations

The child as learner is constructed both in relation to human and non-human agents. The human agents that appear in the curriculum are, besides children, adults who are specified as preschool teachers, child minders, preschool heads, other staff, and parents. They all appear in relation to the child as learner, except the heads. Peers are seldom alluded to but appear in the sentence "The group of children and the interaction between children are an important and active part in the children's development and learning in the preschool" (Lpfö 18, p.11). The adult human agents are often described explicitly in their roles in relation to the child as learner. For instance, preschool teachers are specifically

assigned to be "[…] responsible for the educational content of teaching and for targeted work [...]" (Lpfö 18, p.7), while "other members of the work team, e.g. child minders, also participate in teaching activities to promote children's development and learning" (Lpfö 18, p.7). Formulations similar to these are recurring throughout the document. Teaching comes across as a one-way transaction from the adult/teacher to the children, not as a dialogical process. Neither is the term teaching applied in relation to learning processes that occur between children. Parents are only mentioned explicitly once in the curriculum, although they may be implied in the term home (see below). In the part on 'evaluation' it is stated that parents together with their children" […] should participate in evaluation and their views are to be given prominence" (Lpfö 18, p.19).

While human agents are described quite explicitly in their roles in relation to the child as learner, the descriptions of non-human agents remain vaguer and more general. The most frequent, abstract non-human agent is *the preschool,* which means either the preschool as physical place or as organisation, capable of communication and decision-making (cf. Seidl, 2006). As an organisation, the preschool appears in relation to another non-human agent, *the home*, e.g. "In cooperation with the home, the preschool should promote the development of children [...]" (Lpfö 18, p.7) and "The preschool should collaborate with the home to give children the opportunity to develop according to their conditions" (Lpfö 18, p. 8). Instead of specifically mentioning preschool staff and parents, that would classify as human agents, the relation between the private and public spheres of children's lives are described in a non-human, organisational manner. It is indeed common to refer to the 'home' and 'the pre/school', in legal documents as well as in research, but one can ask if this has certain implication on the interpretation of the text, using abstract terms like this, rather than pointing out human agents.

The preschool as a physical place, containing non-human agents, evolves in phrases that connect the material environment to the child's development and learning: "The environment [of the preschool] should be accessible for all children and inspire them to play together and to explore the world around them, and support the children's development, learning, play and communication" (Lpfö 18, p. 8). The focus on digitalisation can also be said to include non-human agents. Material aspects of the preschool are recurring in different parts of the curriculum, but are vaguely formulated such as "the environment". An explicit description of how the environment could look like, for example, cannot be found. Besides, "different natural environments" are brought up as suitable to "[…] give children the opportunity to experience the joy of movement and thereby develop their interest in being physically active" (Lpfö 18, p.10). The physical surrounding thus comes across as being important for the children's learning and development, although the descriptions of it are vague. The influence is mainly unidirectional, from the environment to the children, but children's potential influence is referred to in the following way:

> "Education should give children the opportunity to acquire an ecological and caring approach to their surrounding environment and to nature and society. Children should also be given the opportunity to develop knowledge about how different choices that

people make can contribute to sustainable development – not only economic, but also social and environmental." (p.10, see also p.15)

In the above citation, children are positioned as (future) actors that can learn to care for their environmental (and social and economic) surroundings.

The becoming, being and active child

The dominant, recurring conceptualization of the child is the child as becoming and 'unfinished'. The goals for learning and the child's development are future orientated. Terms and formulation, such as: "promote" (18 times), "to develop" (17 times) or "lay the foundation" (5 times), illustrate the direction of the learning activities. This notion is condensed in statements, such as that education "should promote all children's development and learning, and a life-long desire to learn" (Lpfö18, p.5). The *desire to learn* points at an idea that children are basically unfinished, and that learning predominantly comes across as a unidirectional, rather than bidirectional process. The child as being in the here and now and the child as a social agent, appear in sentences where children's interests, opinions, family backgrounds and life conditions are mentioned. Here, an active, already competent child appears, quite in contrast to how the child generally is described in the curriculum. "The social development of children presupposes [...] that they can assume responsibility for their own actions and for the environment in the preschool" (Lpfö 18, p.17). However, most descriptions of the child as *being,* also contain characteristics of the child as an object of preschool education, e.g. "Education [in the preschool] should give children the opportunity to reflect on and share their thoughts about life-related issues in different ways" (Lpfö18, p.5) or it is coupled with an aspect of *becoming,* e. g.: "Education should take its starting point in the curriculum and what children show an interest in, and also in the knowledge and experiences that children have already acquired" (Lpfö18, p.7). The child's interests, its being in the here and now, is the starting point, but the aim lies in future orientated education.

The child as being can be found also in reasoning around play and creative activity. For example: "For children, playing is an important activity in its own right" (Lpfö 18, p.8), and "Children should be given time, space and peace for their own creative activity" (p.9). However, the benefits of play and creative activity for the child's (future) development and learning are stressed, as are the (abstract) adult world in facilitating play and creative activity. In this way, the becoming child, and the future orientated preschool, dominantly appears in the text. A citation from the part on creative activity exemplifies this:

> "Education should give children the opportunity to experience, portray and communicate through different aesthetic forms of expression […]. This includes giving children the opportunity to design, shape and create by using different material and techniques, both digital and others. This results in creation being both content and method in the preschool to promote children's development and learning." (Lpfö 18, p.9)

The paragraphs on play and creativity contain no outspoken need to develop, refine or improve the children's creativity or playing skills – these capacities come across as innate abilities with no need or potential to develop. This is worthy of attention since it is in stark contrast to the general discourse in the curriculum text. To play and create seem to be excluded from the overall goal of the preschool, that is, to teach and make children learn and develop.

It is common in the curriculum text for paragraphs to begin with "Education in the preschool…" or "The preschool…". Sometimes, the paragraph begins with "Children…". Children only appear as subjects followed by an active verb on four occasions in the curriculum text, and all of them can be related to the child as learner: 1) "Children create context and meaning based on their experiences and the way they think" (Lpfö 18, p.7), 2) "Children learn through play, social interaction, exploration and creation, but also by observing, conversing and reflecting" (Lpfö 18, p.11), 3) "Children have the right to participation and influence" (Lpfö 18, p.17), and 4) "Children and parents should participate in evaluation and their views are to be given prominence" (Lpfö 18, p.19). Children also appear as the object of the sentence, e.g. in: "Education should give children the opportunity to develop their ability to express empathy and consideration for others by encouraging and strengthening their compassion for and insight into the situation of other people" (Lpfö18, p.5). Or, children are the subjects in a passive sentence construction, such as: "Children should be given time, space and peace for their own creative activity" (Lpfö18, p. 9). Although children are ascribed to have capacities, it is under the framework of the preschool and in relation to its education, where those abilities become visible and facilitated.

Social, interrelational aspects of learning and development (and of everyday life at preschool), are alluded to but seldom explicitly stated. However, it has its own three sentences paragraph that states that:

> "The group of children and the interaction between children are an important and active part of children's development and learning in the preschool. Teaching should be based on children learning together and from each other, and also on the interaction between adults and children." (Lpfö 18, p.11)

The social dimension also occurs in statements, such as: "The preschool should be a vibrant social community that provides security and creates a will and a desire to learn" (Lpfö 18, p. 7), and: "All children should experience the satisfaction and joy that come from making progress, overcoming difficulties and being an asset in the group" (Lpfö18, p.10, our highlighting). However, overall, the learning and education come across as unidirectional – from adult/preschool to child – and 'singular' – something happening to and for *the child* rather than in between humans (and non-human objects).

The child and care

The National Board of Education states that care has been emphasized in the new Swedish curriculum for the preschool (Skolverket, 2019), but still, in our analyses, care is a marginalized concept and subject compared to learning, education and teaching.

The child in relation to care is constructed both in relation to human and non-human agents, but with a stronger focus on humans, than was the case for the child as learner. Care appears in the curriculum in two different ways. One is care as in *care-giving,* which can be related to the *here and now* and thereby to the child as *being.* The other is care as in *care about*, an ability that preschool children shall develop, thereby related to the child as *becoming.*

Aspects of care appear in different parts of the curriculum in more or less explicit ways. "Care" [omsorg] is explicitly mentioned thirteen times, in relation to at least two different concepts: "day-to-day care" [den dagliga omsorgen] (Lpfö 18, p.8), and the idea of care as a basic principle of preschool education (Lpfö 18, p.18). The term *day-to-day care* can be interpreted in different ways, related to the children's physical needs, for example: visits to the toilet, diaper changing, changing clothes, eating and feeding, resting hours and related activities involving the child and an adult, i.e. preschool teacher or child-minders. It is this relation from adult to child that seems to define care in this respect. In that sense, care is similar to teaching, which we have discussed above as a unidirectional activity. Care is *given* by adults, and *received* by the children, not vice versa nor children in between. Some children are in need of extra care, which they are entitled to according to the curriculum. "The preschool should pay particular attention to children who need more guidance and stimulation or special support for various reasons. All children should receive an education that is designed and adapted so that they develop as far as possible" (Lpfö 18, p.7). Giving extra care is in that sense a means to facilitate the children's ability to develop and learn.

"*The preschool* should offer children safe care and has an important role in *helping to form the child's security and self-esteem*. Education should be characterized by care for the child's wellbeing and security" (Lpfö 18, p.10, our emphasis). The emphasis on safety and the relation where the preschool *helps* the child, positions the child as a receiver, rather than an initiative-taking part, and also brings thoughts to more physical aspects even if the self-esteem is mentioned, as an example of more mental aspect of children's wellbeing. Another example describes the preschool teacher as the active part in the care situation: "Preschool teachers are responsible for respecting and satisfying children's needs, and enabling them to experience their own intrinsic value" (Lpfö 18, p.13). Here, the preschool teacher, rather than the child or other children, is described as the one responsible for satisfying the child's needs. The child is the object of the preschool teacher's actions. The child's needs are described as of intrinsic value, in contrast to care as important for being able to learn. When care is mentioned, it is done in the same breath as the child's development and learning (cf. Lpfö 18, pp.11, 19).

Besides receiving care, the preschool curriculum also states that children should learn to care about different aspects of the world, and develop empathy for others. Whereas *being cared for* relates to the here and now, *caring about* is presented with a focus into future, related to abstract phenomenon distinct from everyday life of a child at preschool age, e.g.: "Education should be characterised by a positive belief in the future. Education should give children the opportunity to acquire an ecological and caring approach to their surrounding environment and to nature and society" (Lpfö 18, p.10). And: "Education should give children the opportunity to develop their ability to express empathy and consideration for others by encouraging and strengthening their compassion for and insight into the situation of other people" (Lpfö18, p.5). In summary, children in the preschool shall learn to care about others and the environment. Not only the explicit "global future perspectives" (Lpfö 18; p.5), but also the recurring focus on *education* and *develop* leads thoughts beyond a present in the preschool. The child is described as *becoming,* in regard of *caring about* others and the world. Care does not come across as something intrinsically human (Noddings, 2013), but something to be learnt – a future objective. Thus, the child does not appear as a 'natural', capable carer of her social or material surroundings.

Care for their own bodies is something the child is expected to learn in preschool. Such care is relatively concrete and could be connected to the child's life "here and now." However, it is also related to future concerns: the child should care for its body in order to live a healthy life: "Education should give children the opportunity to experience the joy of movement and thereby develop their interest in being physically active. When physical activity, nutritious meals and a healthy lifestyle are a natural part of children's day, education can help children understand how this can affect health and well-being" (Lpfö 18, p.10). Once again, it is the becoming child, rather set apart from others, and the future orientated preschool that stresses education rather than care, that dominate the text and how the child is conceptualized.

Concluding discussion

A curriculum is per se a future orientated document with goals to reach. In that sense, the results of this study make sense: the Swedish preschool aims to prepare, to promote, and to enable children. However, the Swedish curriculum for the preschool (i.e., child-care and education for children 1-6 years old) is not equivalent and should not be compared to the curriculum for compulsory schooling. ECECs are not exclusively, perhaps not even primarily, educational institutions. The term ECEC stresses this, and the Swedish National Board of Education (Skolverket, 2019) claims that care is further illuminated in the new curriculum. Moreover, the curriculum stipulates a "holistic view" of ECEC: "Education should be based on a holistic approach to children and the needs of children, in which care, development and learning form a whole" (Lpfö 18, p.7). But, as this quote clearly marks, "Education" is the primary objective. Indeed, education comprises care, development and learning; but since it has been argued that care is a prerequisite for learning and development (Buber, 1993; Noddings, 2013), too much emphasis on *education* and *learning* risk downplaying the importance of care (Bergnehr, 2010; Halldén, 2007), and may have negative implications for children's development and wellbeing.

In the discourse on learning and teaching in the curriculum, the child is primarily described as *being taught*. The process of teaching – and the corresponding act of learning – is therefore presented as a unidirectional transfer from the adult/teacher to the child, rather than a social process involving peers, other adults, and the material environment. This conception of learning treats knowledge as something transferable, conferring upon it the character of a finite, material object that one (human) party can give to another. As such, this conception is strongly opposed to posthumanist theories of entanglement and intra-activity (Barad, 2014; Lenz Taguchi, 2011). The peer group as a social milieu for learning and caring is brought up but not emphasized in the curriculum; it is the adult (educated preschool teacher) who acts as the teacher, rather than the children. Although children are invited to share their understanding and experiences as starting points for learning processes, and cooperative and mutual learning is encouraged, this is primarily described as something that should occur with adult supervision, guidance and confirmation; the child comes across as passive. Moreover, learning and care are not elaborately discussed as intertwined processes (Buber, 1993), although a "holistic view" is stated. The curriculum describes the child as mainly a receiver of care. However, as preparation for potential future caregiving, the child is supposed to learn to respect and consider the needs of both others and the environment. There is thus a potential for active care on the part of the child; the child is a (future) agent.

It is a becoming child, a child in process, who mainly appears in the curriculum text, which is not surprising given the predominant future orientated discourse. The child, as it is discursively conceptualized, can partly be understood as a "post-human child" capable of intra-actions with peers, the environment, materials, and ideas, and a becoming child that is shaped by its human and physical environment as well as through learning (cf. Lindgren, 2018). However, it is also a humanist child, depicted rather independently of others, and a passive child – an empty container to be filled with teaching. The child's agency and influence on others (humans and non-humans), and the child as being, are de-emphasized. This risks neglecting the child as a co-creator, an active agent who has influence on their social and material surroundings (Bergnehr, 2019). Instead, the future child – what the child is to *become* through teaching and care – is presented more vividly. Therefore, although the curriculum reflects some post-human perspectives on the child, the approach to preschool education that it prescribes appears to be rather humanistic.

Posthumanist thinkers have suggested that we are all becoming – adults as well as children develop, learn, grow and change throughout life, entangled with others (e.g., Barad, 2014; Lee, 2001). Although we agree on that statement, we also argue that it is important to conceptualise the child – and the human – as being, in the here and now, interdependent on others as individual entities. We are all in the present, and experience the present. To understand the everyday life of the preschool, and what makes auspicious social and physical milieus for the here and now, for wellbeing, joy, contentment, trusting and caring relationships, as well as for learning, there must be a focus on the present and the child as being – that is, the child as a social, resourceful actor who contributes to her environment in the present as well as in the future, as a being child as well as a becoming child.

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