Playful citizenship: Between disturbances and productive ruptures

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An ethnographic study exploring democratic living and children's
citizenship in primary school

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Foreword and acknowledgments

It is difficult to describe my feelings now that I have finished my work on this thesis, and it is with humility that I leave this text to allow readers to interpret and critically review it. Writing it has been overwhelming, challenging, fun, tiring and exciting. This thesis sparked my craving for writing and has made me realise how difficult it is to write well. I have been perplexed and challenged by learning about the complexities of scientific rigour. Therefore, it is not without nerves that I share this text with the world. I dedicate it to the children - to their playful being, vitality and what we can learn from them in the context of school. This study is a call for a renewed focus on democracy and democratic living in school geared towards children's ways of living and knowing.

Summary in Norwegian

Skolen skal i ifølge læreplanen være et sted der barn får oppleve demokrati i praksis, «de skal få erfaring med, og praktisere ulike former for deltakelse og medvirkning», og de skal få «innsikt i at demokratiet har ulike former og uttrykk» (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2017). Det er altså understreket i læreplanen at barn skal få erfare *ulike former og uttrykk for* demokrati. Med dette forskningsprosjektet fokuserer jeg på hvordan barns lekne praksiser og måter å delta på kan lære oss om, samt utvide vår forståelse av ulike former og uttrykk for demokrati som livsform i barneskolen.

Utgangspunktet for studien har vært et etnografisk feltarbeid i en barneskole i Norge der jeg har tilbrakt over et skoleår sammen med barn i 1 og 7 klasse, deres lærere og andre profesjonelle. Jeg jobber etnografisk, og mitt etnografiske blikk har vært rettet mot skolens hverdagsliv og det sosiale slik det utspiller seg mellom barn, og mellom barn og voksne. Jeg har hatt spesiell oppmerksomhet rettet mot hvordan barns bevegelser og lyd kommer til uttrykk i det sosiale, inkludert deres bruk av sted, rom og ulike objekter. Data som er analysert består av feltnotater fra situasjoner der det oppstår brudd i samspill mellom barn og profesjonelle, og mellom barn, samt transkribert materialet fra 10 intervju med profesjonelle (inkludert lærere) og 5 fokusgrupper med barn. Jeg plasserer studien forskningsmessig sammen med nordisk etnografisk forskning og barndomsstudier av barns hverdagsliv i pedagogiske institusjoner.

Det ble tydelig i feltarbeidet at barns kroppslige lekne praksiser ofte skapte brudd i lærerens opplegg, utfordret den voksnes posisjon og parallelt skapte situasjoner preget av sterkt samhold mellom barna. Situasjoner definert som uro og forstyrrelser av den profesjonelle. Barnas praksis ble ofte definert som bråkete tøys og tull, og barna ble posisjonert som urolige, og 'ikke klare' for å delta. Jeg har fulgt situasjoner der denne praksisen kom til uttrykk, og har studert den i lys av teorien om radikalt demokrati av Chantal Mouffe (2005a; 2005b; 2014), som en form og mulig uttrykk for en måte å leve demokratisk sammen på i skolen. Denne avhandlingen er et resultat av denne utforskningen. Resultatet innebærer en utvidelse i forståelsen av fenomenet forstyrrelser i skolen, fra en voksen-orientert forståelse der forstyrrelser defineres i lys av det voksen initierte læringsmiljøet, til en forståelse med utgangspunkt i barns perspektiver og lekne

måter å delta på. For å begrepsfeste denne utvidelsen tilbyr jeg et begrepspar der forstyrrelser forstås som mulige *produktive brudd*, som et uttrykk for levd demokrati, og jeg hevder en form for *lekent medborgerskap*. Jeg har gjennomført affektive rytmeanalyser og analytisk jobbet abduktivt mellom det datadrevne og teoridrevne. I tillegg til Chantal Mouffe og teorien om radikalt demokrati har jeg jobbet med Merleau-Ponty og hans eminente analyser av, og teori om kroppens betydning i all meningssøkende eksistens. To begreper fra Goffmann's teori om totale institusjoner har vært sentrale for å studere nærmere forholdet mellom det jeg kaller offisielle og uoffisielle former for skoleliv, samt utvalgte begreper innen kjønnsteori for å analysere det som har vist seg å være kjønnede mønster i datamaterialet.

Resultatene viser at muligheten for produktive brudd oppstår når fire dimensjoner av det sosiale kommer til uttrykk samtidig; det lekne, kroppslige, kollektive og konfliktfulle. Disse dimensjonene studeres i avhandlingenes fire analysekapitler. Analysen viser at *det lekne elementet* kan forstås som en konstituerende kraft av uoffisielle former for skoleliv, en del av det institusjonelle livet preget av løse og åpne rytmer som skapes av barns lekne væremåte. *Det kroppslige elementet* handler om hvordan barns kroppslige uttrykk styrer deres samspill i større grad enn verbal kommunikasjon. Analysen viser en kropp radikalt ulik kroppen som forventes i offisielle former for skoleliv, et kroppslig aktørskap, som ikke er drevet av 'barnets individuelle stemme', men av 'aktive kropper'. *Det kollektive elementet* viser til fellesskapet som oppstår mellom barna som de utrykker som dypt meningsfullt og hvor sterkt samhold kommer til uttrykk. Analysen viser at slike kollektiv kan forstås som mulighetsrom for kollektiv lidenskap av politisk demokratisk kvalitet som skaper brudd og sammenstøt mellom offisielle og uoffisielle former for skoleliv. Det er et kollektivt kroppslig aktørskap som skaper brudd i og forhandler en elevrolle der forventningen knyttes til faglig prestasjon, det å være rolig og regulert. Det *konfliktfulle elementet* viser til hvordan barns samspill preges av hyppige brudd og sammenstøt som ofte får en produktiv funksjon i samspillet, skaper nye vendinger og kontinuerlig opprettholder forhandlinger mellom barna. Resultatene viser også til et kjønnet mønster i muligheten til å skape produktive brudd, yte motstand og aktivere lekent medborgerskap.

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1. Introduction

Through this ethnographic study, I place particular emphasis on democracy as a form of living in primary school. I explore how attention to children's knowing and doing, together with a reconceptualisation of participation, can offer new insight into the role of democracy in primary education. I suggest that children in primary school can help us expand our sense of democracy and that school can be enhanced as an arena for vibrant democratic living.

The power of children's bodily playful practices to create ruptures in the pedagogical process, challenge power relationships and develop communal equalising events became apparent in the fieldwork. This triggered the need to explore the possibility of conceptualising this practice as part of a democratic way of living together in school, and this thesis is a result of this exploration. I offer a reconfiguration of the phenomenon of *disturbances* in school by disturbing adult-oriented definitions, positioning disturbance as negative for the learning environment, and investigating it in terms of children's perspectives, knowing and living. The result is an alternative conceptualisation of disturbances, in which it is seen as potential *productive ruptures* constituting a radical form of *playful citizenship*.

1.1 Background and area of focus

Attention is drawn towards children's daily lives in primary school, considering their opportunities to access and engage in democratic forms of living, including space to negotiate, deviate, resist and form collectives. This study aims to examine and understand these lived opportunities from the vantage point of children's experiences, perspectives and everyday lives. The focus is on children's bodily forms of expression and embodied ways of knowing, and the premise is the recognition that children are social actors with agency. This does not mean neglecting the broader structural context. Social and cultural contexts obviously contribute to and shape human agency; that is, child agency and participation must be conceptualised and focused on in the broader social and cultural context in which children are situated (Spyrou, 2018; Adebe, 2019; Kjørholt, 2004; Lee, 2001; Wyness, 2013). The ethnographic fieldwork takes place in a school, an institution in which most children in Norway spend a large part of their childhood. I position my study along with other Nordic ethnographic

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childhood studies of institutionalised daily life involving children and young people. This body of research includes studies of how institutionalised activities, such as mealtime, can create or hinder space for democratic living (Tofteland, 2015), or how schools act as 'civilising institutions' with clear norms and ideals for civilised behaviour, including distinctions considering the good citizen (Gilliam, 2015a, pp. 207-212). Other studies have shown that children's citizenship can be seen as expressions of play and resistance (Grindheim, 2014a, 2014b) or nonverbal communication among toddlers as political experimentation (Nome, 2022). Studies have also focused specifically on how secondary school, in addition to academic qualifications, is an arena for negotiations between and identity constructions among teenagers (Aasebø, 2012). Life among and between children in school has also been studied in after-school activity (SFO), with a focus on children's space to play and 'escape' rules and to create their own carnivalesque lives (Øksnes, 2008). What all these studies have in common is an emphasis on the child as a social actor and on the lives that children are active in creating. Rasmussen (2004) is another scholar interested in children's agency in institutional contexts. Rasmussen argues for paying attention to and giving significance to the places in school that children define and to which they attribute meaning (Rasmussen, 2004). I align the interests and contributions of my research not only to this body of studies but also to educational research on democracy and education. Therefore, the review chapter assesses studies in both areas.

School is a societal institution with a specific mandate, content and aim, and it can be understood to involve two cultural projects. Aasebø (2012) argues that one key project in school is the 'youth project', which involves young people's identity processes and informal interactions. Bjerrum Nielsen (2012, p. 11), referring to Bjerrum Nielsen (2009), states that the other main project involves the 'qualification project', which is linked to the national mandate given to schools with respect to securing children's learning. What Aasebø calls the youth project may be linked to life in school, which is not steered by teachers or a national curriculum and is created and constituted by children. Writing about the role of play in school, Øksnes and Sundsdal (2020) refer to this life as the unofficial life- the carnivalesque life that nourishes children's spontaneous play. Øksnes and Sundsdal (2020) argue that children in this life can negotiate a

different self than what is offered in the more official school life run by teachers, a national curriculum and mandate. Children constitute a world of their own in their unofficial school life, or to use Goffman's words, 'an institutional underlife' (Goffman, 1961). Øksnes and Sundsdal (2020) assert that educational research is often too concerned with official school life. Therefore, they call for more studies investigating unofficial life in school to understand its role, value and position in terms of what it means for children, learning, school and pedagogy. I contribute to this by investigating the role of unofficial school life, considering democratic forms of living in school. I engage with and utilise the notions of these two school lives as an analytical prism to determine the distinct features of both lives and especially how unofficial school life is expressed in, negotiates and creates tension in its encounter with official school life.

Another underexposed area in educational research is the study of unofficial school life as relevant and significant to children's opportunities to engage in democratic living in school. I approached the fieldwork with an interest in democracy and participation in school but also with an open ethnographic attitude in considering what this was expressed in daily school life. This open attitude involved a dedicated focus on children's knowing and doing, including the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1994) and social aesthetics (MacDougal, 2006), such as desk formations, the organisation of bodies and time, and other material signatures. One insight I brought with me upon entering fieldwork is Dahlberg et al.'s (2008) idea of *not making definite what is indefinite*. This is important, considering my own confidence in following what was expressed in the field, as it made me doubt my own preconceptions and observations. One of my preconceptions was linked to democracy and participation, as well as how immediately, despite my dedication to children, I focused on what the teachers and other formal institutional structures in school initiated, such as the division of timetables. This initial focus made me aware of what I had seen as prominent civilised school life—'an official school life'—in which children behaved according to what was expected of them. They sat down and worked when asked, walked inside, ran outside and spoke in class only when permitted. I saw this in connection with Gilliam and Gulløv's (2015) study of Danish pedagogical institutions for children. Their study reports on the very high expectations of what children should do as citizens, which includes being calm, attentive, active

and well spoken. These complex expectations lead to many children being unable to fulfil the ideals of civilised citizens. Their results support the first image I had in the field, which dominated my focus on the subtle but highly regulative processes of disciplining children. This first image remained in the study. However, having spent more time in the field, I began to doubt the extent to which I had managed to focus on the children. After two weeks of fieldwork, a child at school asked me why I was spending time with them, and I immediately explained that I was there to understand more about how it was to be a child in school. The child responded that it was a good thing, but how was I to understand being a child when I was an adult? This comment became a moment of serendipity when I doubted my ethnographic gaze and realised that I had been trapped in official school life and that I needed to pay more attention to what the children themselves initiated and found meaningful. This was a milestone in my research process. After spending more time in the field and revisiting my fieldnotes, another image formed: bodily image, in which children's bodies, movements and sounds emerged and created cracks in official school life. I started to pay attention to these cracks, including tracing children's movements and sounds in and beyond these situations. The unofficial life constituted and initiated by the children then emerged.

1.1.1 Disturbances and productive ruptures

I use 'official and unofficial forms of school life' as concepts to study the multi-layered and complex social processes taking place in disturbances. This conceptual prism and analytical move have made it possible to study the distinct affective features of each 'life', including the pulses and rhythms, the relationship and entanglement between them and the role played by the unofficial form of school life, considering democratic living in school. I develop the conceptual notion of 'unofficial school life' by offering the idea of *productive ruptures*, which is offered as an alternative understanding to disturbances rooted in children's experiences, perspectives and ways of knowing and living. It is an alternative to the adult-oriented definition of disturbances prominent in official school life, in which disturbances are perceived as negative or off-task behaviour and problematic for the learning environment. I begin with the definition of disturbances prominent in official school life, and through the analysis the thesis, I examine the movement from this definition to an alternative understanding as experienced, lived and perceived by many children.

The results suggest that a disturbance from the point of view of professionals[1] is most often defined and positioned as noise, nonsense, undermining the collective and generally not made legitimate or significant. These results support the definitions of disturbances from previous research: 'Any behaviour that is perceived as sufficiently off-task in the classroom, as to distract the teachers and class-peers from learning activities' (Duesund & Ødegård, 2018, p. 411). The distinctions as to what forms of behaviour are perceived as off-task are related to adult-oriented perceptions and experiences of this phenomenon that begin with tasks and learning activities, which are most often initiated and led by the teacher. Most professionals stop or try to prevent disturbances. From the point of view of most children in my study, the same behaviour appears to be defined and positioned as meaningful and significant in contributing to making life in school worth living. Most children do not seem to experience these events as disturbances in the way that school professionals do, including how many children seem to take nourishment in their interactions from such 'disruptions' to what they are currently doing. Children seem to utilize these disruptions as nourishing ruptures that create new opportunities instead of preventing plans. The concept of *productive ruptures* has evolved in this intersection between how children and adults experience, live and understand 'disturbances' in different ways, especially in how children utilise it. I now point out some significant results linked to this concept.

The result suggests that the so-called disturbances can be considered encounters and spaces for negotiation in and between the different forms of school life: official forms of school life, with a pulse of order being individually oriented and focused on bodily regulation and the task, and unofficial forms of school life, with a pulse of playfulness initiated and steered by the children. Unofficial forms of school life have a strong collective orientation and negotiate a different body and form of living compared with expectations in official school life. When these lives negotiate and encounter each other, tensions emerge. I suggest that a pedagogical opportunity opens where the pedagogue is challenged to write this

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[1] Professionals refer to youth workers, social workers and teachers as they were all part of the staff group during my fieldwork. These different professions are all professionals in their practice in school. I will specify when I refer to one distinct group.

off as destructive noise or nonsense or embrace it as a potential productive rupture of a situation that can be seen as an educational event in itself, nourishing democratic living in school. An equalising event and a productive rupture that show visible power relations create strong communal sensations among the children and open a space where unofficial school life emerges, including forms of living and knowing that children experience and express as highly meaningful. The analysis of unofficial forms of school life in Chapter 8 suggests how *productive ruptures* nourish and play an active role in interactions between children. Therefore, this concept encapsulates both situations involving children during interactions with professionals in which unofficial and official forms of life encounter each other and in unofficial school life in which children interact outside the gaze of professionals.

When I use the term a 'moment of disturbance' or 'disturbance' throughout the thesis, I refer predominantly to what is defined as a disturbance from the point of view of school professionals found in official forms of school life. The research questions use this term as its point of departure, and the term productive rupture and playful citizenship is the result of the analysis and response to the research questions offering a reconceptualization of disturbance from the vantage point of children. I have tried to be explicit in the text when I trouble the term disturbances, and contextualise with the results, referring to disturbances as a negotiation between different pulses and rhythms and as potential productive ruptures. I use rupture as a more neutral concept when I refer to conflictual events in the interactions between children and between children and professionals.

1.1.2 Disturbances from a democratic perspective

In recent years, we have, in a Norwegian context, witnessed an increased focus on 'disruptive behaviour' in the classroom. Disruptions from children may cause distress for both teachers, pupils, and other school professionals, preventing successful learning environments and learning. Researchers at national and international levels in educational research have broadly agreed that 'disruptive behaviour', or disturbances in the classroom, pose a challenge for schools today (Duesund & Nilsen, 2013; Duesund & Ødegård, 2018; Kjærnsli & Olsen, 2013; Zionts et al., 2002). Duesund and Ødegård (2018) define disruptive behaviour as 'any behaviour that is perceived as sufficiently off-task in the classroom, as to

distract the teachers and class-peers from learning activities' (p. 411). There are many perspectives in the body of research on disruptive behaviour, such as definitions linked to cognitive individual development, level of academic performance (Duesund & Nilsen, 2013) and environmental dimensions, such as classroom and behaviour management (Colvin, 2010; Greene, 2008; Ogden, 2009). Disruptive behaviour is also approached and studied as a collective phenomenon emerging from and constantly moving in the classroom dynamic (Ødegård, 2014). Ødegård is a Norwegian scholar in the field of special education, and he presents a link between disturbances and what Ødegård, borrowing from Heidegger, calls 'the human way of being in the world' (Ødegård, 2014). This article examines disturbances as a kind of atmosphere in the classroom in which both teachers and children are active collectively in the classroom in relation to the disturbances taking place, regardless of their reactions towards them. Ødegård emphasises that teachers may never be able fully understand or know how to approach disturbances (Ødegård, 2014, p.210). Ødegård pushes the phenomenon of disturbances beyond the discourse of learning and links it to a dimension of human existence and of being together in a collective. His study opens the floor to alternative understandings of disturbances in which discoveries and opportunities can be detected, including articulations of democratic education. However, the tendency in public debate and in most educational studies does not seem to follow Ødegård (2014), as disturbances are predominantly seen as a problem to overcome and examined in terms of how they influence and are experienced by teachers (Solberg & Ødegård, 2021). The main concern is to find ways to manage, reduce and control them to a level at which they do not disrupt learning activities. This approach to understanding disturbances is often linked to a classroom management discourse where the concern, although having left a rigid behavioural model acknowledging the complexity in the classroom (Postholm & Hoel, 2013), is how to create and maintain order so that learning can take place (Doyle, 2006).

I am not arguing that worries about disturbances in primary school is not important, or that we must abandon classroom management and any order in the classroom. My concern is that if the current tendency to articulate disturbances is primarily that of a thief of learning that must be controlled, then it might blind us from studying and understanding disturbances from other perspectives. Bjørnstad

et al (2022), a national evaluation study of developments in the primary classroom, finds that the primary classroom in Norway from 2001 has become increasingly teacher steered. They find that common practices in the primary classroom are 'teacher explains', and 'play facilitated by teacher' (p.178). Their findings indicate that play receive much focus but is increasingly regulated and facilitated by the teacher. They conclude that the increased classroom management of play has reduced children's space to initiate free forms of play in the primary classroom. Sundsdal and Øksnes (2015) questions whether children's perspectives risk drowning in the focus on classroom management in school. They argue that classroom management as a field of research, including its theoretical base, perhaps has, in its focus on leading learning processes, triggered an exaggerated focus on children as in need of adjustment and regulation. Consequently, on how the teacher must ensure this regulation through discipline in the classroom and a calm learning environment. My worry is that perhaps has this led to an accelerating concern considering disturbances in primary school. This acceleration may have led to the situation where we commonly understand disturbances in the context of primary school (referred to above) as ANY behaviour that is PERCEIVED sufficiently off-task. The one in the perceiving end is often the teacher who has prepared the task and been trained to manage the classroom. This may consequently have led to a situation where potentially a big scope of children's different forms of behaviour is positioned as a form of disruptive behaviour, simply because it is perceived off-task. Even though, as I suggest with the present study, it may be an expression of a deeply meaningful practice. I hope with this study to contribute with ways to revitalise focus on children's perspective by reconfiguring disturbances from their vantage point.

All concepts are contestable, and, according to Utaker (1991), definitions of a concept can be refined and pushed into new meanings through different theoretical lenses and new insights. I strive towards this endeavour when I move from and between the concept of disturbance and what I call productive ruptures. The concept of disturbance, or 'disruptive behaviour' is used by adults in research, politics and school and is linked to official school life to articulate, describe and understand a certain phenomenon in school. One etymological root of the meaning of disturbance is from the late 14c, which refers to public disturbances and 'disturbance of the king's peace' (Harper, 2023a). The king in

place holds the defining power over what is considered disruptions of peace, similar to how adults today hold the defining power over what is peaceful and disruptive in school. This phenomenon plays out in lived school life and is related to children's forms of expression that adults articulate as negative disturbances of the learning environment. I study this phenomenon by bringing children's experiences, sensations and perspectives of it into the foreground and placing it within a different analytical and theoretical frame. This movement has led to a need to formulate a new concept that more precisely conveys the meaning from the analysis of my study. A concept relates to how we understand a phenomenon (Utaker, 1991, p. 46). The concept of productive ruptures can hopefully contribute to new approaches and understandings of this phenomenon in primary school and to new conceptualisations with a strong democratic perspective linked to democratic living in school and children's ways of knowing and living.

Stray[2] (2011) discusses democratic citizenship and presents an alternative perspective on the phenomenon of disturbances in the classroom. Stray (2011) supports the view that disturbances can disrupt learning processes. Nevertheless, she raises the question of whether all disturbances are destructive or whether disruptions may have the potential to be constructive with respect to democratic education (Heldal, 2021; Stray 2011). Heldal (Heldal, 2021; Stray, 2011;) refers to the political philosopher Chantal Mouffe and the radical theory of democracy in raising this question that considers democratic education. I work with the same theory because it stresses the importance of disagreement and conflict as critical indicators for keeping democracy alive (Mouffe, 2005a, p. 103). This theory offers an analytical link between democracy and disturbance in its insistence on the democratic worthiness of constant disruption and the negotiation of dominant hegemonic structures. For Mouffe, disruptions and conflicts involve constituting spaces for the constant negotiation of current hegemonies that become the groundwork for new stories, alternatives and identities (Mouffe, 2005a). Mouffe offers the concepts of agonism and agonistic struggles to capture this constant negotiation, which refers to *painful struggles* of desires and interests between

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[2] Heldal Stray is a professor in pedagogy and a central scholar in the field of democratic education in Norway. She changed her name during the period of 2011 to 2022. This means that the names Stray, Heldal Stray and Heldal refer to the same person, but their references are different.

collective identities that recognise the equality and liberty of the other in the name of democracy. According to Mouffe, collective identities will always be constructed as relational, and their point of departure will be found in affective dimensions and what people find meaningful, which she calls 'passion'. This understanding of collective identity makes it impossible to uphold only one collective identity (Mouffe, 2005a, p.11), and the agonistic struggles between collective identities that recognise the hegemonic nature of the social order are not pinned down by a rational universal order and morality and include space for resistance and real alternatives (Mouffe, 2005a, p.105). Relating this to an educational context, democracy in school should be more than adjusting to a predefined set of structures and one collective 'we'. It should entail practices and forms of living in which children disrupt and change structures and systems as well as spaces where children can act on their freedom as agents on their own terms. Disturbances are moments in which children poke into the predefined set structures and expectations of knowledge about what a 'good pupil' is. Therefore, these moments carry analytical potential in terms of democracy and education.

1.1.3 Conceptualising the ignorant citizen

The view that disturbances and disruptions in school are a problem relates to how we understand school, a good school, a good pupil and how we understand disturbances. The results of my study indicate that the behaviour displayed by children in moments of disturbance is complex and, from the point of view of children, a deeply meaningful embodied practice that allows them to negotiate, resist and actively belong to the world. Positioning children as individuals 'in need of' adult control and classroom management is based on an understanding in which children are seen to be in an asymmetrical relationship with adults. It is problematic to dismiss this, as there are differences in this relationship, and children depend on adults in many ways. To exclude this would be to neglect important power structures between children and teachers. However, let us suppose that this view dominates and is considered a premise for upbringing and learning in school. In this case, we can ask how it is even possible to imagine children as democratic subjects. Østrem (2012) argues that equality, as an ideal in the relationship between children and adults, must be a premise and an ideal if we are to respect children as equal subjects (Østrem, 2012) and as individuals who can influence, disturb, resist and negotiate their place in this world.

Following this train of thought, one central question in democratic education is how schools can create spaces for genuine deviation, resistance and negotiation. Children learn about and engage in democratic principles in Norwegian schools, such as during involvement in discussions and engagement in student boards and while waiting for their turn, listening to others and respecting rational disagreements. These are important democratic principles that must be learned (Borhaug, 2014, 2017). However, a central point in this thesis is that if these principles hold a monopoly on qualifying as a 'good democratic citizen', then the space to disturb, resist and deviate is reduced.

Educational theorist Gert Biesta argues that many studies on democratic education assume that it is possible to define a good citizen (Biesta, 2011). This implies that the task of education is to reproduce 'the good citizen' (p. 141) by, for example, ensuring that children learn certain skills that are considered necessary to become a good citizen. These skills are arguably important if they are linked to democratic principles and values, but if they dominate democratic education, Biesta (2011) asserts that it risks making democracy into a form or order in which children are pinned down into one pre-existing civic identity (p. 143). Drawing on Mouffe's radical theory of democracy and Jacque Ranciere's (1991) work on the 'ignorant schoolmaster', Biesta (2011) questions whether democratic education is too concerned with democracy as a form of order and introduces an alternative understanding through the term 'ignorant citizen'. This individual is ignorant of the predefined idea about what a good citizen is and does not accept being pinned down into a pre-existing identity. The ignorant citizen is someone who is constantly involved in redrawing boundaries, orders and definitions, thus engaging their subjectivity in undetermined processes. This alternative conceptualisation of the citizen contributes to breaking open the concept of the good citizen, and, according to Biesta (2011), the ignorant citizen is a figure who melts into the concept of subjectification, in which subjectivity is perceived as made and remade by engaging in undetermined political processes. One core point in Biesta's argument is that with this turn, democracy is no longer a process driven by knowledge about what a good citizen is but depends on what he calls a desire for a particular mode of human togetherness, or in short, a desire for democracy (Biesta, 2011, p.141). The figure of the ignorant citizen can be useful for understanding and working with democratic subjectification. I

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empirically develop it by conceptualising the democratic subject as someone who has their presence and desires activated and oriented towards a collective and who experiences democratic subjectification as events taking place when these desires are unified, disrupted and accelerated, expressing resistance or protests and taking new turns. Working with the conceptual figure of the ignorant citizen in the context of education and pedagogy involves a focus on greater equality for children as democratic subjects. This includes attention to the relationship between children and adults, between teachers and pupils and between pedagogy and democratic politics. Certain scholars have concerns regarding the modern emphasis on the need for more equality in the relationship between teachers and pupils. Torjussen (2021) argues that one core task for pedagogy today should not be to search for greater equality but to establish, or perhaps re-establish, the division and boundaries between adults and children to avoid what he calls an 'authority crisis' in school. This is a crisis in which one uncritically accepts that pedagogy is ideally a symmetrical endeavour of interaction between equal parts, as is the ideal in the world of politics. This is a critical discussion that I develop in Chapter 3.3.3. There are significant concerns and arguments that must be focused on in the debate put forward by Torjussen and other scholars. Nevertheless, I disagree with the premise of the discussion that equality is the core of the problem and argue that equality is still rejected by many children and that the conceptualisation of voice, as the primary capacity for securing democratic participation, is the root of Torjussen's (2021) concerns.

1.2 Aims and research questions

Based on this background, this study aims to contribute ideas illuminating disturbances in schools from children's vantage point and a democratic perspective. Access to space for resistance, negotiation, deviation, democratic subjectification and forming collectives are examined. The situations of concern are, first, the moments in which children's sound, moving bodies and use of space break the expectations of the official rhythm of school, and second, the moments in which a form of rupture takes place in the interaction between children. These are situations in which there is a form of dissonance, disagreement or conflict of interest. Based on this background and after a long research process, the following primary research question was determined:

What is defined as a disturbance in school, how is it negotiated, and how does this affect children as democratic subjects.

The following research questions serve the main question:
1. What constitutes a disturbance, and how is it expressed in a Norwegian primary school?
2. What are the teachers' responses to what they consider disturbances, and what are the critical disturbing elements triggering the negotiation between teachers and children?
3. How and to what extent are there different opportunities for different children to resist, negotiate and be a democratic subject in primary school?
4. What is the role of ruptures and conflictual events in interactions between children?

The questions are studied in the analysis in Chapters 5–8.

The knowledge ambition is twofold: to produce an empirical response to how disturbances are negotiated and constituted in school and to offer a theoretical framing in conjunction with the empirical material that can articulate, disturb and expand available understandings of disturbances and the connection between disturbances and democracy in school. The concepts of playful citizenship and productive ruptures are responses to these endeavours to move available conceptualisations towards new understandings and horizons.

1.3 Methods, analysis and theoretical landscape

As this is an ethnographic study, the empirical material was collected through a one-year fieldwork in Grades 1 and 7 in a Norwegian primary school. I literally followed the children around wherever they went, if I was allowed. The empirical material consists of fieldnotes and transcriptions from interviews with professionals and focus group conversations with children. The transcriptions serve a complementary role to the fieldnotes. Fieldnotes are observations of social practices, processes and events from daily life in school, from teaching in the classroom to situations taking place during breaks. Fieldnotes are rigorous in terms of the descriptions of the social aesthetics of situations, such as details of bodies, organisation of time, movement, facial expressions, sound, gestures, sensations, tone of voice and changes in intensity and moods. The first strand of

situations foregrounded in the analysis is observations of interactions in which children engage in doings defined by professionals as a form of disruption or disturbance. Most situations involved teachers and mainly took place in the classroom or during structured activities initiated by the teacher in physical education (PE), arts & craft or natural science. The second strand of situations is observations of interactions between children in which there is a form of conflictual event, disagreement or rupture in communication. These situations that were analysed took place in the wardrobe, the nearby woods or the Lego room, which were the spaces the children defined as meaningful and out of the view of professionals. The analytical approach has its point of departure in abductive thinking. I present the methodology, criteria for selection and the process of analysis in Chapter 4. The concepts and theoretical resources used were developed as a result of the abductive movements between reading and rereading the empirical material and theory.

Theorising emerged alongside fieldwork and the process of analysis, and the abductive grounding allowed me to invite theory from an early stage. The theory helped me to trouble my own interpretations, create new and understand different elements in the data. Different theories have different roles, but they all work as a prism through which I study the empirical material and conceptualise core concepts. The first theory grounding the methodology used in the analysis was the phenomenology of the body by Merleau-Ponty. I used this theory as a prism both in fieldwork and in the analysis, considering the body and children's bodily forms of expression. The second main theory is Mouffe's radical theory of democracy and the way it was interpreted and used by Biesta in the context of democratic education (Biesta, 2011). This theoretical outlook is the prism through which I understand democracy. Other theories used are the perspectives and theories on gender in Chapter 7 and the concept of primary and secondary adjustments of Goffman (1959), which were used to expand the analysis by considering the two forms of school lives.

The alternative conceptualisation of disturbances I offer was made possible and relevant by the theorising of the social, inspired by the affective turn. According to Zembylas (2014), the affective turn and its ways of theorising the social have created new opportunities for engaging in the critique of power structures and

relations in education. One of these opportunities has developed grounds for pedagogical openings to work with a greater focus on transformative processes in educational spaces (Zembylas, 2014). Productive ruptures and playful citizenship can support such a pedagogical opening and perhaps contribute to transformative processes for democracy and education.

1.4 Opportunities for and limitations of school as a democratic arena

Democratic education has traditionally been considered in Norway and Nordic countries as a matter of the Bildung aspect of education (dannelsen) (Stray, 2011). This means that focusing on democracy is usually expected to be implemented across all teaching and is not confined to one specific subject (Huang et al., 2017). This is different from many other countries where it is often limited to a 'civic and citizenship education' subject based on specific models of learning (Huang et al., 2017). The revised national curriculum seems to carry on this tradition and intention by articulating democracy as a core pillar of Norwegian schools. 'Democracy and participation' are positioned in the core curriculum as one of six central values on which schools must ground their work and practice (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, Chapter 1). According to the curriculum, the 'school shall give pupils the opportunity to participate and to learn what democracy means in practice' (Chapter 1.6). As I conducted my fieldwork in 2020–2021, the new curriculum had not yet been implemented. This means that my fieldwork was undertaken in the context of changes in the curriculum. Nevertheless, I argue that it is primarily based on and bears the consequences of the previous national curriculum from 2006, as it takes time to work new curricula into practice in schools. The holistic approach seems to be advanced in the 2020 curriculum revision by making 'democracy and citizenship' one of three overarching interdisciplinary topics in school (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, Chapter 2). Democracy is paired up with the concept of citizenship, and it is discussed in Chapter 2, 'Principles of learning, development and cultivation' (Chapter 2.5.2). This indicates that democracy is intended to form part of the broader mandate of school in terms of cultivation and more formal learning dimensions, such as learning about democratic forms of governing.

The renewal of the Norwegian curriculum in 2020 led to discussions among scholars about the direction of democratic education and what it should and

should not be. Børhaug is critical of the changes that materialised in the renewal of the national curriculum in 2020 and finds that Norway seems to move towards an individualised and de-politicised citizenship education (Børhaug 2017, p.2). Børhaug also questions the notion of having children's lifeworld as a point of departure in democratic education, of democratic participation being learned and of the school not being a democratically cultivating institution (Børhaug, 2017; 2018). Børhaug (2017) is concerned that the new curriculum places too much focus on participation related to children's experiences and perspectives. He argues that the focus on children's lifeworld will blur the core task of democratic education, which is for children to learn about democratic forms of governing. According to Børhaug, one central question to ask is whether Norwegian schools should individualise democratic education or become a collective and be a bridge between society, politics and children.

Stray and Sætra (2018) acknowledge Børhaug's criticism, but instead of agreeing with the criticism, they support Børhaug's suggestion of a renewed discussion on to what extent Norwegian schools constitute a democratic arena. Moreover, Stray and Sætra (2018) find that Børhaug's critique is too narrow in terms of understanding the definition of democratic education in schools. They argue that democratic education must be approached in a broad sense using democracy in accordance with Dewey's understanding of the concept of democracy as a life-form and a form of doing. They propose that the two alternatives should not oppose each other in school; instead, they can nourish each other. More than Børhaug, Stray and Sætra intend to legitimise the significance of democratic values, including the focus on equality and freedom. Børhaug seems to favour and stress the importance of learning *about* the procedures on which representative democracy is based, whereas Stray and Sætra argue that the development of democratic values should be equally important in democratic education as learning about democratic forms of governing. The latter is supported by other scholars in this field of research in Nordic research. Breivaga and Rangnes (2019) stress that democracy in school must be approached from both ends but that there is a need to develop practice and research regarding approaching democracy in school as lived democracy. Stray and Sætra (2018, p. 102) confirm the emphasis on understanding democracy in school as a form of living and add that democratic education must be studied from the perspective of

children and youth, and that the school must be an arena that connects individual children to society and political life (Stray & Sætra, 2018). I put emphasis on democracy as a form of living, and this will be developed throughout the thesis. One focus linked to this is children's experiences and forms of knowing and living in connection with the power relations and social structures governing voice, democracy and participation.

1.4.1 Limitations of *about*, *for* and *through* democracy

The Norwegian core curriculum leaves no doubt that democracy should be a focus in schools. However, the school as an institution is, arguably, not democratic. The role of teachers as pre-positioned leaders and the asymmetrical relationship between pupils and teachers are two immediate examples of this institutional structure. I reflect on this issue in this section.

Interpretations and thoughts about the relationship between education and democracy are as old as the idea of democracy. Dewey (1916) is one of the first to address this relationship in a European context. Although complex and multifaceted, this relationship seems to be primarily studied and understood as education for democracy or education through democracy (Kovac, 2018; Biesta, 2006). Education *for* democracy includes learning *about* democratic principles and procedures, the political system and learning for democratic participation in which children are meant to acquire skills and values that are intended to prepare them for critical thinking and democratic engagement (Stray, 2011). The other strategy involves learning *through* democratic activities and processes in schools, such as the student council or other participatory activities (Stray, 2011). This manner of separating democratic education can be important in operationalising democracy into teaching and can function well as an analytical departure point. However, democratic activities seem rigid, and the complexity of school life will undoubtedly blur the boundaries between them. Another limitation of these strategies is related to the extent to which the 'nature' of school as an institution is democratic. According to scholars, such as Stray and Sætra (2018) and Børhaug (2017), these strategies for democratic education are situated in an institution that they all agree to be not democratic. Kovac (2018) supports the view that a school as an institution and the 'nature' of its organisation and its dedicated roles, including those of teachers and pupils, are not compatible with being democratic. He argues that the intention and goal of running a

contemporary Western school according to democratic principles are simply not realistic (p. 2). Kovac concludes that school in its current form must be terminated and that a radical transformation must take place for it to become democratic (pp. 12–13). His argument is that a genuine democratic school is simply not realistic and often an empty rhetoric, and that the best way forward for democratic education is to be realistic and to support schools to 'educate children in skills that are proven to support civic participation later in adult life' (Kovac, 2018, p. 13). I follow Kovac's analysis and argument that the common Western schooling that we see today is not inherently democratic. However, there are schools in Norway and beyond, such as the famous Summerhill in the United Kingdom or the Educate Together schools in Ireland (McCutcheon & Haynes, 2022), that operate more democratically on all levels. These schools are usually privately run, and if there is a fee attached, then there are reasons to be critical of them, such as whether these schools are linked to financial resources. Nevertheless, this proves that it is possible to run modern schools more democratically. McCutcheon, a longstanding principal of an Educate Together school in Ireland, argues not based on empty rhetoric and unrealistic ideals but on hands-on experience in practice that it is possible to run schools more democratically on all levels, but it demands a rewiring of thinking about what democracy is and can be in schools (McCutcheon & Haynes, 2022). He stresses how he, as a school leader, should ensure daily that both teachers and children could enjoy democratic experiences and continue to be curious about what that could be (McCutcheon and Haynes 2022). Considering McCutcheon's and Kovac's differences of opinions indicates that there are different views on what is perceived realistic concerning democracy in school. The premise that schools today are not democratic cannot be accepted as a reason for closing the discussion about whether schools can evolve their democratic functioning and strive towards becoming more democratic. It is important to challenge and disrupt positive hegemonic structures and identities in the agonistic approach to democracy, including central societal institutions (Mouffe, 2005b). Following Mouffe, the idea of 'what is realistic' can be interpreted as a concept based on what is realistic in terms of the current power structures and hegemonic institutional structures in school. According to Mouffe, the argument pushing the need to be *realistic* can be seen as encouraging democratic education to adapt to the current dominating structures and hegemonies instead of challenging them.

Following Mouffe's theory, I argue that these structures are there to be negotiated, ruptured and disturbed, and that research, especially in current times in which democratic values and democracies across the globe are being challenged, must and should focus on how schools, as a significant societal institution, can be enhanced as a democratic arena for children who spend a large part of their childhood in it.

Following this discussion, one approach to take is that democratic education should meld into the current structure in which the goal of democracy in school is for children to accept and learn to be the 'good citizen' they are taught/educated to be. Another approach is to disturb this picture and examine to what extent it is possible to make space for events of democratic subjectification in an institution that can be argued to be inherently undemocratic. I used the latter approach to disturb the ideas of participation and democratic education and what a democratic subject is and can be. The reasoning behind this rests on the argument that a democratic society needs a constant critique of hegemonies and negotiations between different positions to keep democracy alive. And, if we light up a torch and search in the dark unexplored corners of democratic living, we can learn something new. Children, as a group, should be taken seriously with regard to these processes to ensure equality for children as a group, and to recognise that children offer valuable experiences, perspectives and insights relevant for creating stronger democratic communities and societies. Biseth et al. (2021) argue that there is a need for movement in conceptualisation and thinking about conventional democratic education, including about, for and through democracy, to foster civic action in uncertain times (Biesth et al., 2021, p.153). I hope to contribute to this endeavour.

1.5 The field of research

I find inspiration in, aim to contribute to and position the study methodologically together with other Nordic childhood studies of institutionalised daily life involving children. Furthermore, I seek to contribute new understandings of democracy in primary schools, which is the second relevant area of educational research on democratic education. Chapter 2 looks into both areas but mainly focuses on political reforms, developments and research considering democratic education. I aim to contribute to the conversation in the latter field as I seek to address and challenge the dominant focus on official school life in this area of

research. There has been an increasing focus on the importance of children's lifeworlds and democracy as a life form in Nordic educational research on democratic education (Biesta, 2019; Breivaga & Rangnes, 2020; Heldal, 2021; Olson, 2020). However, the lifeworlds made significant in these studies are mainly upper or lower secondary schools examined through large quantitative studies or interviews (ICCS, 2016; Huang, 2017; Biseth et al., 2021; Sætra, 2020; Englund, 2011). To date, only a few ethnographic studies have focused on democracy as a life form and children's lifeworld in primary schools. Another limitation of the research on children's lifeworlds is that despite a focus on it, most educational research on democratic education appears to have its unit of analysis oriented towards teaching, the role of the teacher, content of subjects, teacher-initiated learning activities, participatory infrastructures (e.g. the student council) and generally what I refer to as official forms of school life (Breivaga & Rangnes, 2020; Dalehefte et al., 2022; Englund, 2011; Sætra & Stray, 2019; Sætra, 2020). This implies that social life and unofficial school life are less studied and are insignificant in the research on democratic education. The final limitation is the lack of focus on the relevance of bodily forms of expression for democratic living. Most studies have focused on cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking, speech and reason. As shown in Chapter 2, there is an increasing focus on bodily forms of expression and embodied forms of knowing in studies in this field employing an agonistic approach to democracy, but they remain limited. This indicates that although democracy as a life form and children's lifeworlds have gained attention over the years in this field, little empirical attention has been paid to children's lifeworlds in terms of unofficial school life in primary school, including their bodily expressions. The focus on unofficial forms of school life is generally limited in educational research, including empirical research on disturbances and 'disruptive behaviour'. There are many theoretical and philosophical studies on the role of conflict and disruptions in education and pedagogy (Biesta, 2011; Biesta, 2019; Biesta, 2022; Ruitenberg, 2009; Tryggvason, 2017; Koutsouris et al., 2021; Sant, 2019), but little empirical attention has been given to the phenomenon of disturbances linked to unofficial school life. Disturbances, disruptions and disruptive behaviour are studied empirically through the lenses of the teacher-initiated task, official school life and the learning environment. The areas of educational research focusing on this phenomenon include special education and classroom

management research. I intend to disturb this by removing it from this context and replacing it with a different theoretical framework with a strong orientation towards children's experiences, perspectives and ways of living and knowing in school. I am not opposed to research focusing on official forms of school life, including learning for and about democracy, its principles, institutions and practices, such as working in the student council. This is not a question of either/or because it is all meaningful. Instead, I suggest that we understand it as a spectrum. These different forms of school life can be explored by considering how they nourish each other and their combined and distinct relevance and significance in democratic education. However, based on this train of thought, unofficial school life is a neglected area in this continuum.

1.6 Situating the project: Closing remarks

I examine situations involving different forms of disturbances or ruptures as entangled within the 'social', that is, the notion of social as culturally embedded in lived life and in the way of doing things. This means that although the rationale and expressed ideology of democracy and citizenship in school is interesting and important, my main interest is in what takes place 'beneath' the official language that is not rationalised and verbalised outside of lived situations but expressed in a lived life in which embodied practices and expressions are at display. In pedagogical anthropology, Gulløv (2015) emphasises that the notion of the social, 'that of being social', which is often referred to as social competency, has, at least in Denmark, tended to become synonymous with the democratic way of being (p.189). She argues that the push on educational institutions to test and evaluate children's academic performance and social abilities has been inflicted upon 'the social' (Gulløv, 2015). This analysis points to an important development in education today—the instrumentalisation of the expectations of being social—which starts as an idea at the centre of democratic understanding and participation and becomes a necessity for the development of individual children and the functionality of the institution (Gulløv, 2015, p. 189). This is a relevant discussion because disturbance, especially when expressed as a form of disruptive behaviour, can indicate a rating of seeing this behaviour as less socially competent than a child acting in accordance with norms and expectations. The social way of being becomes antonymous to disruptive behaviour, causing disturbances. If the analysis of Gulløv (2015) is valid, then this can lead to a situation in which causing disruptions becomes impossible to

imagine as having democratic potential and inflicting it on children as democratic subjects. I aim to resist the perception of disturbances as merely an off-task 'problem' behaviour in need of being solved, controlled and stopped. I have studied situations in which a form of disturbance occurs to investigate its potential for democratic education. I suggest that these lived interactions can be seen as potential productive ruptures constituting a form of playful citizenship led by children.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise and situate the project by presenting its area of focus, relevance and contributions. The contextualisation includes presenting my analytical approach and key results and opening the threads on the key discussions examined and contributed by my study. Chapter 2 is a review of key policy discussions on democracy and education in Norway, in the context of the European Union and in research. The purpose is to address the limitations of the current research and political developments to enhance the contextualisation of the relevance and contribution of my study. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part addresses political developments in a Norwegian and European context and contextualises how democracy is often situated and understood in an educational context. This section includes a brief presentation of the two dominating conceptualisations of democracy in the context of school. As I offer an alternative concept of democratic living in participation, it is important to address the current key discussions and understandings to situate my contribution. The second part of Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature. Chapter 3 discusses my theoretical framework, which presents the key theoretical perspectives, including how I use them for the analysis and conceptualisation of the core concepts. This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part lays out how I conceptualise and understand embodied agency and children's bodily forms of expression using Merleau-Ponty's theory, especially the body as the foreground of all meaning-making. The second part details my perception of the radical theory of democracy and my conceptualisation of democracy, democratic living and participation. This part includes key elements on how I theorise democracy in primary school linked to Mouffe's agonistic model. These elements are taken up in the analysis and include the concepts of democratic subjectification and agonistic participation. Towards the end of this part, I invite critical discussions on the agonistic model

and engage in a theoretical discussion on the relationship between the phenomenology of body as introduced by Merleau-Ponty and poststructuralism as used by Mouffe. Chapter 4 is a comprehensive chapter that aims to contextualise my ethnographic approach. I am inspired by different scholars within the field of ethnography, including Hammersley and Atkinson (2012) and MacDougall (2006), and position my ethnography, together with other Nordic ethnographic research, on children in pedagogical institutions. The selection and process of the analysis are introduced together with ethical considerations, notions of validity and reflexivity in my own role. I discuss in detail conducting fieldwork among children and searching for 'children's perspectives'. The analysis is presented in Chapters 5–8. Chapter 5 discusses situations involving children and professionals in which adults have made references to a disturbance taking place. I examine affective features, bodily forms of expressions, what is negotiated and how children and adults relate to what takes place in these situations in different ways. This analysis lays the groundwork for the pulses and rhythms that contribute to developing the conceptual notion of different forms of official and unofficial school life. This is a grounding analysis for how I theorise the ignorant citizen, and it is the point of departure for the rest of the analysis chapters. Chapter 6 presents the teachers' responses to what they define and experience as a disturbance. The main focus is on how teachers' responses create and hold children in different positional movements that influence children's relationships with the collective and their opportunities to engage in the space of the ignorant citizen. The chapter ends with a summary of the extent to which a disturbance 'made acceptable' can be seen as a form of productive rupture. Chapter 7 shows how there seem to be different opportunities for different children to access unofficial forms of school life and the space for the ignorant citizen in situations involving interactions between professionals and children. The differences can be linked to the social category of gender, and I study how these apparent gendered differences are expressed in lived life and how they are experienced as deeply unsettling by many girls. Chapter 8 explains the interaction between children and how the different forms of disturbances in children's communication are taken up and utilised as productive ruptures. This analysis shows a link to how productive ruptures seem to feature the form of citizenship initiated and lived by ignorant citizens. I expand the theorisation of unofficial school life by examining how playful citizenship is expressed and

lived among children in school. Chapter 9 discusses the results of the analysis to respond to the main research question and reconfigure the disturbances that offer productive ruptures and playful citizenship. I explain playful citizenship by pointing out four key elements that are necessary for a disturbance to be a potential productive rupture. I discuss educational policy for playful citizenship and the practical pedagogical implications of playful citizenship in school.

2. Democracy and education, policy and research

I use this chapter to show the worthiness of the study. This chapter aims to address the limitations and main areas of focus in the research field and take up key discussions involving teaching, education and political developments. This chapter begins with political reforms and the development of the field in terms of democracy in a Norwegian school. This part reviews the European political context, considering the reference framework for democracy developed in the European council. Two common concepts used to articulate the relationship between education and democracy are briefly explained. Chapter 2.3 introduces the second part of the chapter, which is a review of relevant literature, to develop the position and contributions of the study.

2.1 Political reforms and developments considering democracy

2.1.1 Brief historical review in the Norwegian context

Norwegian schools have a longstanding tradition of education for democracy and encouraging critical thinking and participation (Briseid, 2012). Since 1848, when Norwegian schools obtained their first objectives clause, Christian values have been a significant value field in Norwegian education and have gradually been supplemented by an emphasis on humanistic values embedded in human rights and democracy (Briseid, 2012; Slagstad, 2003). The objectives clause in 1848 exclusively stressed Christian heritage, traditions and 'true Christian enlightenment' (Bostadutvalget, 2006). This clause stressed the importance of learning knowledge and skills that are defined as useful for society. There was no explicit mention of schools as having a democratic mandate, which became more evident in 1936 (Bostadutvalget, 2006). The 1936 objective clause emphasised the task of securing and educating good people of society (samfunnsmennesker), or 'good citizens'(Slagstad, 2003). This turned the focus from the sole perspective of being useful to something more profound—being a cultivated, capable human being taking part in a democratic society (Slagstad, 2003). This change could have been the forerunner to a more explicit focus on democratic citizenship seen in today's mandate, in which the objectives clause explicitly states that education should promote democracy (Slagstad, 2003; Stray, 2011). In 1969, the focus on Christianity was toned down. Teaching Christianity with regard to christening was removed as the responsibility of schools, and this task

was assigned to the church. Instead, tolerance and freedom of spirit were emphasised as important areas on which schools should focus (Bostadutvalget, 2006). This change was another step towards a stronger focus on democracy through tolerance and freedom of spirit. Many changes took place in 1998, including greater emphasis on the principle of inclusive education, cooperation between schools and pupils' guardians, equality, ecological responsibility and a strengthening of focus on the need to adjust tasks and teaching to children's abilities and prerequisites (Bostadutvalget, 2006). This was also the year when Norway obtained one joint education act for primary and secondary education. There were no major changes considering explicit references to democracy and democratic education.

The main findings from a Norwegian doctoral study from 2009 suggest that the reform in 2006 (Kunnskapsløftet, 2006) contributed overall to the downscaling of citizenship and democracy in Norwegian education (Stray, 2009). Stray argues that the national curriculum in 2006 was pulled in the direction of being adapted to the result-oriented rhetoric introduced by the modernisation project. The modernisation project that Stray referred to has according to Norwegian philosopher Lars Løvlie been driven by the political ideology in globalisation processes in the European Union and Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). Løvlie argues that these processes have allowed ideas on human capital and economic growth to influence ideas on how schools should be run to the expense of children (Løvlie, 2021, pp. 13–16). One argument for the 2006 curriculum revisions was a critique of the perceived pedagogical hegemony in schools driven by pedagogical thinkers, such as Rousseau (Løvlie, 2021). According to the leading voices behind the national curriculum revision in 2006, there was no immediate need to address democracy, as this was already captured well in Norwegian schools (Stray, 2009). The politicians at that time unanimously agreed on the need to boost basic skills and competencies to enhance the level of knowledge among Norwegian children so that they could compete at an international level (Stray, 2009). Studies from the last decade have supported this observation, pointing to Norwegian schools as a fragile platform for democracy and participation (Børhaug, 2007; Vestby, 2003; Holte, 2009[3];

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[3] Master thesis

Hope, 2013[4]). The result-oriented discourse influencing Norwegian schools can be seen to combine with the overall development in Norwegian society over the last few years. In the final book on a national power and democracy investigation, Østerud et al. (2003) conclude that democracy has been put at risk since the development from the 1990s in Norway. This is due to the development characterised by increased privatisation, a strong orientation towards individual consumers, reduced engagement in volunteer work, fewer grassroots movements in politics, more bureaucracy, politics as a career, top positions and a decrease in members of political parties, endangering the democratic participation of the young generation and people not involved in or have no experience in politics (Østerud et al., 2003).

2.1.2 Current Norwegian curriculum and mandate

The result-oriented discourse, as presented in Chapter 2.1.1, continues to influence Norwegian schools (Løvlie, 2021). Nevertheless, the current national curriculum, which was renewed in 2020, strengthened its focus on participation and democratic citizenship in schools. This includes making democracy and citizenship one of three core overarching themes for all teaching and work initiated by schools. The other two themes are mental health & life skills and sustainable development. Recent reports (Karseth and Ottesen 2022) having studied these new overarching themes concludes that the other two themes present as more focussed and concrete in comparison with democracy and citizenship. Democratic citizenship is regardless of this lack of clarity an area of priority in the national curriculum for all compulsory education and it supports that more studies are needed to further disseminate what democracy and citizenship in school can and should entail. The renewed mandate, despite lack of clarity, promotes democracy as a way of governing and living, and several of the values stressed in the current objectives clause, such as equality, intellectual freedom and solidarity, are tied to democracy and democratic values. This shift towards a greater focus on democracy already began in a commission in 2015 (NOU, 2015:8) and a government white paper from (White paper 2015–2016:28) discussing how to strengthen democratic education in Norway.

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[4] Master thesis

2.1.3 The reference framework for democratic competences

The European Council has developed a reference framework of different competencies considering creating democratic cultures. This framework is intended to be adapted for application across all education throughout Europe, from primary school to higher education (Bergan, 2022[5]). The mandate serves to promote democratic citizenship as a key area of education and develops 'non-prescriptive' guidelines and pointers that the national and local authorities can adapt to local needs (Bergan, 2022). One of the key components of this work is related to the 20 core competencies organised into four categories set out in the butterfly model of democratic competencies (European Council, 2016). The competencies are according to this model necessary for learners to learn and engage in as preparation to be future competent democratic citizens (p. 9). The model is illustrated in Table 2 (Council of Europe 2016, p. 11).

Table 2.
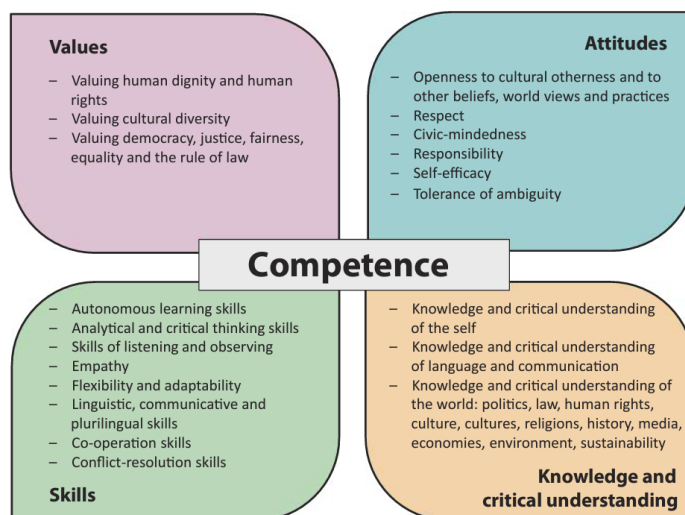
There are many ways to approach this model. This can be seen as a realisation of the focus on democracy in education and a significant contribution to democracy in Europe, as the framework intends to identify a form of common ground or a certain set of values with reference to a democracy that everyone can support and protect (European Council, 2016). In this approach, it is possible to argue that the risks and critiques are not a direct result of the model but rather relate to how the model is used and translated into pedagogical practice. It is also possible to take a critical gaze towards the risks of turning democratic values into competences.

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[5] Head of the Education Department of the European Council, Department of Democratic Citizenship.

One risk is that democratic education could be pushed into an instrumental logic of learning a set of skills that involves a risk of teaching according to a standard without taking the local context into consideration (Apple et al., 2022). One example could be if the complexity of the butterfly model as a conceptual framework is simply translated into a test in which children are encouraged and measured on how many competencies they can list up without thoroughly reflecting on what the competencies entail for lived life. Another example is the act of transforming values into something that can measure and judge right or wrong. The latter example is part of a greater discussion in which central educational scholars, such as Biesta, express concern about the intention of teaching 'common values' (Apple et al., 2022, p. 247–249). Biesta argues that the problem starts with the task of defining these common values and who should be in the position to make these decisions. According to Biesta, democratic education, rather than teaching common values, should teach plurality—a whole set of different values and visions that can be understood as 'uncommon values'. Biesta does not propose leaving any definition of democratic values, but reduce it to the values of liberty, equality and solidarity. These values are not structural; they form part of a democratic infrastructure in the sense that they must be in place to create grounds for people to have different values but without leaving a democratic ground (Apple et al., 2022, pp.247–248). Biesta states that there is always a risk involved when a centre of power (i.e. Council of Europe) develops and identifies a common set of values and competences for all teachers to teach their students not grounded in their respective countries or schools (Apple et al, 2022). Although the Council of Europe has received feedback and contributions from different parties, the framework is initiated and developed away from the context in which it is meant to be used. The skills and competencies identified as key democratic competencies can also exclude others. In other words, there is a constant dilemma involving the definitions of these values, skills and competencies. Another dimension is asking the demographics of those involved in this project, such as their cultural outlook, social background, gender, age and role. These questions are important to understand the power structures embedded in the making of these 'common values' perceived to be necessary to become independent and responsible citizens. Following Mouffe and the agonistic approach, democracy should illuminate the possible hegemonic positive identities that run the wheel of grand societal and political processes and

structures. As this discussion belongs to a large political field, I do not aim to conduct a full-scale discussion of this topic in the present thesis. However, the concern and criticism about this infrastructure are important because they raise questions about whether this infrastructure can create or hinder democratic education and culture in school. I recognise that this political context supports democratic citizenship, which, I argue, is positive. I share however the concern of Biesta (Apple et al., 2022) holding on to equality and liberty. And, instead of focusing on common values and visions, I examine democratic education in relation to a radical plurality involving the disruption and disturbance of predefined common grounds and identities in schools.

2.2 Different conceptualisations of democracy

Democracy has ancient roots, and there are many ways to approach and understand democracy in educational research. John Dewey's work has been and remains influential in conceptualising democracy in schools. He is well known for stating that education cannot be reduced to a matter of the future but is rather a fundamental aspect of the very experience of *living* (Hansen, 2006). According to Dewey, democracy is also a form of life, associated with living and rich in communication, learning and inquiring (Hansen, 2006). In accordance with Biesta, Dewey argues that democratic education must work with the subtle and underlying principles of being a democratic being in the world. For Biesta, it should create spaces to 'fuel children's desire for wanting to be outside of themselves in the world' (Biesta 2015, pp.38–39). Dewey's conceptualisation of democracy is that it must involve collectives with space for resistance and different ways of living and must be open to critique and new constructions of values and contemporary practices of living (Dewey, 2007). This is my point of departure on democracy as a form of living in primary school. I use the radical theory of democracy as an analytical framework to develop theories on resistance, different ways of living and new constructions that are relevant for democratic living in school.

Previous studies have suggested that teachers' approach to democracy evolve in three major understandings: deliberative, which is based on dialogue to form communal decisions; communitarian, which is based on the principle of majority rules; and liberalistic, which is based on individual freedom and decision making (Solhaug & Børhaug, 2012; Sant, 2019). These different theoretical models on

democracy have implications for understanding democratic cultivation, democratic education and the democratic subject. I use the agonistic model of democracy. The term agonism is derived from the Greek word 'agon', which means painful struggle, conflict or dispute, and it is used in the agonistic literature considering human relations applied to difficult processes of negotiation (Koutsouris et al., 2021, p. 2). Openness, dissent and agonism—key principles in the agonistic theory of democracy—seem impossible to measure or reconcile against a particular order, and a democratic process is considered to be driven by dissent and conflict (Barbour, 2010; Biesta, 2006, p.132; Mouffe, 2005a; Mouffe 2005b; Sant, 2019, p.677; Tryggvason, 2017). Scholars use the agonistic approach among to obtain a political conception of a democratic person (Biesta, 2006, p.132). Most scholars in this area lean towards poststructuralist perspectives and seem to assume that there must be a level of equality among participants in a democratic process in which both parties recognise the equality of the other (Sant, 2019). The participants are engaged in what an agonistic educator would call the 'equality of intelligences' (Barbour, 2010, p.254; Sant, 2019, p.678), which is a less commonly used model for studying democratic education (Sant 2019). Despite these theoretical models, democratic education as a field of research is disputed and involves a diverse plurality of conceptualisations and theoretical understandings (Sant, 2019). Theoretical diversity can make it challenging to identify common definitions of central concepts, such as democratic education and the democratic subject. However, if plurality is recognised as a value of democracy, then this theoretical diversity can be seen as an ongoing negotiation and struggle between differing views that are constantly developing the field (Sant, 2019). It can be considered protection against a final consensus about democratic education and maintains the nerve of a constant open struggle of what democratic education can be. In the present study, I contribute to this open attitude and to the plurality of meaning and aspirations in research on democratic education.

2.2.1 Democratic citizenship

Democratic citizenship (Demokratisk medborgerskap) is a common concept in the educational literature concerned with democratic education. The concept dates back to the French Revolution, when it was used to repeal the sharp division between the elite, the aristocrats and normal citizens (Stray, 2009).

Similar to democracy, it is not a straightforward concept and has several meanings. The term citizenship (medborgerskap) can be divided into two meanings: status and role (Stray, 2011). The status of a citizen refers to the legal dimension of being a citizen. For example, I hold a Norwegian passport, and thus I am a Norwegian citizen. Role has a wider range and refers to active participation in society. This term is not dependent on my status as a Norwegian citizen. The notion of action (handlingsdimensjonen) tied to the term 'role' in citizenship is a result of processes through which individuals acquire their citizenship (Stray, 2011, p. 14). Citizenship is concerned with questions related to collective and political identification and how it is constantly formed and reformed throughout the lifespan of a citizen. Democratic citizenship education places emphasis on the action dimension of democratic citizenship and is a link between education and having the opportunity to be an active citizen in society. It expands beyond teaching democracy and relates more to education 'through' democracy, as it involves active citizenship for children and young people. It focuses on how education can nurture active citizenship that is relevant and meaningful for children and young people. Looking back at the history of this term, which aimed to close the gap between the elite and the 'people' during the French Revolution, and seeing it within the context of school today, democratic citizenship seems to refer to securing better equality for children as a group, as they are not part of the elite and have less power than most adults. The notion of citizenship acts as a link between democracy, active citizenship and disruption of power structures and hegemonies. According to Heldal (2021), this approach to democracy in schools is productive because it emphasises the need for schools to play a role in protecting and building democracy at a time when democratic values are under dispute (Heldal, 2021, p. 246). The term playful citizenship is related to the action dimension of the citizenship role, but playful citizenship emphasises more on *expressed citizenship always becoming* rather than *acquiring citizenship*, which, in my understanding, relates more to a process of development from a less mature to a more mature and developed citizenship.

2.2.2 Democratic participation

Participation is commonly used in conjunction with democracy and is referred to as democratic participation. This terminology is used across theoretical conceptualisations of democracy and across fields and areas of educational research, from Early Childhood Education (ECE) to school-related research. Democratic participation is also extensively used in the literature on child studies and childhood sociology (Adebe, 2019; Berson et al., 2019; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). Its usage in this field is combined less with 'democratic'. The same applies to the global framework of children's rights, where participation is a key term, for example, in article 12, which relates to children's right to be heard (Lansdown, 2010). The studies in this field of research often draw on different theoretical traditions, and the focus on participation is usually on children's right to be heard as an individual with autonomy who is able to speak up instead of the values of democracy and the mandate of schools. The concept becomes complicated when it is translated into Norwegian, as the 3 concepts of 'medvirkning', 'medbestemmelse' and 'deltakelse' can be translated into English as 'participation'. However, the terms in Norwegian have different connotations and meanings. 'Medbestemmelse' is an alternative translation of 'co-decision making'. It is usually related to children's individual right to be a part of decisions that affect their lives. 'Medvirkning' is weakly correlated with the notion of decision making, and it can be alternatively translated into 'co-influence', which relates to children influencing and being active in their own lives. This form of participation in Norway is more broadly used. There are floating boundaries between 'medvirkning' and 'deltakelse', which perhaps is the closest term to participation. Participation has gained increased focus over the last few years in Norwegian schools due to the children's rights framework set out by the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which includes children's right to be heard (Lansdown, 2010). It is the first international human rights convention that gives children a specific juridical status regarding civil, political, economic and social rights (Fortin, 2009, p. 40). The intention to recognise children's right to be heard has been supported and developed by the actor-oriented approach in social sciences (Long, 2001) and further translated into childhood studies, which adopt the view of seeing children as social actors with agency and capable of constructing and determining their own lives (Durham, 2008; Berson et al., 2019; James & Prout, 1990; Percy-

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Smith & Thomas, 2010). Studies have questioned whether an extensive scholarly focus on more autonomy to the child, as evidenced by their capability to participate, risks neglect of social and cultural structures and children's agency within a wider social and cultural context (Gulløv & Højlund, 2015; Adebe, 2019; Spyrou, 2018). I expand on the latter insights to present an agonistic understanding of participation.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The following sections present studies that are relevant to the topic, indicate the gaps in the literature and nuance the positioning of and establish the study's worthiness.

2.3 Approaching the review

The purpose of this review is to identify gaps in the knowledge base of democratic education to uphold my contribution and to identify research relevant to my focus and research questions. Studies were reviewed through the major journals in the field, whether Nordic, European, international or Norwegian, and through search engines, such as Science Direct. A more stringent search was conducted using the ERIC database. I chose three search phrases in English for searching through the ERIC database ERIC: 'democratic citizenship education', 'democratic participation' and 'agonistic education'. I translated the first two search phrases into Norwegian and conducted additional searches through Oria, the University of Agder search engine. As the relationship between play and democracy became relevant through the course of the study, I added one search for both ERIC and Oria: 'play and democratic education' and 'lek og demokratisk medborgerskap'. Below, I illustrate the details of the search. The section on 'relevance' means that I had certain criteria on what to include in the review. I did not review studies related to higher education and teacher education or those that were not peer reviewed or relevant. The only exception to peer-reviewed work was a few chosen relevant master's studies. I explicitly state in this study when I refer to master's studies. I narrowed down the search to the last 10 years for international studies and the last five years for Norwegian literature.

Table 1

Search words	Results	Relevance
Democratic citizenship education	1,343	1st review: 40. 2nd review: 25. 3rd review: 19
Demokratisk medborgerskap	316	1st review: 32. 2nd review: 17. 3rd review: 15
Democratic participation	1,214	1st review: 56. 2nd review: 17. 3rd review: 16
Demokratisk deltakelse	1,194	1st review: 39. 2nd review: 4. 3rd review: 1
Agonistic education	43	1st review: 43. 2nd review: 24. 3rd review: 20
Play and democratic education	15	1st review: 15 2nd review:13 3rd review: 11
Lek og demokratisk medborgerskap	1	1st review: 1 2nd review: 0

The search for agonistic education was not narrowed down by years nor level of education due to a few results.

1st review: Selection criteria: primary and secondary education + that referred above

2nd review: English or Nordic languages

3rd review: This varied according to the search; for example, studies that were related exclusively to children's rights and did not reference democracy, conference papers and other characteristics that disqualified them from the review.

The snowball approach was used in the review (2014). Specifically, I used backward snowballing (Wohlin, 2014), in which reference lists of central books and papers in the field were added to scope the literature and pinpoint the main scholars and studies in the field. This means that I had a 'start set' of key articles and books and expanded from there. I also conducted forward snowballing, or 'citation tracking' (Wohlin 2014), in which I searched new literature based on the papers citing the study being examined.

2.4 Research on pupils' access to and understanding of democracy

2.4.1 Empowerment gap and depoliticised democratic education

Many studies on democratic education have agreed that political efficacy[6] is a significant factor for political engagement in society and that schools should encourage and support the development of young people's political efficacy

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[6] Understood as a belief in own ability to participate and political competences (Sohl and Arensmeier 2015).

(Ødegård & Svagård, 2018; Claes et al., 2017; Maurissen, 2020; Deimel et al., 2020). One correlating finding across countries and studies is that there are social inequalities in democratic education (Biseth et al., 2021; Deimel et al., 2022), which indicates that although education can boost the focus on political efficacy, not all children can benefit from it. Studies analysing data from the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) find that there are socioeconomic inequalities in civic learning and political participation in European and Nordic countries related to social background and living in socially disadvantaged areas (Deimel & J.Abs, 2022; Hoskins et al., 2021). The results of the 2016 ICCS among Norwegian 9th graders support the finding that there is a correlation between parents' level of education and children's overall knowledge and understanding of democratic forms of governing and democratic principles (Huang et al., 2017). This means that children in Norwegian schools with parents who do not have higher education scored lower on 'democratic skills and competency' compared with children with parents who have higher education. Studies analysing data from the Norwegian ICCS have indicated that political efficacy is influenced by social background, socioeconomic status and gender, with girls reporting stronger political efficacy than boys (Huang et al., 2017: Ødegård & Svagård, 2018). Social background affects in other words the benefits children gain from democratic education, creating gaps between children's opportunities to participate in democratic and political processes in broader society. This empowerment gap contributes to a deep injustice towards political participation, and addressing it is a difficult task. One problem is how democratic education is adapted more into 'schooled' versions geared towards cognitive knowledge about democracy and less on passion for and engagement in genuine political issues. This includes a lack of focus on children's genuinely meaningful experiences, which I stress in my study. I support previous research encouraging changes in democratic education (Biseth et al., 2021; Hauger, 2021; Lieberkind, 2020; Olson, 2012a, 2012b; Olson, 2020). If the main purpose of democratic education is to support and encourage children to be actively participative and engaged citizens with political efficacy, I propose it should focus more on democracy in practice—'lived democracy'—and less on cognitive knowledge about democratic forms of governing (Hauger, 2021, master's study). Hauger (2021) finds a statistically significant correlation between political interest and deliberative participation and a weak correlation between children's knowledge

of democracy and political engagement and democratic participation. Lieberkind (2020) reports that Danish schools work with what he calls an 'educationalist version' of democratic togetherness. This version is steered by teachers' intentions, in which children's views on learning are made valid in the classroom but are not made legitimate or recognised as having genuine political status or relevance (Lieberkind, 2020). The educationalist version seems to favour and encourage children's opinions as a group and as individuals, but it does not consider political participation and identity (Lieberkind, 2020). Kahn and Westheimer (2003) assert that despite agreement in political rhetoric that democratic education is important, there is less commitment and traceable consensus operationalising these commitments into practice in deciding on the best curriculum to support the goal of educating democratic citizens and the most productive pedagogical practices. Westheimer and Kahn (2004) examine 10 programs in American schools aiming to nurture the 'good democratic citizen'. They find three types of citizens who support a democratic society: the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen and the justice-oriented citizen (p. 242). One result from their study is that teaching in these programmes, focus mainly on the personally responsible citizen and neglect the justice-oriented citizen. There seems to be more focus on citizenship without politics, which means service and character, but not democracy (Westheimer & Kahn, 2004, p. 243). Given this result in connection with the discussion in Chapter 1.4, which shows the extent to which modern Western schooling is inherently democratic or not, and Kovac's (2018) argument that schools should only focus on teaching children *about* democracy, this indicates that for official forms of school life to engage children in genuine democratic living is not a straightforward task. Therefore, exploring this potential beyond unofficial forms of school life is important.

According to Biseth et al. (2021), the difference between teaching citizenship and learning democracy is neglected. They emphasise that teaching is not sufficient to secure civic understanding and democratic participation from young people, regardless of social background (Biseth et al., 2021). Biseth et al. (2021) conclude that there is a need for a 'transformative civic education' that should include more than conventional democratic activities (p. 153). They argue that a transformative civic education must be responsive to fostering civic action for an

increasingly uncertain future (p. 153). They refer to Freire and his take on developing critical consciousness as 'transformers of the world' and civic education to encourage transformative learning processes for both teachers and learners (Biseth et al., 2021, p. 153). My study offers insights into democratic education that moves beyond conventional activities and educationalist versions of democratic togetherness, thus contributing to this research field.

2.4.2 Education *for*, *about* and less *through* democracy

The 2016 ICCS conducted among Grade 9 pupils from 148 Norwegian schools finds that they hold high levels of understanding *about* democracy and its processes compared with pupils from other countries participating in the ICSS, and that pupil democracy seems to be far better than that in other countries (Huang et al., 2017). Norwegian pupils seem to be well represented in pupil councils (elevråd) and in school environment committees (skolemiljøutvalg)[7] (Huang et al., 2017), indicating that Norwegian schools legitimise education *for* democracy *through* engagement in these councils and committees. However, the 2016 ICCS reports that despite the good representation of children on these boards and that this is an arena for practicing democratic skills and understanding, there seems to be uncertainty or a lack of evidence as to whether this representation leads to political participation in which children have an actual influence on school practice (Huang et al., 2017; Harjo, 2019[8]). This finding is supported by pupils who report in an interview study (interviewing 40 pupils) that although they appreciate genuine opportunity to influence, and feel capable of, engaging in decision making considering school practice, they also report that its difficult and requires better structures, more support, and clearer expectations from teachers (Uthus 2020). This ambiguity indicates that although children in Norwegian schools hold high levels of knowledge and understanding about democracy and seek to influence and engage, it does not automatically mean that school fulfil the aims of the national curriculum of being an arena where children experience *through* democracy and the opportunity to participate and influence their life in school.

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[7] The Norwegian education act states that all schools must have a student council and a school environment committee in which children should be represented. Education act § 11-A.

[8] Master thesis

One national Norwegian study that examines children's attitudes and understanding of democratic participation is the 'Elevundersøkelsen', which is managed by the Norwegian directorate of education and training. All schools in Norway must find time to respond to this annual survey, and it is compulsory for all children in Grades 7–10. The study includes questions about democracy and citizenship. The theme of the questions is 'pupil democracy and participation'. It has four questions[9], which the children are asked to rate to what extent they agree or not on a scale of 1–5. The four questions are as follows: 'Do you take part in suggesting ways to work with the different subjects'?, 'Do teachers make it possible for you to participate in the student council and other works as shop steward'?, 'Does the school listen to your suggestions'? and 'Do you engage in making rules for how you want to have it in your class/group'? (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2022). Rather than asking about teaching different forms of democratic principles and governing, the questions are more concerned with children's participation in influencing school practice and engagement in the pupil council. The questions mirror a certain priority in pupils' democracy and participation. They represent what Børhaug (2018) criticises as a lack of focus on learning about democracy and democratic rules and procedures. The views on this vary among scholars, and the point is not to have a moral judgment as to whether the questions are bad or good. However, they represent a certain view of democracy and emphasise the participation dimension. The question concerning the student council was rated the highest by children, with a score of 3.93, whereas the question about their influence on their work with the subjects received the lowest score of 3.23 (Wendelborg & Utmo, 2021). The pupils scored above average on all questions, with almost 70% (highest score) for whether teachers create space and make time for pupils to engage in the student council and 51% (lowest score) for whether the school listens to their suggestions (Wendelborg & Utmot, 2021, p. 115–116). This difference indicates the complexity of trying to report the status of democratic education in terms of how one understands and conceptualises it. It also indicates that teachers do not recognise influencing subjects and teaching to be the same level of democratic practice as involvement in the student council. Many teachers relate to *about* and *for* democracy, and the dimension of *through* democracy in teaching is less

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[9] I translated the questions from the survey from Norwegian into English.

focused on and recognised. This can also indicate that the student council is a more established participatory infrastructure in Norwegian schools for working with education through democracy, and it is seen as less of a complicating task to make space for engaging in it than involving children in teaching. The notion of *through* democracy seems in other words limited in teaching but is more visible and evident in the student council. The findings from the student survey are not associated with broader institutional life in school, including informal social processes and interactions between children. This is not made significant and legitimate in the survey, and it means that there is less knowledge and insight into the latter, considering democracy and participation in school. My study contributes to addressing this limitation by examining the social, unofficial forms of school life and its possible role for democracy and education.

2.5 Research on teaching democratic education

2.5.1 The teacher teaching *about* & *for* democracy

In most of the empirical studies I have reviewed, teaching and the role of teachers in official forms of school life are analysed as a central dimension in schools linked to democratic education in Norway and internationally (Dalehefte et al., 2022; De Groot, 2017; Fry & O'Brian, 2015; Henriksson, 2018[10]; Kesici, 2008; Kiroglu, 2013; Lanahan & Phillips, 2014; Sezer & Can, 2018; Sætra & Stray, 2019). Analysing an educational initiative to prevent extremism and radicalisation in Norwegian schools called 'Dembra', Dalehefte et al. (2022) find that teachers have a crucial role in promoting democratic values (pp. 206–213). Sætra and Stray (2019) examine teachers' ideas and ideals in the 'type' of citizen they want to teach. Through a survey and interviews of 26 teachers from Norwegian lower secondary schools, they find that teachers focus on learning how to think critically and being rationally autonomous in order to become democratic citizens and less on participation and democracy through democratic practices (Sætra & Stray, 2019). This implies that teachers in Norway concentrate the most on learning skills for engagement in democracy more than learning through democracy, which is consistent with other research in a Norwegian context, as reviewed in Chapter 2.4.2. Other studies (Biseth 2010; 2012), find that many Norwegian teachers and school leaders do not understand

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[10] Master Thesis

democracy as something independent to actively promote in teaching, but that it should form part of the daily school day experience through for example the student board. Studies in other countries find that teachers who promote cooperative learning (Ferguson-Patrick, 2022) and enquiry-based teaching (Vaughn & Obenchain, 2015) have greater success in increasing the focus on education through democratic dialogue, which includes the promotion of activism and engagement with inequality in the classroom and students being open about their opinions and willingness to listen to others with differing views (Ferguson-Patrick, 2022; Vaughn & Obenchain, 2015).

The common methods used in studies on teaching are interviewing teachers (Kesici, 2008; Lanahan & Phillips, 2014; Fry & O'Brian, 2015; De Groot, 2017; Catalano & Leonard, 2016) and conducting different types of surveys (Fry & O'Brian, 2015; Sezer & Can, 2018; Kiroglu, 2013). This includes teachers' opinions on democratic classroom environments, values significant in democratic education, democratic practice and the challenges and dilemmas in democratic education. Some studies are action-based research in which teachers are given pedagogical strategies to use in assessing their effects on supporting and strengthening democratic practices (Knight, 2001; Lithoxoidou et al., 2021; Tammi, 2013; Susinos & Haya, 2014). Some studies have thematically focused on teaching that engages in the observation of classroom practice and on children in interviews (Bartels et al., 2016; Abendschön, 2017; Tammi & Rajala, 2018; Akar & Kara, 2020; Karabulut & Celik, 2017; Payne, 2020).

Teaching in the age of accountability – obstacles to democratic education
One pattern evident in the results of the studies on teaching and teachers is the obstacles to securing a democratic classroom environment experienced by teachers. These obstacles include discourses on accountability for other subjects, institutional challenges in gathering many children in one class with a few teachers (Kesici 2008) and other demands, such as assessments and administrative tasks. Aasebø et al. (2015) highlight how teaching in the age of accountability is challenging and how classroom activities are dominated by a focus on outcomes and students' achievements. This insight can explain teachers' difficult experiences in working with democracy when there are other demands higher on the list of priorities. The teachers in my study have similar experiences, including how democracy and participation are discussed as popular concepts,

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but with little concrete content for their teaching. All the studies referenced in chapters 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 focus on official forms of school life initiated by teachers and their role in democratic education. Conversely, in my study, I examine the unofficial forms of school life, the intersection between the two forms of school life and their role in democracy and education.

2.5.2 Dilemmas in controversial issues in democratic education

Research on controversial issues has become a large part of educational research. Controversial issues have also become a field of interest in the Council of Europe, as illustrated by an international training pack for teachers on teaching controversial issues (Kerr & Huddlestone, 2015). This section presents a few key discussions and tendencies to justify the worthiness of my study considering this field of research. Based on interviews with teachers and pupils from Norwegian lower secondary schools, Sætra (2020) finds that discussions on controversial issues can work well if there is a good class environment, characterised by strong social relationships jointly constructed by pupils and teachers, tolerance, respect and skilful management of discussions. Breivaga and Rangnes (2019) report the results of several empirical studies conducted in Norwegian classrooms, and their main conclusion is the need for teachers to take more risks in discussing disagreements on controversial issues (Werler, 2019; Breivaga, 2019; Rangnes & Werler, 2019; Askeland, 2019; Rangnes & Ravneberg, 2019). These studies find that collective disagreement (uenighetsfellesskap) is one area of democratic education that is not used extensively or is well established in school (Breivaga & Rangnes, 2019). There is a consensus about the potential for discussing controversial issues on active citizenship and democracy (Breivaga & Rangnes, 2019; Hess, 2004; Hess, 2009; Hahn, 2010; Ljungren, 2015; Sætra, 2021), but there is none on exactly how controversial issues should be defined and worked with in schools (Hand, 2008; Gereluk, 2012; Sætra, 2021). Dilemmas, such as the concern that certain issues are too sensitive and can offend and create anger, have been discussed (Gereluk, 2012). Other dilemmas are related to a lack of communication skills and confidence among teachers in encouraging and engaging in dialogues about political conflicts in the classroom (Bickmore & Parker, 2014). Bickmore and Parker (2014) study conflict dialogue in two primary and two secondary schools with skilled and committed teachers known to engage in this manner of teaching. However, they find that even with these purposely selected teachers, there is a lack of critical deliberation of what they

call 'heartfelt disagreements', and little attention is given to probing diversity, questions about equality in the issue at hand and taking up genuine dialogue about different views and political conflicts (Bickmore & Parker, 2014). Another dilemma is the possible tension between freedom of speech and hate speech (Mattson, 2020). Christer Mattson has extensively studied hate speech, neo-Nazi groups and organisations. He argues that dilemmas in any heartfelt disagreement emerge when freedom of speech clash with hate speech (Mattson, 2020). This fusion—or tension—can threaten and jeopardise the sense of safety of individuals and groups and create hatred instead of democracy and dialogue (Mattsson, 2020). This is an important point, considering how risky it is to allow this kind of discussion in the classroom. Mattsson's (2020) point is significant if it turns out that children or teachers use space intended for freedom of speech to engage in hate speech. There will always be risks involved in teaching, and if teachers are afraid to engage in discussions due to the risk of hate speech, another risk will emerge. This reduces opportunities for children to take part in discussions on social conflicts to recognise differing perspectives and to involve themselves in sustainable democratic conflictual dialogues (Bickmore & Parker, 2014). Bickmore and Parker (2014) stress the importance of the conflictual dimension of dialogue and argue for the need for transformation in democratic education to better grasp how to work with and use the conflictual dimensions of the social considering democratic education. Through my study, I hope to illustrate how a greater emphasis on unofficial forms of school life can contribute to such a transformation in primary school, where we can learn from children about alternative ways to utilise and take nourishment from conflictual forms of communication, such as being less dependent on verbal communication and without leaving democratic grounds.

2.6. Research on the agonistic conceptualisation of democracy

Only a few empirical studies have drawn on the agonistic approach to democratic education, and interest in this theoretical approach as fruitful in empirical seems to have grown as the few existing empirical studies are recent. Some explorative empirical studies have been conducted on workshops for scholars (Sant et al., 2021; Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018), with interesting contributions, but these do not directly target children in school; thus, I will not report on them. According to a recent scoping review (Koutsouris et al., 2021) and a theoretical review (Sant, 2019), research in this area is predominantly philosophical and

theoretical, while empirical research in schools is limited. There is therefore a need to develop an empirical basis. According to Koutsouris et al. (2021), this will be significant for future research in generating contributions to curriculum development and classroom practice. This development requires a process in which abstract concepts are translated empirically. The current study has embarked on such an endeavour.

2.6.1 Political dimension in social science

Tryggvason and Öhman's (2018) study[11], which was conducted in a social science class in a Swedish lower secondary school, applies Mouffe's agonistic model to examine the political dimension as expressed in teaching. The didactic dimension is analysed, and the authors understand it in accordance with the German tradition of educational research (Tryggvason, 2018b, p. 115). The study is based on interviews with teachers and classroom observations. They examine the political dimension in terms of conflicts, opinions and the boundaries between us and them, following Mouffe. One result indicates that heated discussions in the classroom seem to be interwoven with the didactic relationship between teachers and pupils. If the discussions are heated, it can be tempting to seek safety in the subject position of being a student rather than a political adversary (Tryggvason, 2018, p. 115). Another result highlights an ambivalence from the point of view of the teachers regarding inviting children's political opinions into the classroom when teaching about political issues. The teachers seem to support bringing children's political opinions into the classroom, but if the children are heavily engaged in the subject, this can, according to many teachers, hinder them from critically analysing the topic from different perspectives (Tryggvason, 2018, p. 115). The teachers stress that children can become so emotionally invested that they are not able to approach the topic from perspectives other than their own. Despite having a significant interest in the topic, this can according to teachers lead them to get low grades because they cannot fully analyse it (Tryggvason, 2018, p.116). Teachers stress the risk of receiving low grades and losing critical distance in favour of emotional investment. This implies that teachers see a possible tension or conflict between engagement in a topic and approaching it with critical distance from multiple

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[11] This is one out of four studies related to the doctoral thesis of Tryggvason (2018b). The other three studies are theoretical.

perspectives beyond the children's own. I recognise this concern, but given this result and those reported in Chapters 2.4, it is possible to see a worrying tendency, considering the leeway given for the political dimension in school. Westerheimer and Kahn (2004) find that more attention is given to service and character and less to political justice and the justice of citizens. As noted in Chapter 2.4, Lieberkind (2020) discovers a similar tendency of the educationalist version in democratic education diminishing children's political participation beyond the classroom. One example of this is how children's political participation in, for example, the climate strike in many schools was handled. The children were praised for being engaged, including those in Norway, but at the same time, they were asked to return to school or be given a mark for being out of school without permission. This is a clear example of how children are encouraged to be active citizens but within an educationalist version. This means that when they walk out into the streets engaging politically in the world, they are asked to return to the power relations and the structure of the classroom (Biswas & Mattheis, 2022). The missing links and dilemmas related to the political dimension reported in Tryggvason (2018) are viewed from the point of view of adult teachers. An orientation away from the adult-structured perspective towards children's knowing and living could enhance this picture and add nuances and insights into to it. I examine this point and hope to contribute insights relevant to the relationship between children's living, experiencing and knowing and how schools can enhance their work and focus on the political dimension of democratic education.

2.6.2 Political dimensions in art education

Studies have been conducted on art education in terms of the role of art, movement and dance considering political and democratic education (Catalano & Leonard, 2016; Leonard, 2014). In this section, I review a study on art education in which the author proposes that agonistic theory is relevant to the relationship between art education and democratic education (Skregelid, 2016, 2019). Skregelid (2016) examines the differences in opinions and concerns about pupils' emotions when encountering contemporary art. Her study indicates that subjectification can emerge between pupils and a piece of art, as art can challenge norms and a state of normality, and that this transformative potential encourages new stories and perspectives. The political dimension of art education can according to Skregelig contribute to democratic subjectification (Skregelig,

2016, 2019). Skregelig's emphasis on the opportunity for democratic subjectification is developed using Ranciere's concept of dissent, through which she argues that continuous dissensus is the only way to challenge hegemonies and bring forward new stories. This strongly resembles Mouffe's (2005) concept of struggle, which I theorise with in my study. Skregelid shows the political dimension of art by studying dissent and conflictual encounters and how they are encountered by children. I show the political dimension of children's playful bodily practices by studying disturbances and ruptures in school life and how they are lived and experienced by children.

2.6.3 Conflict, resistance, political emotions and materiality

The studies reported in this section are in the context of Scandinavian ECE. These studies have a stronger explorative approach to and a wider concept of democracy and democratic education compared with studies related to schools. In much ECE research considering democracy, the unit of analysis includes the broader daily institutional life, beyond the pedagogical-initiated activities, such as interactions and social processes among children. Educational research in schools seems to be more accountable towards didactic, teaching and the role of the teacher and pays less attention to unofficial forms of school life. What these studies, including the studies presented in chapter 2.7, have in common is that, with the premise of democracy being conceptualised as a lifeform, they discuss possible premises for democratic processes in different situations, contexts and interactions. Common features are the emphasis on negotiation, resistance and transcendence in different forms and that on looking at daily familiar situations as possible spaces for democratic practices and experiences. The following studies use the agonistic conceptualisation of democracy, while the studies in Chapter 2.7 have a similar orientation to conflict and resistance but do not use an agonistic theoretical framework.

Using discourse analysis on interviews with pedagogues in a nursery, Grindland[12] (2012) identifies different discourses on how they constitute the conditions for democratic practices. She argues that mealtime on 'the edge of chaos' can enable children to participate in democratic practices in nurseries. The democratic potential involves children's opportunity to influence and be a different mealtime

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[12] Grindland later changed her name to Tofteland.

participant, rupture the legitimate mealtime participant and disturb the order of the mealtime initiated by the pedagogue (Grindland, 2012). Tofteland (2015[13]) examines how emotions are given meaning during mealtime in the construction of identity as a mealtime participant. Emotions are given meaning and act as a significant contribution towards the construction of both collective and individual identity as a meal participant (Tofteland, 2015). For example, on the one hand, the pedagogues attribute hope to creating a collective feeling among the children by singing the same songs; on the other hand, emotions are given meaning in individual identities if they are related to children's bodily practices and the disruption of the meal. Based on her results, Tofteland finds that emotions should be taken seriously and analysed in terms of democratic practices in nurseries to prevent only one collective identity from being legitimised as the identity of the mealtime participant. Instead, a plurality of emotions and practices should be adopted to create plurality in mealtimes to recognise mealtimes as a potential democratic space (Tofteland, 2015, p. 125).

Grindheim (2014a) examines how children conduct citizenship using various kinds of play to resist, transcend and push against rules and regulations in nurseries. The ideas professionals have about democratic participation, such as partaking in decision-making processes, seem less relevant among the children involved (Grindheim, 2014a). Moreover, she proposes that democratic cultivation can be considered relational and contextual, and children participate as 'child citizens' in ways that are not traditionally considered democratic participation (Grindheim, 2014a). One of the non-traditional ways for 'child citizens' to participate is to express emotions related to anger, its position and status, considering the extent to which these emotions are legitimised (Grindheim, 2014b). Grindheim's results imply the following: 'Episodes from fieldwork indicate that children who communicate what they regard as disrespect or injustice through anger are more often considered aggressive children who need to modify their emotions than communicators presenting an important message'. Moreover, this response to anger can be seen as a limiting condition for children's democratic participation (Grindheim, 2014b, p. 308). For Grindheim it is troubling if harmony, little conflict and a rational discussion of

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[13] Related to the same study of Grindland (2012).

interest is the norm for children's participation in nurseries. She refers to children's right to participate and freedom in accordance with the children's rights framework and argues that conflictual perspectives and anger should be seen as a form of expression to be taken seriously in the name of democracy. Anger can be considered a form of resistance from children against an institutionalised daily life characterised by many conventions of normality to which they are expected to adjust (Grindheim, 2014b, p. 308).

Johansson and Emilson (2016) explore acts of resistance in conflicts to investigate the extent to which they involve democratic learning. Two categories of conflicts (p. 30) are identified in terms of the quality of space for democracy learning: 'space for diversity, which illustrates openness for different opinions to be articulated and heard, and secondly, space for unity, which illustrates how struggles, alliances and authority affect and restrict the opinions that are articulated and heard' (p. 30). Their findings indicate that both categories can have different potentials for democracy learning and that agonism and antagonism can be seen to beat play in these moments (Johansson & Emilson, 2016, p. 30). Their study implies that teachers and children are deeply involved in these moments and that playfulness, courage and emotions characterise acts of resistance initiated by the children. In conclusion following the authors, these phenomena are fundamental to society, and more research is needed to develop knowledge about the possible opportunities brought by democratic education (Johansson & Emilson, 2016).

Another strand of research on democracy involves conflicts among toddlers in nurseries (Nome, 2017, 2022). Nome (2022) examines the effect of toys on conflictual encounters between young children and finds that children's nonverbal negotiations about toys can be interpreted as political experiments. Professionals should be more cautious about stopping and interfering in children's conflicts because these events could be considered arenas for democratic experiences (Nome, 2022, p. 1). Melhuus (2015) analyses the extent to which objects and spaces in a nursery invite or regulate initiatives and transcendence in ongoing play (Melhuus, 2015, p. 67). Melhuus uses Ranciere's understanding of democracy and her own as her point of departure. She is interested in children's opportunities to act, resist and bring something new into

this world. A central concept in her study is transcendence. Her results indicate that both children and professionals are inferior to the meaning of space and objects. Moreover, she uses Biesta's (2008, 2011) understanding of democracy, in which initiative, disruptions and transcendence are important, to discuss how explicit and rigid rooms can affect democratic practices (Melhuus, 2015). Although Skreland (2015) does not use an agonistic theoretical approach to democracy, she has empirically studied how the resistance towards, the negotiation of and allowing children to participate in making rules in nurseries, together with pedagogues, can be ways of creating space for collective democratic practices and democratic experiences for children. Her emphasis on resistance and negotiation is in accordance with the other studies reviewed in this chapter.

2.7. Research on play and democracy

Empirical studies on the relationship between play, playfulness and democracy have not been a long-established research field. Nevertheless, play research is a large and highly diverse research field. I am not interested in play research in general but rather in research on play and democracy and educational research on the dimensions of democracy and play. According to Koubovà et al. (2022, p. 1), play and democracy research opens analytical space for deepening the understanding of the significance of play as a political, cultural and social power. Many play researchers assert that genuine play is serious and involves the transcendence of being playful with and breaking boundaries and rules (Bateson & Martin, 2013; King, 1987; Sutton Smith, 2015; Øksnes & Sundsdal, 2020). It has profound elements of negotiation, especially with peers (Bae, 2006), and it connects us as human beings with the world (Sutton Smith, 2015). Moreover, play can be considered an interaction process characterised by a direct, unruly form of democratic culture (Toft & Rüsselbæk Hansen, 2017). Many studies have pointed to how distinct play cultures exist among children and how these cultures also exist among children in school (Corsaro, 2018; Øksnes & Sundsdal, 2020). My study supports previous observations on the features of playful cultures and extends them towards understanding their relevance in democratic living and children's citizenship in primary school. Studies on democracy and play includes Kennedy (2022), who argues that working with a community of philosophical enquiry (CPI) in schools can encourage a deep form of play and that the structural dynamics of CPI, which include intergenerational encounters,

support *democratic sensibilities*, such as non-hierarchical forms of dialogues and equalising experiences for those involved. Benson (2022) examines discourses on micro-interpretation in a UK state school implementing a UK strategic government policy for state schools in relation to regulations on children's behaviour. Benson stresses that children are placed in age-segregated institutions (schools) and have little formal power over this. The results of her study conclude that different,

> Acts of children's play can be interpreted as their inadvertent negotiations for control over adult-dominated places and times. These acts unveil an unofficial power that can be enacted in places and spaces seemingly controlled by strategists (Benson, 2022, p. 222).

The children began to act differently and play with these new rules. For example, in class, they would play with the 'hands to yourself' rule by poking their fingers at their classmates' heads or with the 'walk on the left side' rule (which also indicates remaining silent on the corridor if several children are in the hallway) by walking dramatically on the wrong side of the corridor. These acts can be considered disobeying the rules or, according to Benson, tactful acts in which children resist and negotiate a school space owned and defined by adults. In a Norwegian doctoral study, Øksnes (2008) conducted an ethnographic study of children's playful activities and alternative practices and routes of escape in daily life in a Norwegian after-school assistant (SFO/AKS). Since then, Øksnes has studied several lines of connections between play and resistance (Øksnes, 2018), between play and democracy (Sundsdal & Øksnes, 2022) and play as a liberating practice (Sundsdal & Øksnes, 2018). Øksnes has also written about the value of play in education and school (Sundsdal & Øksnes, 2021; Øksnes & Sundsdal, 2020). Play holds democratic potential because it creates space for dialogue, is open for negotiation and takes up the perspectives of the others, as it 'offers a peek into a potential world that is not the world we already know' (Øksnes, 2008, p.83). Sundsdal and Øksnes point to the qualities of play, including freedom, a way of negotiating and transcending rules, a liberation of the mind, a meaningful practice (real life), and assert that play can be a significant democratic experience for children in school (Sundsdal & Øksnes, 2022, p.174). Children challenge the status quo with their playful practice and negotiate another life and other identities (Øksnes, 2008). Sundsdal and Øksnes (2022) are critical about how

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much of recent play research approaches play as a tool for more effective learning. Based on their own and other's research, they argue that this can be seen as a form of colonising children's play by adapting and utilising it for educational goals set and defined by adults (Øksnes & Sundsdal, 2020; Sefton-Green, 2020). As drawn from Gadamer, play involves spontaneity and magic rather than order and plans; children's play often disturbs teachers' and parents' plans, thus challenging adult norms and power (Sundsdal & Øksnes, 2022, pp.214–215). Although play is not a core concept in my study, Sundsdal and Øksnes's emphasis on play is pertinent to how I examine the ignorant position and the bodily playful practice, the playful pulse and the open and loose rhythms. I try to develop this emphasis on the richness of opportunities in play as an important inspiration for the notion of children's bodily playful practices. Other scholars have also analysed the similarities between play and democracy as a lifeform, pointing to it as a practice for collective negotiation, new perspectives, ruptures of the established world, and a way for children to create their own alternative *public space (*Andersson & Kampman, 1996, p.128; Østrem 2012, p.158), featured by *unruly democratic playful participative cultures* (Toft and Rûsselbæk Hansen, p.144). More theoretical studies have been conducted on the relationship between play and democracy in terms of schools, and only a few are empirical studies. In this regard, I hope to contribute to this field of research with a distinct empirical focus.

2.8. Territory of the study

I now present the main limitations of the reviewed literature to clarify the position and contribution of my study. Educational research on democratic education targets predominantly upper and lower secondary schools in Norway and in other countries. Primary school and younger children have received less empirical attention, and this creates space for my study to contribute knowledge and insights into contextualising democracy for younger children in school. The dominating methodology in the field is the quantitative approach and qualitative interviews with teachers, school leaders or headmasters. Ethnographic studies on children in terms of democracy and education seem to be limited in the context of schools. Theoretical and philosophical studies abound in the field of educational research on democratic education, and there is a particular lack of empirical studies in the subfield of agonistic democratic education. This means that little empirical attention has been given to examining the relationship

between the theoretical concepts in the agonistic framework and practice in school, which is the goal of my study. Given the lack of empirical studies on agonistic democratic education in schools, the studies based on ECE reviewed in Chapter 2.6.3, motivate my theoretical outlook and operationalisation in the analysis. This includes play, conflict, resistance and daily social processes and interactions as interesting aspects for democracy and democratic practices. The lack of empirical studies is also prevalent in research on the relationship between play and democracy in the context of schools. I hope to contribute to strengthening the empirical base of this field.

The whole body of research is thematically limited, and although the agonistic literature has a more distinct focus on conflicts and affect, very few studies, to the best of my knowledge, have empirically analysed disturbances in school from a democratic perspective, as is done in my study. Little attention has been given to social processes and interactions in everyday school life beyond the subjects and teaching, regardless of the theoretical outlook. This indicates that social life in school and the lives of children, which I refer to as unofficial forms of school life, are not made relevant studying democratic education. We know little about democratic education in primary school, the role of unofficial school life in terms of democracy, and ways to engage children in lower grades. One reason for this insufficiency may be due to how democracy is usually conceptualised and practiced in 'traditional ways', as stated by Ødegård (2012), favouring skills being more prominent among older children. Another reason is that the theoretical perspectives applied in research do not identify younger children as eligible to engage in democracy and democratic practices to the same extent as older children. These reasons are related to the kind of citizen or child seen required engaging in democratic education. How we interpret democracy has consequences for how we understand the citizen and thus the child as a democratic citizen. If rationality, speech and reason are the capabilities we associate with a democratic citizen, then many children in primary school will always be secondary citizens to older individuals who have learned and developed a different skillset concerning these capacities. Therefore, we find it difficult to imagine ways to engage children in democratic processes and practices involving other capabilities, such as embodied forms of agency. Most of the current empirical studies have pointed to the need for a change in

democratic education to include those other than conventional democratic activities (Biseth et al., 2021, p. 153). Perhaps my study could contribute to such an endeavour. The final aspect of the territory for my study is my emphasis on the body. In the agonistic approach, affect is fundamental to democratic processes. I develop this empirically by considering disturbances, productive ruptures and children's playful bodily practices. I hope to show a correlation between passion, bodily presence in this world, children's collective bodily playful practices and democratic education. The aim is to disturb and expand the conceptualisations of democracy by showing the relationship between disturbances and democracy in primary school.

3. Theoretical landscape and perspectives

The empirical material is my basis, and I use different theoretical concepts and perspectives to examine different aspects of the data. According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018), a prosperous theoretical outlook provides an opportunity for a thorough, creative analysis. The dialogue with theory has helped me create new paths and follow elements in the data that I would not have understood otherwise. This includes following the empirical notion of 'things that just happen' by understanding it as an expression of embodied agency that can challenge the hegemony of voice using a combination of perspectives and concepts from all theories involved. According to Hacking (2004), a scientist, the ontological and methodological challenges and questions we set ourselves to respond to in research are sometimes exaggerated. Hacking describes his approach of not worrying about these dimensions too much and instead exploring multiple theoretical perspectives to reach a state in which one loses control only to regain it to develop insights into complex matters (Hacking, 2004, p. 17). I have explored different theoretical perspectives and worked pragmatically without fear of inviting new theories. If the material brings new elements of relevance to the research question and I do not see how the current theories can assist me in developing the analysis, then I will look for additional theoretical outlooks. I have followed whatever is necessary to give justice to grand and complex empirical material. It can be argued that I work with too many theories and concepts and that the better academic practice is to have clear lines of, for example, ontological connections between theories used. I recognise this, and thus, in Chapter 3.6, I reflect upon the connections and differences in the relationship between the main theories used. I choose not to make theoretical discussions or discrepancies between theories or an academic discourse, stating that using too many theories is problematic, prevent a new perspective from emerging in the theoretical framework. Especially if rejecting it means losing substantial analytical potential in the data from the field. The research question is a constant guide. Eventually, I have reached the point at which I do not see how any further interpretation or new theoretical additions could further develop the response to the research question.

3.1 A theory on bodily movement and forms of expression

The theory of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a French philosopher and professor in children's psychology, is a foreground theory, and follows the study from prior to the fieldwork. This theory follows as a golden thread through the analysis, grounding my understanding of the concept of the lifeworld and laying the theoretical foundation for understanding children's bodily playful practices and the empirical notion of 'things that just happen'. In Chapter 8, I use gestures and the pre-reflexive subject in the analysis. In what follows, I present the key elements I put in motion from this theory and use them in the analysis.

'The child' or 'the child's way of being' is according to Merlau-Ponty a living incarnation of human existence, and children live through their bodies more explicitly than most adults (Merleau-Ponty, 1994, p. xi). Merleau-Ponty was the first philosopher in phenomenology to consider the body as the centre of understanding the world. He puts emphasis on the body as existence and that it is through the body consciousness and meaning come into being (Merleau-Ponty 1991).

3.1.1 Bringing the body to the foreground of meaning-making

One of the reasons why I find this theory meaningful in studying children's perspectives and ways of knowing and living is Merleau-Ponty's grounding of the phenomenal field and his focus on the body as existence. Merleau-Ponty's theory can be complex to understand. However, in my understanding, this complex theory is simply trying to convey that human experience must be described and understood from a first-person perspective, in which the body is not left out of the equation, but recognised as where the first-person perspective is situated. The theory offers concepts for examining how children experience and live their lives in school through their bodies and not just how they describe it or have learned to conceive it. The phenomenal field is a transcendental field (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, pp. 61–66, 173), which in my interpretation means that it involves a form of perception of our perceptive world and that it is transcendental in that it is not possible to abstract our perception from our bodies and the world. Transcendence, as I read Merlau-Ponty, is infused in the act or movement whenever 'existence' takes up for itself and transforms de facto situations

(Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 173). The 'natural world' exists regardless of human perception (p. 156), and the transformation involves this dimension of transcendence, implies that we cannot understand perception as a separate entity; it must be and is immersed in our body as flesh of the world. In my understanding, his conception of the transcendental field is closely connected to his concept of chiasm. In medical Latin, chiasm means crossing or intersection, and in Greek, 'khiasma' means 'two things placed cross-wise' (Harper, 2023b). For Merleau-Ponty, the crossing in chiasm seems to relate to this lack of abstraction between the body and the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, the 'world is flesh', and with this, he stresses that we live as bodily subjects in mutual entanglement with the world and that meaning only comes into being through this existence (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, 1994). The concept of chiasm (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 130) rejects dualism, as it entails not being able to separate the body from materiality. No bodily subject is an object of another, and this can point to a mutual interdependence and a decentring of humans as the centre of existence (Melhuus & Nordtømme, 2022, p. 39). The entanglement between the world and the body makes abstraction between the world and the subject impossible. We belong to a world living as bodily subjects and are in a continuous flow of entanglement with other bodies that we are in intentional movement with and against (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 255). It is important to emphasise that we are not talking about the body as a physical mass or object. His philosophy has always been grounded in the phenomenal field. The critical unit of analysis remains on the bodily existence of living, moving bodies constituting meaning only in this present entangled form of existence. Meaning does not belong to reason, looking into the world from the outside; it only exists within and through this entangled state of human bodily existence (Merleau-Ponty, 1991). I am in the world through my body. I experience the world with my body and look at it through it. Therefore, it is not possible to separate my subjectivity from my bodily existence.

This inseparableness creates a field of perceptive presence in the phenomenal field. For example, a child points to a rock in the woods and says, 'Look', before picking it up and touching it. From Merleau-Ponty's perspective, this is an active, intentional perceptive presence in which the child's eyes, voice and the movement of the hand and the rock are in an intentional, active movement with

each other. It is not a conscious reflection that makes the child say, 'Look"; it is the sight of the rock and picking it up that creates the grounding for potential reflection about the rock. In other words, reflection is not the first site that organises the world for us but rather the moving bodily subject (Merleau-Ponty, 2010). In this way, meaning is not an intellectual endeavour, but an experience aroused by the bodily subject (Nome, 2011, 2012). I apply this way of understanding meaning and reflection when studying children's bodily forms of expression and the notion of 'things that just happen'. Merleau-Ponty does not propose a new dualism but states that the bodily moving subject comprises thought and reflection. His philosophy is concerned with transcendence, which means that nothing is either/or and that we will never find a true essence of any matter on either 'side'. This is an important element of Merleau-Ponty's theory because this ambiguity indicates that the *actual movement* between thought and movement is the focus and that movement makes it *impossible to separate*. This entanglement is linked to how I try to understand children's doings and their descriptions of their doings in the analysis. I use this perspective on a form of *moving inseparableness* to understand how children behave during disturbances and conflictual encounters with other children and how it relates to the ignorant position and unofficial school life.

3.1.2. Conceptualising embodied forms of agency

Merleau-Ponty's theory grounds my conceptualisation of embodied agency, including the entanglements of the body in all meaning-making and his concepts of temporality and gestures.

To understand the intertwinements the body is immersed through lived life, Merleau-Ponty refer to temporality or the 'time of the body', and human existence as time (Rasmussen, 1996). His understanding of temporality involves a constant flow of time in which the individual body transcends the moment of now. The bodily subject is not locked in one moment but already has horizons on the way to becoming past and leaning into the future (Rasmussen, 1996, p.110, my translation). Merleau-Ponty (2014) discusses temporality as an absolute flow that appears perceptively as a particular consciousness, a field of presence to itself, others and the world. With the concept of temporality, Merleau-Ponty blurs the boundaries between subjectivity and time as subjectivity and time become immersed through a common field of presence (Merleau-Ponty, 2014).

This is a perceptual domain the body has power over (p. 94, xv, xxiv), and it means that an individual has an active perceptive presence in the phenomenal field. A form of knowing becomes the body's actions, which are as important as what the mind is thinking. These acts at the level of the body are expressions of a navigating sensing body that *acts on its agency* (pp. 260–261) and uses its repertoire of limbs, gestures, movements and sounds to inhabit the space at its disposal (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p.100–104). They are immersed in the connections in which the body is linked to the world in de facto situations, an entangled pre-reflexive consciousness, and freedom can exist and emerge the way I interpret Merleau-Ponty (2014, pp. 137, 482–83) in this particular consciousness. I use this theorisation of agency and develop it with perspectives on children's agency proposed by Toby Rollo, a Canadian political theorist. Finally, I link it to Mouffe's concept of passion, including her emphasis on affects as important for democratic politics.

Rollo (2016a) argues that children, as a group, are denied political equality, as their primary forms of agency are not given political legitimacy compared with the forms of agency more prominent in adult bodies, including speech, reason and rationality. Rollo draw on many theorists, including Merleau-Ponty's theory and connects children's primary forms of agency with embodied agency. Rollo argues that children feel space and time instead of mapping and conceptually measure them, and they do not base their knowing on theoretical constructions or representations (Rollo, 2016a, p.239.). All that is required for children to understand the world *is to establish a particular bodily know-how cultivated through the child's ongoing exploration and play* (Rollo, 2016a, p. 239). The notion of 'bodily know-how' is closely connected with Merleau-Ponty's idea of temporality and the body as existence. I use these theories in studying children's bodily practices and collectives to examine their usability and consider this complex cultivated bodily know-how, which children draw from in their daily encounters, as relevant for establishing new knowledge and insights into democracy in primary education. The idea of using embodied agency as a relevant and meaningful supplement to more common forms of agency related to democracy and education, such as voice, speech and reason, seems radical. However, why does it appear radical, and from what perspective does it appear so? Western Europe's intellectual traditions consider abstract representational

agency as an epistemologically legitimate agency, whereas many indigenous intellectual traditions recognise and favour the domain of the embodied (Rollo, 2016a, p.237). This illustrates that making embodied modes of agency inferior to the more rational modes of agency, is not a universal conceptualisation but vary according to context, culture and society. The final piece of my conceptualisation of embodied agency is its value as a core component to understand Mouffe's conceptualisation of passion and affect as fundamental to democratic living. This is related to how she emphasises that mobilisation for democracy does not take place on a rational cognitive level but in the body's capacity to be affected and the need to belong. This is supported by Biesta (2011) in his interpretation of Mouffe's theory of democratic education: democratic education cannot only be about teaching democracy, but it must also be linked to the activation of the desire for democracy.

3.1.3 Gestures and bodily experiences of space

I draw on two other dimensions of Merleau-Ponty's work to analyse children's movements, gestures and sounds in their habituation of spaces in school. These dimensions are presented in Chapter 8, in which I explain the interactions between children in spaces away from the gaze of professionals.

The first-person perspective is addressed in Merleau-Ponty's notions of gestures and spatiality. Spatiality may seem like a complex concept, but it is closely associated with bodily agency and the pre-reflexive bodily subject, as it involves the fundamental experience of space. For Merleau-Ponty, spatiality does not involve objective positional spaces but rather situational spaces or phenomenological places defined by how bodies take space, use it, interact in it and belong to it. For example, as shown in Chapter 8, children engage in the space between trees or in the wardrobe. The space is made up of intentions from bodies, flowing into and inhabiting other bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1994, p.154 my translation). We inhabit our situational spaces without referring to cognitive, conceptual and reflective processes in this phenomenological understanding of space. Instead, our living habituation to situational spaces is a non-reflective bodily responsiveness to space. From this perspective, children's actions in different school situations can be caused by the spatial demands of situations as responses to environmental pressures and cues (Merleau-Ponty, 2014). Merleau-Ponty refers to this as the body before the 'political body' or the body formed by

different institutional structures. He uses the phenomenology of perception as a theoretical construction to understand the pre-reflexive 'I' rooted in the lived body, a non-reflective behaviour at the level of the body—the bodily responsiveness that enables us to exist in this world (Merleau-Ponty, 2014). 'I' refers to the most fundamental structures and dynamics of being social, enabling a meaningful human existence. This opens up an analytical space for studying spaces manifested around and among children as more than physical objective spaces. It provides me with an analytical language for studying children not 'in' these spaces but in *how they inhabit them* and experience them meaningfully.

For Merleau-Ponty, gestures involve a wide range of bodily expressions, from a smile to language with sounds and differences in tone of voice. Despite their empirical variance, they are similar in that they all contain a certain meaning, but none of them are pure natural signs holding one absolute meaning that everyone can understand, regardless of culture and context (Merlau-Ponty, 1994; Hangard Rasmussen, 1996). For example, a smile will always contain meaning, but this meaning will vary according to the context. This means that a gesture, although it can present as a simple bodily expression, such as a smile, is recognised as a complicated form of interaction in this perspective. Merleau-Ponty writes, the 'meaning of the gesture is not given but is understood through an act from the point of view of the viewer' (1994, p. 151, my translation). According to Merlau-Ponty, this act is not a mental cognitive act, but it is positioned on the middle ground, in which a smile does not make me think of joy, as the smile in itself is the actual joy expressed in this situation. It is a circular movement of intentions in which my intentions through a gesture inhabit the body of the other, and the gesture that is received and acted upon by the other is expressed back to me (Merleau-Ponty, 1994). I apply this perspective in examining similar circular movements between children in playful collectives, in which gestures are used in favour of speech in many interactions. I now leave Merleau-Ponty and discuss the second main theory used in this study—Mouffe's radical theory of democracy. This theory embodies my understanding of democracy and democratic living.

3.2 Bringing conflict to the foreground of democratic living

Mouffe, a Belgian political theorist, developed the radical theory of democracy in political theory. It is not a common theory used in educational research or in

democratic education. However, an increasing number of scholars are applying Mouffe's theory to educational empirical research, as shown in Chapter 2. One of these scholars is Biesta (2011), who has attempted to draw on this theory to examine democratic education. I find inspiration in his interpretations. Thus, I develop the 'the ignorant citizen' introduced by Biesta (2011) based on Mouffe's ideas considering my empirical material. Mouffe's ideas of democracy inspire my theoretical outlook on democracy in school because they create an analytical space for studying situations involving different forms of ruptures as relevant for democratic living. I am also motivated by her legitimacy towards passion as a significant dimension in democratic processes and her insistence on the need to 'expand' democracy beyond political areas and institutions into other areas of society (Mouffe, 2002). This theory came to my attention in conjunction with the ethnographic discovery of realising the analytical potential of studying different forms of ruptures and conflictual encounters in school. Mouffe developed this agonistic model of democracy due to what she saw was a limitation of the consensual understanding of democracy and as an alternative to deliberative and aggregative models (Mouffe, 2014, p. 154). It serves as an analytical framework for understanding how a

> democratic order can acknowledge and manage the existence of conflicts that do not have a rational solution and how we can conceive democracy in a way that allows in its midst a confrontation between conflicting hegemonic projects. (Mouffe, 2014, p. 154).

I use the agonistic model as an analytical tool for imagining conditions for agonistic confrontations. It offers concepts for giving analytical attention to different confrontational processes and encounters. The condition of confrontation is based on what Mouffe refer to as the democratic paradox (Mouffe, 2005). Mouffe argues that in any liberal democratic society, we are bound to experience conflicts of desires and interests and tension between liberty and equality. Following her train of thought, this pluralism is fundamental to any collective, and different forms of rupture in interactions are pivotal to human existence in this radical pluralism. This form of radical pluralism gives opportunities for disruption and disturbance of hegemonic structures and orders, and it is only through a conditioning space for such an 'agonistic pluralism' that a reconstruction, development of new collective identities and clear alternatives

are possible (Mouffe, 2005b). I use these questions in this theory to study how and to what extent these spaces are conditioned in primary schools. Mouffe argues that we must move beyond merely studying political institutions in terms of democracy and democratic politics. I interpret this encouragement to mean that other central institutions, such as schools, can become interesting units of analysis. I explore the space for agonistic struggles and pluralism in primary school and try to convey Mouffe's theory through analytical attention. Overall, I theorise with it considering three dimensions in the empirical material: 1) to what extent is school about adjusting to and accepting predefined orders, rules and regulations; 2) to what extent is there space for the disruption of and changes in these orders; and 3) how and to what extent can children form and re-form different and alternative collective identities.

3.2.1 Disruption of social structures as fundamental democratic events

In my reading of Laclau and Mouffe (2002), the task of institutions is not rational disagreement to seek consensus but to make space for agonistic pluralism and to welcome and accept struggle and tension as part of the different desires and interests in any collective, including schools. According to Mouffe, '*It is the legitimation and recognition of conflict and the refusal to suppress it by an authoritarian order that holds democracy alive*' (2005, p. 103). This primary condition of democracy indicates in my interpretation that institutional structures should be elastic and should promote conflictual pluralism and apparent alternatives. This is a space in which sedimented hegemonic practices can be challenged and disturbed and in which there is a productive engagement to disturb and bring forward everything that the dominant consensus has pushed to the side (Hirsch & Miessen, 2012). Mouffe (2005) argues that it is impossible to reach a rational agreement and that it is an illusion to consider that ideas of power can be dissolved based on rational debates (p.104). Instead, any consensus will always be a temporary result based on hegemonic provisions (pp.104–105). This indicates in my understanding that there will always be a struggle for positions and borders in agonistic pluralism. Mouffe states that we need to come to terms with the hegemonic nature of social relations and identity, as well as the different forms of exclusion they entail, instead of trying to hide them behind rationality and morality (p. 105). One such exclusion mechanism I suggest involves how a legitimate democratic identity is often intrinsically linked to one form of agency involving speech and reason. Following Mouffe, I interpret these

arguments to encourage spaces in which there is constant struggle over desires and interests not pinned down and adjusted by a rational, universal order. This is a collective with no belief in rational debate as the only suitable solution and in which participants experience resistance, conflict and real alternatives.

This disruption of structures involves a disintegration of what is made legitimate and significant in the dominant discourses, a destruction and disruption clearing the ground for developing new collective identities and subject positions (Mouffe, 2005a, p. 105). I use the concept of 'dislocation', that Laclau offers, for these displacements, in the analysis studying a moment of disturbance. Laclau, using dislocation, refer to something being 'pushed out of place', a dislocation of social space (Marchart, 2014). According to Marchart (2014), Laclau has the idea that if dislocation means pushing something out of place, then it must be radically different from what it pushes against. A dislocation is unexpected, inconsistent with the immediate expectations and, therefore, can threaten sedimented routines and processes of social institutions (Marchart, 2014, p. 277). I have used these features of the concept dislocation as a focus studying the empirical material and disturbances. The consequences of dislocation have a dual nature: on the one hand, dislocation disrupts the current 'positive' identities, and on the other hand, it is the foundation on which new identities are constructed (Laclau, 1993, p.39; Marchart, 2014). In my reading the dislocation of social space creates grounds for putting hegemonic structures at display, thus making it possible to question and eventually challenge them. The aim is not to create new positive identities but to disturb and crack open existing identities to make room for other stories and alternative identities.

Agonistic pluralism filters into the entire analysis in relation to the three dimensions presented at the end of Chapter 3.2. It is especially relevant in Chapter 5, which discusses negotiations or the 'struggles' among different positionings. I use agonistic pluralism with emphasis toward dislocation to examine the empirical material and create an analytical space in which it is possible to study disturbances as situations involving opportunities for pushing social structures and power relations out of place. This is followed by an analysis of a space for the ignorant citizen to appear. I develop this in Chapter 6, in which I study different responses from teachers and, using dislocation, investigate their

responses, considering the extent to which their responses make space for the dislocation of power relations and social structures in place in the classroom. Agonistic pluralism is used in Chapter 8 to examine the interactions between children as potential agonistic struggles. I put the concept in motion to analyse the different forms of ruptures in the interactions between children in places where children are away from the immediate view of adults. The concept makes it possible to explore and imagine children's interactions as involving vibrant agonistic struggles.

3.2.2 Belonging to and the formation of collective identities

Passion is a central concept in the radical theory of democracy that is influential in my analysis, especially in Chapter 5, 6 and in the theorisations and discussion in Chapter 9. In Mouffe's theory, passion can be seen as a powerful form of affect that relates to people's way of forming, we/they identification and collective identities. Mouffe (2014) distinguishes between emotions and passion and in my interpretation considers emotion as a significantly individualised concept and passion as holding a more robust political quality. With passion, Mouffe underlines the conflictual and collective dimension of affect, a strong form of collective affect that constructs collective identities and pulls people together (Mouffe, 2014, p. 149). From what I understand, Mouffe refers to the kind of affect that contributes to the development of collective relations and identities and mobilises people to walk the streets in protest. Mouffe (2005b) refers to Canetti (1960) in underscoring her point about passion, describing it as a drive that makes them want to become part of a crowd to *lose themselves* in a moment of fusion with the masses (p. 23). The drive of passion for belonging to a group is so powerful that individuals are willing to give up some of themselves to belong to a larger group (Tofteland, 2015). In the analysis, I connect Mouffe's emphasis on affect with Merleau-Ponty's concept of the pre-reflexive subject, bringing the body to the front in all meaning-making. Tryggvason (2018) argues that passion, as defined by Mouffe, must not be understood as something to add to a political discussion but as already being there. Tryggvason quotes Todd to deepen the understanding of passion and conflicts from an agonistic perspective: 'Conflicts of this quality are not so much about positions, perspectives and worldviews, but are articulations that are contested at *the very level of who I am'* (Todd, 2011, s. 111, cited in Tryggvason, 2018). Passion cannot be separated from people's collective identifications and their sense of self. Passion being

related to *the very level of who we are and that of 'losing ourselves in the masses* resonates in my reception with Merleau-Ponty's idea on the pre-reflexive subject and bringing the body to the front in all meaning-making. I use Merleau-Ponty's ideas on the bodily subject and develop them theoretically through Mouffe's insistence on the significance of affect for democratic life. In other words, I interpret her concept of passion considering Merlau-Ponty's pre-reflexive subject to study and understand children's playful corporal practices in respect of democracy in primary education.

Passion is related to affective forces pulling us towards different groups, either for long establishments or merely for a moment to be immersed in it (Mouffe, 2005b, 2014). In my analysis, the collective affect *pulling people together* is a critical piece of significance, not the length of time spent in this 'establishment' of a particular collective identity. This reflects an understanding of the time relevant to my study. First, it resonates with Merleau-Ponty and his use of temporality, in which he blurs the boundaries between the individual subject and time. Mouffe asserts that it is not about a measurable timeframe but the movement of pulling and being pulled together with others that matters. Second, it supports studying disturbances as a potential situation involving passion, although they represent situations that take place often only in a flash of a moment, and children are immersed in them only for a moment. According to Mouffe (2005), it is possible to detect passion in places where people are concerned with collective identities and we/they formations. This supports her idea of looking beyond political institutions in studies on democracy and democratic living. In my reading, the concept of passion is at the centre of Mouffe's theory because it is an essential part of her critique against the prevailing rationalist, universal and essentialist approach, especially in modern liberal democracies (Mouffe, 2005a). Mouffe (2005a, 2005b) insists on the value of constant struggle and confrontation, asserting that it is not possible to hold on to a consensus-driven united collective, as this diminishes the grounds for democracy. From this perspective the way I read Mouffe, new beginnings are pivotal for holding democracy alive, and it is only when a collective is conflictual, unstable and elastic in terms of ability to change that we can characterise it as having democratic quality.

According to Mouffe, the struggle or confrontation must be sensitive to what she refers to as the agonistic confrontation between adversaries. Adversaries are not enemies or antagonists but instead are friendly enemies engaging in agonistic conflicts in which one agrees with certain ethical–political principles, such as equality and liberty for democracy, without necessarily agreeing with the interpretation of those principles (Hirsh & Miessen, 2012). Agonistic confrontations, or what Mouffe (2005a) calls *agonistic struggle*, are in my understanding the struggle between different interpretations of shared principles. These shared principles are a complex part of the theory I struggle to comprehend, as Mouffe offers little argumentation and exploration regarding these ethical–political principles. Therefore, I align my interpretation with those of other scholars, including Tofteland (2015, p. 41) and Tryggvason (2018). emphasising that equality and liberty as linked to the democratic paradox is at the centre of these ethical-political principles for democratic processes. The theory promotes a radical form of pluralism, but it does not support a collective completely 'freed' from structures, as that would lead to anarchy. Interpreting this theory in terms of education and my analysis does not mean applying a perspective arguing for the removal of all forms of principles and common ground. It is about finding concepts and ideas for imagining and understanding how schools can initiate spaces for flexible social structures that promote different collective identities that hold different interpretations of the institutional structure in place.

Passion is used in Chapter 6 to study the main disturbing elements, including the laughing collectives of children. I use it to understand the social processes and interactions in children's bodily playful collectives in Chapter 6 and beyond. Tryggvason (2018) argues that it can be challenging to separate passion and emotions when analysing an actual situation in empirical research. I support this observation, but no more than that it requires careful consideration of how to approach it. My approach has been to include three necessary components of the definition of passion. I have been attentive to 1) the dimension of fusion with the masses and the notion of losing oneself, 2) the conflictual dimensions arising from the confrontation between children and teachers, or between children, and 3) the relationship among the children creating the playful collectives in the situations. Rhythm analysis (RA) (Chapter 4.5) has been used a support for the

discussion on passion and affect, as it is an analytical tool for tracking affecting rhythms that offer language for transforming a focus on affect into units of analysis. Passion is in summary a central concept I use to study the 'ignorant position' and the ignorant citizen.

3.2.3 Studying agonistic collectives of peers and institutional orders

Having reviewed the concept of passion, Mouffe (2005a; 2005b; 2014) is in my view clearly interested in the significance of collective forms of identification for democracy. Any collective of people will always have differences in opinions and interests, creating grounds for agonism. Her concepts of passion and grounds for agonism open an analytical space for studying how and to what extent collectives of children in school involve elements of this 'democratic quality'. Therefore, they motivate my interest in children's collectives as constitutive of unofficial school life. I use the term collectives instead of groups because I want to highlight collectives in accordance with Mouffe's ideas. Stressing the collective instead of the individual involve possible risks and dilemmas, especially as any group of people will have differing views, backgrounds and interest. Another dimension is related to power relations. Although children are peers in a collective in which no children have a predefined role as superior to the other, there will always be roles, positions and levels in any group with respect to popularity, which influences those who have more 'power' than others. Tryggvason (2018) relates the position of power to popular students. However, looking at this considering the authority of a teacher and the official system of school, children as a collective quickly end up being the least superior. Moreover, regardless of status in the peer collective, all children are expected to adhere to and navigate the 'role of the pupil', bound by the orders and expectations of school. Therefore, although there are apparent nuances concerning the 'isolated peer group', there is a certain order in school that makes children the subordinate group. To a large extent, school is a system constructed by adults for children. There has been an increased focus on participation in Norwegian schools through, for example, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there are few profound structural aspects that children can influence and decide upon through the life course of mandatory school in Norway. School is a right for the individual child, but it is also mandatory and a duty to fulfil as a citizen. In most Norwegian public schools, children have no say in the length of time they should spend in school daily and weekly or in the

priorities of subjects, such as the number of hours, the subjects valued as primary subjects and the core skills to learn. This includes how math and Norwegian are considered key skills to learn, whereas music, arts & crafts and physical education (PE) are given fewer hours and a lower status in terms of core skills. I could go on with similar examples and I could point to more examples in which schools have managed to include elements of choice. However, the choices are often framed inside an already preset plan, including, for example, which one of two test formats children will choose for their assessment. From a democratic perspective, this can be adequate practice, but the deeper structural dimensions, such as why the test is there in the first place, what kind of effect it has on children and whether tests should be a part of the school, are not set up as topics for discussion. If I follow Mouffe's ideas on democracy, official school life seem to follow an authoritarian order with little space for agonistic struggle, as most dimensions have already been given and set on which children, as a group in society, have no direct influence.

It is relevant to ask whether it is appropriate to employ Mouffe's theory in school when she emphasises the need not to suppress conflicts through an authoritarian order. My answer is yes, as pointed out in the introduction chapter. First, from a normative position, I argue for greater justice and equality for children as a group in terms of democracy and democratic living in education. Second, Mouffe stresses that any collective will always have differences, creating grounds for agonism. I use these differences as an analytical tool to approach children as different others, not lacking. Recognising children as a different other aligns the adults not as the better ones or the ones with the more correct answers; instead, it questions what kind of 'other' the adult versus the child is and their point of doing, living and understanding considering this. This perspective can challenge ideas on child and pupil and disturb the superior position the pedagogue often finds themselves in (Østrem, 2012). Therefore, it has the potential to challenge the orders, relations and structures that position adults in these privileged positions. Any order is socially constructed, and anything that is socially constructed can be investigated and challenged. With the radical theory of democracy, referring to the correlation between disturbances, ruptures and democracy, I open up an analytical space to study disturbances from a democratic perspective. Perhaps is the school order not an authoritarian order but

one that children, who today spend much of their childhood in school, can and should challenge, or at least trouble to create dislocations and transformations. If we are to expand and develop insights into school processes to enhance practices for democratic living and challenge hegemonic practices, then I suggest it is not an option to accept that there is a substantial order in school. Instead, we must investigate the places and processes in which the authoritarian order is visible. Only through this can we in my view discover the spaces children can navigate, resist and move with and against them in their lives.

3.3 Conceptualising democracy using Mouffe's agonistic model

3.3.1 Citizenship conceptualised through democratic subjectification

My understanding of citizenship is aligned with the agonistic model, and I connect it with the figure of the ignorant citizen. In my view, the ignorant citizen is someone who engages his or her subjectivity and citizenship in 'democratic subjectification' processes. My understanding of democratic subjectification is inspired by Biesta's notion of democratic subjectification, which he offers as a conceptual couple, based on the interpretations of Mouffe's work (Biesta, 2011). Mouffe's agonistic model and radical theory of democracy provide alternatives to and create new conceptualisations of the democratic citizen and, thus, democratic subjectivity. The citizen in this approach is understood as someone involved in constant struggles to bring new beginnings into the current collective. It involves a citizen who is 'ignorant of' and who does not accept being pinned down to a pre-given civic idea or identity (Biesta, 2011). This is a person who refuses to succumb to a form of socialisation where it is about being inserted into a pre-existing democratic order (Mouffe, 2000). Tryggvason (2018, p. 42) points out that Mouffe's agonistic model does not refer to social and cultural collectives in which the person is already involved. Opposite to the communitarian model, Mouffe is concerned with the potential formation of new collectives and identities based on the collective's vision. Using Mouffe's agonistic model, the democratic subject becomes someone who takes part in creating ruptures of the given, bringing new alternatives to established orders, systems and structures. This is someone who contributes to elastic and dynamic structures and who is never perceived as given or settled. This way of understanding democratic subjectivity resonates with Biesta's (2011) conceptual concept of democratic subjectification. In my understanding, the term subjectification is associated with

the processes of becoming and 'coming into presence' (Biesta, 2011) as a democratic subject and with how a subject is entangled and engaged in this world. This interpretation resonates in my view with Mouffe's concept of passion, and the focus on entanglement and coming into presence can be related to how we, as human beings, always seek meaning or come into presence through common affects and collective forms of identifications. The processes of being and entanglement with the world imply that subjectification is linked to broader notions of identity and socialisation if one understands that socialisation is related to human beings and becoming. However, I am specifically interested in the processes of becoming in connection with democracy and different forms of ruptures, and I find that subjectification based on Biesta (2011) and Mouffe (2005) has greater potential for analysing these processes compared with using a concept such as socialisation. Subjectification places more emphasis on coming into presence instead of more linearly oriented development processes. This is important, as I devote much focus to the notion of 'things that just happen', which is rooted in a strong form of presence.

Biesta does not explicitly address the discursive in his notion of subjectification, but as he theorises with Mouffe (Biesta, 2011), he provides a link to a theory involving the discursive and discourses as pivotal in social processes. My use of subjectification recognises this connection, and I support Munkholm (2020), who argues that subjectification involves processes in the discursive, something constantly made and remade in the local context. Processes where individuals encounter the world and are engaged in transformations and movements in emerging as subjects for others and ourselves (Foucault, 1977, 1975; Hammer, 2017; Staunæs & Juelskjær, 2014). In this perspective, subjectification is contextual, relational and in constant movement, which means avoiding decontextualising and essentialising the use of such an understanding (Søndergaard, 2003, p.34). Mouffe in my view supports this in her critique of the universal essentialised subject and her encouragement of decentring the subject. According to Søndergaard (2003), subjectification is a good concept for capturing its floating understanding of the subject. The analytical focus becomes whatever is 'culturally and discursively inscribed and seen or given as the truth or normal, the given patterns of meaning and practices that concrete subjects is created by and creates themselves through' (Søndergaard, 2003, p. 35). Both

democratic subjectification and the discursive in my work involve the body, which I can, following literature on subjectification, refer to as embodied subjectification, specifically 'embodied democratic subjectification'. This bodily focus includes how representations become embodied through relational and situational practices (Papadopoulos, 2008, pp. 150–152). My focus on the body develops from Merlau-Ponty's pre-reflexive bodily subject to the insistence on how bodies also perform and realise discourses and positions through bodily actions movements (Papadopoulos, 2008, p. 151). This includes gestures 'habits of the flesh' and ways of talking and walking. Merlau-Ponty's theory on the body, the radical theory of democracy and Biesta's notion of democratic subjectification are elements I work with in studying the body as important in democratic subjectivity and living in school. I now move on to the agonistic model to examine democratic subjectification and the opportunities linked to democratic participation and agonistic participation.

3.3.2 Agonistic participation

The agonistic model is used to reconceptualise democratic participation, as described in Chapter 2.2.2. One significant dimension of this model is how it challenges linguistic forms of agency, including 'voice', as the dominating form of agency expected and required to participate. Ideas related to *voice* involve deep power relations and injustice in the forms of agency that are not included in the notion of the adult, able-bodied agency characterised by reason and speech (Rollo, 2016a; Rollo 2020a). This critique is related to Mouffe's ideas on agonistic pluralism, as this form of radical pluralism cannot be realised without a critique and rejection of the essential rational subject, which risks blindness in the deep power structures to which all human beings are subordinate in any society (Mouffe, 2005a). Therefore, in radical democracy, the social actor comprises multiple subject positions that are continuously moving and changing (Mouffe, 2002, p. 183). Mouffe argues that only with this decentred poststructuralist understanding of the subject is it possible to theorise all the relationships of subordination in which a single individual is inscribed. This includes understanding how dominating social structures are related to the capacities required for the participation, such as the voice, of children. To advance this exploration, I use postcolonial perspectives from Rollo (2016a, 2016b, 2020a) that children are not considered democratic subjects because voice positions them as a subordinate group in society, as voice favours the able adult

notion of agency and does not legitimise children's primary forms of agency as valuable for democratic politics. This supposition lays the ground for how the expectations of legitimate and non-legitimate democratic ways of being in school condition and construct children's identities and what opportunities this gives children as being democratic subjects.

Mouffe's second main critique considering the agonistic form of participation is her criticism of the hegemonic neo-liberal logic in democratic societies, where she is concerned that citizens are transformed into political consumers (Mouffe, 2005a; Mouffe, 2014). Mouffe (2005a, p.6) asserts that the dominance of neo-liberalism in society is a threat to democratic institutions because democracy is reduced to a set of neutral procedures, and citizens are transformed into political consumers, thus reducing politics to an instrumental activity in which ethics becomes inferior to the economy (Mouffe, 2002, p. 179). Mouffe argues that one implication of procedural logic, which becomes merely about being inserted into an already set structure, is that no or few flexible structures are open for changes, thus risking the pinning down of agonistic confrontations. Her concern is that there is real danger if the participation does not entail real confrontation of different views, as conflictual models of communication will withdraw, and the participation becomes only some form of consensus in which one cannot disturb and which presupposes consensus (Hirsch & Miessen, 2012, pp.24–25). The risk the way I understand Mouffe is that it becomes a false or tokenistic form of participation in which citizens presumably take part but not on their terms, without any real influence. Thus, according to Mouffe (2005, 2014), we depend on agonistic participation involving continuous agonistic confrontations and struggles to keep the democratic project alive. I have theorised and analysed the empirical material with this critical agonistic understanding of participation.

3.3.3 Critical discussions linked to the agonistic model

There are different strands of critiques and critical discussions of the agonistic model. These include theoretical discussions on the opportunities and limitations of how the agonistic model can understand democratic education in more political terms and how it can make affect and political emotions relevant to democratic politics and education (Sant, 2021; Crossouard & Dunne, 2015; Heldal, 2021; Knight, 2018; Ljungren, 2015; Straume, 2016; Ruitenberg, 2010; Sant, 2021; Tryggvason, 2018; Tryggvason, 2019; White et al., 2007). I point to

a few important and relevant clusters of critical discussions to clarify my use of the agonistic model, especially regarding equality and conflict.

The first critical discussion is on how the agonistic model and Mouffe stress the importance of experiences that arouse a quality of equality in interactions. This means that there should be a quality of equality among the members in any confrontation, and thus, equality should be approached as a fundamental democratic value. This is not straightforward, and there are dilemmas that have given rise to discussions and concerns among scholars. Torjussen (2021) finds that the issue of children as equal subjects and equality as the ideal in relationships risks removing the boundaries and actual differences between children and adults. He asserts that it can be problematic for children, as they do not have the kind of autonomous self-determination that is asked of them. We risk allowing pedagogy to adapt the world to children and prevent children from adapting to the world (Torjussen, 2021, p. 231), as also stressed by other central Norwegian scholars (Børhaug, 2017, 2018). I follow these arguments, but I disagree with the overall premise of this criticism. I am not convinced that these risks are related to children as equal subjects and equality as an ideal in the relationship between children and adults. On the contrary, I think that the issue of 'treating children as small adults' occurs because we cannot respect and recognise children as equal subjects. We recognise them from an adult position in which we seem to be trapped in a narrow understanding of voice (Rollo, 2016a; 2016b; 2020a). This conceptualisation of voice expects children to act closer to adult capacities, including speech and reason. I am concerned about this conceptualisation of voice linked to democracy and participation for younger children, and my view of equality is not about children being equal to or similar to adults. I work with agonistic equality, which is related to who belongs to the big 'we', who is pushed out and who is positioned outside of it. Having agonistic equality as an ideal may affect the position of the teacher, but in my interpretation, it is not about transferring authority from the adult to the child or blurring power relations in the educational encounter. It is a rupture that shows the power relations and introduces new understandings of the interdependence between a pedagogue and a child. Insights can open a space for recognising that teachers and children rely on each other to engage in and with the educational encounter as their common point of departure. Interdependence does not simply

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change the position of who has authority; it disturbs the view of humans as independent autonomous beings, pushing towards the recognition that we are all connected and interdependent in our relationships with the world. Arendt's ideas are one theoretical grounding in the critique of equality as an ideal and the boundaries between pedagogy and politics. Arendt is concerned that loss of authority among adults could cause them to neglect their responsibility in the world and their guidance of their children into it (Arendt, 2006). This guidance of children is fundamental, as she argues that children are incapable of instructing themselves in an educational context (Arendt, 2006). I assert that children in many instances have shown that they can instruct themselves in educational contexts, such as during the climate strike and how thousands of young people demonstrated against severe global issues caused by adults. This has even been studied as 'strikingly educational' (Biswas & Mattheis, 2022). Moreover, it is not a matter of abolishing adult responsibility but rather determining what authority means and does. I also question why professional responsibility in schools must be related to adult authority. Another dimension of Arendt's theory is that, to her, the most fundamental threat to democratic political activity is when people are unable to respond to different events, find it irrelevant or alienating leading to a lack of action (Markell, 2006, p. 12). If we accept this emphasis from Arendt, then I wonder how it translates into a greater boundary between pedagogy and politics. If we consider school as a place where we can encourage children to be active independent citizens with a belief in and political desire to engage in the political world, then political action cannot be nourished by 'shielding' children as a group of people from the political sphere but rather by including them in it. I agree with Heldal (2021, pp. 258–259) that schools in our complex global and digital world will always be political and that a separation of schools from politics may lead to a depoliticised citizen role in which politics ends up being separated from morals. Heldal (2021, p.258) uses Mouffe's theory to show that the division between morals and politics can weaken democratic citizenship in schools, thus disempowering children. Democratic citizenship must be seen as a political and normative ideal in school because, if not, other discourses steered by economic and international neo-liberal logics will infiltrate its mandate (Heldal, 2021). According to Heldal, it is necessary to bring in arguments and theories from other fields outside of the school discourse, including theories on democracy and justice, to secure a strong, dynamic and enhanced citizenship

education. It is not within the scope of this thesis to advance this discussion. However, it would, in my view, be rather paradoxical if greater equality with respect to children would undermine a discipline such as pedagogy if we understand pedagogy in an educational context to be a field of knowledge and practice set to focus on children.

The second critical discussion linked to the agonistic model is a critique of the antagonistic assumption behind the theory (Knight, 2018; Schaap, 2007; Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele, 2010). Mouffe's dissociative approach is criticised for employing ideas concerned with the 'us and them' divide from Carl Schmitt. The critique is concerned with the extent to which it is possible to apply Schmitt's political concept to a theory about plurality and democracy (Schaap 2007). Schmitt was a German political theorist and a member of the Nazi party critical of liberal democracy. Similar to my view, Mouffe rejects Schmitt's conclusion because it is dangerous and anti-democratic. Nevertheless, Mouffe's insists that insights from his theory (not his conclusions) can be beneficial if taken seriously in the name of democracy (Mouffe, 2005a, pp.36–38). Mouffe offers a thorough argumentation for why it is possible that his ideas on the 'us and them divide' have critical potential for a better understanding of tensions embedded in liberal democracies related to equality and the relationship between exclusion and inclusion (Mouffe, 2005a, pp.36–45). Mouffe write that according to Schmitt, there is a difference between liberal equality, in which every person is perceived to be equal to another, and democratic equality, which depends on who belongs to the demos and who is pushed out or is situated outside at any given time (Mouffe, 2005a, p. 39). This following Mouffe shows the paradox between liberalism and democracy in that democratic logic must involve a moment of 'closure', considering what constitutes the 'people', and this will inevitably involve the possibility of putting up boundaries between us and them (Mouffe, 2005a, pp.43). Therefore, according to Mouffe, liberal democracies must always be a 'constant process of negotiation and renegotiation through different hegemonic articulations—of this constitutive paradox' (p. 45). In my view she implies that without this constant negotiation and struggle between 'us and them', any liberal democracy can easily maintain a democratic order that is both exclusive and suppressive. In my interpretation, based on Schmidt's ideas, Mouffe conveys the role played by the paradox in any democratic society in an

interesting manner. Her emphasis on 'us and them' and how democracy without a constant genuine negotiation could be a 'false democracy' that supresses its people are relevant and interesting in democracy education. With this train of thought, it is not possible to create a 'we' without excluding someone or something. Therefore, I suggest, a central task of democracy education is to create grounds for constantly negotiating the current 'we' and disruption for new collective identities to emerge.

The third critical discussion is concerned with the unproductive and overly optimistic focus on conflict and emotions relevant to democracy. For example, conflict is considered superior to solidarity, which is problematic because conflict without a basis of solidarity can easily end in violent confrontations (Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele, 2010). Another critique targets political emotion. By studying the consequences of embracing anger as a political emotion in democratic education, Yacek (2019) finds that studies using agonistic theories, such as Mouffe's theory, have given too much recognition to the importance of emotions (e.g. anger) in education. Anger involves serious psychological risk and may contribute to making antagonism and societal problems worse and counterproductive rather than better (Yacek, 2019). Leiviskä and Pyy (2021) assert that citizenship education that focuses on conflictual identity formation, in accordance with Mouffe's idea of conflict and agonistic struggle, may create antagonism rather than dissolve it. This critique has been taken seriously in the agonistic literature. One response to this critique is that much of it is based on misinterpretation, especially of the agonism fronted by Mouffe (Tryggvason, 2017, 2018a, 2019). One problem is that the critique seems to be based on a psychological understanding of emotions, and this misplaces the argument, as Mouffe explicitly states that she does not refer to individual emotions but to collective identities and that this is why she uses the term passion which has a stronger political connotation (Tryggvason, 2018a; Mouffe, 2014, p.149). Another dimension related to the critic is that the exaggerated focus on conflict above solidarity seems to overlook Mouffe's insistence on radical equality. This means that for a conflict to be agonistic or not antagonistic, there must be a symbolic ground shared in relation to equality in which the participants must not be enemies wanting to kill the other but rather friendly adversaries, as Mouffe calls it. This is important because the disturbances and ruptures in my

research are not situations in which neither the teacher nor the children want to seriously harm or kill the other. The situations examined in my study involve serious disagreements, deep conflicts of interest and physical outbursts, but playfulness is the affective nerve, not violence.

The fourth area of discussion is the kind of agonism applied in the agonistic model. It is important that one be critical in educational research about the different agonisms used in the agonistic literature. This is especially important when applying Mouffe's agonism because it is different from that of Arendt, a philosopher whose work is more commonly applied in educational research. This means that although they both use an agonistic approach to democracy, Mouffe has another theoretical contribution compared with Arendt. I agree with Mouffe (2014) that Arendt's conceptualisation does not fully capture and do justice to the democratic opportunities of disruptions and conflict. Although Arendt focuses on human plurality and understands politics as the action for dealing with this plurality, she fails to show that this plurality is also the point of departure for antagonistic conflicts (Mouffe, 2014, pp. 152–154). Following Mouffe Arendt's understanding of agonism is one that does not recognise antagonism and that, instead of conflict and struggle, points to and relies on pluralism for the public sphere, which works around the notion of intersubjective agreement (Mouffe, 2014, pp.152–153). Arendt explicitly references the Greek Agon, but according to Mouffe (2014), Arendt is not able to fully develop a conceptualisation that fully considers the 'agon'—the 'painful struggle'—due to Arendt's emphasis on reaching an intersubjective agreement for the public sphere. The way I understand Mouffe, Arendt's focus on agreement hinders fully capturing the two central levels of the agonistic struggle. These levels refer to the moment of contestation and the continued articulation of new alternatives and, in my reading of Mouffe, the 'construction of new hegemonic articulations', which indicates that new stories and identities must be focal in democratic politics (Mouffe, 2014, pp.152–153). The concept of the 'ignorant position', which I empirically and analytically develop, is theoretically based on agonism that brings conflict to the forefront and considers the moment of contestation and the second dimension of the agonistic struggle. The duality of these dimensions offers a theoretical perspective to analyse disturbances and ruptures as possible moments of

contestation and the continued struggle and negotiation opening or reducing opportunities for children as a democratic subject.

3.4 Mouffe meets Merleau-Ponty

I use several theories in my research, as presented in the Introduction and in the beginning of Chapter 3, and which I will address further in Chapter 4.1. The two key theoretical strands are based on Mouffe and Merlau-Ponty. In what follows, I explore the connections between these theories and briefly discuss the other theories used. As Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 138) states, '*Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world since the world is flesh'*. In my reading of Merlau-Ponty, he proposes that there are no limits and clear boundaries, as we are all flesh, the world is flesh, and, therefore, we are an entanglement of bodies mutually connected to the world. This ontological outset of seeing human beings entangled with and to the world shows the interconnectedness of beings in the physical, cultural and social world coming into being through relationships and our place in the world (Thornquist, 2003; Zahavi, 2003). This interconnectedness of human life is to my understanding ontologically related to the theory of radical democracy and Mouffe's social ontology of radical negativity (Mouffe, 2014; Laclau & Mouffe, 2002). In the 'discursive nature of the social', there are no essential identities, only forms of identification discursively inscribed in political and collective identities (Mouffe, 2014, p. 155). This implies in my view that the ontological premise for Mouffe is that there is no identity without contingent expressions and connections with other objects (Laclau & Mouffe, 2002; Hansen, 2014). Although Mouffe focuses more on discourses and political and collective identities, similar to Merleau-Ponty, social ontology points to the interconnectedness of human life in which we are in a mutual, entangled and existential way of being in the world. Moreover, Mouffe's insistence on affect and her concept of passion as a centre of human existence and meaning-seeking are in my interpretation having studied both theories related to Merleau-Ponty's idea of the body as the foreground in all human meaning-making. All theories I use, including those presented in the following section, rupture the cartesian dualistic approach to human beings and emphasise human entanglement with and in the social as a prerequisite to a meaningful existence. The following two concepts have been my analytical language used to expand the analysis of institutional structures in schools and how children and professionals navigate these structures.

3.5. Two concepts to investigate different forms of school life

The primary and secondary adjustments introduced by Goffman were used in the field process and in studying the empirical material. These concepts seemed highly relevant and significant for creating an analytical space for broadening the analysis of what the different school lives. I only introduce the context in Goffman's theory in relation to these two concepts, which means that I do not present the full complexity of Goffman's theory, nor do I present other central concepts in his theoretical universe. I solely aim to clarify how I understand and use the kindred concepts of primary and secondary adjustments and finetune their contribution to the analysis.

Goffman was a Canadian sociologist and social psychologist. He is highly influential in sociology and is considered a theorist in studies across many disciplines. I focus only on his work on total institutions, which ties him to the Chicago school of sociologists, with a sharp and precise focus on ethnography and everyday life. His concepts are geared towards details in the social world, such as rituals, routines, face-to-face interaction and processes concerning producing and reproducing social orders in institutions. Through primary and secondary adjustments, Goffman examined the intersection between institutional structures and the way individuals navigate and manage their roles in an institution. Goffman was interested in how institutional logics establish and influence people, including how normalising processes involve events occurring within the institution's walls (Goffman, 1961). In my reading of Goffman, he was mainly interested in what occurs within institutions and less in the power constructions between institutions and society. This is why I isolate the focus of these two concepts on a specific dimension that takes place within the school as an institution. Primary and secondary adjustments are used to study the relationship between two school lives and its distinct features. These kindred concepts make it in my view possible to explore moments of disturbances and ruptures in interactions between children as an encounter between institutional structures and the individual child navigating these structures as an active actor in their lives in school. According to Goffman (1961), primary adjustments hint at whatever is perceived as the 'normal' and expected conduct in the institution, while secondary adjustments belong to whatever is 'against' what Goffman (1961) calls 'programmed' conduct. The secondary adjustments belong to the

institution's 'underworld' (Goffman, 1961) and connect with unofficial forms of school life. To my understanding this refers to whatever is not on the official timetable and agenda but is composed of and managed by children. In my reading of Goffman, the tension between primary and secondary adjustments is important in studying how individuals manage to maintain a sense of agency in a total institution. Many may argue that Norwegian schools, as institutions, are far from being the original institution Goffman studied. Goffman (1961) initially studied mental patients in mental hospitals and inmates in prisons, although he specified in his book, Asylum (1961), that he did not mainly aim to describe prisons or mental hospitals. He aimed for a theory offering a 'general profile' (p. 16) of these establishments. I understand this to be a form of institutional profile with certain characteristics that are typical of the so-called 'total institution'. Goffman developed these institutional characteristics in 1961 in the context of Canadian prisons and mental hospitals. However, despite a very different context, they can still I propose, with high analytical precision, illuminate the dimensions of Norwegian schools, identifying them as sharing features with this 'general profile' of a total institution.

Goffman (1961) points out that there is typically a world of inmates and a world of staff in total institutions and that the group of staff is fewer in number than the inmates, who come in a large batch of what he calls similar others who are treated alike. Furthermore, there is a certain distance between the two groups, as the staff group is meant to supervise and control the inmate group. This is parallel to teachers and pupils, who have two different roles. Children can be seen as this large batch of others, as they are usually 25–30 children in one class. They are grouped based on age. Children in similar age groups are given a similar curriculum, which is developed based on expectations, norms and developmental standards children of a particular age group are expected to follow. Additionally, all children, regardless of age, are expected to follow the same rules set for pupils within the school. For example, they are not allowed to playfight or run inside. Another typical feature of a total institution, according to Goffman, is related to the organisation of time.

> All phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading
> at a prearranged time into the next, the whole sequence of activities being

imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials (Goffman 1961, p.17).

The pulse of order studied in Chapter 5 is related to this feature, even causing ambivalence among the teachers, who are the guardians of this manner of splitting up and organising time. According to Goffman (1961), these various activities are finally brought together by a rational plan designed to fulfil the aims of the institution (p. 17). This rational plan can be seen as the overall national school policies, the national curriculum, the timetable and generally the school mandate as set out by the core national curriculum. This institutional system, is in my reading of Goffman, enforced, produced and reproduced by the two culturally and socially different worlds that very often develop, separating the staff and inmates. According to Goffman, even talking across these boundaries happens in a particular tone of voice (Goffman, 1961, p. 19). This can be seen in schools, where teachers often talk to children differently from other adults. Examples are the adult bending down and talking to the child in a calm, soft voice to engage the child and teachers using a stern and loud voice to keep the children quiet. Adults rarely use the same approach as their colleagues in terms of tone of voice. There are still other features that I can mention, but these critical features of schools illustrate in my view that school can be studied as a total institution, as conceptualised by Goffman. I use the concepts of primary and secondary adjustments because they are precise and can explain the intersection between the two school lives, thus relating to the emergence of the ignorant position. I now leave Goffman to present the final theoretical perspectives put in motion in chapter 7 of the analysis.

3.6 Gender perspectives

The following theoretical perspectives were obtained from studying the empirical material, and I work with gender perspectives to analyse the dimensions of the apparent differences between children following a gender pattern. As Mouffe does not offer a theoretical framework for studying discourses or subject positions from a gendered perspective, there is a need to look at other theorists. The initial focus in the research question was to what extent there were different opportunities for different children associated with being a democratic subject, and gender became apparent as one possible structure of difference studying the empirical material. The following sections show how I conceptualise gender in

the analysis and how I approach gender in analysis Chapter 7. I draw inspiration from discursive perspectives on concepts including gendered meanings, masculinity, femininity and subject positionings.

In bringing gender to the foreground, I recognise it as a social category that potentially affects the lives of children. Aasebø (2002) finds that it is important to be critical of social categories while bearing in mind the risks of reproducing the category by bringing about a specific knowledge about it. However, according to Aasebø, withdrawing completely from using categories such as gender could be dangerous. This risk involves disregarding gender as a category, which has historically been important and relevant in identifying power structures and social inequality in terms of gender (Aasebø, 2002). Another complexity is that not only is gender one of many dimensions to study human existence, but in my view is also a concept with many connotations. According to Bjerrum Nielsen and Davies (2017), 'it is a dimension of bodies and physical reproduction, individual identities and personal experience, language and discourses, social relations and everyday interaction' (p.136). Scholars who are associated with the social psychological perspective of gender include Simone de Beauvoir and, in the Nordic context, Haavind and Bjerrum Nielsen. Haavind (2000) and Nielsen criticise traditional psychology for making gender a difference, a dichotomy, something natural, static and symmetrical. This is a substantial and main criticism of traditional psychological perspectives that has led to a movement in the perceptions on gender, with most current researchers who use the social psychological perspective approach gender as something historical, relational and contextually bound (Bjerrum Nielsen, 2013, p.457). Instead of using the concepts of women and men as analytical categories, I consider gender in relation to 'gendered meanings' (Haavind, 2000). Gendered meanings in my understanding relate to ideas about gender, which then relate to discourses about gender. One of the most prominent theorists on the discourse perspective of gender is Judith Butler, an American philosopher who is well known for her book Gender Trouble (Butler, 1990). In my interpretation Butler supposes that the structures and systems of power produce the same subject that the same systems are meant to defend and represent, producing and reproducing the subject in accordance with the expectations of the structures (Butler, 1990).

3.6.1 Femininity and masculinity

Masculinity and femininity can to my understanding be considered concepts that move along a continuum in describing and capturing different femininities and masculinities in a given context (Jackson & Dempster, 2009). The term masculinity was developed in relation to 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 2005) and discourses on a specific masculinity that is the idealised, dominant and high-status discourse of being a particular male (Connell, 2005; Jackson & Dempster, 2009). This idealised masculinity is constructed with regard to more subordinate discourses and forms of maleness; for example, maleness is related more to feminine discourses (Connell, 2005). This form of hegemonic masculinity is what many are measured against and seek acceptance within (Mills, 2001). Discourses on hegemonic masculinity will always be historically and contextually dependent. I recognise however, some scholars argue that changes in the rules of hegemonic masculinity modify at a very low pace (Kimmel, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity can reviewing the literature capture and create a scale on what is considered 'more or less' male and what legitimate doings are within the norm (Frosh et al., 2002; Jackson & Dempster, 2009; Kimmel et al., 2004; Kimmel, 2008). I use these perspectives and concepts to analyse how children take up different positionings in moments of disturbances related to the discourses of femininity and masculinity.

3.6.2 Gendered subject positionings

Position can in my understanding be considered a criticism of and opposition to the tradition of role theory in sociology. I have used this concept to obtain a dynamic model that recognises the complex reality of interaction between children compared with the traditional more static role concept (Davies & Harrè, 1990). Position is rooted in discourse theory in which the discourse is seen to offer different gendered positions (Davies & Harrè, 1990), for example, whether the gendered positionings I present in Chapter 7 can be among those that children create during a day at school. Positioning is meant to illustrate less rigid and more floating and dynamic standpoints that male and female pupils can move in and out of compared with the concept of role (Aasebø, 2012, p. 39). Floating positions never being universally given are in my understanding important to be recognised to avoid presenting them as locked and isolated units. Defining groups of children into positions could be interpreted as rigid typologies; thus do

I underline that the feminine and masculine positions studied in Chapter 7 are local and contextual. I follow Aasebø (2012), who stresses that ethnographic research must assume that events in daily social life are illustrations of a unique situation and a larger cultural and social reality (p. 40). Introducing different gendered positionings must following this show something unique and specific, as well as relevant patterns, to generalise similar situations.

3.6.3 Mouffe and discursive perspectives on gender

Gender is entangled with discursive practices that are culturally available in any society (Bjerrum Nielsen & Davies, 2017). A premise of the discursive perspective on gender is that gender can be understood as a social phenomenon to examine for discursive constructions. Discursive thinking is important in Mouffe's work. She does not limit the discursive aspect to speech or writing, as it can also involve bodily practices (Laclau & Mouffe, 2002; Mouffe, 2014). Mouffe's concepts have been used in other empirical studies on gender. Studying gender and youth citizenship in Senegal, Croussuard and Dunne (2015) use Mouffe's concepts and find that despite engagement in society, young people are often drawn to conform to universal identities, including hegemonic patriarchal gender relations, which seem to make young females more vulnerable and reduce their opportunity to participate (p. 43). They examine gendered hegemonies using Mouffe's theory, thus relating gender to the notion of political participation. Mouffe's theory can in other words support gender analysis of power structures and opportunities for democratic participation. Identifying discourses and discursive practices aims to illuminate the relationship between them to show possible tensions (Laclau & Mouffe, 2002). These tensions can be seen as struggles between different ways of doing, thinking or constructing (Burr 2003). According to Mouffe (2002), discursive struggles and differences, when 'locked' in language, are one way research can offer meaning to the world.

4. Ethnography, epistemology and methodology

The methodology has its departure in an ethnographic fieldwork conducted over a year among children in Grades 1 and 7 in a Norwegian primary school. The methodology includes participant observation, ethnographic-guided conversation, focus group conversations and qualitative semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, I situate my study as ethnography by outlining the reasons for adopting an ethnographic approach, such as epistemological and methodological grounds. I then describe the processes of data collection, selection and analysis. The chapter ends with a reflection on validity and ethical considerations.

4.1 Epistemological and ontological groundings of ethnography

There are many ways to use ethnography, such as through focused ethnography, critical ethnography and institutional ethnography. My use of ethnography is 'classic' anthropological, as I spent a long time in the field and described how practices unfold in the studied space. Nevertheless, I expand this and find inspiration in visual ethnography (MacDougall, 2006) and a critical open ethnographic approach as proposed by Hammersley & Atkinson (2012), as I use postcolonial perspectives (Rollo, 2016a;2016b;2020a) and Mouffe's theory, which are both concerned with obtaining justice and examining the structures of power and power relations. I methodologically follow the footsteps of Scandinavian scholars conducting ethnographic research on children in pedagogical institutions (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003), who seem to draw on complex sets of theoretical perspectives but have a common goal of conducting fieldwork in institutional settings among children. I aim to use a methodological framework that allows dynamism and follows the direction of the empirical material (Hastrup, 2003, p. 399). I also recognise that I cannot capture the entire complexity of the field but acknowledge that my orientation can serve as direction for the project, reflecting my theoretical interest and research direction (Hastrup, 2003). Knowledge and research are contextually bound and historically, socially and culturally situated. This means that I see human beings as meaning makers and producers of knowledge rather than objective identifiers trying to describe one universal truth. This view aligns with an ethnographic constructivist perspective, and taking such an approach to epistemology means that there is always an opportunity for doubt, new interpretations and new insights.

Ethnographic research can never fully and objectively describe the totality of people's lives. I only interpret life as it unfolds in the social interaction between me, the context, the children, professional and other actors involved (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003, p. 26). This interpretative process includes asking questions about the meaning of the lived day-to-day world in school. In my study, this includes a constant search for familiar and taken-for-granted events in lived school life. I find phenomenology, as developed by Merleau-Ponty, a beneficial perspective for studying people's lifeworlds. 'Lifeworld' in phenomenology refers to the lived world we are all part of as creatures on this planet, and it is connected with our daily immediate world and daily practical actions (Gilje, 2006). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body, I focus my ethnographic attention on children's practices and their bodily first-hand experiences in school. I am inspired by the concept of the lifeworld in terms of Merleau-Ponty's notion of chiasm, or 'the world is flesh' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Our *lifeworld is flesh, which* means in my understanding that we are all mutually entangled with the world through our bodies, and only through this embodied entanglement meaning in our lifeworld can we come into being (Merleau-Ponty, 2004; 1994). Phenomenology conceptualised along these lines helps me to examine the phenomenon of disturbances and interactions between children involving different forms of ruptures from an actor-oriented, practical and 'action-oriented' point of view. Gilje (2006) argues that phenomenology is a fruitful contribution to constructivist perspectives because of its insistence on the significance of practical experiences, subjectivity and intentionality and its compatibility with a constructivist perspective. I support this observation and Gilje's argument that both perspectives, although they emphasise different parts, have a common interest in the 'subject' or 'objects' involving a complex multi-layered constitutive process (Gilje, 2006, p.16). Combining phenomenological and constructivist perspectives allows me to expand the analysis of people's first-hand experiences in a broader social structure. This is my starting point in the methodology, which I expand in the analysis by finding inspiration from other theories, including Mouffe's post-structural terrain. I do not use other theories in the methodology, but I use concepts, especially those of Mouffe, in an abductive analysis to reconfigure and *deconstruct the concept* of disturbance. In the Anglo-American tradition, the post-structural perspective has often been interpreted in a

social constructivist framework by theorists such as Michel Foucault (Esmark et al., 2005). This study extends the understanding of the social structure and the first-person experience to the discursive conditions for both dimensions.

4.2 Ethnography as an embedded curious stranger

Ethnographic studies examine social life and how it interacts and unfolds in people's daily lives, including the material, social and cultural contexts (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003; Hastrup, 2003, O'Reilly, 2012). Ethnographic studies imply an engagement that needs to move beyond spoken words to acknowledge that people's values, rationales and perceptions are not always identified in the spoken word but also equally in people's doings (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003). I find inspiration in MacDougall's work on visual ethnography in engaging in ethnography that is beyond words. Reading MacDougall (2006) prior to conducting fieldwork captured and enlightened me in terms of the importance of 'looking' in ethnographic work:

> When we look, we are doing something more deliberate than seeing and yet more unguarded than thinking. We are putting ourselves in a sensory state that is at once one of vacancy and of heightened awareness. () However intelligent and perceptive one might be, we live in a world so dominated by concepts that we find it difficult to look at anything attentively (MacDougall, 2006, pp. 7–8).

Although difficult, these insights attempt to escape the world of concepts and language and heighten the awareness of finding the immediate presence in the field. MacDougall introduces the concept of social aesthetics not in my understanding, in terms of art and beauty but in terms of 'a wider range of culturally patterned experiences' (p. 96), such as design of buildings and grounds, clothes, gestures, rules of dormitory life, organisation of students' time, particular styles of speech and gestures and other rituals of everyday life (2006, p.94–99). I have examined these dimensions and the extent to which they affect children's doings at school.

An ethnographic study involves in my view spending enough time in the field to be able to distinguish the typical from the non-typical and become an accepted stranger that can detect and become familiar with patterns, reoccurring situations, roles, routines and interactions (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003, p.17). The extent to

which researchers are immersed in the context and/or data is considered an important feature of ethnography, separating it from shorter fieldworks or case studies (Parker-Jenkins, 2016, p. 29). I spent over a year on and off at the school, at least three days a week in 2–3-month periods at the time. This allowed time to get to know children, professionals, rhythms and routines and to unravel the complexities and nuances I would not have spotted otherwise. I achieved this by constantly asking new questions that led me to literally follow the children's practices out of the view of professionals, or questions related to the role of disturbances and different forms of conflictual encounters between children. Or how the dialogue with school professionals developed from only focussing on the topic of my research to gradually be a dialogue about the daily practice and life at school. According to Fangen (2010, p.122), one may discover over time that first impressions change, turn out wrong or emerge as more complex and nuanced than what I first assumed or observed. These unravelling experiences helped me to see the subtle mechanisms that were blinded by the more dominating features of the context, such as the teachers' and officials' 'verbalised' pedagogical activities in the classroom. In these processes, I realised that what I initially did not see, particularly the children's nonverbal 'unofficial' practice, were the subtle yet powerful mechanisms eventually encapsulating this project. The balancing act of being an embedded curious stranger meant that I tried not to allow myself to become so familiar that I would no longer be the curious stranger wondering about the practice and asking all the questions. I also worked to constantly identify connections and place observations on a broader theoretical frame and context. Through this continuous interpretative act, I developed the figure of the ignorant position and the concepts of playful citizenship and productive ruptures. The latter process objectifies the field because I develop concepts and categories that the participants do not have the same access to or power to define (Fangen, 2010, p. 225). Conversely, Fangen (2010, p. 225), referring to Habermas, stresses that this can also be a process of liberation by being critical towards the dominating institutions and categories to develop new knowledge.

4.2.1 Preconceptions and normative assumptions

I am a trained social worker and have worked for years in different services and organisations serving children's rights in different situations in Norway and in other countries. This background has and continues to shape my preconceptions of how I understand, interpret and analyse. For Gadamer (1995), it is impossible

for humans to be free from prejudices, and the task must be 'to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings' (p. 269). This task triggered a rich and illuminative process that surprised, affected and astonished me. I realised that I was embedded in a discourse about children's rights and participation, which I took for granted as purely positive for children without dilemmas. Working with my own preconceptions made me concerned about this and made me realise that when starting the research process, my view and aim with children's participation was for children to develop a rational autonomous voice. Although I initially tried to have an open approach, I was unconsciously looking for forms of participation in school that aligned with my understanding. I was unaware that I had been embedded in a discourse through my previous work. This discovery was troublesome at first because it made me uncertain about many elements of this research and of definitions of participation. When I realised that disturbances could be related to democratic participation, it surprised and genuinely challenged me to move with my own understanding of the study. This movement between my own preconceptions and the field was significant for the results. However, it was neither possible nor purposeful to erase all my preconceptions. A heightened awareness about them can albeit create space for change and movement, which can make me more attentive to how my preconceptions are constructed in a social, cultural and historical context.

Preconceptions also involve normative assumptions. According to Nome (2017), normative assumptions are not necessarily negative and should not be rejected but instead challenged and questioned to illuminate their understandings and social consequences (p. 59, my translation). Normative assumptions involve ideas about how things should be. Engaging in qualitative research in which I advocate democracy and children's citizenship in school can be considered a normative activity. I am not hiding this normative position, and I examine the grounds for our definition of democracy in schools and children as active citizens. I try to challenge assumptions, such as 'disturbances are negative' and 'conflicts are harmful', and challenge the positive identities 'good pupil' and the 'good citizen' to open ideas underpinning these assumptions to learn about children's social opportunities and consequences in school. I do this with a strong

orientation towards children's experiences and point of view. This means that I have a normative assumption about children and that it is good for both society and children to listen to their views and experiences. I am aware that this is an idea from my adult-oriented position, and I must be attentive to how this idea causes expectations towards children as individuals and as a group in society, such as being actively involved citizens.

4.3 Methods

I spent three months at the school in autumn 2019, 1½ months in Grade 7 and 1 ½ months in Grade 1. I returned in January 2020 and spent another two months between Grades 7 and 1. Due to the interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that hit Norway in spring of 2020, making the Norwegian government close all schools, the third period was split into two periods, as I was not allowed to return to all pupils in spring of 2020. I spent another month at the school in May/June 2020 in Grade 7 and, upon the request of the school, returned in August/September to complete the fieldwork with the same children, contact teachers, and other school professionals, but now in Grade 2. This means that I entered and left the field for several field periods over the course of a year. Entering, leaving and returning to the school several times gave me the opportunity to zoom in and zoom out in a way that enhanced and alerted my reflexiveness in my project. In an ethnographic research process, the research focus should be continuously developed and centred (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). I used field breaks, which means being physically distant from the fields, to readjust my focus and gain analytical distance. Through physical distance, I could use more energy to examine the material collected instead of having all my senses wired to maximum being a body in between other bodies in school. I had moments during these breaks in which I was surprised by my fieldnotes as I spotted new details, saw connections in the material and discovered important leads to follow to develop the project. Such as how many times I had noted down the expression of 'things that just happen', or my notes considering children's practices in disturbances saying, 'few words being spoken, bodily movement, sound, laughter'. The long fieldwork made space for doubts, which supported the abductive movements, including a continuous process of centring the area of attention.

4.3.1 The school

I chose one school to fulfil that of engaging in a long fieldwork. It seemed like the right decision for my field of study, which aimed to not establish a practice but to study the daily familiarity in practice in a new way. I chose a public school because I wanted a school with no particular pedagogy that was free and available for all children, regardless of religion or other beliefs, vision or pedagogy, which private schools often aspire to have. The school was a 'Grade 1–10' middle-sized public school in a middle-sized Norwegian city with about 500 children. Each grade had its own space and classroom, and the school had a library, a dedicated science room, a gymnastics hall and a staff room. The school had one main entrance with a large hall, in addition to the children's own entrance to their wardrobes and class areas. The wardrobe in Grade 1 was directly outside the classroom, where the teachers would meet them in the morning and after each break. In Grade 7, the wardrobe was at the end of a hall, a distance away from the class area, with no teachers meeting them in the morning or after breaks. The teachers would first meet them at the entrance door into their classroom area. Grade 7 had access to one open football court, a smaller one closed off by high fences, benches and a small athletics area, including a running field and a basket court. Grade 1 spent time on the other side of the school during breaks accessing a big sand box, a football court with high fences, several swings, benches and climbing playsets. The nearby woods were also used weekly, but mostly by Grade 1. This area had hills, tall trees, smaller trees, bushes and different paths.

4.3.2 Grades 1 and 7

I spent time with Grades 1[14] and 7, a total of 55 children, because I wanted diverse field material that included, for example, ages and time spent in school and to explore the relationship between negotiations of disturbances in the different grades. I was not interested in the children's ages as a characteristic of the difference or a representation of a certain need or behaviour but rather in how Grades 1 and 7 offered different contexts for children, as the children in Grade 1 were in their first year of encountering daily life in school, whereas those in

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[14] I spent a few weeks with the same children and teachers in the same space in Grade 2 due to COVID-19, but I did not observe any distinct and relevant differences during these few weeks between Grade 2 and Grade 1.

Grade 7 were about to leave primary school, thus creating different contexts and expectations towards children. I assumed that I would see many differences between the two grades, but my results suggested that, despite the differences, a surprising and dominating feature was the elements *connecting* the groups of children instead of dividing them. Examples of these elements are how disturbances, or *productive ruptures*, seem to have an active role in the interactions between children, how all the children rupture the pulse of order caused by bodily playful practices and how all children across grades tend to be stopped and corrected by professionals when engaging in a practice professionals define as noise and nonsense.

Both grades were characterised by a low level of diversity in terms of ethnicity, and among all the children in both classes, one child had Norwegian as a second language. I did not ask for or record their social background, but in conversations during fieldwork, the children openly shared their different life situations. Some of the children lived with one parent every other week because their parents were divorced, or one parent was not involved, other lived with two mums, while others lived with their mum and dad. Most of the children in both years had siblings, and there was diversity with respect to the parents' work situations. I did not try to find out whether the children lived in houses or flats, but the area of the school was dominated by houses. Thus, I assumed that most of the children lived in spatial houses as most children seemed to walk to school. Social background and ethnicity, as reviewed in Chapter 2, are highly relevant in terms of children's opportunities in school and democratic education. However, these categories were not in the foreground of the empirical material, and I did not obtain sufficient insights into these dimensions of the children's lives. Conversely, gender and age proved to be more prominent factors in terms of disturbances, and they were developed in the analysis.

4.3.3 Teachers, youth workers and social workers

The staff group working in Grades 1 and 7 included eight teachers, two youth workers and two social workers. It was a diverse group in terms of gender, age and years of experience in working in school. The two contact teachers of Grade 1 were female, had many years of experience working with young children, had been contact teachers before and were 35–45 years of age. The two contact

teachers of Grade 7 were male, had been teachers in different age groups (including lower secondary school) and were 35-45 years of age.

4.3.4 Embedded and in-between the daily rhythms of doing fieldwork

I was excited, curious and nervous sitting in my car in the parking space outside the school during the first day. Starting fieldwork was far from the books, laptop and the safety of the university I had been used to. That September morning, I was slightly overwhelmed by the researcher's role, but I found inspiration and comfort in the encouragement that 'We want to be surprised; we want to find out that we were wrong and that we actually did not know it at all' (Dahlberg et al. 2008, p. 336). This humble attitude became important to me during fieldwork, helped me to get out of the car and led me to the school yard.

Ethnographic gaze and attention
I spent time with the children in the classroom during class, in teaching, in the wardrobe, outside during breaks and mealtimes. I also joined Grade 1 on their weekly trip to the nearby woods. I literally followed the children throughout their day in school in different situations. I entered the field open to what might emerge, but I specifically had an overall interest in democracy, democratic practices and children's forms of expression in daily situations, interactions and activities, both in child–adult and child–child interactions. I noted down the daily rhythm in school, the routine, the material objects, how the objects were used, how the children used space, moved, how people spoke, who spoke, who listened to whom, how interactions took place, the words and phrases used and my own feelings.

In the beginning, I occasionally spent time in the staff room, which gave me the opportunity to learn more about the discourses at school and to get a better overview of the entire school practice. Nevertheless, the children were my main focus, and I continued to follow them closely throughout the fieldwork to maintain an understanding of their overall context and practice. Despite my eminent focus on the children, my observations during the first couple of weeks were mostly on what the professionals initiated, how the teachers communicated the pedagogical agenda, how the children's bodies were regulated and the organisation of the classroom, timetable and daily schedule. As noted in the introduction, I had a serendipitous moment after a couple of weeks when I

realised that I had neglected to fully address what the children initiated and found meaningful. Thus, I made sure to adjust my ethnographic gaze. I adjusted my gaze towards what children initiated in different situations. Specifically, I started paying attention to when the children smiled, laughed and expressed different forms of joy and belonging, such as connecting with other children. This change of ethnographic attention made me realise that what most children initiated and expressed as meaningful were often defined by professionals as disturbances, noise and nonsense. This tension between different outlooks on the same situation was interesting. Thus, I decided to follow these situations further and to understand this from the vantage point of children. I started to study the forms of expressions that aroused responses, indicating that they disturbed the official school agenda. I studied these moments by looking closely at the sound, movements, gestures and forms of interactions and communication considered disturbances. I also examined what was disturbed and what the negotiation involved. These observations led to another advancement in the field process, in which there was a need to follow these practices expressed by children in situations where they could unfold without being stopped by a professional. Specifically, I analysed how the children used and approached conflicts, disruptions and disagreements in their peer interactions. These advancements took place during my first two months in the field, and I maintained my ethnographic gaze on these two strands of situations during the rest of the fieldwork. I was often invited by the teachers and social workers to have lunch in the staff room, but after a few weeks, I decided to have lunch with the children, although I occasionally spent part of my lunch time in the staff room. Most of the children said that it was not common for adults to have lunch with them but that it was all right for me to join them:

> It's nice that you eat with us and not just sit like a guard, as most adults do when we eat. They are nice, but we know they are here to make sure we are not too loud and that we leave the classroom for the break when we are done eating. (Fieldnote, Girl, Grade 7)

Lunch time gave me the opportunity to share a situation with the children where we could eat and chat. A professional was sometimes present in Grade 7, occasionally chatting with some of the children. In Grade 1, there was always one teacher present to engage the children in social activities. Mealtime was the

only daily activity in the main classroom that did not include the same planned agenda as in other activities in the same space (main classroom). The children would talk, eat and drink from their bottles, 'doings' that were not allowed in class (except for Grade 7 that could have their bottles on their desks). I experienced this as a relaxed situation, and it became an important timeslot during the day when I could engage in what O'Reilly (2012) calls an ethnographically guided conversation: 'taking place in the field as part of the ongoing development of trustful, ethical, sensitive relationships' (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 126). Chatting with the children while eating allowed food to be our main activity, while chatting became secondary, which perhaps made my role less intrusive and encouraged more informal talk. These 'eating time chats' developed into spontaneous chats in the hall, in the wardrobe while getting dressed or undressed, outside during breaks or while sitting on a bench. These conversations were inspired by Rasmussen's (2017) walking interview and the walk-the-walk with the children during the day. I did not have pre-determined questions for these conversations, as the aim was to encourage conversations through which the children could talk about their interests and curiosities without disrupting my agenda.

Level of involvement and the researcher's role
The first few days in the field accounted for many open observations. I allowed time and space to adjust into the researcher role and got to know the area, the children and the professionals. This period allowed the children to become familiarised with me being around. I had this phase in both Grades 1 and 7, although I was more accustomed to the role when I started in Grade 1 after a month at the school. At the beginning, I asked the children if it was all right for me to come anytime, anywhere and in different situations. They said yes and gradually adjusted to the rhythm of my presence without them saying anything. My involvement was high, with the intention of coming as close as possible to their daily practice. Thus, I asked questions about the immediate situation, what they thought of it, and whether I was open about my field of interest. Although most of the children actively expressed positive interest in my presence, my involvement did not come without dilemmas. My active involvement with the children in spaces where they were often beyond the gaze of the professionals can be seen as trespassing their space for the benefit of my research. The children rarely had a break from me following them around, and some children perhaps

felt that they had to adjust in these situations in a different way than if I had not been there, even if I was neither one of the professionals nor one of their peers. An example of hospitality from the children was when they told me that I could have a locker for keeping my clothes. However, I cannot guarantee that some children did not feel comfortable with my presence and involvement. Another consequence of my involvement is that my questions and interests could have made some of the children focus more on this than they normally would. For example, some children could have increased their playful bodily expressions in my presence because they sensed that I was interested in that or they could have exaggerated their experiences as meaningful, less meaningful, or fun because they wanted to be polite and nice to me and to respond to my questions. There will always be dilemmas in research, and at some level, I will always be a researcher who is involved in influencing the object of study. I was less active in certain situations, such as in classroom situations in which the dialogue was between the teacher and the children or when the children were asked to work individually on their workbooks. In these situations, similar to the children, I was regulated by tight and organised rhythms. Situations like these with a more set structure challenge according to Fangen (201) researchers to adjust and consider their level of involvement. I often readjusted my level of involvement to ensure that I was sensitive to and respectful of the ongoing activity, while still being close enough to understand and pay attention to details. For example, I would not initiate conversations with the children if they had a test in the classroom or if they were deeply involved in an activity during the break. It was a balancing act of involvement and detachment, strangeness and familiarity, and 'it is in fact a very creative and distinct way of being in and learning about the world' (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 106). My experience was that it involved feelings of always being somewhere in between. Regardless of whether I sat in the back of a Norwegian class silently observing and taking notes, played football with the children or sat around the bonfire chatting and helping the children roast their sausages on the weekly trip to the woods, I always had a feeling of being in-between, which offered me opportunities to be immersed in the field through an embodied experience of sensing institutional structures and discourses. This was useful throughout the research process. This 'in-between' role involves a feeling of being nowhere and everywhere at the same time. In one situation, I found myself helping a child with the zipper of his raincoat to assist him on his way out

to play. I mirrored the other adults and used my body and skills to do the zipper. I did what the space expected me to as an adult. In another situation, I was in the hall with a group of Grade 7 boys who started a playfight. They looked at me as if they were worried that I was going to stop. One boy said:

> We do not have to worry about her; we can do whatever. She is not like a normal adult. You know, you don't decide things, you don't tell us off. (Fieldnote; Grade 7).

In this situation, I broke the rules of the school by not interfering. I did the opposite of what was expected of me as an adult in this space. In the situation with the zipper, I found it hard not to follow the civilised expectation of helping the child. Would I end up as the researcher on a pedestal if I did not help and is helping the only sensible alternative to build trust in the field? What would happen if I did not help? These bodily field experiences are relevant for what you access, and being 'not like a normal' adult or 'just being the researcher' indicates freedom in being in between or at least disturbing the set structure and order of things. Palludan (2003) emphasises that this work and the focus of the ethnographic researcher make the researcher someone who is positioned differently than the rest of the people in the institution. This different in between positioning, as highlighted by Palludan (2003), allowed me to be a 'different adult' ('en atypisk voksen') (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003, p. 104) who is free from some of the structures to which other adults are subjected. If the researcher can act against what is expected of other adults in the institution, it might be easier to get access and be closer to the children and their knowledge and experiences of the school context (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003, pp. 104–105). Another familiar strategy I engaged in is trying to be more of a 'childish adult' (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003, p. 106), such as when joined in the children's activities like building sandcastles in the big sandbox or playing football. These moments of engagement supported my intention to understand from the children's point of view, and I gained insight into the aspects of institutional practice. For example, a boy in Grade 7 stated after we played football:

> The adults usually don't play with us, usually only like before the summer; all the adults play in a big game but not, like, normally. Adults usually just stand still and watch with their yellow vests (Fieldnote; Boy, Grade 7).

This comment shows what constitutes an 'adult' and what constitutes a 'child' in the school. Pushing the boundaries and acting outside of the expectations of the norms of being an adult in a given context enable researchers to define an 'adult' and a 'child' and determine what upholds these divisions (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003, p. 107). It also indicates the consequences of my researcher role, as the children saw me as a different adult. I was someone who did not fulfil the expectations of other adults in the school but still helped if needed. Thus, this role could be confusing for the children because I did not fall into their normal routines and expectations, or even for the professionals because I did not contribute extensively to any activities and just followed the children around.

Doing fieldnotes

Fieldnotes are the main body of my data material. I brought a notebook with me. I informed the staff and the children early in the fieldwork that the notebook would be my extended memory. They asked me questions about it, and this gave me the opportunity to explain that it would serve as a diary and to ask for permission to write on it occasionally. This made notetaking less of a mystery, and I was able to adjust and manage notetaking according to the local context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). Taking fieldnotes discretely is suitable in many field studies, such as in a separate room away from the participants or upon leaving the field for the day (Fangen, 2010, p. 107). This prevents the researcher from being put on the pedestal, sitting as a passive notetaking observant, as this could negatively influence the participants and make them uncomfortable. I was discrete most of the time. However, in terms of adjusting to the local context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012), I found that notetaking instead of contributing to the pedestal position supported dialogue, curiosity and contact, especially with the children. They asked me what I was writing, wanted to draw in it and write things themselves. These moments initiated fruitful discussions and developed my understanding of the children's playful approach to my presence. In a study conducted in a nursery, Vestel (1996) found that notetaking created a playful space in which the book and his pen invited the children to engage with him by mimicking his writing, thus establishing contact and dialogue with the children. This aligns with my experience in that the act of conducting fieldnotes becomes an embedded and important part of the conversation and context in certain situations.

I organised my fieldnotes into three categories: observational notes, theoretical notes and methodological notes (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Observational notes are descriptive and detailed notes of what happened, while theoretical notes attempt to extend and connect observational notes and develop meaning (Fangen, 2010). Methodological notes are meant to question the research and the researcher's role. My observational notes were typically detailed descriptions of what happened, including material signatures such as where it took place. The theoretical notes showed whether the incident supported previous situations, whether it was linked to specific social categories and power relations, whether words or bodily forms of expression were in the foreground, and questions intended for me, such as what is being disturbed and who defines it as a disturbance. The methodological notes focused on my role—was I actively involved or not in that situation, what did I initiate, should I change something considering what I was looking for, etc. I had a daily writing routine in which I structured and transferred notes from my fieldnote book to a safe space on my laptop. This routine secured my memory and bodily sensations of being in the situations and helped me from taking down descriptive notes near the field to organising and developing them into a more structured set of notes that were valuable to proceed with the focus of the study. I left the field with big data material, including three field reports of 260 pages in total and 125 pages of transcribed interview material.

4.3.5 Interviews to disturb and expand the fieldnotes

Interviews in the ethnographic tradition are often conducted using unstructured, collaborative and open-ended questions and on topics arising from the fieldwork (O'Reilly, 2018, p. 118). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2012), there are good reasons why ethnographic research should include more formal, in-depth interviews. They serve a complementary role in my study to expand, adjust and disturb the fieldnotes and to gain insight into the professionals and the children's experiences and descriptions. In all the interviews and focus group conversations, I noted down the materiality, bodily movements, gestures and sound in addition to verbal communication. I organised the interviews and focus group conversations at the end of the second period. Organising this in the second period ensured that I had rich material of observations for developing the interviews and focus groups, and that I could follow up on the themes and topics

from the interviews in the observations for the third and fourth field periods. The topic of the interviews and focus groups and those who were involved emerged during the fieldwork, and they were intended to enrich the observations with the participants' own considerations and thoughts (Fangen, 2010). More formal conversations can broaden the repertoire of the data, as observations are more driven towards doings, while interviews and conversations serve discursive data, including the professionals' and children's reflections, descriptions and thoughts (Fangen, 2017, p.172). The more formal conversations were significant in extending the fieldnotes, such as how the children described their playful practices or how the teachers reasoned out their different responses to 'disturbances'.

Interviews with teachers and other professionals
I interviewed eight teachers, two social workers and two youth workers, for a total of 10 interviews, as two interviews involved two professionals (please see the details in the table below). All the teachers and other professionals who worked in Grades 1 and 7 were selected for the interviews. Everyone was present regularly in my observations, and I had situations with all of them that I wanted to elaborate on. The interviews took place during working hours and lasted from 20 minutes to 1 hour. The longer interviews included more situations I wanted to ask about. The interviews took place while sitting down in one of the meeting rooms at the school, and I used a notebook and a voice recorder. The dialogue was dominated by verbal language, with small occasional gestures, differences in tone of voice and regular eye contact. I used an interview guide, and although I did not rigidly follow all the questions, the structure was applied to all the interviews. The interview started with a series of situations in which the professionals were involved. I sought their views, justifications and considerations about their responses in these situations, including how different doings, sounds and movements (verbal and nonverbal) from the children were recognised or not and why. Following this, I asked about the more general aspects of the practice and sought their reasoning for their overall practice and different pedagogical activities. The last part of the interview focused on their reflections and thoughts about participation and democracy in school. These different sections of the interview worked as a guide, and according to Dahlberg et al. (2008), sequences like these encourage a shift between the 'interviewer introducing new areas and the interviewee taking the lead' (p. 190). Sitting in a

formal interview with a voice recorder changes the context from the occasional chat to a more rigid conversation, always controlled by the researcher to some extent (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). The trust and relationship built with the participants prior to the interviews were valuable in this regard, and the situations at the beginning of each interview rooted the questions in something concrete and gave me the opportunity to invite the participants to challenge or clarify my understanding based on my observations. Several professionals found it positive that I had spent time with them prior to the interviews:

> Emma: You have been here for so long that you have already seen what a pattern is and what is not. It's easier for me to explain things to you than if you have no clue about our practice. (Interview; Teacher, Grade 1)

> Ella: You have seen our practice for a long time, so this interview is also an opportunity for me to learn from your observations and to discuss our practice. (Interview; Teacher, Grade 1)

These experiences indicate that the interviews served the purpose of expanding the fieldnotes and helped me better understand the professionals' reflections and practice.

Overview of interviews

Grade 1: Contact teachers	Emma, Ella
Across grades, social workers	Carla*, Caroline*
Grade 7: Contact teachers	Robert, Carl
Subject teachers	Olaf, Michelle Mathilde**, Martha*
Youth worker	Roger
Assistant	Adam

*Interviewed together. All names are fictitious.

** Mathilde also taught in Grade 1.

Focus group conversations with the children

I conducted five focus group conversations with three children in Grade 1 and two in Grade 7. All conversations had an agreed start time and lasted around 30 minutes. The spontaneous fieldwork conversation was important for collecting data and understanding the children's daily lives in school. However, these conversations rarely extended into longer dialogues. Thus, it became important to create a space where I could engage in longer conversations with the children to

get the nuance of, challenge my observations of and gain access to their broader narrative about being a child in school. In recent years, focus group conversations have been widely used, and they were originally introduced as an alternative to the more formal individual interview, which scholars argued was too controlled by the researcher (Walther, 1981). One aim of focus group conversations is to take advantage of the social dynamics in a group, and the social interaction between the members in the conversation is utilised to create the data material. The conversation develops not only from the researcher's questions but also from the interaction between the members, thus disrupting the power structure in which the researcher is the one controlling the conversation (Halkier, 2002). This form of communication creates empirical material that not only relates to the actual content but also to *how* the children talk with and to each other (Halkier, 2002). The children can help each other develop the conversation, play off each other's initiative and create a level of social ritual that frames the context for the conversation to which the children will adapt (Halkier, 2002). The playful pulse often expressed in the conversations, in which the children bounced off each other's initiative, wrote in my fieldnote book and played with the voice recorder, is one of the ways that influence the context by, for example, making more children join in. This way of playing off each other's initiative was at times so strong that my agenda was forgotten in the background. Being attentive to this multitude and complexity offers rich empirical material linked to the content of what is being said and to how it is being said and by whom and how it is socially expressed (Halkier, 2002). The collective focus was on the reflections and narratives of how the children understood and perceived their days in school. I encouraged the conversation by presenting them with questions, for example, about what they normally do in the different rooms and areas of the school, and I tried to explore the different situations I had observed. I encouraged the children to show me, not just tell me with words, how they moved in the different rooms, such as whether they ran or walked. Sometimes I would say, '*You say that you are often asked to use 'insidevoice' (innestemme) and 'outsidevoice' (utestemme). Can you show me what that sounds like?*' I also used my body to supplement the verbal communication, such as when I ran inside the Grade 1 wardrobe, and a boy said:

> No, no, we don't run here. We always go to our places and get undressed. Like
> this (he moves over to his designated place). Then, we sit and wait until the

teacher says we can go inside the classroom. (Focus group conversation; Boy, Grade 1).

Overview of the five group conversations

Grade 1	2 girls, 1 boy
	2 girls, 1 boy
	1 girl, 2 boys
Grade 7	4 girls
	5 boys

I used a voice recorder and an informal question guide. The original plan was to walk around the different rooms and ask about the situations I had observed in these spaces. The children in Grade 7 asked whether we could sit in one room instead. Thus, both group conversations with the children in Grade 7 took place in rooms with closed doors. The children used their bodies to show me different things they tried to explain. They were interested in the voice recorder, moved in their chairs and laughed loudly. Towards the end of one focus group conversation:

> Two boys threw a bottle at each other. Eventually, they stood up and passed it to each other over a table in the room. A competition then developed. The winner had to pass the bottle at just enough speed to reach all the way over but without letting the bottle fall to the floor. (Focus group conversation; Boys, Grade 7).

This is an example of a typical moment during focus group conversations. The situation was not verbal and not initially part of my agenda, but it was important to my interest in understanding how it was to be a child in school. If we pay attention to the body, we can develop insights into the 'unspoken knowledge the body holds about the immediate surroundings and context' (Rasmussen, 2017, p. 83). Through this, I realised that the children's bodily expressions during these conversations disrupting my agenda was important unspoken knowledge about their role as pupils and the school context. The focus group conversations with the Grade 1 pupils also involved a rush of bodily movements and sounds, such as combinations of sitting down, having a verbal dialogue about a question I asked and collective walks around the school in different rooms. They moved with and against my intended agenda, and when they tried to escape from my intentions, I

tried to follow them to study what had happened. They wanted to write in my fieldnote book and draw on it, and we had moments in which the fieldnote book was the centre of attention. I invited them to sit down in certain rooms, but most of them just kept on walking, running and lying down—using the space and almost everything in the rooms at their disposal. According to Rasmussen (2017), children usually 'have the space in their bodies' (p. 80, my translation), and these situations during the analysis proved this assertion. Rasmussen (2017) introduced the 'walking interview', to encapsulate what he has found, which I can support with my research that; 'the doings of the child's body in the places and spaces they walked in indicate a strong experience based and habitual knowledge' (p. 84, my translation).

The children were not invited to take part with a goal of representation. The point of ethnographic research is to determine why one wants to engage in more formal, in-depth conversations with participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). I wanted to engage in a longer conversation with the children to better understand their stories about being a child in school and their thoughts about concrete and daily situations. I had specific situations to explore with most children meaning that I needed no special criteria for selection. However, I was motivated to invite one particular boy in Grade 1 to a focus group conversation because he had been involved at some level in many disturbances. However, he did not want to participate, nor did he take the initiative to participate in other informal conversations. My open approach to selection could have caused problems because, due to pragmatic reasons, such as the time and scope of the study, it did not allow conversations with all the children. However, not all children wanted to participate; thus, in practice, the selection was based on who was interested in participating. I invited all the children in both grades to participate who had indicated interest in taking part. Then, I asked the contact teachers if there were any precautions that I should take in organising the conversations. I created a list and then randomly divided the children into three groups in Grade 1. In Grade 7, the children wanted to be grouped according to gender. This was not my initial intention, but because I wanted to make them comfortable and respect their wishes, I accepted this and put the girls and boys into their respective groups. This difference could have influenced the data, leading to a greater emphasis on gender in Grade 7. However, differences in

gender also emerged in Grade 1, in which the conversations were mixed in terms of gender. Regardless of gender, different types of children participated, such as those who were quiet and those who were outspoken, those who followed the expectations of the situation and those who more often challenged them, and those who always ran out of the classroom after class and those who stayed making drawings or similar activities. The benefit of a long fieldwork is that several children who did not participate wanted to converse with me at other times during the fieldwork in more informal situations, such as in the playground, in the wardrobe or out in the woods.

The conversations with the children were dominated by another level of bodily forms of communication, compared with the interviews with the professionals. During the conversations with the children, I felt that our bodies dominated and conveyed more powerful stories than the words we spoke. This feeling can be related to Merleau-Ponty's (1994) proposition that children have another form of corporeal image—another incarnated existential way of being in the world—compared with adults. This assertion of children's bodily knowledge and experience led me to Warming (2011) and her goal of accessing children's perspectives. To access and assess children's worlds and perspectives in an ethical and sound manner, we must bridge the notion of speech and the 'child voice' by acknowledging the significance of embodied knowledge, power relations and seeing children's subjectivities as fluid and performative instead of fixed and essential (Warming, 2011, p. 40). I tried to achieve this by carefully considering the entangled context of the spoken word, the embodied practice presenting, the unplanned drawings in my fieldnote book and all the other contextual forces we embedded in in the moments of co-creating the empirical material from the focus group conversations.

4.4 The critical task of taking children's perspectives

The focus on the agency and voice of children worldwide, especially through the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, has ushered in an era of giving them attention. It has also pushed forward a situation in which ethnographic research, which involves asking and observing children directly, is assumed to be a good method for capturing the children's perspective (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003). However, is it useful to talk about children's perspectives as one entity? Gulløv and Højlund (2003) argue that such a definition is too simplistic because it

ignores the fact that there will always be fluid and dynamic coexisting perceptions, interests and positions in any group of children or human beings. Moreover, is it possible to detach myself to such an extent that I can communicate through research from a child-centred perspective without any connotations? Identifying a child-centred perspective runs the risk of overlooking the relational child and can continue to uphold the child–adult and teacher–student dichotomy instead of presenting an alternative path where we are all perceived to be mutually entangled (Murris, 2016). According to Kjørholt (2004), the growing individualisation of children can isolate them from the broader social and cultural context and neglect the interdependence and entangled state of living:

> It is highly important to move the focus from the self-determinating subject to the social and cultural contexts children are part of in order to get insight into how different subjectivities, relationships and cultural practices are discursively constructed. (Kjørholt, 2004, p. 247)

Conducting research on children requires a reflection of how my study could contribute to constructing children's perspective, children as subjects and children as a category (Kampmann, 2003). As I conduct fieldwork among children and write about democracy and participation in school, I believe that children can convey something important about their lives in school. However, the stories from the children, as those from the professionals, are experiences, descriptions and reflections embedded in an institutional context in which we are all discursively inscribed. Therefore, conducting research in a school must acknowledge the power relations in the institutional context and how they will subject power over and contribute to constructing ideas about children. This does not mean that children's verbalised experiences should be neglected. They will still be addressed, but following Warming (2011), we must move beyond the voice as one representative essential voice or as one child's perspective. Therefore, I centred my attention and searched for the children's perspectives beyond the spoken word by examining their doings, movements, sounds, gestures, tone of voice and embodied knowledge. The endeavour to theorise, interpret and take the children's perspective is a strong cultural force (Moshenka, 2019). As I am part of this engagement, I argue the importance of educational research to explore children's perspectives, doings and knowing to develop

knowledge and new perspectives. This is a clear normative position that represents a certain outlook of children and childhood and is in no way detached from my situated life, context and worldview. Through work, I have experienced countless encounters with children expressing the feeling of not being taken seriously by professionals and adults or sitting in many meetings apparently for the best interest of the child without diligent attention to how this is experienced from the children's point of view. Another aspect that has aroused my passion for understanding children as human beings is the construction of knowledge in educational research and in the adult professional community about children's development and needs and how school is rigged based on much of this knowledge base. I am concerned that all this adult-oriented constructed knowledge can make us less curious about children as fellow human beings–as flesh presenting in daily encounters–as we have all these ideas about what they are, what they need, what they are capable of, and what is good for them. I also have these ideas, and my results and arguments point to ideas about what is good for the children and my interpretation of it is from my adult researcher gaze. However, the journey towards arriving at my conclusions has been significantly led on by children. I have tried to trouble my own ideas, which has supported a move towards unofficial forms of school life and allowed for phrases such as '*things that just happen*' to gain significant analytical attention, although from my adult perspective, this seemed initially to lack substance and relevance in democratic education. Taking any perspective in research, whether it is an adult's or a child's, is difficult because we are immersed in a social context, and as a qualitative researcher, I cannot go beyond the doings, articulations and stories I am served in the field, regardless of who I encounter.

4.5 The process of analysis

The analysis process was not controlled by order and objectivity; such a characteristic would reduce the analysis to a size unrecognisable compared with what I experienced it to be. We must in my view be careful to present processes of analysis purely as well-organised and objective, as this is not often the case (Wolcott, 1994). The process of analysis has in my experience followed the more structured work of formulating research questions and taking fieldnotes, but it has also developed in my thoughts and ideas as the researcher, making it a dialectical interactive process difficult to pin down and present as a stringent and linear process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). I found the process to be a mix

of chaos, systematic work and creativity. Wolcott (1994) points to a central task of scientific rigour in qualitative research, which is to balance the complexities of social life with the objectivity claims of science (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 276). I tried to balance this using the abductive strategy, which is between the data-driven and concept-driven, as the analytical strategy.

4.5.1 Moving between the data-driven and concept-driven

The fieldnotes were the starting point of the analysis, and they were expanded by the transcriptions from the interviews and focus group conversations. I used the theory early to expand the concepts derived from the data. My process of analysis was driven by the close relationship between the empirical area and theory in relation to how I used the notion of 'things that just happen'. This is evident in the fieldnotes and transcriptions of the focus group conversations. Using different theories, I expanded this empirical area of focus through theory and found that it could be linked to the embodied forms of agency, formation of collective identity formation and being playful. This expansion led to refinements of the theories I used to study the data, such as expanding the empirical observation 'things that just happen' using the radical theory of democracy and the emphasis in this theory on affect and passion. These movements triggered the analysis process and resembled the abductive strategy, which shares the elements of both deduction and induction but was rather an extended interplay (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018), abduction moves from induction from an empirical basis, but it does not reject the theoretical preconceptions rooted in deduction. Fangen (2010, p. 38 my translation), citing Habermas (1978, p.144), argues that abduction supports thinking to extend knowledge and constantly test our interpretations of the new material, driving the research process forward. One example of this is how I worked with the notion of things that just happen. This was initially an empirical observation that many children linked to their doings. In analysing this part of the data, I searched for concepts to help me theorise, and I realised that the phenomenology of the body could support an interpretation of this in terms of the pre-reflexive subject and the core of meaning-making in social life. I took this back to the data and studied how and the extent to which this notion could be related to social life, specifically in meaning-making. This led me to see that the children's practice, expressed as just happening, usually took place with other children. The collective orientation was an added element to this piece of data,

and I searched again for concepts to help me interpret the collective orientation as relevant for democracy (my overarching interest), which led med to the concept of passion in the radical theory of democracy. This added theoretical layer expanded my interpretation of the data towards how the notion of things that just happen could be linked to Mouffe's affect, passion and the formation of collective identities as the basis of all democratic life. This is one of many similar processes in which I tried to develop and bring new insights into the data by introducing different theoretical paradigms and perspectives. In these processes, I was surprised to find new traces to provide new and alternative paths to follow. These surprises in the data can hinder a locked position and lead to new insights and alternative stories and interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 389). I believe that I created mysteries in the data (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018, p. 389) when I theoretically explored the extent to which it was possible to understand disturbances in alternative ways in terms of the empirical notion of things that just happens and beyond its dominating interpretation as an off-task behaviour being a problem for the learning environment. Theorising with a democracy theory and other concepts, such as RA, which had not been much used in studying disturbances before, allowed me to see elements in these situations that I would not have seen had I not engaged in a new theoretical framework. It supported alternative readings and interpretations of the empirical material, which was developed to reconstruct disturbances and new horizons in offering the concept of playful citizenship and productive ruptures.

4.5.2 Selection and empirical material

The empirical material consisted of transcriptions from the interviews, focus group conversations, and fieldnotes from the fieldwork. The fieldnotes consisted of observations of social practices and processes, including verbal interaction and bodily movements, gestures and sound, that took place in the classroom, the wardrobe, outside during breaks, in other commonly used rooms, while walking in the hallways and during mealtimes. The fieldnotes included observations from daily routines and rhythms, how the children used different spaces and the interactions between children and between the professionals and the children. This also included events, interactions and relations the children expressed as meaningful, what they initiated and what they got involved in. The empirical material used in the analysis comprised situations in which there was a form of rupture in the current activity. The first strand of these situations focused on the

interactions between the professional and the children, and the second involved the interaction between the children. The situations involving the children and the professionals mainly took place in the classroom, the science lab, the arts & crafts classroom and in the PE hall. The situations involving only the children occurred outside during breaks, the Lego room and the nearby woods for Grade 1 and the wardrobe for Grade 7. In the analysis, who was foregrounded and who was 'given voice' over others was a point of reflection. The teachers, including the contact teachers, other teachers and substitute teachers, were more in the foreground than the other professionals. For example, Chapter 6 focuses only on situations involving teachers. The children included boys and girls from both grades, children holding different social statuses, children in different friend groups, the quiet ones and those that spoke up more. Most of the children seemed to occasionally enter the zone of disturbances, and everyone took part in the playful bodily practices, whether to create rupture in the official school life or participate in a conflictual event with peers. The empirical examples used as rich descriptions in the analysis were based on the situations that I considered the best to function as rich descriptions for the purpose of the analysis.

4.5.3 Step 1: Three initial criteria for the empirical material

There were many situations that involved a moment of disturbance or some form of conflictual event. I highlighted situations in which there was a form of dissonance, including situations involving an interaction between the teacher and the children and between the children only. The first two criteria are related to the strand of situations involving the interaction between the children and the professionals, and the third criterion relates to situations involving only the children.

My first reference is that the situation included elements of the well-used and well-known definition of disturbance by Duesund and Ødegård (2018). I highlighted the professionals' responses on what they perceived as sufficiently 'off-task'. In other words, what the children did off task was specified for the class collective. This left me with 62 situations for further analysis. The second criterion included situations involving a spontaneous 'live' interaction and negotiation between the professional and the children. I did not include conversations about something that happened yesterday. I was interested in those that involved more than one sequence of interaction, so I left out the interactions

that stopped immediately after the first response from the professionals. This helped me obtain the richness of nuances (Munkholm, 2020, p. 100, my translation) from a 'live situation'. A total of 32 situations remained for further analysis. The third criterion focused on situations in which there was a form of dissonance in the children's interests or conflictual events. This involved a large number of situations, so I had to narrow them down to 'live' situations with active interactions involving more than one sequence of negotiation. One criterion was that the professional at no point adjusted, supported or stopped the interaction, as I was interested in situations the children steered from beginning to end. A total of 49 situations remained that mostly took place in one of the following spaces in school: the Lego room (Grade 1), the nearby woods (Grade 1) and the wardrobe (Grade 7). The children were often out of the view of the professionals in these spaces, and they considered them meaningful spaces. On these grounds, I decided to include only situations that took place in these spaces. One final filtering was to ensure that I had a relatively even representation of the children in Grade 1 and those in Grade 7 and that the situations had sufficient fieldnotes to substantiate the analysis. With reference to the first pile of situations that took place in a more structured situation, these situations occurred with less clear plans and rules, and my fieldnotes were not detailed enough for a thorough analysis in all situations, so I decided to exclude the situations with less detailed fieldnote. This left me with 27 situations: 12 in the wardrobe with Grade 7, eight in the woods and seven in the Lego room. Eventually, I moved on with 59 situations. These initial 'benchmarks' were not used to obtain a certain number of situations, but they were important to identify situations with rich details for the empirical analysis and clarity to the readers on how I filtered large amounts of data into smaller and more precise units of analysis.

4.5.4 Step 2: Exploring the connecting lines between situations

The next stage was to examine these 59 situations to determine the immediate features that could connect and separate them for further analysis. The aim was to detect certain key connections or differences that could be relevant to the next stage of engagement in the mapping exercises. I tracked all possible patterns in the situations inspired by the principles of contiguity, in which I looked for connections and key relationships in the different parts of the data (Maxwell & Chimel, 2014). I connected the immediate features of the different situations and followed surprising elements and breaches in connections to go deeper into the

material. I did not work systematically with the principles of contiguity. Instead, I found inspiration in finding substantial connections on the premise of exploration. I reviewed the data again on the premise of two dimensions: to explore whether there were strong features in terms of connecting the situations and to explore whether there were key differences; for example, in following my focus on the body, did I take notes on the body's use of space in each situation. Based on this background, which is rooted in abductive movements, two 'features' emerged that influenced further analysis. One of these analytical features is a 'connecting key', which runs through all the situations; I call this key the *bodily forms of expressions*. This connects with how the situations appear to be strongly influenced by diverse forms of children's movements, sound and use of objects and space. Another feature is the 'key of difference', which relates to situations involving teachers and children, as there seem to be two main responses to the situations among teachers. I directed these into two groups and called them the *teachers' responses*. This key difference is the extent to which the children's actions became acceptable or not. Then, I went through all 59 situations and selected the situations representing the most substantially rich descriptions for the connecting line and the key of difference. This left me with 28 situations involving professionals and 20 situations involving only the children, a total of 48 situations.

4.5.5 Step 3: Mapping social processes

I examined one situation after the other inspired by Adele E. Clarke's situational mapping. This mapping approach helped me get an overview and the different details of the situations. This form of situational analysis is based on the concept of the 'situation', in which 'understanding its *elements and their relations* is the primary goal' (Clark et al., 2018, p. xxv). Mapping aims to show detailed descriptions of human, non-human and discursive elements and the nature of the relationship between them (Clarke et al., 2018; Clarke, 2005). I studied all the situations and created visual maps in which I drew up lines of the relationships between the children and professionals, between the children, between the children and the objects in physical space, between the professionals and the same objects and between the discursive elements, such as the relationship between children and the expectations towards learning or social categories such as gender. I also labelled the different relationships, for example, by whether they were characterised by rejection or invitation. The mapping exercise added layers

to the connecting key bodily forms of expression, such as the sounds of bodies *expressed as collective laughter* and *the playful conflictual body*. It also added to the key of difference in terms of the *teachers' response*. Two different patterns emerged in terms of the *nature of the relationship* (Clarke 2005), between the teacher and the pre-planned pedagogical activity (task) in the different situations. The responses of many teachers in accepting the children's 'off-task' doings seemed to be characterised by a *high and open commitment to the task,* in which *invitation* characterised the relationship between the teacher and the children. The situations in which a teacher did not accept the children's doings seemed to be characterised by a *high and tight commitment to the pedagogical activity (task),* and the relationship between the teacher and the children was characterised by *rejection*. Chapter 6 develops the analysis based on this result. Another added layer became apparent when studying the relationships between the children and the different bodily phenomena defined by the teachers as off-task. When I reviewed the different mapping networks, I observed that the *relationship* between the children and, for example, laughter defined as 'off-task' by the teachers varied from an *active* to a *moderate involvement*. The mapping seemed to indicate that more boys than girls were actors in the situations linked to active involvement and more girls than boys were actors in situations linked to moderate involvement. The same relationship was not apparent in the mapping of situations involving only children. The mapping exercise made it possible to create several visual networks of relations that not only brought forward the added layers to the analysis but created visual maps that functioned as a useful point of departure for tracking the affective rhythms.

4.5.6 Step 4: Tracking the affecting features with RA

The creation of visual maps required me to examine the empirical material in isolated units to study the mapping. Step 4 was about re-opening the movement and complexity in the material by introducing the concept of affective rhythms (Kofoed, 2013) to, as Munkholm (2020, p. 98) puts it, 'bring life back into the analysis'. I have used RA rooted in the concept of affective rhythms to study the different yet connected forms of social processes in situations. These are processes crafted by children's playful bodily practices and the more regulated official agenda of the school. Working with RA helped me to describe affective rhythms in situations to show how the two forms of school lives are interdependent with each other and also how space and objects are used as co-

creators to bring back or uphold different rhythms. Similar to Munkholm (2020) and Kofoed (2013), I find that different situations comprise different opportunities for what was possible or not, including differences in the legitimate way of being. RA can be considered valuable for introducing forward social elements relevant to a greater understanding of inclusive and exclusive dynamics in social processes (Kofoed. 2013). An example is how different spaces constitute different opportunities for how children must act and negotiate subjectivity to become an accepted body (Munkholm 2020, p. 109), including becoming a body with agency. This insight showed how the school lives contained different pulses and rhythms, patterns in how the children moved with and against this, and how affect intertwined with these movements creating different senses of 'we' and space for agency in the two school lives, including when they came in conflict with each other. For example, I examined how negotiation between the different forms of the social (what I refer to as school lives) and consequently the rhythms can be studied as influential in moving and holding the subject in ways that push into a spectrum of inclusive and less inclusive positional movements considering the collective. I examined how these processes and positional movements connected with the space for democratic subjectification. I thoroughly tracked the affective rhythms in the 48 situations. I ended up with rich material, considering how affective features seemed to be expressed, play out and shape social processes in these situations.

Affect, or affective rhythm, concerns the highly complex organisation of social processes, recurrency, displacements and how they all connect with and are attuned by affective dimensions (Kofoed, 2013, p. 174). In other words, I was after more than tempo, acceleration and speed in the conceptualisation of rhythm (p. 174). Initially, I studied the situations as one 'whole' to identify the central affective features across and between the situations, followed by the affective charges in the different situations. The first movement of RA is to show the 'core pulse' (Kofoed, 2013) across the empirical material. I studied how the levels of intensity moved in the situations, including how dynamics and tempo changed and moved in and between human and non-human actors. Examples are the curves of intensity that seemed to silently drop after the children laughed, the movement from a loud sound to sudden silence when the professionals asked the children to be silent and reminded them of the regulations. Additionally, how

intensity travelled with the moving bodies, nourishing the interaction between the children without words being spoken. Kofoed (2013) identifies one core pulse in her material. Conversely, in accordance with Munkholm (2020), I find two core pulses that are important to the empirical material and the analysis: *a pulse of order featuring the official forms of school life and a pulse of playfulness featuring the more unofficial forms of school life.*

In the next step, I studied how different affective rhythms intertwined and worked together with the core pulses. An affective rhythm is not a steady beat; it changes, moves and is tuned in by intensity, temporality and affect (Kofoed 2013). An affective rhythm has an emotional dimension that relates to its affective quality and pulse (p. 179). Using this as a conceptual tool provided me with an analytical language for transforming moods, senses, movements and objects of analysis. This insight was useful in expanding my understanding of the negotiations between the two school lives and the two core pulses. Examples are when I discovered how intensity moved with the pulse of playfulness and how the intensity of this pulse accelerated and gained speed, clashing into the pulse of order. Additionally, how children added intensity to it by joining in, how it became sharper in the struggle for hegemony in the classroom and how the intensity of the playful pulse changed as the pulse of order came with the professional's regulative move to assign expected behaviour. Intensity tops emerged in peaks at which the two pulses fought for hegemony and status, and they exploded into the pulse of playfulness, or the pulse of order regained its position and quieted down the pulse of playfulness. The intensity of the pulse of playfulness in the unofficial forms of school life never completely diminished, although it appeared less active. The intensity was still present but in a quieter form, tuned in by subtle looks and stares between the children, silent laughter or eyes smiling into others' eyes. These movements in intensity also played out in unofficial forms of school life alone and in the strand of situations involving only the children. The intensity tops in these situations often emerged during sharp conflictual events and could move and change into collective laughter, manifesting in several bodies at once. It could move into different and calmer intensity spots, where, for example, the children in conflict returned to a collective non-conflictual focus. Intensity tops are the clashes between highly complex and disorganised social processes. I studied these disorganised clashes

and tops in different situations as I tracked down the 'affective' patterns and attached these patterns to different pulses and rhythms. This analytical exercise allowed me to follow the flow of quality in the rhythms and analyse when they ruptured each other and what simultaneously pulled together and fragmented the intensity. I did not focus on the dynamic reality observed at a given time, but tried to get to the heart of this dynamic and movement (Kofoed, 2013, p.173). Therefore, a rhythm in RA is not only a movement or a given repetitive pulse with a steady pulse but is also concerned with the *flow of* this movement as essential, and its quality is tied to affect, intensity and pulse (Kofoed, 2013, p.173). Finally, I identified two sets of affective rhythms: *tight and organised rhythms*, which are linked to the pulse of order, and *open and loose rhythms*, which are linked to the playful pulse.

4.5.7 Transcriptions as complementary data

The transcriptions from interviews and focus group conversations played a supplementary role in expanding and challenging the fieldnotes and results from the four steps in the analysis. I traced the connections and surprising elements from the transcriptions that elucidated the observations and interpretations of the fieldnotes. For example, I used the transcriptions to develop interpretations of the key of difference in relation to the teachers' responses. The transcriptions from the interviews with the teachers provided the teachers' considerations and justifications for their responses, expanding the analysis. Another example is that I used the transcriptions from the focus group conversations with the children to analyse the connecting key—*bodily forms of expression*—allowing me to examine what these practices meant to the children. In my view sound qualitative research offer structures of meaning in conclusions and results, what Bjerrum Nielsen (1994) refer to as the *intersubjective structure of meaning* derived from analysing empirical material. The transcriptions served a complementary role in completing the analysis to offer this necessary structure of meaning in showing the relationship between the children's playful bodily practices and the different forms of ruptures, disturbances and democratic living in the school.

4.5.8 Summary

Table 2.

Step 1 3 criteria applied to the raw material	Step 2 Connecting Lines	Step 3 Mapping Social Processes	Step 4 RA
1st criterion: Sufficient off-task to get attention from the teacher	Key of difference: Teachers' responses	Playful body Collective laughter	Pulse of order: Tight and organised rhythms
2nd criterion: Conflictual event/dissonance between children and professionals	Connecting key: Bodily forms of expression	High and tight commitment to the task: rejection	Pulse of playfulness: Open and loose rhythms
3rd criterion: Conflictual event between the children without staff involvement		High and open commitment to task: invitation	
		Gender/different opportunities	
*62 → 32 situations **48 → 27 situations	*32→ 28 situations **27→ 20 situations	*28 **20	*28 **20

*Situations involving the children and the professionals

**Situations involving only children

4.6 Validity of the study

'All values for quality, like all social knowledge, are ever changing and situated within local contexts and current conversations' (Tracey, 2010, p. 837). This implies that good qualitative research deserves regular dialogue and discussion (Tracey, 2010). One historical and continuous discussion on the quality of research is rooted in validity (Tracey, 2010; Yilmas, 2013). This concept stems from the quality criteria in quantitative research, and validity has been criticised for not fitting the purpose of judging quality in qualitative research, as the two research paradigms differ in terms of the fundamental questions about epistemology, methodology, theoretical perspectives and methods (Yilmas, 2013, p. 312). The quality of my study is connected to interpretation and meaning. It is context-bound and is not about objectivity as a value in itself because it is

through my bodily presence, as an entangled subject in the context, that I am able to access and analyse the data. However, this does not mean that all interpretations are possible. Despite this criticism, I find validity useful as a concept to convey the importance of ensuring well-grounded research that is true to the demands of a certain set of quality markers supported in a broader scientific community. I use transparency, credibility and coherence as quality markers to show the validity of my study.

Transparency refers to honesty about the research process and clear accounts of it (Tracey, 2010). I tried to be open about my preconceptions, biases and changes that occurred throughout the research process, such as disturbances and ruptures in interactions that were not the initial focus, aimed for a clear account of how I used the empirical material and offered reflections on how I managed and approached the role of a researcher in the field, including being a 'different adult'. I showed this not only in the Methods chapter but throughout the presentation of the text. For example, in Chapter 1, I presented the details of how the focus of my study changed and the choices I made in the theoretical framing due to these changes. Moreover, in Chapter 2, I presented how I approached the review as an attempt to disclose the choices made in the literature review in accordance with how I understand my contribution to the field. In the analysis, I present readers with detailed empirical descriptions to clarify the empirical material used in the analysis. I tried to be as sincere as I could in presenting the dilemmas and challenges I had encountered throughout the research processes, such as ethical considerations, my research role and preconceptions and other details about the study. This includes how my own preconceptions about children's rights and the concept of voice were disturbed and moved. In my experience, one tricky balancing act considering transparency was avoiding succumbing to my own personal experiences and ensuring sufficient reflexivity to capture my understanding of the practice in the study. I can only hope that I was able to justify it.

Credibility refers to the trustworthiness and plausibility of the research findings (Tracey. 2010). It has to do with offering credible accounts of a social and cultural context that can seem 'realistic' (Richardson, 2000, p. 254). I offer rich descriptions and illustrations of the complex realities I encountered in the

fieldwork. My intention is to address the descriptions and illustrations involving the situated detail in culturally and socially situated meanings. I hope to offer structures of meaning for social events and practices in accordance with thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). One of the most important features of credibility is engaging in thick descriptions, following Geertz, as descriptions and illustrations that are divorced from their context lose their meaning in qualitative research (Tracey, 2010). Instead of merely 'objectively' describing how something happens, it is my job as an ethnographer to add links to contextualise the social event, adding layers of intentions, communicative dimensions and prescribed meanings. I have not been able to capture all the details from any given situation, following Hastrup (2003), lived life will never be exactly like the way I try to describe it, regardless of how rigorous I am in terms of the precision of details. However, I hope to have provided sufficient details to the readers to follow my analysis and interpret the findings as credible and trustworthy.

Coherence is the last principle guiding the validity of my study. It refers in its simplest sense to how well a study adheres to achieve its stated aims and goals. Tracey (2010) argues that coherence ensures a meaningful interconnectedness between the research questions, methodology, data collection, theory, analysis and results. For example, the movement from using disturbances to productive ruptures and playful citizenship contributes to coherence in the argumentation throughout the thesis, which includes the reconfiguration of disturbances towards democracy, thus making the radical theory of democracy and the research results coherent. The theoretical figure of the ignorant citizen creates further coherence by analysing the argument and the results of the ignorant position. The literature review aimed to situate my study, and the main aim of the review was to present the main limitations of the current body of research in order to establish the contributions of my study. Hopefully, the transition from the limitations to the contributions is also coherent, as it indicates a meaningful connection between the current literature and how I extend it. Coherence depends not only on active choices and my research practice, but it also connects to the textual presentation and the way in which I show the structures of meaning obtained from the analysis (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1994). In sum, I tried to offer a study with a serious and coherent message for the readers to understand and interpret. Following Ricoeur (1992, p. 60, my translation), I expose the structure of the internal

interdependent relationships in the study through the text. My direction of thought in the thesis is for the readers to interpret, embody and make meaningful (Ricoeur, 1992; pp. 54 and 60, my translation).

4.7 Ethical considerations

The ethnographic method creates opportunities to understand people's daily relationships and interactions. An ethically responsible ethnography must acknowledge and accept that managing this role is challenging and requires continuous and careful consideration. One important ethical consideration is the critical reflection on the implications of how I position my research, example making children into participants of research, and what consequences that may have for positioning of children (Kampmann, 2003), considering their lives, expectations toward and ideas about them. This relates to the kind of knowledge I construct and contribute to participation and democracy in school. By entering children's lives and presenting insights into their practice and experiences, I allow this to become knowledge immersed in all the power relations in the context of my research (Kampmann, 2003). Through my analysis and results, I theorise the children's knowing, living and experiences to offer a reconceptualisation of democratic living and children's participation in school. Following Kampmann, I am aware that this knowledge will leave my 'control' and evolve into new meanings in the hands of other scholars, professionals, politicians and other adults studying children and childhood. This is a dilemma I encountered in doing this research. In what follows, I point to three other areas involving ethical considerations and dilemmas: informed consent and anonymity, children as participants in research and entering and leaving people's lives. The clearance and acceptance from the National Research Ethics Committees (NESH) are presented in Appendix 1. However, this does not release me from the ethical responsibility of conducting research. I reflected on and resolved the ethical dilemmas on a case-by-case basis as the ethnography evolved.

4.7.1 Informed consent and anonymity

Informed consent
Obtaining informed consent involves ensuring that the participants understand what the study is about. Upon receiving detailed information, participants can give their informed consent, which is based on an understanding of what participation entails (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). I prepared three different

consent forms—one for the parents/guardians, one for the school professionals and one for the children. The contact teachers assisted me in disseminating the consent forms to the guardians/parents and the children. All professionals in Grades 1 and 7 consented to participate. The children were under the age of formal consent, so parental consent had to be the 'official consent' used for participation in the project. I used an additional information form for the children, aside from obtaining the consent of the parents/guardians. This distributed informed consent is important because despite the discussions on how children will contextualise a research project compared with adults, children should actively be involved on the same level as the other participants with respect to obtaining their informed consent (Gallagher, 2015). One problem I encountered was that for some children, the parents/guardians ticked off all the boxes for participation, while the child did not tick off the box for individual focus group conversations. In this case, most parents/guardians wrote explicitly that they consented to their child's participation but explained that the child was reluctant to be part of focus group conversations. Another problem was that some parents/guardians stated on their children's consent form that they consented to the participation, including speaking with me, but only if I sensed that they were willing. My dilemma in these situations was that the parents formally gave their full consent, but the children did not. If I had not given the children consent forms, I would perhaps not have encountered this. However, as this came up, I had to address it. My decision was not to initiate longer conversations with these children and not invite them to formally take part in the focus group conversations, despite their parents/guardians giving their consent. I changed my approach if the child clearly wanted to participate. This could have led to a loss of data, but if I had not taken this seriously, I would have disregarded the children's views on consent. This would not be consistent with providing the children with consent forms in the first place.

Another dimension of ensuring children's understanding of participation is to be respectful and humble towards a diverse group of children in terms of physical functioning, language barriers or other possible impairments. I was not made aware of any language barriers among the children in the two classes in terms of having the forms in Norwegian, nor was I presented with information about children with, for example, vision impairment, so I assumed that regular written

letters would be sufficient. An effect of using written letters is that many children in Grade 1 would not be able to read the consent forms independently compared with the children in Grade 7 due to their reading skills. Reading skills are important in giving consent, and this involves many complicating factors. For example, children with lower reading skills than other children would be more dependent on their guardians for information about the study. If these children had parents/guardians with good reading skills and experience in higher education and research, they would be more informed about this type of form compared with guardians without this experience. However, I was not able to address all these dilemmas, and I chose to do it the way I did with written consent forms because, regardless of reading skills or social background, it is reasonable to assume that most children in this school had guardians or family members who could assist them if they were not able to read themselves.

One could ask whether this complexity challenges the ethical justice of 'simply' sending out a consent form and trusting that this would be sufficient in obtaining consent. I argue that it is an important stepping stone in the process as laid out by NESH because it offers participants a context for the study. However, the added layer with young children not yet being able to read complicates matters because the children might find it difficult to fully understand what it means to participate. For this reason, I continuously initiated dialogue about consent to be sensitive to different ethical levels of consent. One level is obtaining legal consent through the NESH (2022) guidelines, and another is being attentive to the professionals and children during interactions with them in the field. An ethnographic researcher must constantly respond to what is going on in the field (Berta & Høgblad, 2023, p.267). For example, several children in Grade 1 were curious about their role in the research at the beginning of the fieldwork, and many were unsure about what it would mean for them in their day-to-day school life, such as wondering about whether I would give them a test or assess them. I responded that I was not going to do anything to them except spend time with them. Many children, especially in Grade 1, were relieved by this clarification and were happy for me to join them. This concern from the children, that I would demand something specific from them, can indicate what they were used to when new adults enter their school lives. It was obvious that they relaxed more in my presence when I clarified my role.

Another dimension I found demanding was assessing whether I provided all the participants with enough information. Using the ethnographic method, I did not know exactly what could emerge or what I would end up writing about (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012; Fangen, 2017). Due to the nature of the ethnographic method, it is difficult to achieve genuine informed consent at the beginning of fieldwork because the researcher seldom knows what exactly would come out of it (Berta & Høgblad, 2023, p.265). This is true for my study. This is why I continuously contextualised the study with the participants and their participation in it as it evolved and changed through the fieldwork.

Anonymity

As I conducted fieldwork in one school, I left out certain details about the school and the participants to maintain confidentiality. I safeguarded the participants through deductive disclosure (Tracey, 2010, p. 847), which means combining details in certain data, such as those related to the professionals, to uphold ethical responsibility and ensure privacy (Tracey, 2010, p. 847). All the names were fictitious, and I translated the quotes into English so as not to focus on the way things were said with respect to dialects. It is important to consider which information is valuable and which is not. The conflated details were not considered important to the research questions, and the need to protect the participants was more important. Maintaining anonymity involves the extent to which the participants recognise each other while reading this thesis. The fact that it has been almost three years between the fieldwork and the publication can work as a safeguarding mechanism towards this endeavour. This means that there could be role changes that could conflate who the contact teachers were for Grade 7 the year I spent at the school. I discussed this with the professionals before I left, and they said there was no indication that this would be a problem.

4.7.2 Children as participants in research

Any study involving children must discuss and reflect upon the category of children and childhood (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003). James and Prout (1990) pointed out the emergence of a paradigm of childhood 30 years ago in which classical developmental psychology was forced aside by new perceptions that consider children as social actors with agency. This understanding of children has grown over the last few decades, and as with any other view on children, it is

connected to our cultural perceptions and practices and is not an objective approach to studying children (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003). This also means that our understanding of children is not set and static but moves with time and context. I also act upon a certain understanding of children, inviting them as participants in my research. Most discussions on whether children should be shown more consideration in research stem from the continuous tension and relationship between the need to protect children and simultaneously promote them as active participants with agency. I invited children to participate in my research, and through this, I consider them to be capable of providing valuable contributions to qualitative research. However, I am reluctant to take part in a 'dichotomy discussion' of participation and protection. Instead, I lean towards a poststructuralist view that childhood and child as adulthood and adult are social constructions that are culturally and historically produced. This does not imply that no considerations should be given to children in research. There are practices that make it obvious that 'children and childhood as a social and cultural phenomenon is embedded in a heap of different power relations' (Kampmann, 2003, p. 177), such as the need for parents/guardians to give their consent on behalf of their children and schools' institutional structures in which children are subject to different mechanisms controlling their daily activities. Is it of interest to the children to participate in my study, and how can I respect the children's different levels of interest in engaging with me as a researcher in their school? I tried to be sensitive to the verbal and nonverbal cues, and I did not push for conversations if the children looked away, walked away from me or gave me a sign of unwillingness to engage in dialogue.

My experience is that most children accepted my presence through cues, such as smiles and invitations to play or join them outside. There was a gradual increase in interest among the children in sharing their experiences in school. However, their acceptance of me as a person in the field does not automatically mean that they approved or expressed interest in my study or in my role as a researcher. The increased interest from children in wanting to share of the experiences does, however, indicate that they expressed a form of acknowledgement towards the research project. The interest of the children can be seen as positive for example considering that many children wanted to join the focus group conversations. However, it is difficult to fully understand what participation in a focus group

means when compared with an informal fieldwork chat. One child who was eager to participate asked to return to class halfway through a focus group, as it possibly did not mirror her expectations. This indicates that inviting children to more formal conversations is not straightforward even if they want to join. Moreover, the fact that I contributed to certain expectations for example linked to the focus group does not indicate how all children experienced participating. I should be aware of what position the children might get in relation to other children being invited to more formal conversations during the fieldwork (Kampmann, 2003, pp.172-173). Additionally, what kind of relationship do I want to establish with the children when I invite some of them to join a longer conversation with me but not the others (Kampmann, 2003)? For example, I had a conversation with the girl who left the focus group to understand if she had any questions for me. She told me that she left because it was more fun to chat like we normally did without the other children around (informal fieldwork chat) and that the focus group took longer than she thought it would. This indicates that there was a distance between her immediate expectations to join and the actual experience of joining that I must respect and follow. This is a sensitive dimension of research, and I do not have any convincing insights into the positioning of the children I might have contributed to. I put together the groups of children based on my observations, but I had a dialogue with the teachers about whether these were safe groups for the children to be in. My experience is that the children did not dwell on this, but my insight into this is based only on my visual embodied observations.

Another dimension linked to children as participants in research is their curiosity about me as a person. Their typical questions addressed to me were as follows: *Do you have children? Where do you live? Do you have a boyfriend? What's your name? Are you married? What do you like to eat? Why do you wear a necklace? Why do you wear a scarf? What's your favourite colour? Do you like flowers?* These questions are based on a social and cultural context and show an interest in me as a person, as a woman, a mother and a wife. They triggered my reflection on all the structures and roles I am embedded in while also being a researcher. The same questions were not asked by the professionals, who conversely asked questions more related to the study. This is an interesting dimension of involving children in research that I could discuss further. This

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raises an important point for ethical reflection. I developed a different relationship with many children, characterised by a 'personal interest' from the children's point of view. I had to pay careful attention to this on many levels, such as in terms of being responsible in my interactions with them, knowing that I would leave them, writing about them and ultimately spending time with them for the purpose of the research. The notebook and the obvious notetaking at times helped towards this. This visible 'writing exercise' also triggered conversations about me as a person, my role as a researcher and the study. It gave me the opportunity to explore these levels of involvement with the children. These dilemmas are an inevitable part of ethnographic research; thus, this is why I tried to work reflectively towards it.

4.7.3 Entering and leaving people's lives

I have come close to people's daily habitual practices, routines, struggles and moments of joy (Fangen, 2010). Moreover, I have been entrusted with confidential information, and children and professionals have shared their thoughts, experiences and practices with me. This demands careful ethical consideration, and it is my responsibility to manage and act ethically and with dignity with respect to the relationships I develop and encounter. I have continuously encouraged an open dialogue about my presence and possible concerns and questions about it, emphasising that these conversations are positive and important. Typical comments are similar to what Emma in Grade 1 said towards the end of my second field period:

> You know, I think I was initially a bit nervous. But after a while, you asked me questions about our practice that I had not thought about before, and it made me reflect on my practice in new ways. I must admit that I sort of forgot that you were here, and this was useful as I allowed myself to conduct my practice normally. I think that is what can create the most learning for all of us. (Fieldnote; Teacher, Grade 1)

The teacher highlighted reflecting on her practice and feeling comfortable and at ease with my presence, enabling her to be genuine in her practice. One dilemma with this is that my role as a researcher is associated with contributing to her learning. There are scholars arguing for this as a positive dimension of qualitative research, such as Gubrium and Holstein (2003), who explored postmodern

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interviewing. However, it was not my intention to engage in or contribute to the participants' learning of their practice during the fieldwork. The emphasis on learning could create a dilemma in which the participants become too involved in trying to learn from the researcher, potentially leading to an unfortunate influence in which the researcher contributes to a change in practice towards one's own interest. Several participants reported that after a while, they forgot to think about me as a researcher. This indicates that I did not have a disproportional influence on their daily practice. However, despite all precautions, my presence still had a level of influence on the object of study, which is part of qualitative research. According to Løgstrup (1975), the ethical demand of research has a radical dimension in that it exceeds any ethical formula and guideline and is the outmost consequence of caring for the life of the other (Løgstrup, 1975; Eide et al., 2005, p.65, my translation). How can I be sure that I cared for the lives of the participants? I do not know the answer to this. However, this chapter and the last sections are an attempt to show all the ethical considerations I made to achieve this aim.

4.8 Presentation of analysis

The results are thematised and developed in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. These four chapters answer the research questions and discuss the unofficial forms of school life, the figure of the ignorant position and the affective charges identified through the RA. They respond to the following main research question: *What is defined as a disturbance in school, how is it negotiated, and how does this affect children as democratic subjects?* The first three chapters present the themes of the situations involving the children and the professionals, and Chapter 8 focuses on the situations involving only the children. Chapter 5 presents the tight and organised rhythms with a pulse of order and the tight and organised rhythms with a pulse of playfulness. This is analytically developed and associated with the official and unofficial forms of school life and the emergence of the ignorant position. Chapter 6 discusses the themes of the teachers' responses and collective laughter as a bodily form of expression. How collective laughter seems to be a key disturbing element triggering teachers' responses and how teachers' responses trigger different positional movements, influencing the children's opportunities in terms of collective and democratic participation are analysed and discussed. Chapter 7 explains how children seem to have different reasons for engaging in doings that professionals define as off-task. Active versus moderate

involvement is analysed in relation to how the social category of gender seems to create different opportunities for children to access the ignorant position and be a democratic subject. Chapter 8 presents the results on the bodily forms of expressions and on how ruptures and conflictual events seem to be productive, nourish children's interactions and create grounds for the ignorant position and playful citizenship.

5. Negotiation between two affective rhythms

This chapter analyses how different forms of school life are constitutive forces of a moment of disturbance. The aim is to plot the affective and bodily dimensions, including how and to what extent children's bodies are involved. The second aim is to analyse the grounds from which the ignorant citizen is derived. The research question to be answered is as follows: *What constitutes a disturbance, and how is it expressed in a Norwegian primary school?* I begin by presenting the core affective charges of the empirical material in the RA. The analysis shows a story about disturbances as complex encounters in which different forms of school life appear to meet in an assemblage of pulses and rhythms. The concept of affective features and the results of the RA, including the pulse of playfulness and order, are important in this analysis. The concepts of primary and secondary adjustments, the idea of the ignorant citizen and dislocation are theorised within this analysis.

5.1 A pulse of order and a pulse of playfulness

I start with a fieldnote that I wrote the first morning. This story has analytical significance and serves as a rich description of how different pulses and rhythms are expressed in daily social life at school.

> I stand in the schoolyard and take a moment to rest my eyes and listen to what is going on around me. Children of different sizes climb trees, run after each other or stand on a staircase talking and laughing. Some dance with coordinated and less coordinated moves. Others are playing and hanging over poles in a play gym area. The school bell rings, and all the children in different activities, tempos and movements immediately turn and move towards the stairs up to what appears to be the school entrance. Bodies run up the stairs; some walk. I hear the footsteps of gathering bodies. I walk alongside two children, our bodies touching. Children of different sizes and ages laugh, talk, scream, shout, hit other bodies and smile when eyes meet. Finally, we reach the top of the stairs and move inside. We are in the wardrobe. There is still an energy of bodies moving and mouths talking. We leave the wardrobe and approach the classroom. The teacher stands at the entrance, greeting everybody with a handshake. There is now less volume and movement among the children. They wait behind each other in a line; they individually greet their teacher with a handshake. I also greet the teacher in the same way. We move into the classroom. Another male teacher

is there. He utters no words and only points to a chair at the back of the classroom for me to sit on. The children start to find their chairs, most of them in silence. Three boys and one girl whisper and laugh at something, poking each other as they sit close. One of the teachers says, 'Come on guys, we do this every morning–we often must remind you, but you know that when you enter the classroom in the morning, every day, you close your mouth, sit down, and start to read. And you know we do this reading to support you in enjoying reading. No sound. Be quiet now'. The room is silent; no words are spoken, and bodies sit still. I can hear chairs being moved, rucksacks being placed over the back of the chairs and children moving their bodies from a standing position to sitting on chairs in front of desks. A few more laughs and smiles are exchanged. One girl makes a facial expression towards three boys. With a subtle movement, she barely sticks out her tongue at the boys. The boys laugh silently. The same teacher says, 'Come on now, close your mouths, speed up and get your bums down on the chairs so we can all start reading'. After a few more seconds, everyone sits in silence. Everyone has a book on their desks, moving their heads and eyes down towards it in silence. (Fieldnotes: Grade 7)

This series of events is familiar, a daily routine, as emphasised by the teacher. I was initially struck by the disciplining force of the space, devoid of sound and movement from loud voices, bodies running and touching. There was a gradual downscaling to silence and less movement. The children eventually sit down on their respective chairs. It was a transformation not only of movement and sound but also of how the children related to each other. When they were outside and running up the stairs towards the school building, their bodies were touching, eyes meeting, smiles were exchanged, and there was much laughter. There were a multitude of interactions and exchanges between the children. The transformation when they moved towards the classroom shows how these collectives turned into lines and rows greeting the teacher and eventually sitting down on their respective chairs. The children in the classroom looked away from each other and then looked down at their desks and books. It was a transformation from a strong sense of collective to an individual presence. I initially struggled to articulate and comprehend these shifts in the atmosphere and energy level, but I felt them intensely in my body. These sensations from the complex social processes I found myself in developed through the concept of affective rhythms. Using RA, as presented in Chapter 4.5.6, I study two central affective features that align with different forms of *order* and *playfulness*. These

pulses hold distinct affective qualities. They flow through the empirical material and have core beats with different affective rhythms. Different forms of order and playfulness seem to be nourished by intensity from different affective chargers that play an active role in situations professionals define as disturbances and in conflictual events between children. The empirical material, including the story presented above, illustrates subtle yet distinct shifts in bodily sounds and movements. These shifts, from running up the stairs to sitting in the classroom, radically change the arrangements of body movements, sound and use of space. The central affective charges serve as strong affective directives (Kofoed, 2013, p. 164, my translation) for what is possible and not within a space. For example, the empirical example above shows how children's bodies must change from a multitude of movements and sounds outside to a silent sitting posture for reading their books in the classroom. I have studied these shifts as affective directives, crafting and pulling intensity towards different pulses (Kofoed, 2013, p. 164) that infiltrate social processes offering different spaces and opportunities for being a child in school. Before I more closely study the affective rhythms in these pulses, I present an ambivalence among several teachers in maintaining the pulse of order. The analysis of this ambivalence is developed in Chapter 6.

5.2 Teacher's ambivalence guarding the pulse of order

The affective charger, in order, shows the core pulse that constitutes the official forms of life at school. This order is expressed using a linear-oriented organised timetable hanging on the wall in the classrooms, materialising as planned lessons, the school bell pulling the children inside and up the stairs and the teachers asking the children to be silent and sit down to read every morning. The order crafts and draws intensity to working in silence, assignments, workbooks and postures of the children while sitting on their chairs in front of their desks while they read in the morning. The order validates the teachers as guardians of this order, positioning them in front of the classroom or the one all the children must greet in the morning. In certain situations, the complexity of social processes infiltrates the affective quality of order and confuses professional judgment. The following two empirical examples indicate this confusion. During the fieldwork, the contact teachers in Grade 1 repeatedly mentioned (without being directly asked about it) that they often had to ask the children to stop playing (the children in Grade 1 were given time to play daily) due to the progress of the day and the timetable scheduled for a new lesson. They said they felt terrible about it

because they genuinely believed in the importance of play for children's well-being in school, and they could see that the children thrived when playing. This leaves the impression that the two teachers experienced a pull between what their professional judgment considered better for the children and the demands of the timetable. They have clear reasoning for wanting to allow the children to play, but it seems that the demand from the timetable controls their final decisions. It is as if the timetable becomes a co-creator of the pulse of order in the social processes infiltrating the teachers' decision making and situated practices. Regulation of sound and remaining calm are other dimensions that seem to influence teachers' ambivalence:

> It is social science, and Robert divides the children into groups and asks them to discuss a news case. Robert says, 'If we don't care about the society we live in, we risk becoming passive citizens, allowing anybody to rule and democracy to fail'. The children start to discuss. A humming sound spreads across the classroom. Robert tells me that it is important not to be slaves to the workbook and that we should use live news and contextual content to make it relevant for the children. The humming sound of the children conversing intensifies. The teacher says loudly, 'Come on now, people. It must be possible to talk about this without getting so loud. We're not in a café, so hush now'. The humming and the room's intensity drop. Looking directly at me, Robert says in a low voice, 'I feel upset when I must hush them when they are engaged in a conversation about the news. It doesn't feel good having to ask them to tone it down about something so important'. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7)

Robert feels ambivalence and unease in regulating the children, and the sound regulation seemingly overrules Robert's professional emphasis on the importance of discussing news. There appears to be a perceived correct level of sound, and Robert refers to it as not being in a café, which can refer to being in school does not legitimise being social, as if one it is sitting in a café. The metaphor of the café indicates that there is a louder and looser rhythm in a café, where you can speak louder and more freely, whereas discussing in school requires a calmer attitude. The comment from Robert was not the result of a question or confrontation from me; it came unprovoked, as if Robert needed to explain his reasoning for this practice. Robert did not explicitly say why he felt he had to shush them, but he did say that he felt awful doing it. He referred to a feeling of

doing the wrong thing by asking them to tone it down. Nevertheless, he still did it. When he called the children's attention to tone it down because the volume was too high, this indicates that the preferred speaking level was at a lower volume. Robert commented on not becoming passive citizens, but one could question how shushing is connected to the teacher's goal of developing active citizens. This teacher's feeling and apparent ambivalence about his practice suggest that sound regulation can also materialise as the pulse of order, positioning the teacher as the regulative guardian. This ambivalence indicates that serving as guardians of the pulse of order is complex and sometimes overrules the professional managing it. I analyse the teacher's ambivalence in Chapters 6.1.2–6.1.4.

The empirical material shows that the pulse of order is composed of tight and organised rhythms. I now discuss these rhythms, including what kind of body is important and what kind of intensity occurs. I reference the empirical example presented at the beginning of the chapter and draw on fieldwork conversations, interviews and focus group conversations.

5.3 Rational calm bodies in tight and organised rhythms

5.3.1 Arranging bodies into the correct learning position

The different forms of school lives are shown through the RA, as manifested by a complex multitude of movements, intensities, pulses and rhythms. These provide different opportunities for children on how to be children in school and consequently what is defined a disturbance and the boundaries and space for children's democratic subjectification. The first dimension examined as part of the RA in identifying rhythms is the arrangement of bodies. I have been interested in how bodies are asked to sit, stand, move and behave in different situations. Bodies in tight and organised rhythms are typical, as in the empirical example presented at the beginning of this chapter, asked to finetune their movements and sound to fit straight lines and rows in the classroom, from sitting down to how they position their bodies on the chair to where their faces turn, either towards the teacher or their workbooks. This can be illustrated by the following phrases used by teachers: 'faces turned this way', 'ears listening', 'feet calm' and 'hands in lap or placed on desks'. There is a rhythm of repetition in how the children are repeatedly asked to finetune their bodily movements and

sounds to a level where they are stilled and muted into rows and lines bound in by the expectation of the pedagogical activity. However, as the RA points out, there is also something new in every repetition (Kofoed, 2013), for example, the difference between being the first child to be told to sit down and being the 10th or the difference between being the first to enter the classroom that morning and the last. Body after body is expected to sit down. For each child, the arrangement of bodies on their seats is repeated, but it also offers something new as the number of children sitting increases while less children are left standing making those left standing more visible in comparison to everyone sitting down. This shows an organised scene of bodies in which everyone is expected to sit down, with a relatively tight scheme of allowed and non-allowed movements and sounds.

These are tightly organised rhythms, as there is little wiggle room for the children in these situations to act outside of these rhythms. Everything that deviates from the tightly organised plan of making the children sit down to get the class started, for example, to read, is commented on and regulated as out of place. I consider it tight rhythms when teachers admonish the children for sticking out their tongue or moving their heads and eyes to ensure the correct learning position. Another reason for calling it tight is that children appear to have few alternatives in these situations. The teacher usually predesigns the setting, and the children must adapt to the bodily adjustments to fit into their role as pupils to contribute positively to the learning environment. The learning position dictated by the tight and organised rhythm seems to be what the children refer to when they talk about having to be 'calm' at school. Children in Grades 1 and 7 describe being calm as not talking, being quiet and sitting still. The children describe this position as boring, with little opportunity for laughter and fun:

> Erica: School is mainly about being calm. We must just perform and be good children. But you know, it is so dull that we can't even laugh without being told off. (Focus group conversation, Grade 7)

Emotional outbursts in the tight and organised rhythm are consistent with Erica's observation, as these rhythms are characterised as having a strong sense of rationality in which emotional outbursts, such as laughing out loud, grinning and

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screaming, are not accepted or seen as inappropriate. The sense of the 'rational body' in the tight and organised rhythm is often explained by teachers in terms of the agenda of the current situation based on the timetable. For example, if children took out their food before the scheduled lunch time set by the timetable, the teachers would stop them and tell them to wait until the designated 'eating time'. This would occur regardless of whether it was 30 or 10 minutes before lunch. Another example is if the children were not sitting still, the teachers would tell them to wait for 'break time' to move and expend energy and that they now had to be still because they were in the classroom. I use the term rational body to refer to the different elements of and expectations of the body in these situations. Children's movements, sounds and feelings of hunger are finetuned and disciplined to adjust their bodies to the expectations in school and the timetable. The rational body is considered the better alternative if the child is to contribute to a good learning environment. A good learning environment is necessary to achieve learning, and children contributing to this environment with a rational body are seen to be the good and successful pupils in school.

5.3.2 Democratic bodies: civilised, responsible and contribute to learning

The expectations of the rational body seem to follow the practices of democracy. Professionals consider freedom at the centre of democracy in school, not as an independent value, but paired with responsibility (frihet under ansvar). Professionals stress the expectations of a rational responsibility that encourages children to contribute in a civilised manner (Gilliam & Gulløv, 2015) to the learning environment and social life in class. It is individually oriented, described as taking responsibility for oneself, and requires alignment with the rational embodiment of being calm and gentle. One concrete practice associated with this freedom under rational responsibility is that children are expected to make choices based on the alternatives offered by their teachers. The different choices are steered by the teacher and seem to mainly relate to academic work, such as which of three tasks they wanted to start on, how they want to present their assignments (orally or in written form) and options on whether they want to peer review test results or have the teacher do it. Another practice related to democracy participation is voting in class and participation in the student board. The bodily prescription of taking part in these practices follows the calm and rational embodiment of tight and organised rhythms. The student board was not for children in Grade 1. The children in Grade 7 who took part in it, with two

elected representatives, expressed little engagement with and commitment to this practice. According to national guidelines and the Education Act §11.2, the student board, which all schools must have, primarily targets Grades 5–7 in primary school. This means that children in the lower grades are excluded from the student board, while children in Grade 7 are invited and perceived to be capable of participating. The exclusion of younger children can be seen as a structural expression of children in lower grades being positioned incapable of participating in the student board according to the criteria set, which is associated with the calm, rational body. This alignment does not seem to conform to what most children in my study find meaningful or what drives their actions. The agonistic approach to democracy is concerned with what drives human action, what makes us do what we do and what makes us form collective identities. It recognises conflict, affect and passion as important for democratic processes. If the practice and infrastructure of the student board are studied through the lens of the radical theory of democracy, it is possible to discover that many conventional democratic practices in schools, including the student board, are in accordance with the consensual model (Mouffe, 2005a). If participation takes place without a real confrontation of differing views, then the conflictual models of participation will be diminished (Mouffe, 2005a). According to Mouffe, the risk is that the citizens or the children in school participate in a consensus they have no real influence over and are not able to disturb (Hirsch & Miessen, 2012). This can lead to a level of self-exploitation in which citizens apparently participate but only in attaining a consensus defined by someone else and out of reach of the citizen to genuinely have a say in (Hirsch & Miessen, 2012). For example, the children in Grade 1 are not invited to the student board, and the children in Grade 7 express little positive engagement with this as a channel for meaningful participation. This can indicate that it is not enough to secure that children participate in an already existing student board; we must also determine what the children find meaningful to participate in. We cannot look at the subject in isolation in terms of participation and democratic practices, and it is when we illuminate the contextual forces that it becomes possible to detect the net of power structures in which the citizen—or, in this case, the pupils—are immersed (Mouffe, 2014). Freedom with responsibility was never considered important in speaking up on matters of injustice, showing resistance, and being involved in discussions or disagreements. It was primarily tied to matters of learning and

civilised behaviour regarding rules and regulations in school. Professionals talked about freedom as the benefit of being responsible, which, in practical terms, meant that the children who gained the professionals' trust would gain more freedom. The notion of freedom and responsibility seems related to social competency and the 'ideal social subject'. This supports Gulløv's (2015) analysis (Chapter 1.3.4) that the social way of being is synonymous with the democratic way of being. This can lead to a situation in which socially competent children who follow the rules and expectations in an institution are the children perceived as democratic.

5.3.3 The *task* as a co-creator of tight and organised rhythms

I now examine intensity, which is important in RA, as spots, curves and tops in situations. Affective rhythms (Kofoed, 2013; Munkholm, 2021) can help bind repetitions and expansions to social processes and interactions. Affective dimensions can work in situations such as looks, stares, subtle movement and different intensity levels. Analysing intensities means studying changes in intensity. These changes can be intensity drops, intensity that increases or evens out, mutes or is changed in the situation. As elaborated in Chapter 4.5.6, one way to identify intensities is to study what and where intensity gathers, called intensity spots (Kofoed, 2013). Intensity spots are defined as what happens when energy suddenly gathers around something specific, such as many eyes staring at the same person or thing or a sudden movement or act taking place that receives attention from the surroundings (Munkholm, 2021, p. 87). They can also be cohorts of bodies moving together or spreading or moving fast, very slowly or not at all (Munkholm, 2021, p. 87). Intensity spots in my analysis are the dimensions of a situation that appear to encapsulate different intensity processes. Intensity spots are interesting because they collect and navigate intensity and, through this, they receive a dominating position in the situation.

There is one distinct intensity spot that moves in tight and organised rhythms. This involves the *task* presented and is often initiated by the teacher. The teacher is pulled into the intensities and with the task to the extent that the teacher and the task become twosome, expecting the children to act in accordance with what the task requires from them. First, the task makes the energy gather around the teacher. This is the moment when most children, in all 28 situations of disturbances studied and analysed, move their gaze towards the teacher when

talking about the task. This turn of focus positions the teacher at the centre of attention in relation to the task. The children must listen to the teacher to learn about the task. This materialises intensity and becomes an affective directive, directing the movements of bodies, the level of interaction between bodies, the sound levels and the bodily positions. The intensity the task activates initiates the moment the children enter a space directed by the teacher, such as entering the classroom by greeting the teacher, as they do in the empirical example presented at the beginning of this chapter. There is a transition from the wardrobe space into the space of the classroom, which starts with greeting the teacher. It then continues when the teacher underlines the significance of reading and links it to the need for children to find their seats, stop their activities with their classmates and sit down. The reading task stressed by the teachers requires and appeals to a calm body. This appeal also applies to other tasks in other situations across Grades 1 and 7, such as reading, working with numbers in a workbook, singing the morning song (Grade 1), writing, taking tests, discussing the week's news (Grade 7) or renting and borrowing books at the library (Grade 7). The task, with its distinct bodily signature, is the leading star in official forms of school life, such as an orchestrating hub of intensities, speeding up, slowing down, fading and moving the children and adults in different directions. In the empirical example presented at the beginning of the chapter, the reading in a twosome with the teacher becomes a catapult for fading the sound from the children, slowing the children down and eventually splitting them apart on individual chairs, where the intensity fades almost into a mute compared with the intensity of running feet and loud voices up the staircase to the school that very same morning. I refer to it as a catapult because it is influential in moving a large group of children into the tight and organised rhythm of official forms of school life. The task, typically situated in the classroom, upholds and makes the rational, calm and regulated body significant as the good pupil body to the extent that the content of the task, such as *what* the children are reading or the joy of reading, appears inferior to the bodily signature of how it is performed according to the teacher. The children in Grade 7, talked about their experiences from these morning read situations,

> Erica: I think many of us like to read, but it's just less inspiring sitting in the classroom, like being told now you have to read.
> Peter: Many of us read before going to bed, I like to read in bed before I sleep.
> Christian: Its something about the evening, its more relaxed kind of.

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They find it more difficult to find motivation, enthusiasm and joy in reading at their desks in the classroom where they were told when, how and for how long to read. The dimmed light at night in the bedroom before going to bed, the relaxing atmosphere after a long day and the privacy of their rooms (children explicitly mentioned their rooms) and homes create different atmospheres and affective dimensions for the body compared with the classroom. The classroom is often bright, with no privacy as everyone can see everyone, and the position of sitting on a hard chair with the head bent over the book is not as comfortable as lying in a bed. I point to these differences to show that perhaps many children find joy in reading, but what is experienced as less meaningful and what seems to be in accordance with tight and organised rhythms is the expected bodily signature of the task that gains authority and significance. These experiences in reading were expressed by the children across grades but emphasised more by the children in Grade 7. The children in Grade 1 had similar experiences with the daily morning song expressed in focus group conversations,

> Lilly: I like singing, but not always when I am told I have to, and we have to stand up and sing just as the teacher tell us to.
> Michael: Its fun to sing, but kind of not always in the classroom every morning.
> Helen: The song is kind of fun, but long, and sometimes boring, I wish we could sing different songs also.
> (Focus group conversation, Grade 1)

Most children enjoyed singing, but many children find the morning song framed by the classroom and steered from the teacher which appear to limit and reduce children' enjoyment of it.

5.4 The task outside the classroom shifts affective quality

The tight and organised rhythms tied to the task create the most intensity inside a physical *conventional classroom*, the space where the children in Grades 1 and 7 spend most of their time and where most teaching takes place. It is the room where all the pupils have their individual desk and chair, where timetables hang on the walls and where there is one or two teachers, one assistant and 14–30 children, depending on the size of the class. Contact teachers have one

designated classroom, referred to as the 'main classroom'. The material signature and organisation of bodies in a conventional classroom are dominated by the teacher standing in front and the pupils sitting down on individual desks spread in lines and rows in the classroom. The tight and organised rhythms seem to fade in intensity and loose grip of the task when Grades 1 and 7 move outside the conventional classroom space. Examples of these spaces are the dedicated room for arts & crafts (containing many different materials, wooden benches, lockers with hammers, saws, etc.), the physical education room and the nearby woods. A different affective charger emerges with fewer lines and rows, more talk between the children, more movement and sound of bodies and more laughter and smiles on the children's faces. The task in these situations is made visible in the timetable and in official school life. However, the task does not have the same tight bodily prescription as in the conventional classroom space, nor are there exact expectations of sound and movement. The tight and organised rhythms do not have the same authority and it creates a different affective atmosphere. There is a different kind of 'being together' when the teacher is not positioned in front of the classroom and when they use fewer words and more bodies when explaining tasks. The point of departure for the teaching in these spaces begins when, for example, the arts & crafts teacher in Grade 7 uses her hands to show the children how to thread a needle on the sewing machine or how to use a saw on a piece of wood. Other examples of this practice are the teacher who uses his bodily skills in a football game to play in a match during a PE class or the contact teachers in Grade 1 using their finetuned motorial skills to chop bigger chunks of firewood to light a fire in the woods for warmth and food. Teachers use their senses to listen to different birds in the woods, look for and study different types of trees or touch, feel and taste nuts from trees or berries on the ground to identify what can be eaten. The teachers use more of their physical skills and capacities to teach, and their tendency is to *show* the children the task at hand instead of writing or saying it with words. The task demands a different body from the children and moves beyond the calm, seated and silent body, as in the common body in the conventional classroom. Different affective qualities are shown, which can be seen to resonate more towards the second affective charger identified in the material.

5.5 Bodies in open and loose rhythms where things just happen

In the following analysis, I continue to refer to the empirical example and discuss the affective features of open and loose rhythms with a pulse of playfulness. The social, as expressed by the children I met outside the school building that first morning, has a different character from the pulse of order and tight and organised rhythms. This social life cracks the pulse of order, and the affective charger pulls the intensity and focus away from order to a playful pulse. Playfulness concerns children's looser and freer way of being in school, for example, their varied and creative use of space, as I observed numerous times, including on my first day at the school. Another dimension of the playful pulse is the children's loud voices and bodily presence, for example, how they collectively forced themselves up the stairs among other bodies that morning on my arrival and their giggles, screams and laughter in the wardrobe. The children's way of being related to the playful pulse, moves from large to subtle movements and sounds, from screams and running to poking each other into the back while entering the classroom and the silent sticking out of the tongue of the girl in Grade 7 that morning. The pulse of playfulness intensifies as a more volatile, less planned and less serious, something 'that just happens', according to the children. This unanimous response from the children is interesting and indicates that the social processes within this school life have a different affective quality than the pulse of order. The poking in the back on their way to the classroom and the tongue sticking out are among the doings the children describe as involving this sensation of being *things that just happen*. The following empirical example is illustrative and typical of the children's response to the notion of things that just happen:

> Girl grade 7: I guess these things just happen because we are often so bored in school. We just want to have more fun.
> Girl Grade 1: I don't know. We just do it kind of, sort of just happens. One thing leads to another. I guess we are sort of playing.
> Boy Grade 7: I don't know. It's just fun.
> (Focus group conversations).

The notion of things that just happen is often associated with the need and wish to have fun and also as a release or escape from boredom. It is a sense of one thing leading to another. Many children point to the latter as just being taken and led on. It is experienced as a sensation of being 'infected' by the atmosphere,

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other children and objects and of being playful. All children describe things that just happen as relating to a form of play—their own kind of play. Children in Grade 1 are quick to define their doings as play, while those in Grade 7, although also emphasising play, point to having fun as being strongly linked to 'things that just happen'. I now analyse the playful pulse and the dimensions of things that just happen.

5.5.1 Collective bodily presence driven by intensity of fun

In the case presented in Chapter 5.1, the girl and the boys in Grade 7 do not find their seats immediately when entering the classroom. The girl sticking her tongue out at the boys, the subtle smiles and the silent laughter follow a rhythm other than the tight and organised rhythms. These doings create cracks and hick-ups in the official school life and follow a very different pattern of arrangement of bodies, with few lines, rows and pregiven permanent seating arrangements. There are bodies everywhere in the schoolyard before the school bell rings: feet running and walking and bodies climbing, dancing, talking, screaming, laughing, jumping and more. There is an endless flow of bodily movements and sounds engaged in different activities, actively using the space at hand in different ways. There are power relations and many subtle bodily prescriptions in this life, such as what is considered appropriate for a specific group of children. However, there are fewer direct bodily prescriptions compared with tight and organised rhythms. There is no one steady rhythm, but there are *open loose rhythms* in different forms and shapes, suddenly changing from fast movements to sudden stops or peeking into sharp intensity tops, such as when the children scream upon seeing some insects that morning. The scream is found to be an accepted emotional outburst in loose and open rhythms. The emotional outbursts in unofficial forms of school life have a different quality from the rational calm body. They are manifested as screams, loud and joyous collective laughter, a complex multitude of facial expressions, yelling and playfighting. The authority in the open and lose rhythms is not positioned with the teacher and the task but is spread in and among the children. The intensities moving in these collectives are orchestrated from an *intensity spot of fun*. Intensity gathers around everything that is fun and becomes a significant dimension of the loose and open rhythms and the pulse of playfulness. The feeling of joy and having fun seem to influence what motivates children's doings in many situations of disturbances. In fieldwork conversations the children described these situations, whether it was leaving their seat when not

allowed, laughing loudly when working in silence, sticking out their tongues, poking each other in the back, fooling around in the library or simply talking when silence is expected, as relating to the *need to have fun*. Fun appears to be experienced necessary to find freedom from a school day dominated by listening to teachers, being told when to do what and generally being managed and regulated by adults. According to the children, there is an expectation of being calm and doing as the adults ask, and this often means sitting still and not talking. The children in Grade 1 had this expression called 'calm sitting' (finsitting[15], my translation), which they learned from the teachers concerning being calm in one's seat. According to the children in Grade 1, this is a central part of what they must often do:

> Sara: Calm sitting is something we do a lot. It's kind of calm and not talking. We must be calm a lot, even though it's boring, and just do the things the teachers tell us to do. (Fieldnotes; Grade 1)

The children in Grade 7 seemed to relate the expectation of being calm and rational to adults' fear of worst-case scenarios or simply adults taking everything seriously. According to these girls in Grade 7:

> *Erica*: Everything is so serious in the eyes of adults. Like even an innocent snowball fight, which we just think is so much fun when finally the snow arrives, you know. Even with this, the adults are afraid we're going into a real war. It's almost like they think we want to hurt each other on purpose.
> *Emily*: It's like they don't have faith that we'd be okay, or like, they are always so concerned about the consequences that they don't see anything for fun. It's just all serious, and all fun is noise to them. It seems like sometimes. I guess we need to get stuff out of our systems sometimes and not just be good girls.
> (Focus group conversation; Grade 7)

The 'demands' these girls refer to in the role of being a pupil are what children experience as what they must escape from. Collective experiences of fun become

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[15] The teachers in grade 1 used the term, 'finsitting' to explain how they expected children to sit in their chair: Silent, closed mouth, hand in lap, face turned to front towards teachers. They described it as a positive way of trying to establish a calm and positive learning environment instead of using hush (hysj).

a source for this escape, which releases energy and steam from their bodies and triggers the need for freedom from a tight and organised day steered by adults.

5.5.2 Infected by affective qualities of bodily playful collectives

As explored in the previous section, the intensity spot of fun appears in all its complexity to play up against and into the intensity spot of the task. Fun becomes a pivot for driving intensity and attention away from the task to bodies clashing together, eyes meeting, feet moving at different speeds and formations and voices forming different sounds, harmonies and disharmonies. One example of a common situation took place in Grade 1 in the morning, when they had their daily morning song. Children sing the morning song as they do every morning,

> Four boys and two girls start to sing with different voices: changing the volume and making their voices lighter and darker interchangeably. They look at each other, smile and laugh. More children join this 'different kind of singing'. More children laugh. Ella, the teacher, stops the song. She says, 'I never usually stop the music, but now we must do that. There are so many "nonsense voices" in her that I am disturbed. I am not able to concentrate on what I am meant to do. We try again, and I want to hear all your great voices. It is a lot nicer when we all sing properly. (Fieldnote; Grade 1)

This situation illustrates how intensity and attention is pulled away from the task of singing properly, as defined by the teacher. The children's different ways of singing—being louder, faster or slower than the teacher's instruction—break the morning song. This turn of events during the morning song created laughter among the children and established a temporary collective, modifying the morning song by using their voices in different and new ways. There were similar situations in Grade 7 in which fun seems to gather intensity away from the task, for example, in the library. The library had many pillows and beanbags. A typical situation was attention being pulled away from reading, which is the defined task in the library, towards the children poking, grinning, throwing pillows, laughing and rolling around in the bean bags. A specific affective quality is infused in these collectives created by and with the children. This quality is perhaps what this pupil refers to regarding why he joins these different collectives*:*

Thomas: It's not like we perhaps always think or sort of want to take part, but it just happens. I am, at least, sort of just pulled into it like it infects me. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7).

According to Massumi (2002), a central source of inspiration for RA, the affective quality that Eric refers to, can be considered an expression of the body's ability to affect its surroundings and be affected. Massumi (2002) discusses the body's ability to affect and be affected as unconscious intensity sensations. Through this theoretical lens, it is possible to study Eric's experience as an unconscious sensation of the intensity of fun, which moves in the open and loose rhythms he is pulled towards. The children describe this affective quality of experiencing as being pulled into something and of being infected as something that just happens and simultaneously is considered highly meaningful. It relates to more than one child and depends on and spirals off in between and among children. Immersed in these collectives, the children are attentive to each other's bodily movements, sounds and gestures. Children's bodies are affected by other bodies and their immediate surroundings, immersed in the moment. The pull to the moment in these collectives is not only related to other bodies but also to materiality and objects. The children seem to be lured by the possibility of the object they sit on, have in their hands or have on their desks. For example, when a boy in Grade 1 taps his pencil like a drumstick against the desk, other children follow him, creating a collective of children tapping their pencils, eventually causing a disturbance. Another example is when a boy in Grade 1 uses the flag in a vase, which was put on his desk for his birthday, as a plane, flying it with his body, holding his hand up and walking around the classroom. The act of playing with the flag makes the other children in the situation imitate him using different things, such as pencil cases and water bottles, as flying objects. The other children joining him seem to be oriented towards their bodies and the objects in their hands. Their doings invite others to join. The teacher in these situations dismisses these collective actions as noise, nonsense and disruption[16]. The pull to the moment is related to the use of space and objects. The materiality of the situation becomes a co-creator of the playful pulse, the things that just happen and the orientation towards the moment. The role of materiality as a co-creator of children's meaning-making practices and lived life has previously been studied

[16] Teachers' responses to disturbances are examined in Chapter 6.

in several empirical studies, including the Nordic field of ECE (Melhuus & Nordtømme, 2022; Nome, 2017) and other international literacy studies (Giorza & Haynes, 2018). I will not analyse materiality but consider it to have a significant role to play in interactions between children:

> The boys sat on individual chairs. One boy started to tip his chair back and forth. The other boys looked towards him. Another boy joined in, and then the rest of the boys followed. They were almost dancing with their chairs, all laughing. I asked them why they were playing with the chairs. *Christian*: 'You know, it's not boring talking to you, it's just…' For a moment, he looks at the other boys. He continues, 'I don't think we know, or it kind of just happens'. *Peter*: 'Like this chair is shaped like this in the back, making it more fun to swing on. Then you just start to lean back in a way. Kind of just happens.
> (Focus group conversation; Grade 7).

The boys moved from sitting in their chairs, mainly looking at me and answering my questions, to engaging with each other and the concrete and physical space. By engaging collectively in this situation, they connect through the sensation of things that just happen. They smile, grin, make sounds with the chairs and their bodies and laugh, thus challenging and disturbing the plan I set up. They disturbed my position as the one steering the situation as their collective action held my attention. The shape of the chair should be noted. Its shape makes it more fun to swing on, as if the actual condition of the chair leads them on. The chair, as a physical object, is important in this situation as a contributor to the collective action of the boys, similar to the pencil and flag in the other two empirical examples mentioned. The boys are smiling and laughing; they are engaged in open and loose rhythms with a pulse of playfulness. While the emotional outburst in the tight and organised rhythms is calm and rational, collective laughter characterises the open and loose rhythms. Laughter is a factor that intensifies the connection between children. I analyse laughter in Chapter 6.

5.5.3 Playful collectives and common affects

The dimension of fun being infected by the moment and the collective orientation are connected with the flow of the pulse of playfulness and can be studied as a playful commitment to the now. I call it playful commitment to the now because to experience this sensation of being infected, being pulled into

collectives of fun, genuinely engaging in a moment and moving in and with things that just happen, it is necessary to have a specific commitment to the moment. Children must be attentive to more than words, must listen to bodies and objects, and must take seriously any initiative that comes up in the space they are in. This spontaneous collective commitment to the now ruptures and causes from the view of most professionals disturbances, noise and nonsense. One distinct material signature of the formation and re-formation of these collectives is that they involve a transition or movement from the regulated individual body to an ignorant body manifesting common affects and strong communal sensations among the children. The transition involves a move from the children being positioned as individually regulated learners, looking at the teacher and down to workbooks or to the board, to a collective orientation in which the children look at each other, laughing, smiling and connecting. The communal sensation is a bodily collective presence that creates cracks in the order of tight and organised rhythms. This collective involves the quality used to describe Mouffe's concept of passion, which is a form of collective affect (Mouffe, 2014). Drawing on psychoanalysis, Mouffe (2014) argues that human beings are bodies with the capacity to affect and be affected. Mouffe, drawing on Freud and Spinoza, defines affection as the ability of human beings to be affected as subjects by the actions of another body (Mouffe 2014, p.156). Therefore, desire and affect are central to this theory, and Mouffe (2014) finds the dynamic created by the capacity of affect to be useful for examining and understanding the production of common affects. This is the basis of her term 'passion', and it is possible to relate affect to the doings of children concerning this collective commitment to the now. Mouffe considers affect to be the space in which the discursive and the affective are articulated in specific practices. Mouffe (2014) does not limit discourse to speech or writing, as she asserts that it can equally serve bodily practices. The only criterion she sets out is that action and significance cannot be separated (Mouffe, 2014). The communal sensation of the affect shared by the children, which draws on the desire and need to have fun and find release and freedom from a controlled day, creates a space in which the discursive and the affective show a playful practice. This playful practice just happens: the children are pulled into a practice ignorant of the official expectations set at school, a practice of joy and a feeling of freedom and play. This can be seen as a signifying practice that follows Mouffe because it is a form

of meaning-making in which the children are engaged and a collective form of bodily communication. The actions in the actual practice, the playful bodily doings and the interactions cannot be separated from the significance of the practice. The concept of signifying practice being intrinsically linked to Mouffe's (2014) concept of passion makes the bodily movements, the sounds, the bodily presence and the playful engagement in which things just happen materialise as the signifiers of the practice, making it impossible to seperate the action from the significance. This also follows Merleau-Ponty's theory and his understanding that the body is the start of meaning making and perception and that it is impossible to separate the body from the mind/intellect, as we are our bodies and inhabit the world through our body (Merleau-Ponty, 1994; 2014). With the playful acts of multiple bodies in an open and loose rhythm, the commitment to the now is not an action that makes it meaningful. It becomes meaningful the moment it takes place. Things that just happen, infect and connect bodies, and this is what is experienced as significant. Through this theoretical lens, a collective desire among children to engage and participate in these collectives can be identified. According to Mouffe, counter-hegemonic politics necessitates the creation of a different regime of desires and affect to bring about a collective will sustained by common affects to challenge the existing order (2014, p. 157). Through Mouffe, the common affects established in the playful collective may hold the grounds for the emergence of a different regime of desires and affect that considers the playful practice of children as something more than noise and nonsense to be a signifying practice relevant for democracy and education.

5.5.4 A meaningful life not on the timetable

Children described these playful collectives as highly meaningful and making life worth living in school, whereas most of the professionals described the doings in these collectives as most appropriate for breaks separated from 'official school activity'. The social life expressed in these collectives is not considered a significant dimension of official school life. Information about breaks and playtime was sent out to the parents as part of the transparency of the children's daily schedules, but it was not written on the actual timetable. This indicates that it is not considered a significant content of a school day in comparison with, for example, Norwegian or maths. Breaks and playtime were indicated by bullet points beneath the timetable or written at the back of the sheet sent out to parents. Breaks and playtime were not indicated on the printed versions of the timetables

on the walls in the classrooms of both Grades 1 and 7. In Grade 1, they were indicated on the day plan written on the blackboard in front of the classroom during the morning routine, whereas it was not present on the day plan of Grade 7. Academic subjects were visible on the timetable in both grades. This imbalance on the timetables shows what the official communicated school life is and what is positioned in the background. The day plan in Grade 1 showed as noted the breaks and playtime as well as mealtime and subjects. The ritual every morning for Grade 1 consisted of going through the day's schedule, and the children always cheered when the teachers mentioned the break times. All children across the two grades expressed, joy and a sense of freedom toward breaktimes and this part of school life:

> *Heidi*: I think we sort of depend on the breaks to blow off some steam from our bodies after sitting still so much, you know. The wardrobe, where we are kind of by ourselves on the way out and in from breaks, is kind of like a free space where we can be more ourselves. (Focus group conversation; Grade 7).

Many children consider this feeling of being in a free space to be important for them. This sensation of free space is for example connected to the time in the morning in the wardrobe before class starts, as Heidi points out. Other children in Grade 7 point to the same situation of feeling a sensation,

> William: The wardrobe in the morning is kind of our space, like its our last chance to talk before school starts (Fieldwork conversation, Grade 7).

This indicates that many children experience a different quality of talk outside of class than the conversations they have in activities with teachers. This free space is related to the feeling of reduced pressure from performing a task, being rational and calm, and just doing happy and meaningful activities. The children in Grade 7 focus on having little opportunity to talk freely, whereas the children in Grade 1 focus on how much more time they got to play. For example, the children in Grade 1,

> Penny: Like when we have break, that's the only opportunity where we can decide what to do and what to play. (Focus group conversation, Grade 1)

They find playing deeply meaningful and love getting out of class to run and play. Bodily movement, such as running and blowing off steam from their bodies, is connected with the children's feeling of joy and sense of freedom across grades. Moreover, the opportunity to move, run, climb and roll around seem to create a sensation of freedom. Therefore, there is a distinct focus on the body and movement. This indicates that the sensation of being in a free space where they can be more themselves is related to moments in which their bodies are less regulated in a space belonging to the playful pulse situated within the unofficial forms of school life. The social, as expressed in these playful collectives by the children, is described as a highly meaningful life form. Although this expression of the social is not legitimised on the timetable, it causes ruptures and upholds constant negotiations between the pulse of order and the pulse of playfulness.

5.6 Movement between different pulses and rhythms

5.6.1 Rhythms in struggle show different life forms

The professionals rarely described or positioned the affective quality of the playful pulse, its outbursts and intensity as meaningful and related to fun and freedom, as the children described them. They characterised these outbursts as noise, nonsense and disruptive behaviour. The following empirical examples show how the loose and open rhythms collide with the tight and organised rhythms. The outbursts from the children are predominantly positioned as noise and nonsense, similar to this Grade 7 situation in the library:

> A group of children sits under the stairs, among some beanbags. I can see and hear them laughing. I move over and ask how it is in the library. *Andrea*: 'It's more fun, kind of'. *Andreas*: 'Kind of like freedom, like we can move. Christian farts and makes signs that he is trying to fart'. *Helen*: 'It's nice to be able to talk to each other or lie in the beanbags'. *Andreas*: 'Yeah, it's really nice ('DIGG') to sit and lie down in these beanbags instead of the hard chairs we usually sit on'. Everyone laughs. Andreas jumps on Christian's stomach, and then the two boys roll around in the beanbags. The boys laugh louder, and the girls join in, although the girls look more often towards Carl. Everyone laughs loudly. Carl, the teacher, enters. *Carl*: What on earth are you doing? You are now in Grade 7 and must be able to behave. Now, you are only causing disturbance, and you are not enjoying reading as you are meant to. This is only

nonsense and yes, simply noise. So, now you need to calm down and read. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7).

The farting, rolling around and laughing in the above empirical example represent a different way of being compared with what the teacher expects from the children. The teacher positions the children's actions as noise and nonsense. This is similar to Ella's behaviour during the morning song in Grade 1, in which several children start to sing louder and faster than Ella the teacher, and she stops singing, considering it nonsense and telling the children that she cannot concentrate and that she knows they can sing better. Ella dismisses the children's different ways of singing as a positive contribution, and she stresses the need to do it properly. Carl and Ella hold different bodily expressions when approaching the situations. Carl raises his voice, argues that the children's doings are simply noise, and tells the children to stop abruptly and loudly, with no smile on his face. Conversely, Ella smiles, has a gentle voice and stresses that the children can sing better. However, both teachers define the children's doings as nonsense, off the scheduled task and try to stop what the children are doing to read and sing properly. The different forms of school life at play can be seen in these situations. They move together, crossing and colliding. The children modifying the song, farting and laughing loudly seem to flow and move in a different rhythm than the rhythm of the teachers when establishing calm reading and proper singing. Both teachers identify children's doings as noise and nonsense and consider these actions to ruin the nice and cosy atmosphere of proper singing and calm reading. There are two radically different ways of looking at and experiencing the same situation, as represented by the different rhythms in which a pulse of order drives one and a pulse of playfulness drives the other, leading to different outlooks towards what is meaningful and important in the situation.

5.6.2 Fused rhythms create alternative collectives

These different yet entangled rhythms and pulses do not rigidly follow the children or the professionals. Although the playful pulse most often is orchestrated from and among the children and the pulse of order is orchestrated from adults, there are also situations in which they mix not with friction and tension, which take place in disturbances, but in the entanglement of rhythms, creating a different affective quality. The following situation is rare in the empirical material, but it carries analytical significance, as there is an apparent

mixing of rhythms and a movement in affective quality. The movement materialises as a symbiosis between the different rhythms and pulses, creating an alternative collective being and presence between the children and the professionals. This alternative collective took place in different ways, for example, if the professionals joined in the loose and open rhythm of a collective with the children. Roger, (youth worker, Grades 1 & 7), played football with the children. I asked him why he did this in the interview:

> Roger: Well, I get strong and genuine contact with the children when I play with them. Our roles have become different somehow. When I just stand and watch, which we often do as adults, I end up just standing and waiting for someone to come to me or that I must go and help someone. When I play, I am kind of more where they are. I am in the situation in a different way. I am where they are. I think it is crucial not to just stand there looking at them. (Interview, Youth worker, Grades 1 & 7).

My observations support that the notion of 'standing watching', as Roger refers to it, is a standard approach among professionals during break times when children play and engage in different activities. The school had a weekly plan for organising outside guards (utevakter). According to the professionals,

> Carl teacher Grade 7: The outside guards serve to ensure that adults are always present with the children when they are outside during breaks.
> Adam assistant: They are meant to prevent and assist in solving conflicts.
> Emma teacher grade 1: create a sense of safety and offer comfort when needed. (Fieldnotes)

The professionals on 'duty' outside wore yellow vests, walked around slowly, stood still watching and looked towards the children. The situation Roger refers to is not a typical situation based on the empirical material. However, I observed Roger while playing football with the children and thus asked him about it in the interview. Roger referred to words like 'genuine', being more where 'they' (children) are and achieving another form of contact with the children. He also commented that it was as though their roles had changed. The affective quality changes through Roger's movements, changing from standing watching to being physically immersed in the activity, moving together with the children and

running alongside them with a collective focus on the ball. His role as the professional is less noticeable when he chases the ball with a group of children compared with just standing next to them 'watching'. The combination of the ball, running bodies, and movement changes the affective quality and creates space for the pulse of playfulness. The interaction changes towards what Roger calls a more 'genuine contact with the children'. The intensity of the situation seems to be transverse between two rhythms. It begins from the pulse of order manifesting as the 'standing-watching' adult position, which is the outside guard organised in weekly timetables intended to ensure that the school runs smoothly, to a different affective quality the moment Roger joins the children. The intensity then moves to the open and loose rhythms with a playful pulse as Roger becomes immersed in the game. Therefore, affective quality changes from two different orientations to a combined orientation on the ball. In this symbiosis, the playful pulse emerges, and the open and loose rhythms, which become inferior to the tight and organised rhythms in a moment of disturbance, become more on equal footing.

This is an alternative collective that has more than two sets of rhythms. There seems to be a third affective quality that emerges between the two pulses and rhythms. The running bodies and football show intensity in a collective orientation of fun instead of the task of maintaining an overview of the situation, as is expected of an outside guard. Common responses in the focus group conversations talking about the role of adults in school is reflected in these quotes from different children,

> Boy grade 7: Adults rarely play with us, when they do its often like something special, like before the summer holiday. Its so much fun.
> Girl grade 7; Adults normally just teach as and tells us what to do, that's school. If we do something like different so its less like in the roles of pupil and teacher, like being on a trip, its kind of not like school.
> Girl grade 1: Teachers tells us often what to do and how
> Boy grad 1: Adults often just walk around kind of, looking at us, or just standing watching - its fun if they play with us, like in football.
> (Focus group conversations)

The children expressed a sense of enjoyment and gratitude towards situations in which the professionals genuinely participated in their playing. They said that it was not like being in school when the adults played with them. These rare situations are described as different, including an experience of more genuine interaction and less like the roles in the classroom. This supports Roger's experience of achieving another contact with the children. Carl, an arts & crafts teacher in Grade 7, had a similar experience of a switched position when standing next to the children on the planer bench during arts & crafts. According to Carl, he felt less like a formal teacher standing on the planner bench:

> Carl: Standing there with the children on the planner bench, we are more side-by-side in a way. In the classroom, I feel it is more obvious that I am the teacher and, in some strange way, one level above the children and I am the one telling them that we will learn this or that. We are on the same bench, like closer together. (Interview, teacher, Grade 7).

Carl points to a sensation of a different and alternative collective in which experiences are closer to the children, supporting this feeling of gaining another kind of contact with the children. Many children in Grade 7 confirm this experience, saying that arts & crafts is not like being in school and that they can talk with the teachers differently and less *'school-like'*. Carl's conventional classroom seems to be what the children refer to as a more proper school, and arts & crafts is different from this. The contact teachers in Grade 1, Ella and Emma, mirror Roger's and Carl's reflections on their presence and role in their weekly trip to the woods. They describe the feelings of being with the children as closer somehow and more present when they sat around the bonfire:

> *Emma*: 'There is less classical teaching in the weekly trips to the wood. We feel that our didactic work is relegated to the background, as the children are very immersed in the woods. We have less of the timed and planned schedule in the woods and more time just to be—and that it is different pace from that in school'. (Fieldnote, teacher, Grade 1)
> *Ella*: Children have a bond with the woods, like they are more in their element in the woods, in a space where they can be more themselves. Being without a timetable gives us more time to be together with the children and be more relaxed yet very present. (Fieldnote, teacher, Grade 1)

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The teacher's role is somewhat less dominating in the woods, and there are few lines and rows. Instead, the children run all over the place. I spent time with the children on these weekly trips, and I usually could not see the children from where I was standing. Walking around in the woods, I often found them between the trees, playing, smiling, laughing and screaming. They run from tree to tree, play hide and seek or simply run while playing war with the nuts falling from the trees. I asked the children about their experiences in these trips, and the children, usually in chorus, replied that they loved the trips, that it was not like being in school, that they could bring a different lunch and that they could run in the woods. They considered the trip to the woods very meaningful. The other professionals who joined these trips also found them meaningful and pointed out how the trips served as a place for *all children*, as there was less focus on what they *should be doing* out in the woods than when within the classroom. For example, some children who struggled in the classroom with tasks and sitting still while working in silence seemed to thrive, enjoy and be active and positive contributors in the woods, gathering sticks for the bonfire or playing games between the trees. The children experienced fewer demands in the woods, less focus on assigned tasks and fewer pre-arranged activities. The experiences of the professionals and children involving the football, the planer bench and the woods indicate that the loose and open rhythms in these situations are less inferior to the tight and organised rhythms in the more conventional classroom context. Ella mentions being less dependent on the timetable and that it creates space for a stronger collective presence with the children. This implies that the authority of the timetable as a co-creator of the pulse of order fades in the woods as there is no set programme or timetable to follow, allowing space for the open and loose rhythms to emerge. All of the teachers reflected that they felt differently about being together with the children, with a more relaxed and genuine presence. This implies that when the intensity spot of the task from the tight and organised rhythms fades, the current orientation from the open and loose rhythms creates space for a different kind of togetherness between the professionals and the children. This togetherness is characterised by less hierarchical roles and an equalising presence rooted in the open and loose rhythms in which common affect and playful collectives affect the more hegemonic forms of school life directed by the pulse of order and tight and organised rhythms.

5.7 Emergence of the ignorant citizen

The RA illustrates how the different forms of school life show different positions children must navigate. Official forms of school life create expectations in the rational way of being calm and regulated, and the ignorant position immersed in the open and loose rhythms can be seen as expressions of playful negotiation and resistance to the rational bodily position. I consider the different school lives to have clear, distinct features, but they are still mutually dependent on each other, and both lives give nourishment to the other. This duality of being independent yet interdependent brings analytical scope for studying the emergence of the ignorant citizen. The ignorant position emerges as it disturbs the order of a situation and shows the order. This becomes visible because the disruptions from the children trigger responses from the professionals who in turn shows what is made legitimate and not within the current situation. Children's collectives can be seen to deviate from, push into and make the boundaries for sedimented social practices in school visible, such as the norms for practice linked to the task and the rational calm body in the conventional classroom. I relate the emergence of the ignorant citizen to the concepts of passion, agonistic pluralism and dislocation. According to Biesta (2011), the 'ignorant citizen' is someone who constantly redraws boundaries, orders and definitions. This way of linking children's playful bodily practices to democracy can be found in the literature on children's play. For example, Sundsdal and Øksnes (2018) analyse play as a concept of liberation and resistance. According to Øksnes (2008) playful practices among children can be seen as a negotiation of another life and other identities. Play can be seen to expresses collective forms of negotiations that rupture established perspectives and create space for the new (Andersson & Kampman, 1996; Strem, 2012). Seen through Laclau's (1990) lenses, the ignorant citizen is someone who can dislocate social space. Dislocation refers to a breakup of what is room for in dominant structures and to something being 'pushed out of place' of a radically different nature and not in accordance with what is immediately expected. It can disrupt 'positive' identities and create space for new identities to be formed (Laclau, 1990; Marchart, 2014). The rational calm position can be seen as a positive pupil identity, the position children are expected to confirm with and the tight and organised rhythms situating the rational position are pushed out of place by the ignorant position.

According to Laclau (1990), dislocation involves a duality that relates to the effect of dislocation. It threatens identities (positive identities) and is the foundation for constructing the new (Marchart, 2014). The rational bodily position can be seen as a positive identity made legitimate and significant in official school life and the ignorant position as the foundation on which new identities are constructed. The quality of a 'radically different nature' (Laclau, 1990) is what emerges from the playful pulse compared with the very different pulse of order in official forms of school life. Children's playful doings cause a disturbance because they do not fit into the structures and role of being the 'good pupil' and the good citizen. Children's playful doings committed to the now, collective laughter and the expressed sense of fun and freedom are identified as noise, nonsense and disturbance because they are radically different from the rational body of being calm, focused and regulated. Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) concept of dislocation is the events that are not expected, thus threatening social institutions' sedimented routines and processes. The playful collectives cause disturbances and hold the potential for situated dislocations of an immediate situation and structurally longer-term dislocations of hegemonic routines and practices in school, showing the power relations and affecting the hierarchical positioning. These potential dislocations can create a space in which children can deviate, resist and bring in something 'radically new' to create a space for democratic subjectification, for new identities to evolve and for sedimented hegemonic practices to move and change.

5.7.1 The grounds for the ignorant citizen and democratic lifeforms

On this backdrop, I assume that the figure of the 'ignorant citizen' offers a leeway to discover that the struggles between the rational and ignorant position can be seen as struggles creating space, a polis, for undetermined democratic practices, initial experiences of agonistic pluralism and a space for democratic subjectification. This assumption rests on an agonistic conceptualisation of equality, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, and a focus on human beings as neither independent or dependent but interdependent. The different forms of school life, similar to the children and professionals, are viewed in interdependent relationships. This interdependence is where equality, as the ideal in relationships, is not a separate aim towards respecting children but as having the potential to show the power relations and sedimented hegemonic practices in school. This understanding of interdependence is essential for the continued

analysis, because it underscores that the assumption for the grounds of the polis rests on the idea that, although the official school life presents a sedimented hegemonic practice, or the 'authoritarian order' (Mouffe 2015a), it stands in an interdependent relationship with unofficial forms of school life. This means that by showing it as the 'order', the ignorant position makes it possible to affect and challenge it. Through this analysis, I argue that these processes offer a space for democratic subjectification and 'dislocation of social space' by showing the authoritarian order as well as new rhythms, orders, alternatives and identities. I now deepen the analysis of these double processes, including the emergence of the ignorant citizen, by adding the concepts of Goffman's primary and secondary adjustments.

5.7.2 Built-in members in running a school

The two affective features at play in a moment of disturbance are immersed in the same institution and consistent with the rational bodily position manifested through the tight and organised rhythms and can following Goffman (1961) be seen as primary adjustments of children in school. The primary adjustment is in accordance with being a cooperator, 'programmed', 'normal' and a 'built-in member' (Goffman ,1961, p.172). For example, this is what occurs when the children stand neatly in line outside the door to greet their teachers or without a word, enter the room in the morning, sit down quietly on their chairs and start to read. Another example is when children raise their hands in class and only speak when permitted to by the professional present or show the sign for going to the toilet. They act according to what is expected from them in the institutional context, and these primary adjustments contribute to the stability and smooth running of the institution (Goffman, 1961). The rational calm body expected from children, is one school feature that aims at stability and smooth running. The timetable is another, ensuring that everyone knows the daily schedule at the designated time and that a weekly prescription is offered for the children's activities. The timetable is also a tool for implementing the national school policy, national curriculum and learning outcomes, for prescribing details such as the number of hours for each subject and for shared with parents to bring clarity and stability to their expectations with respect to the children's doings in school.

School professionals are positioned as guardians of the pulse of order to ensure that these primary adjustments are followed and maintained. This guardianship

involves a professional ambivalence, as studied in Chapter 5.2.1. This ambivalence indicates that there could be tension between the teachers pedagogical reasoning and judgement as better for children and the institutional structural demands. Yet another example of this is how Emma in Grade 1 is concerned that their pedagogical reasoning for their weekly day trips will be challenged by the timetable in Grade 2 due to an increase in the number of Norwegian lessons per week and consequently, the expectations about the task. Emma experiences that the pressure to conform with primary adjustments as a built-in member of the teaching staff to ensure the smooth running of the learning goals and adherence to the national curriculum, is in tension with what she as a pedagogue argues better for children. Her pedagogical reasoning as with other teachers pointed to in chapter 5.2.1 is in tension with wider structural demands, and the ambivalence arises when these teachers act according to the institutional demands instead of own pedagogical reasoning. This illustrates how primary adjustments are a powerful mechanism for ensuring institutional running and create directives for what is possible in the institutional structures both for pupils and school professionals.

5.7.3 Rational built-in bodies of democratic education

Goffman (1961) argues that routine activities in an institution imply certain conceptions of the actor; thus, he believes that institutions can be viewed as places that generate assumptions about identity (p. 168). Through this analytical lens, I ask what kind of view schools have on children considering the activities they engage in and are expected to perform in school. Official forms of school life imply that a good pupil is perceived as someone who is calm, who has mastered capacities such as reason and speech and who is oriented towards the academic work and their future by understanding the importance of learning the skillset adults have identified as foundational for any future citizen of a global world. Reviewing activities and pedagogical approaches used to ensure the rational bodily position, through the lens offered by Goffman, it is possible to argue that children are conceived as those who need to be taught, calmed down and made rational to function within the demands of the institution and society. These assumptions about identity make up the good citizen and a 'built-in member' of a democratic society (Goffman, 1961). This points to a consensus about a specific type of identity serving the collective good of society. According to Biesta (2011), this consensus is intrinsically linked to the assumption in

democratic education that it is possible to know what a good citizen is and that the school task becomes that of reproducing that citizen. The consensus rests on an assumption about what is considered a good citizen. One illustrative example of such a consensus of the good citizen is the common European reference framework for democratic competences developed in the Council of Europe, presented in chapter 2.1.3. According to Mouffe (2005), a consensus can be harmful to democracy, as it pushes other alternatives to the side, and rational consensus is not possible without excluding something else. Options that represent other stories, other identities and pluralism are pivotal to any living democracy (Mouffe, 2005a). Considering this, we can ask: What is excluded as valuable in education when the rational bodily position in official forms of school life appears to hold the consensus and hegemony? What is excluded is what this analysis considers the unofficial forms of school life and the ignorant position. This is a life not scheduled on the timetable, and this lived life is not carefully planned or measured but is spontaneous bodily practices. This life is not significant in the narrative about the democratic citizen, and this exclusion may reduce space for pluralism, different alternatives, democratic practices and room for children's democratic subjectification in school.

5.7.4 Playful bodies disturbing the idea of the built-in member

The unofficial forms of school life create cracks in the official school life in moments of disturbances. The primary adjustment to the rational bodily position serves as a function of the identity made legitimate and significant as the democratic citizen and is important in maintaining a certain level of stability and predictability in school. The concept of secondary adjustments expands the analysis of the unofficial forms of school life and their potential in children's democratic subjectification and children as ignorant citizens. Goffman (1961) points out that institutions, such as schools, with their official rules and regulations, will have institutional underworlds, which can be unofficial forms of school life. A central point in Goffman's theory is that the interactions, social processes and behaviours in these underworlds are necessary in any living institution to avoid the total institutionalisation (Goffman, 2006) of the inmate's self (Goffman, 1961, p.11). In my reading of Goffman these underworlds and what goes on in them are focal to acknowledging in the institution. They are following Goffman (1961) important because they can contribute to reducing or preventing the dominance of the 'official' life to the extent that there is no room

for any other life. The underworlds offer different platforms for the inmates to be something else and to be different than what the official life in the institution offers and demands. 'To be his own man, with some control of his environment' (Goffman, 1961, p. 56). The different doings in which the 'inmates' resist, transcend or move around rules and regulations established in the institution are what Goffman (1961) calls secondary adjustments. According to Goffman, these secondary adjustments are the opportunities and the wiggle room individuals have to uphold their agency in a total institution. They are what constitutes the underworld, the inmate world (Goffman 1961) and can in school be seen to be the world established and managed by children.

5.7.5 Bodily ventilation from the rational body

Through this theoretical lens, it is possible to understand the open and loose rhythms with a pulse of playfulness as ventilation from the rational body demanded in tight and organised rhythms. Goffman refers to the dimension of 'being their own man' as a moment in which children create a wiggle room or a space for being someone other than the pupil within official school life. The children act on their premises, drawing on their embodied agency to make tight and organised rhythms open and loose. It can seem like the ignorant position is closer to what most children experience as meaningful, and 'sometimes a secondary adjustment becomes almost a kind of lodgement for the self, a churinga in which the soul is felt to reside' (Goffman, 1961, p. 56). Therefore, children's secondary adjustments can be seen necessary at a deep level for them to maintain a sense of self in a large institution. The self they negotiate is radically different from the embodiment of the rational calm and regulated pupil expected in tight and organised rhythms, and perhaps it is this sense of self that children point to when they refer to being more themselves when engaging in unofficial forms of school life. Unofficial forms of school life appear to be a significant force in making school a meaningful space, and the analysis shows that it moves intensity and pulls children together, providing alternative ways of being a child in school.

SUMMARY

This analysis indicates that there are two central affective features at play in a moment of disturbance: tight organised rhythms with a pulse of order and open and loose rhythms with a pulse of playfulness. These rhythms nourish each other and simultaneously create space for tension and conflict. The timetable, bodily regulation and the task are agents of order in tension with an orientation towards the now in which intensity is drawn towards what is fun. There are different expectations of children in the different rhythms, including bodily positions to which children are expected to conform. The playful pulse expressed through children's bodily playful practices, which the children consider very meaningful, is at the centre of attention in all disturbances. The space of negotiation between the different rhythms and pulses is studied as a possible space for the emergence of children as ignorant citizens and for the undetermined democratic practices, initial experiences of agonistic pluralism and democratic subjectification. This chapter serves as a foundation for the rest of the analysis and is the basis of the ignorant citizen.

6. Different responses to disturbances

This chapter analyses the teachers' responses to the children's bodily playful practices in the context of what teachers position as disturbances. The chapter discusses critical disturbing elements that trigger different responses. One aim is to develop insights into the features and the relationship of the responses that make children's bodily playful practices acceptable compared with situations in which they are not acceptable. The research question to be answered is as *What are the teachers' responses to what they consider disturbances, and what are the critical disturbing elements triggering the negotiation between the teachers and the children?* I start by studying the responses in which disturbances are made unacceptable. This is a situation in which the negotiation of the disturbance ends in re-establishing tight and organised rhythms. This is the most common response. The next part of the analysis presents two situations in which a disturbance is made acceptable. These are less common but serve analytical significance. The first situation is a disturbance that bursts into a loose and open rhythm with a strong pulse of playfulness after a negotiation process. I then present a situation in which the intensity at the peak of the disturbance is less and leaves the negotiation immediately. The teachers' responses support a transformation into an alternative collective. The analysis then focuses on academic accountability, which is a common feature influencing all responses. Finally, I examine and discuss the key disturbing elements in the situations and how these elements can be related to passion and collective affect. Mouffe's concept of passion, Goffman's concept of the underworld, the findings from the RA and the situational analysis are used in this analysis.

6.1 Not made acceptable

The following situation is a thick description of a situation in which a disturbance is not made acceptable but a displacement of rhythms still occurs. It has rich analytical potential, as the negotiation considering the disturbance move in many directions includes several sequences and key critical features of a disturbance. The following situation is a math class in Grade 1:

> The children sit at their individual desks and work on their task. Emma asks the children to put a thumb up if they have managed the task and a thumb down if not. Four boys put their thumbs down, and the teacher asks if they mean it. The

boys look at each other and laugh. *Emma*: 'If you are just trying to fool me, then stop it. This nonsense is not allowed'. More children laugh. *Emma*: Now, you need to sit still, put your hands in your lap, listen and look at me because I am the one talking. I need to wait until you are ready to take a message'. Everyone becomes quiet, and their heads turn to Emma. After about two seconds of silence, I hear a pencil tapping against a desk. Phillip begins tapping his pencil against the desk in a slow rhythm. It makes a sound that everyone can hear. One boy joins in, tapping against his desk, and then another joins in. A rhythm of pencils tapping against desks is emerging. More children join the rhythm. The children look at each other, the pencil and back at each other. Another teacher in the room reacts. *Paul*: 'No, no, no'. Some of the girls who joined last cease their tapping. Several children continue, including the four boys who put their thumbs down and Phillip. More children join in again, both boys and girls. The act of joining involves moving their head from the workbook, looking at another child involved in the rhythm, exchanging and establishing a smile, finding a pencil and joining. The children smile, laugh and look at each other. Phillip looks around and intensifies the tapping, intensifying the volume and laughter from the other children. All of this happens in seconds. For a couple of seconds, I can only hear laughing children mixed with pencils tapping against desks. Emma raises her voice significantly but in a low tone. *Emma*: 'Now you need to stop! When one adult has already told you to stop, you stop'. The children look at each other briefly before they stop with the tapping, laughing and smiling. They look at the teacher and down to their desks. There is silence in the room. I see subtle smiles and children turning their heads a little towards their classmates. Gradually, the intensity of the collective among the children fades, and everyone focuses on their workbooks. (Fieldnote; Grade 1)

Interesting commonalities in the relationships between human and non-human actors in which a disturbance is not accepted become apparent through the mapping of social processes. The relationship between the teacher and the intensity spot of the task emerges as *high and tight* in all situations. The relationship between the task and the children is *open and loose*. The high and tight commitment features the rejection of anything that deviates from the task and the calm rational body, whereas the open and loose commitment features a sensation of invitation, taking up anything from the children's point of view that inflates energy into the intensity spot of fun and the ignorant position. These processes spiral together, create different positional movements and influence the

space for the children's democratic subjectification and participation. I now examine how these processes lead to two tracks where a communal process among the children leads to a form of exclusion of the teacher where the teachers experience ambivalence towards their own responses.

6.1.1 Tight commitment to the task and interaction featured by rejection

Rejected as noise and nonsense
The high and tight commitment between the task and the teacher is typically presented as Emma does in the situation presented above. There is a rejection of what is perceived to deviate from the task. Emma dismisses the four boys and their thumbs pointing down as nonsense. They respond to Emma's request to use their thumbs to signal whether they understood the task or not. However, they are in their collective and play with it, reversing the situation. This is seen as ignorant of the task and positioned by Emma as nonsense. Emma separates the children's doings and rejects them as significant for the context. This suggests that the sounds and movements made by the children are not recognised as meaningful or valuable in this official form of school life. Considering something as noise and nonsense indicates that the teachers find the behaviour wrong, unwanted and unpleasant. Moshenka's writings, a professor in English literature writing, on the intersection between critical theory and anthropology can expand this analysis. Moshenka (2019) theorises children's play in his book Iconoclasm as Child's Play'. Adults will never be able to fully understand children's play and playful doings (Moshenka, 2019). Children's play and their playful world can leave us as adults feeling radically excluded, as we are not relevant and perhaps only superfluous in our presence of the play (Moshenka, 2019). Perhaps the positional movement of defining children's doings as nonsense and noise is connected to the distance between how children and adults relate to the playful dimension of the interaction. It may be perceived as noise and nonsense because the teacher is excluded from leading the task and learning. The teacher's relevance as the classroom leader is challenged in these seconds, and the teacher must struggle for attention against the collective of the children. The teacher and the children relate to these playful collectives in different ways. The insights from Moshenka can help explain that one interpretation of the positional movement referring to children's doings as noise and nonsense can be related to a lack of understanding and recognition of the playful practice children exhibit. Historically, the teacher has been and is still perceived to have a central position

in school in terms of teaching and learning. The teacher as the classroom leader compared with the children's role as pupils can challenge the interpretation of collectives of children being in a position to challenge the relevance of the teacher. However, the content of the moment is altered in these situations and the potential for possible dislocations is constituted. The learning activity defined by the teacher involving math is pushed against the situation of tapping pencils. The intensity of fun develops and challenges the focus on the task, consequently pulling the children and the teacher in different directions. The relevance of the teacher is challenged because the intensity of the task, which ties the teacher so close to being the leader of the learning, is fissured. The collective focus in class changes from the task orchestrated by the teacher to the intensity of fun produced by the children. This is not to say that the teacher is not needed or becomes directly superfluous, as Moshenka asserts. Rather, it indicates a fissure in the institutional structure that establishes the central position of the teacher, and rejecting the playful collectives as noise and nonsense indicates a distance in how the children and teachers experience and approach the same situation. This distance is upheld by the role of the outside guards and the culture of professionals of 'standing watching', as indicated in Chapter 5. This apparent lack of engagement in the children's playful doings can be due to many reasons. However, non-involvement leads to greater intimacy between the children involved in this practice compared with the professionals outside it. Professionals do not have the same direct experience of the doings and bodily immersed experiences, such as losing oneself in laughter with others in the collective. This outside position can be influential in creating grounds for a distance featuring rejection and a form of exclusion that positions children's doings as irrelevant and illegitimate for learning and official forms of schooling.

Rejected as not ready

Another central positional movement in the situation presented above, which establishes both rejection and distance, occurs when Emma stresses that the children must become 'ready' before she continues. It is a common feature in these situations to point out the need for children to be ready. Being ready appears to require a calm and rational body bound by the tight and organised rhythm, and deviation from being 'ready' is rejected as noise and nonsense. When Emma raises her voice and calls on the children to stop, it is possible to understand Emma's action as an indication that she, at this point, does not see the children as 'ready' to participate in the pedagogical activity. The need to be

ready becomes a positional movement that holds and pushes the children away from the ignorant position into the rational position. This positional movement reduces the space for children to access the ignorant bodily position, as it rejects the acts related to this position as noise and nonsense in the learning environment. Second, it pushes the children into a position in which they are perceived as not being good pupils. Not being 'ready' is a signifier that children are not doing what is expected of them. This positional movement seen in relation to the doings described by the teachers in the interviews can indicate that not only are the children not 'good pupils' but they also are not able to fulfil the pupil role on any level in these situations defined as not ready. Reviewing the transcriptions from interviews and field conversations, teachers using the notion *not being ready* talk about the children as not having school as their top interest,

> Ella Grade 1: Children do not understand that their actions disturb, I think,
> Emma Grade 1: Children are simply more interested in playing and talking. Especially younger children cannot sit still and have arms and legs everywhere. (Interviews)
> Carl Grade 7: Even children in Grade 7 struggle with sitting still I think, it just takes time for children to learn the way of school. (Field conversation)

This indicates that the positional movement of not 'ready' implies a view of children not managing the code of conduct in school. It goes beyond not managing the academic work and seems to be a positional movement addressing the overall manner of behaviour in school and the classroom. One common situation illustrating the move beyond academic work is that the teachers would not allow children into the classroom in the morning if there was much sound and movement in the waiting line to greet the teacher. The teachers would tell the children that they had to wait to be let in until they were 'ready', which means no talking, little movement and walking silently to their seat.

6.1.2 Response from the gut and loss of the pedagogical mask

Rejections occur without any visible hesitation. Emma rejects the children's playful doings to uphold the rational body in the tight and organised rhythms of sitting still, hands on lap and gaze towards her. Several teachers elaborate on this lack of hesitation in their responses,

> Ella Grade 1 We have very little time to think about our reactions.
>
> Carl Grade 7: I guess we react almost instinctively on impulse and tend to act based on experience, having been in similar situations before. (Interviews)

The overarching rules, regulations and pedagogical considerations also influence their reactions, Ella teacher in Grade 1 said in a fieldwork conversation,

> Ella: We always try to ask ourselves why we would stop a child or say no to something. We have agreed that we want to have good reasons for saying no, and there are many considerations to take, as we are a collective involving different individuals and needs. (Fieldnote, teacher Grade 1)

However, the teachers also stress that it is not always possible to follow their plan or be a good pedagogue. They become too frustrated or upset. During a fieldwork conversation, Emma, teacher Grade 1, said,

> Emma: You have spent a lot of time here, and so you have seen the 'unmasked reality' of our daily lives in which we raised our voices and do not react as pedagogues. (Fieldnote, teacher Grade 1)

This unmasked reality emerges when the teachers become frustrated and raise their voice, as did Emma when she said, 'Now you need to stop' or Carl, the Grade 7 teacher, when he raised his voice in the library at Grade 7 pupils under the staircase (situation is presented in Chapter 5.4.1). Emma calls this frustration 'losing the mask'[17], which refers to not reacting as a good pedagogue. I use the phrase 'losing the pedagogical mask', which captures the experiences and points made by Emma and many other teachers in my study. Many teachers describe this frustration as related to *being human and not pedagogical robots*. These reflections show that teachers try to balance the demands of official forms of school life and when faced with the playful doings of the children, they react with frustration, which is difficult to explain. This frustration looking back on the RA, can be understood as an unconscious feeling of intensity (Munkholm, 2020; Massumi, 2002). Emma, just like the children, has the bodily capacity to affect

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[17] Translated from the empirical material. Emma originally said, 'å miste maska, da er jeg ingen god pedagog. Da mister jeg det pedogiske liksom'.

and be affected, and she is affected by what happens in the situation. However, the laughter and the intensity spot of fun, which are related to the children as a form of invitation and a pull to join the collective, are sensed and experienced as disruptive energy from Emma's point of view. Emma does not relate to the collective of tapping pencils with smiles, laughter and excitement as the children. The children are immersed in open and loose rhythms, whereas Emma is restricted by her guardianship of the tight and organised rhythm and the pulse of order. Her response is characterised by frustration towards the bodily flow of events, which seem to move intensity and lead to an upheaval of the children's playful doings. This turmoil is intensified by the polyphony of tapping pencils combined with laughter. The intensity develops as more children join. The intensity top bursts open in a couple of seconds when Emma changes her facial expression to a stern face, raises her voice and demands attention. The pattern follows a gradual upheaval of the negotiation between the two rhythms and the guardian of the pulse of order. Her whole bodily presence presents as increasingly frustrated. Her frustration emerges in her attempt to reclaim authority by using her body to raise her voice, cut away her smile, look strictly at the children, lift her chest and utter five loud and clear words: *now you need to stop*. After this, there are a few seconds of complete silence. The intensity from the collective of children fades, and the situation is re-established into a tight and organised rhythm through silence and working in silence. The upheaval of the intensity of the playful laughing collective triggers frustration in the responses of many teachers, making them tighten their grip on the task and the official school life further.

According to Goffman (1961, 1959), children's playful doings, including laughter, are typical patterns of behaviour in the underworlds of institutions. Goffman argues that behaviours such as these can be seen as attempts to ridicule the institutional plan, such as the pedagogical activity and learning situations. However, the analysis in Chapter 5.5, which examines the notion of 'things that just happen' and bodies being 'infected', indicates spontaneous acts. There is also no empirical material pointing to discussions or conversations among the children about planning a disturbance. This unanimous sensation expressed by the children shows a lack of reasons and explanations for how to formulate and talk about what happens in these moments. This indicates that children do not

make prearrangements to ridicule or disturb the pedagogical agenda, even if it may be perceived as so by the school professionals. Laughter in these moments intensifies the sensation of unity among the children, who seem to leave the teachers frustrated and 'losing the pedagogical mask', as Emma points out. This observation from the empirical material supports and challenges Goffman's idea of these doings that attempt to ridicule the institutional agenda. The teacher may perceive and experience the children's doings as intentional ridicule, such as when the teacher says they cannot fool her by showing thumbs down if they do not mean it. However, the children's sensations and experiences indicate that their playful bodily doings hold a strong commitment and attentiveness to the now and are not characterised by rational planning. These playful collectives emerge spontaneously and intensify when more children join and the commitment between the teacher and the task is high and tight. The collective affect that emerges and the communal sensation among the children push it off into an intensity top in which the teacher is temporarily pushed out of position and the collectiveness among children intensifies.

6.1.3 The teacher's role ruptured and pushed into the background

I now explore how these situations, bound by a high and tight commitment, the presented positional movements and the responses characterised by frustration, relate to the teachers' experience of ambivalence. They seem to create a double track of pushing the teacher out of place into the background and simultaneously intensifying and bringing the children's collectives to the foreground. Children's playful collectives pull the intensity away from the task to the intensity spot of fun and the orientation to now. Teachers' responses to this transition of intensity, which is characterised by frustration, seem to contribute to a parallel process of troubling the position of the teachers, pushing them into the background. This process affects the teachers' reaction to tightening and stabilising back to the tight and organised rhythms, intensifying the pulse of order. The push towards the background seem to occur because the teachers and the task become excluded from the children's attention. Being the assigned guardian of the task, the teachers become caught in between two different forms of social life in school and are excluded and made irrelevant in those seconds. The teachers are alone in their response to the playful collective of the children, emphasising the feeling of exclusion. They are not only pushed out of position in orchestrating the class, but the frustration in their response places them in the

background, as frustration is an indication of rejection and positional movements creating distance between the children and the teachers. Exclusion and frustration may be connected with the experience of several teachers not reacting as a pedagogue or a pedagogical robot to the children's playful bodily practices but reacting from what is characterised as *their gut,* as a human reaction. This response has a paradoxical nature because this human reaction, derived from the teachers' experience at a human ground level, 'outside' of being a good pedagogue rejects the children's approach to the situation and instead emphasises the children as pupils. The human reaction from the teachers paradoxically increases the focus on the children as pupils to be regulated into tight and organised rhythms in the official forms of school life. It is possible to deepen the analysis of this response if we understand the thumbs-down and the tapping of the pencil as part of the children's bodily incarnated presence in this world, a bodily presence that is situated in the children's embodied agency (Merleau-Ponty, 1994) and connect it to the writings of Moshenka (2019). Their embodied agency is expressed as playful and explorative practices and are located in open and loose rhythms. According to Moshenka (2019), their playful doings can never be fully understood by adults. The play's meaning and the collective stimulated by the tapping of pencils belong to and remain with the children. Based on anthropologist Michael Taussig, Moshenka asserts that 'it is not the child but the adult's imagination of the child's imagination that is the culture bearer' (Moshenka 2019, p. xiii). This implies that we can never reach beyond what children imagine and that adults lack the capacity to fully comprehend what takes place in children's playful doings. Moshenka builds his argument on an empirical observation that adults can never participate in play like children. The feeling of exclusion may be evoked because we cannot fully understand children's play, feel that it occurs for our benefit or feel that we can join (Moshenka, 2019, p. xvi). This point from Moshenka relates to a specific experience and can be used to deepen the analysis of the actual experience teachers may feel in these situations. The typical response of frustration can come from the feeling of exclusion that pushes the teacher out of place and back behind the curtains, where the teacher does not fully comprehend the doings of the children. As a human being who acts based on 'gut' feelings or simply acts as a human, the teacher cannot fully relate to it and does not consider joining in the play as an alternative. The laughter and the intensity of fun pulling the children

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into the collective are the pulse of playfulness, and in fact forms of agency, that adults find difficult to understand and, according to Moshenka, perhaps never will be able to. This remains a mystery, or simply noise and nonsense. Not least, if we understand their doings as part of their embodied agency, following Merlau-Ponty, it means that this mystery must be taken seriously if we are to genuinely understand these forms of agency expressed by the children in my study.

6.1.4 Ambivalent tension between the humane and the institution

The response of frustration is not only tied to gut feeling, loss of pedagogical mask and processes of exclusion. I now add a layer to the analysis of the response of frustration: making a disturbance unacceptable. This relates to the ambivalent sensation or tension, of being crushed between the demands and expectations of the institutions and the recognition of *children being children* in all their being. Emma is caught up in this frustration in the moment of making the disturbance unacceptable. However, she also expresses,

> Emma: You know we do demand too much of the children. Children should have more time to be children, play and have fun. (Interview, teacher, Grade 1)

This ambivalence can be associated with the involvement cycle of staff in total institutions (Goffman, 1961). The involvement cycle occurs when the staff become involved, to the extent that they see the inmates as something more than a role and start to care for them (Goffman, 1961). The teachers are torn between the humane standards for the children with whom they share space and the institutional demands. The ambivalence may be an expression of this involvement, in which teachers reflect on what they see as better for the children, regardless of and beyond the role of the pupil. The ambivalence is connected with the frustration that makes them respond in ways they do not necessarily identify with as good pedagogues with respect to what they understand to be the children's best interests, although it might still serve the smooth operation of the institution. According to Goffman (1961), the 'staff world' in a total institution must constantly navigate this tension between the humane and the goals and operation of the institution, such as the narrative about the rational bodily position. This includes ensuring a smooth institutional operation in which the staff ensures that the overarching aims of the institution are reached (Goffman,

1961). Furthermore, these rational overall aims and perspectives, stipulated, for example, in the national curriculum (læreplan), give staff a language for communicating with the 'inmates' (Goffman, 1961, p.80). The intensity spot of the task depends on the overarching mandate of the institution, including pedagogy as the dominant professional discipline. Pedagogy is the language teachers use in communication with children. It offers a set of values to ensure high human standards in how teachers can and should treat children, in parallel with being an instrument for ensuring teaching that guarantees high scores in learning outcomes. Through the latter perspective, it is possible to see that the tapping pencils, thumbs down and collective laughter dismissed by Emma as off-task noise and nonsense are bodily practices that cannot be managed to accept and handle in the context of ensuring a smooth institutional operation of a primary school.

6.2 Made acceptable

I introduce two situations, one from each grade, in which a disturbance is accepted. The situations have rich analytical potential because they eventually accept a disturbance but in different ways. The situations produce various positional movements and simultaneously shed light on similar features. These situations are rare but analytically interesting because the children's doings are similar but the responses are different. Studying the different responses can expand insights into how they create different contexts and opportunities for what is possible and not in terms of engaging in the space for the ignorant position.

6.2.1 Open commitment to the task and interaction featured by invitation

The relations between the teacher and the task in situations in which a disturbance is accepted became apparent through the initial mapping to have a high and open commitment. I call it open because the children's doings, although initially defined as disruptions in some situations, become defined as something else. The open commitment is characterised by a greater willingness to follow the flow of the situation, to change the collective focus and pace and to give less attention to the readjustments and maintenance of the tight and organised rhythms. The open and loose rhythms gain intensity, and the children's playful bodily practice are segments of negotiation either immediately or after being

taken up as an invitation that becomes a form of legitimate and significant contribution.

6.2.2 From a disruption on the border of chaos to creative contribution

Christine, a substitute teacher, teaches PE to Grade 1 pupils.

> They are doing yoga, and Christine asks the children to be quiet and shows them how to sit in a yoga position. Four boys laugh and occasionally stand up and run around. She asks them to please sit down and pay attention, saying that they are disturbing the rest of the class. She asks them to lie down. These four boys come closer to the group while she continues talking. They lie down, start to laugh again, roll around, stand up and run off again. The teacher asks them to come and sit close to her to help them focus. She repeats that they are disturbing the class. One boy lies down, another boy positions his body on top of the first boy, and a third boy lies down on top of the other two. The fourth boy drags the boys down. They laugh loudly. They now place their bodies next to each other in a crawling position. One of them calls out for more children, and another boy runs from the yoga activity to the four boys. The fifth boy climbs up, so there are now two boys on top of three boys. They call out for more children. A sixth boy runs over, climbs up and ends up on top of the other five bodies. They have created a human pyramid. At this point, the teacher looks towards the boys with an agitated expression. She looks back at the children lying in a circle around her and declares that yoga is over. Several children run immediately over to the boys and the human pyramid. Christine says that she planned on continuing with the yoga a while longer but that it doesn't seem to interest the children. She says that 'perhaps this is not the best lesson to observe because it ended in chaos'. At this moment, one boy comes running over to the teacher, looking at her with excitement, and says, 'Look, Christine, look what we have created'! He takes her arm and pulls her over to the children engaged in the human pyramid. The boy calls out, saying they need more children. The girls join. There are smiles, laughter and moving bodies. The children position their bodies close and work together to hold the pyramid together. There are layers of children, and the one at the top is one of the most petite boys in physical size. He smiles and looks proud on top. The children call the teacher and me. 'Look at us! Look at what we have created'! The teacher smiles and says that she is impressed and asks them if she can take a picture. She says to me that this was a surprising turn and asks the children to do it again. The children build a new human pyramid, and the teacher takes more photos. She smiles and laughs. She appears to be excited

about what the children have managed to do and says that she found this so impressive and creative and that they worked so well together. (Fieldnotes; Grade 1)

The teacher tries to hold onto the tight and organised rhythms by asking the boys to sit down, explicitly saying that they are disturbing the class. She refers to the rational bodily position of sitting calm and still, although it is in the context of yoga and not in the classroom. The boys' movements and sounds are identified as disruptions, and Christine appears to be immersed in the intensity spot of the task, which is to sit/lie still and breathe. The intensity top in this situation occurs in seconds when Christine starts to look more agitated at the boys. When the sixth boy runs over and the human pyramid is established, Christine declares that the yoga lesson is over. In these seconds, Christine expresses frustration, making it explicit to me, saying that this ended in chaos and not in a good way. There is a pull of intensities in different directions during these seconds when Christine continues to maintain the children's attention to the yoga, while the boys pull intensity towards their playful activity. The next turn of events is analytically interesting, as the boy pulling Christine over to the human pyramid somehow changes her perception of the situation. She calls it a surprise and describes it with words such as impressive and creative. Their movement and sound are no longer identified as disturbances. When Christine ends the yoga lesson, the intensity spot of the task holding the tight and organised rhythms loses its power, and the pulse of order loses its authority. Another pulse is established—the playful pulse that features the open and loose rhythm in which the children run, laugh and move together to create the human pyramid. The intensity spot of fun gain dominance, and a new collective is created between Christine and the children when she praises their efforts, takes their pictures and cheers them on to do it again. It can seem as if Christine, after several segments of negotiation, moves from guarding the pulse of order to allowing herself to be immersed in the loose and open rhythm with the children. There is a radical change in positional movements in which Christine repositions herself from guarding the task of rejecting the children's doings as disruptive without a contribution to an inclusive process in which the children are positioned as individuals with a significant contribution, creating a common affect and unifying the children and Christine in a playful collective.

6.2.3 Taken as an academic contribution

Natural science with Grade 7,

> The teacher has started talking about today's topic. Three boys sitting next to each other in a row are talking quietly. One of the boys takes a slipper (shoe worn indoors) and holds it up against the face of one of the other two boys. The boy laughs and makes an expression that it smells bad (facial expression: pinches his nose and turns away). The same boy laughs again and says in a light tone, 'Stop it, it stinks, smells like shit, fungus or something. Seriously, stop it'. They laugh more loudly. The other children turn their heads towards the boys, smile and then laugh. Olaf, the teacher, looks at the direction of the three boys. A couple of seconds pass while he looks at them. The other children and the boys fall into silence before Olaf says, 'Yes, the fungus can, in many ways, cause a smell when you sniff your feet or toes, or at least can be associated if your feet smell bad. Foot fungus is why you should wear slippers in a wardrobe, as fungus often spreads more easily in wet environments'. One of the boys asks Olaf if he is serious. They laugh. Olaf says, 'Yes, I am very serious, actually. Foot fungus is a form of fungus, and fungus is quite interesting'. He continues by connecting the discussion about foot fungus to fungus relevant in science. Olaf says that they were meant to talk about something else today but that he is more than happy to talk about fungus, which is important and exciting in many ways. He continues to lecture about the different aspects of fungus, its quality, where it is found and what it consists of. Several children ask if they can get fungus when wearing tight shoes. They discuss why they can get foot fungus in a wardrobe compared with getting fungus out in the woods. The gaze of the children is towards Olaf; he does not comment, regulate or ask the children to pay attention. They continue with this dialogue in the plenary until the break. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7)

There is less negotiation of the task and tightly organised rhythms in this situation compared with the yoga situation. Olaf appears almost immediately to embrace the playful collective of the boys as an invitation and contribution to the discussion in class. The situation does not collapse into an open and loose rhythm, as in the previous situation, nor does it completely move the intensity away from the task, as Olaf stops the playful activities of the boys and continues to hold the rhythm organised towards science as the overall task in the collective. There is still a mix of rhythms, and the boys' doings are made significant as an

actual academic contribution. When I discuss this situation with Olaf in the interview, Olaf says,

> Olaf: It was not the plan to talk about fungus but I find it important to see these minor disruptions from the children as possible initiatives. I see them as initiatives and opportunities to change the lesson's focus towards what the children find interesting. It makes children more engaged I think. And you know, I don't know it all. (Interview, teacher Grade 7)

It challenges him as a teacher because he must be more present to respond to what the children bring in. He puts emphasis on children's interests, engagement in the conversation and that this engagement is related to how the topic comes from them. Another emphasis he makes is how it creates opportunities to change the lesson which and that he does not know it all which can be interpreted that he seeks to discover new learning routes together with the children not simply via him. This attitude towards disturbances is not common among the teachers, but the arts & crafts teacher mirrors this attitude:

> *Michelle*: I always work on the children's impulses and initiatives. This is the key ingredient in the creation of art and in my teaching. (Interview; Teacher, Grade 7)

This type of teaching is reminiscent of Aasebø et al.'s (2017) dialogical teaching communication, which refers to the children's experiences, lives and understandings, including cultural and societal concerns linked to these. This way of teaching can encourage discussion and exploration of the children's contributions (Aasebø et al., 2017, p. 280). When Olaf takes on the acts of the boys, he explores the issue of smelly feet in the academic field of natural science, thus making smelly feet and slippers academically relevant, regardless of whether they are linked to a learning outcome this year or this month. The immediate context and the children's interest in it are given greater emphasis than when the topic is linked to a learning outcome. Olaf considers the boys' doings as an invitation instead of rejecting them, thus allowing more space for open and loose rhythms.

Olaf's immediate reaction reduces the negotiations in which the children and Olaf are pulled in different directions. The disturbance does not progress because it turns quickly into something else due to Olaf's response. It becomes less intense and despite the collective laughter contributing to the intensity top, it fades with Olaf's response and gains just a little energy as he does not express frustration. Despite the lack of intensity, there is an intensity top in this situation. It takes place in seconds when the volume of the laughter increases and more children join the three boys. Olaf turns his face and looks at the boys the moment the laughter turns up one level. This is the moment when the situation is either readjusted back to the tight and organised rhythms or not. It is a window of opportunity when Olaf pays attention to the boys due to their playful doings. This situation is not a total collapse into open and loose rhythms, such as in the yoga lesson. Laughter is reduced, and Olaf remains in position as the conductor of the situation. Nevertheless, it is not a thorough re-establishment of the tight and organised rhythms, as in the pencil situation, as the boys' doings are not positioned as disruption, noise and nonsense. They are somewhere in the middle. Olaf manages to act on the children's immediate interest in the smelly slipper and transforms it into a natural science topic. The teacher changes the concrete topic of the lesson he planned upon inviting the children's doings to the collective of the class. An alternative rhythm emerges in which the two sets of rhythms appear to combine instead of crashing and pulling in different directions. This alternative rhythm becomes a space in which the children appear engaged in the conversation with the teacher, there is collective laughter (although its loudness is reduced), and the teacher does not appear to be frustrated, raise his voice or in any way show that he lost his way as a pedagogue due to the change in focus. A difference attached to this alternative rhythm is that although the organised rhythms push through, with the children raising their hands to ask permission to speak, the children ask more questions than Olaf, and the questions from the children direct the discussion in class instead of the task initiated and planned by Olaf. This response shows an open commitment to the task, as Olaf was willing to change it.

Release from the workbook and academic confidence in the subject
Common features highlighted by teachers as important if one is to show willingness to change the task and plan are passion for teaching, solid academic knowledge of the subject they teach and willingness to release the focus on using

workbooks. Olaf uses his theoretical understanding of the subject as primary guidance in ensuring the progression of his teaching. He recognises the national curriculum and makes sure that he follows the critical learning outcomes. However, he says:

> Olaf: I refuse to be locked in a workbook manual. I am not worried about getting through everything, but I am more concerned about the children engaging and finding out what they are doing interesting and meaningful. (Interview; Teacher, Grade 7)

Other teachers also show this reluctance to be dependent on workbooks:

> Robert: I fear that a rigid dependency on workbooks would reduce my commitment to whatever comes up from the children in class. It is not necessarily easy to avoid this dependence, but we must break free from it to base our teaching on what is relevant to the children living today. (Interview, Teacher, Grade 7).

Many teachers emphasise academic confidence as another key feature expressed important to engage with children's spontaneous initiatives. Several teacher stress that this is important to be able to not fear new possible topics that could emerge because of children's input. Other features stressed is to have an open commitment to the task and to be passionate about teaching as a combination of a worldly and academically orientated practice.

6.2.4 Responses featured by openness, risk & commitment to the now

As discussed in Chapter 6.2.3, Olaf notes that a particular form of presence is important for him to make a disturbance acceptable. Based on his experience, this more attentive presence makes the children more engaged in the conversation. Olaf must be attentive to whatever initiative comes up in the classroom, and to be attentive, a particular commitment to the now is necessary. Attention to the now makes him aware of things that just happen. With this move, it seems as if he has come closer to the open and loose rhythms despite having a clear focus on an overall academic subject. The arts & crafts teacher's experiences further illustrate this commitment,

> *Michelle*: Most of my teaching is based on impulses from the children. I depend on this if I want to support the children in learning about and creating new arts pieces. I would not have had a meaningful teaching experience if I could not work with the children's initiatives in class. (Interview; Teacher, Grade 7)

Michelle's and Olaf's openness is entangled within the open and loose rhythms. The commitment to the now emerges when the present agenda changes, and the teachers move with a flow in which one is attentive to initiatives, regardless of whether they are on the pre-set schedule. This attentiveness involves acting on initiatives derived from the ignorant position and doings that can also be defined and positioned as noise and nonsense. The teachers emphasise that they find it helpful to approach these minor ruptures as productive initiatives but that they are tied to an element of risk. Teachers, including Olaf, assert that risk is an essential and inevitable part of teaching. It is impossible to foresee everything that will happen during class. Biesta has dedicated a whole book to Olaf's experience titled *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, which argues that we should embrace risk as a premise for education to make it possible (Biesta, 2013, p. xi). Biesta is not the only one emphasising risk in education. Many have done this, including the main area in educational research of the Bildung tradition. The Bildung-centred didactic tradition highlights risk and the impossibility of predicting learning outcomes, as the content of teaching can be interpreted into a variety of meanings, thus making it impossible to predict its outputs (Aasebø et al., 2017; Hopman, 2007). The experience and focus on risk are extensively shown in educational research. The teachers in my study perceive risk to be a nature of the practice[18], and there is a unanimous consensus on the risk of acting on initiatives that are not a part of the plan or do not come from the bodily rational position. This perceived risk creates opportunities, as indicated by Olaf and Michelle, but also serves as a blockage for making a disturbance acceptable,

> *Carl*: If I allow too many initiatives from the children outside of the school code of conduct and my plan, I worry that the class will become a total chaos. (Interview; Teacher, Grade 7)

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[18] Translated from interviews with the teacher across grades: 'det vil jo bare alltid være en naturlig del av praksisen' (lærer 1 klasse), 'det kan man jo aldri unngå, det skal vi vel ikke heller – det er jo bare sånn livet er' (lærer 7 klasse), 'vi kan ikke forutse alt' (lærer 1 klasse)

> *Ella*: I really like the risk of acting on the children's free initiatives that are not in my plan. They have so much potential. However, I sometimes fear that I will struggle to 'land the situation again', so they need careful consideration on my part. (Interview; Teacher, Grade 1)
>
> *Mathilde*: I like to make space for the children's free initiatives, but we must accept more sound and movement. If we allow too much of that, I am afraid we will end up in total chaos and lose focus. (Interview; Teacher, Grades 1 & 7)

The issue of 'landing the situation again' and the fear of ending in 'total chaos' and losing focus indicate a concern about losing control over the situation. Loss of control is related to the level of sound and movement becoming too loud, and the notion of 'landing' is centred around returning to the calm rational body, back to the position of silent bodies, voices and movement in lines and rows on desks. There are no specific concerns about the situation becoming dangerous or hostile. The fear of chaos is related to their position being pushed out of place as guardians of the pulse of order.

6.3 Academic accountability influencing responses

I have examined how disturbances not made acceptable move from rejection (defining them as noise and nonsense) and 'not being ready' to making them acceptable, with the same doings being considered as productive contributions. I have also discussed a tight versus an open commitment to the task and the responses changing from rejection to invitation. I now study the relationship between these different responses to analyse why situations turn out as they do and why certain disturbances are made acceptable, while others are not.

Responses not making a disturbance acceptable

6.3.1 The basic skill of numeracy

From a teachers' perspective, a disturbance is related to doing something perceived as 'off-task', and this is supported by previous research on disturbance (Duesund & Ødegård, 2018). The task is important and attracts much attention in a twosome with the teacher. However, the task varies, and the different grades and subjects create different contexts for the task. It influences the space for what can be considered a legitimate and significant task in that situation. This does not mean that it dictates the space and leaves no room for teachers to exercise professional agency, as Olaf illustrates, or how teachers talk about breaking free

from workbooks (Chapter 6.2). However, it creates specific opportunities and limitations regarding what the teacher is accountable for in the overarching national curriculum and school policy. Teaching today takes place in an age of accountability (Aasebø et al., 2017). Accountability refers to outcomes and the 'blame game', which places responsibility on the teacher, teacher training or children's socio-economic background for the pupils' various achievements (Aasebø et al., 2017). Accountability refers to what is perceived as a legitimate and significant task to ensure children's exemplary achievements. One interpretation from the perspective of ensuring children's accomplishments is that the teacher in math in Grade 1 does not make disturbances acceptable because she has more at stake in risking losing sight of the task. She teaches math and numeracy, one of the five basic skills the Norwegian curriculum defines as core skills that children should learn in school. The teacher does not find the children's playful collective of tapping pencils relevant to math or numeracy, which dominates as the task in this situation. The competence in math in Grade 1 includes 'explore numbers, sets and counting through play, nature, visual art, music……' (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019a). This could be interpreted as the children's doings could be considered an invitation to relate this focus to play and music, with the rhythm of tapping pencil being a form of music and collective tapping being a form of play. However, the teacher does not make this interpretation significant or legitimate as a form of contribution.

6.3.2 The pencil as a tool for writing

Another dimension of a disturbance not made acceptable in math with Emma involves pencils. In the children's playful collective, the pencil becomes a drumstick. It becomes a co-creator of the pulse of playfulness in the open and loose rhythms. The children play with the pencil and use it to access the ignorant position. They disturb the rational bodily position in the tight and organised rhythm, in which the pencil serves as a predominant tool for writing. Serving as a tool for writing in official school life, the pencil has status as an object contributing to what Goffman (1961) calls the smooth operation of the institution. This smooth operation involves academic accountability for the children's achievements in writing. Writing is one of the basic skills in the Norwegian curriculum. The children's approach to the pencil triggers the correct way of using it in accordance with their rational bodily position. The correct use of the pencil has a distinct focus on Grade 1 and involves a particular way of

holding the pencil, which is practiced if the child cannot manage it. I do not intend to analyse the pencil grip but only point out how there is a right and a wrong way to use the pencil. This expectation is powerful because it relates to one of the core skills children are expected to learn in school and how to write. The children's use of the pencil in the math situation with Emma goes radically against the expected use of it.

Leafgren, a scholar in education from the United States, conducted a study on the pencil and its role in the classroom environment. The pencil is a vital feature of the classroom environment and has a long history of offering writing to the masses (Leafgren, 2013). Leafgren conducted her study in the United States and found that children used the pencil to annoy teachers by not writing with it and that the teachers consequently tried to enforce strict regulations, expecting the pencil to be used for writing (Leafgren, 2013, p. 280). Children's playful attitudes regarding the pencil can be seen as a form of disobedience called 'nomadic disobedience', which throws structured expectations up in the air for a possible reproduction (Leafgren, 2013, p.287). Therefore, the children's playful pencil tapping collective can be seen as disrupting structured expectations and as an expression of accessing the space for the ignorant position. Leafgren emphasises the children's use of the pencil as playful, referring to a 'playful attitude', and this notion of playful can be seen to support the playful pulse in the children's use of the pencil in my study. Eftevaag (2018, master study) reveals that many of the children she observed and interviewed in school described teaching as boring but that it was fun to use the pencil to do small drawings while listening to the teacher. Children's disobedience with the pencil can create opportunities for the reconstruction of current structures, such as questions about what a pencil is and how it can be used and for showing the orders and power relations for the boundaries and regulations for its apparent correct use (Leafgren, 2013). The children's collective of tapping pencils offers an alternative that obstructs and challenges the agenda of the teacher, bringing unofficial forms of school life to the foreground and rupturing the official forms of school life in academic accountability regarding writing. The American philosopher Jane Bennet developed a theory stating that objects, or 'things' like a pencil, have the agency to produce an effect in the world. Bennet (2010) argues that things, similar to people, influence the perception of the world and are mutually entangled in all our relationships. This is relevant in the pedagogical

context because things, such as the pencil, become powerful due to their participation in determining our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour (Skreland & Steen-Johnsen, 2021, p. 3). The pencil is influential in determining a particular set of expectations towards the perceived legitimate behaviour of a child regarding writing. The normative behaviour aligns with the rational bodily position, and the pencil contributes to this position through the correct pencil grip (blyantgrepet).

Responses making a disturbance acceptable

6.3.3 Fungus in natural science

Academic accountability is also influential in making a disturbance acceptable. Although Olaf deviates from his lesson plan, he does not lose sight of the academic content despite taking up the playful collective as an initiative instead of positioning it as noise and nonsense. He transforms boys' playful doings into an academic contribution concerning fungus as a topic in natural science. Perhaps it would have been more difficult for Olaf to take up the same doings in another subject, such as music, math or Norwegian. The boy's reference to fungus can explain why Olaf makes this disturbance acceptable. Olaf has an open commitment to the task (Chapter 6.2), but he also knows well the overall aims of his subject in the national curriculum. He knows the overall competence aims in natural science, and he teaches natural science in many classes and appears to be knowledgeable and passionate about 'his subject' (mitt fag). Consequently, he takes up the boys' doings as an initiative and transforms them into academic contributions through this background knowledge and knowing that the topic relates to the overall aims of the national curriculum. Olaf's insights and knowledge of the subject allow him to take up the boys' doings so quickly that it almost has not had the chance to develop into a disturbance. The academic anchor helps Olaf track the situation quickly back into a pulse of order, toning down the pulse of playfulness. However, the affective quality has a middle ground in which tight and organised rhythms mix with open and loose rhythms.

6.3.4 The human pyramid as physical activity in PE

The situation in the natural science class is explicit about the academic dimension. Conversely, the link to academic accountability is not as obvious in studying the yoga lesson in Grade 1. After all, Christine, the substitute teacher,

says that it all ended in chaos. I offer an analysis of the possible factors in this situation that could have influenced this radical change in approaching children's doings. The doings move from being positioned as noise and nonsense to becoming creative and original contributions. They change when Christine is presented with the human pyramid, which was initiated by one of the children. Several competence aims in PE in the national curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research 2019b) can be related to the children's doings when they create the human pyramid, for example, 'exploring bodily movement in play and other activities, alone or together with others' or 'understanding and practising simple rules for interaction in different activities, including movement' (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019b). One interpretation of the change in Christine's response is that she was able to correlate the children's doings of creating the pyramid with the aims of the national curriculum. Therefore, it is less of a risk to make this activity significant and legitimate. However, it is impossible to expect the same level of insight into the national curriculum from Christine as from Olaf. It is not plausible that she used the national curriculum as part of her judgment to change her response. Christine is a substitute teacher in many subjects and is not responsible for PE in many classes, as Olaf is with natural science. However, an extended analysis of her response shows potential links to academic accountability. Christine recognises the human pyramid as an advanced physical activity. She is impressed by it, considers it creative and original and finds the children to work well as a team. Christine does not make the running, laughing and jumping before the human pyramid is created a legitimate and sound contribution, but she changes her response when the human pyramid takes form. The children's human pyramid resembles the basics of cheerleading, a well-known popular sport in many countries. Christine does not directly say that she associates the pyramid with cheerleading. Nevertheless, she stresses the element of working as a team, which is highly relevant in cheerleading and generally approaches this activity as more relevant to the context of PE than to the children's previous doings. There are certain boundaries between what is possible and not in this situation. Let us suppose that Christine is a substitute teacher for Norwegian or math in the classroom instead of PE in the gymnastic hall. Would the human pyramid then be accepted as a significant contribution? Reviewing the empirical material in the classroom, which is often dominated by tight and organised rhythms with a pulse of order, it seems very unlikely that the

human pyramid would have been considered in the same way inside the classroom as in Norwegian class, for example. This strengthens the interpretation and analysis that academic accountability is important in making a disturbance acceptable.

6.4 Playful laughing collectives as critical disturbing elements

This section examines collective laughter as an element that significantly triggers the responses of teachers and as an active element driving the interaction and formation of collectives among children. Collective laughter among the children occurs in most of the situations in which a disturbance takes place, regardless of whether it is made acceptable or not. Collective laughter among the children tends to intensify when a disturbance is not made acceptable, as shown in the pencil tapping situation presented in Chapter 6.1. The laughter in the math situation in Grade 1 develops in turns among the children as more children participate. The volume of laughter increases as more children join, and it is on a high level when Emma, the teacher, calls out for the children to stop. The laughter in the natural science situation in Grade 7 is not given an opportunity to develop, as in the situation in Grade 1 with Emma. However, it is still highly present, and the interaction between boys and other children involves grins and laughter. This means that laughter is involved not only in triggering the disturbance and the response from the teacher but also in driving the interactions between the children in these situations.

Collective laughter is immersed in open and loose rhythms. It does not appear as an isolated event or a dislocated trigger from the rest of the situation but as an entangled spontaneous bodily act that involves the movement of bodies laughing and the sound of many voices laughing together. There seems to be a pattern in the situations indicating that laughter increases the volume of the children's laughter and their movement and interaction, triggering a response. In this analysis, referring to collective laughter, I simply do not refer to the actual bodily act of laughing but rather to the children's bodies laughing together. Collective laughter seems to take hold of the intensity in many situations, creating an upheaval of energy and causing an intensity top in the disturbances. These are tops in which the intensity from the open and loose rhythms and the tight and organised rhythms clashes together with high intensity. The tops take place in seconds before the situation is readjusted. This top occurs just before Emma calls

out stop, in the second before Olaf talks to the boys and in the moment before Christine announces that yoga class is over. These intensity tops, in accordance with RA, can be defined as intensity spots, as the intensity seems to gather around this top like it does with the intensity spot of task and fun. However, there is a significant difference between the task and fun and the intensity tops involving laughter. This top is the outcome of a collision between the different rhythms, including the intensity spots of fun and the task. I call these intensity tops disharmonic immersions. They emerge as immersion because there is a shared presence between the teachers and the children in which everyone is attentive to the playful laughing collective. However, there is tension energy and intensity, pulling them in different directions and causing a collective intensity of expostulation—of being torn—between the loose and open rhythms with the pulse of playfulness and the tight and organised rhythms with the pulse of order. There is distance and disharmony in how the children and the professionals relate to the same situation, such as in experiencing it, describing it, rationalising it and acting in it. These peaks of disharmonic immersions may last only for seconds. Nevertheless, they occur daily and are significant in establishing and pushing particular views of the 'good child' in school, what is made legitimate and what role laughter should have in school. This creates the basis for the different responses to children as democratic subjects, including the extent to which laughter is considered relevant in democratic education.

Laughter is scarcely studied in educational research, even less so on its possible role in pedagogical practices in democracy and participation. According to Vlieghe et al., the most common approach is studying laughter as a didactic tool—how it can be used for more efficient teaching and for releasing creativity or improving social cohesion (Vlieghe et al., 2009, p.204). One example is a recent study on the role of laughter as a support for the learning environment (Savage et al., 2017). I conceptualise laughter as a bodily experience in which meaning is derived from the actual experience of laughing immersed in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2014). In their study of laughter, Vlieghe et al. (2009, p. 205) draws[19] on Hellmuth Plessner's phenomenological analysis of laughter and weeping in 1961. The actual bodily experience of laughing is central to their

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[19] Hellmuth Plessner's original study in 1961 is written in German. I used the translation of Vlieghe et al. (2009) to refer to Plessner's study.

conceptualisation. They argue that laughter has no rational intention, that it involves a radical self-loss and that a certain position is given up in the act of laughing (pp. 205–206). 'Losing ourselves in laughter' is a familiar expression, and the contagious nature of laughter shows that it is not simply an expression of joy but is related to a response to a situation in which a subject has abandoned speech and reason and experiences and responds to 'the spasmodic, autonomous functioning of the flesh' (Vlieghe et al., 2009, p. 205). This conceptualisation of laughter is the premise of this analysis.

6.4.1 The flow of laughing collectives as playful bodily invitations

The pattern of laughter in a moment of disturbance has a distinct bodily flow and material signature. First, few words are spoken and exchanged by the children, but there are many other forms of expressions taking place, such as the bodily movements of heads looking up, turning of faces towards other bodies, smiles, grins and eye contact. They all present as a bodily flow in which laughter is the engine that drives pace and intensity, serving as an invitation to pull in more children to the playful collective. There seems to be a repetitive pattern of the children joining in the laughter that is evident in the three situations presented in Chapters 6.2 and 6.3. One or two children typically start it, such as Phillip in Grade 1 math class, the boys with the slipper and the boys that departed from the yoga lesson with Christine. The remaining children move through a bodily flow of first looking up from their desks with a workbook, as in the math class with Emma, or looking away from the teacher, as in Grade 7 with Olaf or in yoga class with Christine. Their gaze seems to scan the room briefly before looking at one of the children already laughing. One of the children laughing and the 'new' child exchanging a smile before the child newest to the laughing collective also starts to laugh. The children already laughing typically laugh louder than the one who just joined. The child laughs silently before her laughter increases in volume, entangling with the other voices. These subtle bodily movements exchanged between the children gradually develop collective laughter. The repetitive bodily signature of joining the laughing collective continues and increases in volume as more children join. Eventually, it reaches a tipping point at which the sound of laughing children is the last chain of events before the teacher raises her voice and calls out or makes another signal for the children to stop. This process is more obvious and stretches over a longer period in the two situations in Grade 1, whereas the situation in Grade 7 is brief, and the tipping

point is subtle, as the teacher immediately transforms the playful practice from the children (including their laughter) into an academic contribution. However, the dynamic is similar, and collective laughter is an active trigger of the teacher's response and, in most situations, triggers a re-positioning of the tight and organised rhythms.

The mapping of the 28 situations shows that the relationship between the children and their surroundings in the open and loose rhythms is characterised by a sense of invitation. For example, Phillip (Grade 1, math class) uses the pencil as a drumstick instead of responding to it as an object for writing, as assigned by the teacher. The pencil acts as a playful invitation that, in the hands of Phillip, transforms and creates a rhythm that seemingly serves as an invitation for other children to join. The same applies to laughter. The relationship between the teacher and laughter in the same situations tends to be characterised by a sense of rejection and is perceived as off-task, disruption, noise and nonsense. The relationship between children and laughter presents more as a playful invitation. These invitations make the children respond with subtle bodily movements when joining the collective laughing experience, with bodies inviting other bodies carried by the intensity of the laughter. The collective experience of laughing increases the commitment to the now, in which children are absorbed in the act of laughing. Looking back at the conceptualisation of laughter, children seem to lose themselves in collective laughter and leave the expectations of the rational bodily position. On a 'spasmodic' bodily level, they enter the space of the ignorant position, which deviates from and ruptures the task, triggering a disturbance.

6.4.2 Playful laughing collective nourishes collective affect

The children embrace the laughter of other children as bodily invitations to join a playful collective. They are subjected to the actions of other bodies laughing and, unlike the school professionals, are pulled in and join the laughter. They allow their bodies to be affected by and immersed in a laughing collective with other bodies. Mouffe stresses that the human capacity to affect and be affected is basic to all human existence. This capacity is important in wanting to belong to a collective and is a driving force for how different formations of 'we' are created and re-created (Mouffe, 2005b; Mouffe, 2014). Using Mouffe's understanding of affect to theorise the laughing collectives makes it possible to analyse laughter as

a form of affect that pushes and pulls children together in moments of disturbance. One child laughs, a second child becomes subject to this initial bodily act, and then a collective affect is created between the laughing bodies. This is what motivates more children to join, thus strengthening the collective feeling. Through the laughing collective, children enter a meaningful life—a life they desire deeply. The affect created in this encounter is featured by the pulse and rhythm of the unofficial forms of school life—the life children express as spaces in which they fulfil their desire to have fun, release supressed energy, move with the flow of things that just happen, play and be taken away by laughter. These deep desires and affects can seem far from democracy, but affect and passion are following Mouffe (2014) the spinal cord of democracy, the most fundamental groundwork for nourishing democratic living. By applying Mouffe's agonistic model to democracy, it is possible to understand children's laughing collectives as induced by the children's desire for living and their bodily capacity to belong to and be in the world. When children join the laughing collective, they engage their subjectivity in forming an alternative collective. The collective of the children becomes an alternative to the collective created by the teacher. The children's bodily movements move from a distinct material signature of sitting still and silent on a designated seat in the rational position as individual learners to a collective driven by playful laughter, in which the children create ruptures in the boundaries of the situation as to what is expected from them as pupils.

The anthropologist Sigurd Berentzen studied similar collectives of children in a nursery, with a particular focus on interactions and negotiations between teachers and children regarding correct behaviours. Berentzen (1994) identifies controlling events in which teachers negotiate the social order in mealtime situations. The examples he uses are how children are meant to position their bodies around the table, their level of voice, etc. Children transform most mealtime expectations into playful collectives, and mealtimes become significant spaces for collective experiences among children. These are collective experiences in which children are active producers in meaning-making processes, for example, as a space in which children gain control over their situations by resisting the teacher (Berentzen, 1994). Berentzen's study was conducted many years ago in another institutional context. Nevertheless, his results support and

validate the interpretations in this analysis in terms of the collectives created by the children as active collectives engaging in resisting the tight and organised rhythms orchestrated by the teacher. Tofteland (2015) uses the radical theory of democracy and discourse analysis of interviews with teachers in nurseries to examine how different constructions of mealtimes influence being a participant in the meal for children. Similar to Berentzen (1994), she finds that the expectations and the order negotiated by the teachers push against the children's playful practice, creating what the pedagogues in her study define as the border of chaos. Tofteland (2015) is interested in understanding mealtimes as an institutionalised activity and finds that if mealtimes become too rigid as a consensual civilised collective, they can reduce the democratic space for disagreement, pluralism, fissures of structures and creation of new stories. The analysis of laughter and these studies highlight that the tight and organised rhythms are deeply entangled with the open and loose rhythms and that the tension and struggle between them contribute to the establishment of these collectives, making them both legitimate and relevant in nourishing the collective affect and democratic living. The bodily experience of communal laughter opens the space for the ignorant citizen, through which the children's collective presence disturbs the power relations and opens a pedagogical opportunity for professionals to be curious about democratic living.

6.4.3 Signifying practices and collective passion

For Mouffe (2014), affective quality can be used in different practices. As indicated in Chapter 5.5, the notion of 'things that just happen' is a signifier of children's playful bodily practices. I suggest that collective laughter is also a signifier involved in children's playful doings. Laughter is a bodily experience, a practice at the level of the body in which children can experience a 'radical self-loss' (Vlieghe et al. 2009) and movements between the rational and the ignorant position. These movements, triggered by collective laughter, contribute to making it a signifying practice. In studying children's own experiences of laughter, its pattern, and how infectious it can be, separating the act of laughing from the signification of the action seems impossible. The actual bodily act of laughing in the collective is what makes it significant. The motion of bodies laughing and the signification of its meaning cannot be separated. In all its simplicity, collective laughter as a signifying practice produces meaning and plays a significant role in children's playful collectives in a moment of

disturbance. The discursive element in collective laughter is grounded in the overall playful bodily practice in the open and loose rhythms and unofficial forms of school life. When people are immersed in discursive signifying practices, social agents acquire forms of subjectivity (Mouffe, 2014). Using this as an analytical lens allows the study and understanding of children's engagements in these collectives of laughter as potential spaces for acquiring forms of subjectivity. This means that the moment a child is immersed with other children in these collectives, she gets the opportunity to acquire the subjectivity in this collective. The collective identity and subjectivity in the playful laughing collective are connected with the ignorant bodily position, as shown in Chapter 5. From this perspective, the desire and affect pulling the children into the laughter are not only what causes the individual child to act, but are also important for the child to access and join the alternative collective identity created by the bodies laughing together.

6.5 Different positional movements in responses

There are differences in positional movements in the responses making a disturbance acceptable or not. These differences influence the space for the ignorant position, dislocations of social space and potential productive ruptures. In this section, I review and summarise these different positional movements. Then, I briefly discuss the key differences between the situations in which a disturbance is made acceptable or not to develop the analysis on how the differences between situations may *contribute* to the different positional movements.

6.5.1. Children's position with respect to the collective

According to Mouffe, one important dimension of the dislocation of social space is that the disturbance is unexpected and radically different from what it pushes against. The disruptions caused by the playful ignorant body are, in affective terms, radically different from the rational calm body. The position of the teacher is pushed out of place by this radically different other, contributing to a shift in the subject positions in the situations. In disturbances not made acceptable, children are positioned as individuals who make noise and nonsense. Professionals describe them as foolish, not listening, unable to focus on the task, noisy, selfish, focusing only on themselves, taking focus away from the assignments and learning, unable to sit still, unregulated and with arms and legs

everywhere. These characteristics are considered to disturb class and take focus away from the task. They are considered individuals stealing focus away from the collective, that is, the learning collective. This is the collective of calm and regulated individual learners positioned in lines and rows as silent and still bodies, in which the task pulls and guides the intensity and the teacher orchestrates it. There seems to be a change from this to positional movements, making disturbances acceptable, in which children are positioned as creative, imaginative, interesting, original and with interesting and productive contributions. The latter positioning allows new subject positions, in which the children, instead of being positioned as problems for and stealing from the learning environment, are those who surprise, contribute to doing something differently and find new ways to approach a topic or a subject.

6.5.2 The extent of bodily directives performing the task

One key difference between the disturbances made acceptable and those that are not is related to the task and how it is performed. The tight commitment to the task in disturbances not made acceptable captures the rhythms in these situations, and the material signature of how the task should be performed becomes dominant. For example, Christine, in the yoga lesson, is clear that the children must position their bodies sitting on the floor in a circle, and Emma instructs the children how they must position their bodies in their chairs, with their hands in their lap and closed mouths, facing her. Situations in which a disturbance is made acceptable usually have fewer bodily directives and more bodily wiggle room for how the task should be performed. The greater bodily wiggle room in performing the task apparently leads to more space for considering the children's playful doings as a contribution. The bodily performance of the task affects whether a disturbance is made acceptable and, consequently, how children are positioned.

6.5.3 Child-centred pedagogical practice

Another difference in the situations is that those in which a disturbance is made acceptable have a stronger feature of child-centred pedagogy, following the Rousseau tradition (Løvlie, 2021), or what I refer to in Chapter 6.2 as dialogical teaching communication (Aasebø et al., 2017). This is evident in how these situations make the children's doings and interests meaningful and legitimate for the pedagogical activity. Disturbances perceived as productive ruptures are approached as valuable contributions. Several teachers point out in interviews

and fieldwork conversations that encouraging children's initiatives allows for greater exploration into what children find meaningful and collective learning about new ways to sample work with a topic. The child-centred practice focuses on *children being children* as different from being a pupil,

> *Ella* First of all, they are children. (Interview; Teacher Grade 1)

> *Martha*: Children are children when it comes to it. We must recognise that before thinking of them as pupils, we must avoid demanding too much from them. (Fieldnotes; Subject teacher Grade 7)

Children are children, and their needs as children are made legitimate to the same level, or in fact more important, than their needs as pupils in a learning environment. Many teachers agree that there are too many demands on children as pupils, and they are concerned about whether schools are adjusted to the needs of children as children. The latter concern is mainly expressed in relation to the rational body of being expected to sit still, be silent, listen to the teachers, and perform the learning objectives. Based on the interview material of the teachers, most of them say that when they see *children as children*, it is easier to approach the small 'disruptions' as positive challenges to rethink a lesson, to take a new turn in a discussion or to bring in a new topic to a discussion. This pedagogical reasoning positions children's playful doings as pedagogically purposeful and productive ruptures and children as individuals with a genuine contribution to the collective who can learn from and engage with. The dimensions of the more child-centred approach are expressed in the responses when a disturbance is made acceptable and transformed into a productive rupture. These dimensions fade when a disturbance is not acceptable. Therefore, the dimensions in Chapter 6.5 do not follow a particular teacher. They are features of situated responses in making a disturbance acceptable.

6.5.4 Commitment to the task follows the conventional classroom

Another difference in whether a disturbance is made acceptable or not, thus positioning children differently, relates to a difference in commitment to the planned task. A tight commitment to the common task when a disturbance is not made acceptable follows often the material signature of the conventional classroom. For example, the response in math in Grade 1 is framed inside the

conventional classroom, while the response in PE in Grade 1 and natural science in Grade 7 takes place in the PE hall and the natural science lab. The physical space seems to influence the responses and a more open commitment to the task, leaving or extending it. Creating space for greater commitment to the moment and for taking up children's playful doings as contributions is more common outside of what I refer to as the conventional classroom in Chapter 5.3 and 5.4. None of the situations in which a disturbance is made acceptable takes place in the conventional classroom but in other spaces, such as the woods, the arts & crafts rooms, the PE hall and the natural science lab.

6.5.5 Space for sound or demand for silence

Another difference that serves a role in making a disturbance acceptable or not and consequently the different positional movements of children seems to be the volume of the sound the children make. If the volume of a particular sound increases, it is likely that the disturbance will not be acceptable. The sound can involve objects being used in a different way, such as the tapping pencil in Grade 1, or dissonance between voices, such as when children make fun of the morning song in Grade 1 (the case presented in Chapter 5.5.1). The sound can depart from the use of space and movements of objects combined with chats and laughter, such as when the children in Grade 7 enter the classroom in the morning (presented in Chapter 5.1). The sound in this situation comes from the children chatting, laughing, chairs being moved to sit down on, children taking off their backpacks to place them on the back of their chair and moving desks to be able to fit their bodies between the chair and the desk. Sound also departs from collective laughter and is always entangled with various forms of movements. The level of volume or absence of sound is often assessed by teachers in moments in which a disturbance is not made acceptable,

> Ella: The volume is too high. It is hard to think here now. (Grade 1)
> Robert: It must be possible to talk about this without getting too loud. We are not in a café, so hush now. (Grade 7)
> Emma: Hush (hysj); be quiet; sit still; close your mouth, listen to me; be silent; now I am the one talking (Grade 1)
> Ella: use your ears; no movement–listen only (Grade 1)
> Carl: Only work, no talk. (Grade 7)   (Fieldnotes)

These phrases and words relate to stopping or reducing the level of sound and movement. The typical scenario in which there is a readjustment back to the tight and organised rhythms in a disturbance not made acceptable is that it ends with silence (no sound) and a reduced level of movement. The acceptance of a higher level of sound seem to be influenced by space, and there is a greater acceptance of sound in the PE hall, the arts & crafts space and in the nearby woods. These dynamics, considering sound and the attention it is given, are the differences between the situations. Sound is not assessed when making a disturbance acceptable, but it is focused on when not making it acceptable. Unassessed or unregulated sound allows for a mix of affective rhythms, as studied in Chapter 5.4. and creates the basis for alternative collectives between children and teachers. It is also influential in creating space for the ignorant position and movements of understanding disturbances as potential productive ruptures.

6.6 Different responses offer different opportunities

The different responses create grounds for different opportunities and negotiations in school. I end this chapter with a brief discussion of the opportunities that emerge with the different responses.

6.6.1 The rational position protects learning and possible chaos

The most common response to a disturbance in the empirical material is not to make it acceptable. The results from Chapter 6.1 show that these situations have a tight commitment to the task, and that the disturbances are typically rejected as noise, nonsense and the children not being ready. Many teachers find these situations difficult. This difficulty involves ambivalence towards their own reactions in experiencing a loss of a pedagogical grounding and a feeling of being torn between institutional needs and the children's needs. Institutional needs highlight children's roles as pupils, follow the timetable and ensure the rational bodily position. Children's needs are related to the notion of 'children being children'. The overall intention of most teachers is to focus on academic content and tasks. Therefore, the task and learning outcomes defined by the national curriculum are protected. Rejecting disturbances and ensuring the tight and organised rhythms and the rational position increase the opportunity for obtaining a silent, calm, stable and predictable learning environment, which is considered by most teachers as important to efficiently work with and have progress in the academic content, reach learning outcomes and one could argue

live up to teaching in the 'age of accountability' (Aasebø et al., 2017). The teachers' responses in my study of protecting the bodily rational position and rejecting disturbances also support previous findings (Duesund & Ødegård, 2018), which indicate that teachers in school define disturbances as anything perceived sufficiently off-task in the classroom that distracts teachers and pupils from learning activities (p. 411).

This response can also be seen as creating the opportunity to prevent the risk of 'ending up in chaos'. The teachers are neither concrete nor clear about exactly what the risk of chaos entails, but it involves the level of sound and movement from the children becoming very loud. Chaos involves the volume becoming so high that their voice and role as teachers fail to lead the class in working on the task. Other considerations, although seldom in the material, relate to caring for children who might be sensitive towards sound and to children finding it difficult to concentrate on the task if there is too much sound. Most teachers are concerned that if disturbances, or what they define as off-task behaviour, happen often, they could cause distress to the whole class, and this is perceived to reduce the space for a sound learning environment. The response of not making a disturbance acceptable is made to protect what is seen necessary to ensure a sound learning environment and, thus, progress in learning.

6.6.2 Moderating the rational position create space for new togetherness

The collective established when a disturbance is made acceptable draws less on the task and more on the different initiatives that come up. When the intensity of the task is reduced, the emphasis on the rational position is moderated and creates space for the ignorant position to appear. This shift is an alternative togetherness in which bodies are more tuned towards other bodies. An example of this is a jamming session in which everyone must not depend on the sheet music and must be attentive to and play off each other's rhythms and flows. This requires bodily attention drawn from affect and the body's capacity to touch and be touched by other bodies. Jamming sessions may seem far off from the classroom, but in studying these moments, sheet music becomes the task. This means that the body's capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies is shown through openness to change and leaving the pre-set plan (i.e. the sheet music), moving with the disturbance as a contribution to the collective. There is a shared commitment to the moment that makes affective quality manifest in the

sensations of a collective form of affect, in which the position of the teacher becomes more attuned to the collective of children instead of the predefined task. There is a move away from the planned schedule, with the teachers giving up some of their control to some extent, risking the doings of the children to influence the focus of the lesson.

Two different routes are used towards this shift. First, if the response is immediate to the doings of the children as a contribution, the negotiation is quickly reduced and the pulse of order, although weakened, still holds the teacher in a position as the classroom leader. However, the original task is ruptured due to the input from the children derived from the ignorant position. There is still a grip on the task, but the response requires the teacher to lean into the pulse of playfulness and open and loose rhythms to be able to consider the doings of the children as more than noise and nonsense. This shift of focus creates space for an alternative togetherness in which the doings of the children are not excluded as a disruption but rather included and recognised as a contribution, although they are not presented through a rational, regulated and calm position. The second route includes a more radical transformation, in which the task in the tight and organised rhythms loses its status completely. The open and loose rhythms characterised by play and laughter gain significant strength, and these shifts create excitement in the atmosphere and an alternative togetherness in which the rational body is diminished in favour of the ignorant body. This shift involves a negotiation between the children and the teacher, moving from what initially presents as distance and rejection, in which teacher and children in affective terms pull in different directions, to a greater intimacy in which there is a shared focus on playful doings. The shift also involves a change in the teachers' response from frustration to excitement and 'joyful surrender'—a kind of surrender in which their position as the guardians of the pulse of order is replaced with a sense of joyful commitment to the more open and loose rhythms. The teachers accept, surrender to and move with the children in their playful doings of modifying the task and playing alongside them. The alternative togetherness creates a collective form of affect in which bodies relate, connect, smile, laugh, touch and look at each other. Words become inferior to a strong playful bodily presence, and the ignorant position is given space to challenge the rational position as a positive identity for how to be a good child in school. A dislocation

of social space occurs, creating a different togetherness that is open for things that just happen. This attitude gives attention and commitment to the now and adherence to a togetherness that recognises interdependency between teachers and children. It can be interpreted as interdependence when the teachers recognise the children as fellow human subjects with genuine and significant contributions to the collective. This interdependence can be explained by both the teachers and the children having the possibility of defining the agenda of the moment instead of a predefined task bound by the order of the timetable and political priorities. There is an acceptance of being led and inspired by the children, despite the involvement of a risk of pushing aside the teacher's role. It offers a space in which teachers can see themselves as learners with respect to children (Biswas, 2020).

SUMMARY

This analysis shows two different responses to a moment of disturbance. The first response involves not making a disturbance acceptable. This is characterised by a tight commitment to the task and the positional movements in which children's playful doings are positioned and rejected as noise, nonsense and the children not being ready to participate in class. This response involves a reflection among teachers of experiencing ambivalence and split commitments between different demands of being a teacher, and reactions from their gut trigger a sense of losing grounding in a sound pedagogical practice. The second response of making a disturbance acceptable involves positional movements in which children's playful doings are positioned as a positive initiative and a contribution to the collective. This response is characterised by an open commitment to the task, a release from the timetable and responses featured by risk, openness and a commitment to the now. Academic accountability seme to affect all responses, regardless of whether or not they make a disturbance acceptable. Collective laughter is studied as a critical disturbing element triggering negotiations between teachers and children. The analysis indicates that collective laughter is characterised by playful bodily invitations and by being an expression of passion and a signifying practice with the potential for democratic education. Finally, this chapter discusses how different responses create different opportunities, considering the rational and the ignorant position.

7. Different opportunities to access an ignorant position

This chapter analyses the differences in how some children have an *active involvement* in practices that cause teachers to call them disturbances, while others have a more *moderate involvement*. Interestingly, the children with a more moderate involvement in the interactions between teachers and children have an active involvement in situations involving only children. This is interesting to address because it raises the question of whether all children have the opportunity to access the space for the ignorant position and become those who can deviate, resist and negotiate in interactions with school professionals. The chapter aims to answer the following research question: *How and to what extent are there different opportunities for different children to resist, negotiate and be a democratic subject in primary school?*

This analysis shows that more boys than girls have active involvement, while many girls have moderate involvement. Moreover, most girls in both Grades 1 and 7 express frustration and ambivalence in their own moderate involvement. This shows that it can be relevant to study gender as one possible answer to why there can be different opportunities for different children to access the space of the ignorant position in interactions with the teacher in the classroom. I present different discourses about gender, what I refer to as feminine and masculine positions. The concepts I use include subject positions, femininity and masculinity. I start the chapter by discussing how patterns of gender appear in the empirical material. I then briefly screen the dilemmas of conducting a gender analysis and present the key concepts found in the analysis. The main part is the analysis of the two gendered positions. I conclude analysing and discussing how these positions create different opportunities for different children.

7.1 Gender in the empirical material

I did not intend to embark on an analysis of gender. However, in accordance with the ethnographic method, the researcher should be attentive to what goes on in the field (Berta & Høgblad, 2023) and not close off potential routes in the field and empirical material of possible relevance to the study. One main interest I have is understanding how the negotiations in what most school professionals define as disturbances affect children's opportunities to access democratic subjectification and the ignorant position. One dimension apparent in studying

the empirical material is how gender plays a role in these opportunities. Gender seems to relate to how many boys tend to take a more active role in disturbances compared with girls. One of the aims of this chapter is to offer insights into how gender affects how children experience their opportunity to deviate, resist and access the space for democratic subjectification and the ignorant position.

I studied the 28 situations of disturbances and found that in three of them, girls were involved in disturbances without boys. Boys were involved in 12 situations; a combination of boys in the foreground and girls in the background was involved in 13 situations. This means that girls are often in the background when boys are involved in disturbances. The foreground position means having a more visible role, typically the first body to engage in the playful bodily practice that disturbs and the ones taking the lead in accelerating, for example, laughter and being the last to stop when the teacher readjusts the situation. The background position means joining after a few children have already become involved in the disturbance. The background role also involves laughing, smiling and joining the same bodily patterns that disturb but with a slightly more subtle bodily signature. This subtleness includes laughing a nuance less, less vivid bodily movements and shorter looks towards the teacher. The empirical material I use in this analysis includes situations in which girls are in the foreground of disturbances and their reflections about them in conversations and interviews, as presented in Chapter 7.1.1. It also includes situations in which boys are in the foreground and girls are in the background, as presented in Chapter 7.1.2. Situations in which only boys are involved are included in the analysis, but I do not analyse them in detail. These situations are considered to have less analytical potential because they combine boys and girls. The girls' doings without boys have the strongest analytical significance in studying gendered meanings. The fieldnotes from the situations are nuanced and expanded by transcriptions from interviews and focus groups, as well as fieldnotes from field conversations. I drew on material from five focus group conversations with children, two of which were with children in Grade 7. There were six girls in the first interview and seven boys in the second interview. This clear division on gender between the focus group conversations was a request from the children in Grade 7. I conducted three focus groups in Grade 1, including three children in each group. All three focus group conversations included a combination of four boys and five girls. Chapter 4.3.5 is

a thorough presentation of the focus groups, including a presentation on how and according to what considerations the children were chosen. The children invited to participate in the focus group conversations were chosen based on the children's own wishes and the dialogue with professionals to ensure participation with minimal distress to the children.

7.1.1 Girls in the foreground in a disturbance

The first situation is from Grade 1 in PE class with Mathilde. They are about to start an activity, as introduced by Mathilde:

> *Mathilde:* 'Can everyone stand close to the wall while I explain and be silent and stand still so everyone can hear what I am saying'. I stand at the end of the line of children next to Aurora, who is looking at me. *Aurora* says in a low voice, 'I practiced, and now I can whistle'. I look at her and smile. Aurora puckers her lips and blows air through them, letting out a low whistle. She smiles and appears excited, almost a bit surprised by her whistling. Mathilde hears the whistle and looks over to Aurora. *Mathilde* says loudly, 'Be quiet'. *Aurora* looks from me and down to the floor and says quietly, 'Yes, hush, yes'.
> (Fieldnote; Grade 1)

I did not speak to Aurora directly after the whistling, nor did she participate in the focus group conversations. Aurora was not one of the children I talked to much. She usually avoided situations in which I asked questions or conversations with other children. She also left during several of the field conversations I initiated. Nevertheless, I exchanged a few words with her a few times during the fieldwork after the whistling situation. These short conversations were usually about whether I had played with the children in the wardrobe on the way out. She did not mention the whistling incident again. She referred to school as a place where they often had to sit still on their chairs by their desks. Aurora expresses the feeling mirrored by other girls across grades of having to act in accordance with the rational position. Aurora represents the tendency to normally 'behaving' in accordance with what is expected but having ambivalent sensations about this behaviour. The analysis would have been enriched if I had a conversation with Aurora about the actual whistling, but unfortunately, this did not take place. Aurora was not visible in any other disturbances in the empirical material, except for giving subtle smiles and silent laughter whenever all the other children were

involved in the situation. She rarely spoke in class, was one of the children that always asked for permission to go to the toilet and always did what the teacher asked the children to do. She often played with other children, but I rarely observed her laugh loudly, scream, run or play football. Her interest was in drawing, reading and doing puzzles.

Aurora's whistling during PE class was a subtle form of bodily movement, and it made a sound that the teacher defined as a disturbance. The disturbance from this girl did not involve laughter but a big smile towards me. It involved a skill she had learned how to master, and she showed her desire to share it. The act of whistling was clearly meaningful to her, but it was not acknowledged or made legitimate by the teacher in this situation. The whistling was defined as a disruption of the class, and she stopped immediately when the teacher told her to be quiet. There was no negotiation, which is a more dominant feature when boys are in the foreground of the disturbance. Aurora even said, 'Yes, hush, yes', to confirm Mathilde's adjustment, almost like supporting the correction she received and reminding herself that she stepped out of line. Another difference in the form of the disturbance compared with the boys is that it involved only her, the bodily movement of her mouth and the whistling sound. This can be seen as a subtle and mild disturbance, but the teacher reacted immediately, as in other situations of disturbances and did not pay attention to what the girl was doing, only that it disturbed the class. I now present another situation in which girls in Grade 7 are in the foreground of a disturbance. This is a weekly activity class in the PE hall that gives the children a chance to choose their own activities,

> I observe four girls take a big foam madras out of the storage room. First, they lie still on it, but one girl stands up and starts to drag the other girls lying on it. Another girl stands up and they both drag the madras sliding across the floor. Adam (assistant) approaches them and tells them to take it easy with the madras because it can break if they are not careful. They tell him that they will be careful. They lie down again, and then one girl stands up and starts to lift the madras. The other girls jump off, and they all lift the madras so that it stands on its side. From this position, it falls and makes a loud crash as it hits the floor. The girls laugh, smile and appear to be excited. The girls lift the madras again, pushing it a bit harder this time. They work together to lift it up and look at each other. One of the girls counts to three, and on three, they throw themselves on

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the madras, making it slide across the floor. They cheer and smile. Adam walks over to the girls and tells them that they are not behaving the way they should with this madras, that they have used their chance and that this madras could break when they use it like this. He tells them to put the madras back in the storage room. The girls stop their activity and put the madras back. They look upset and walk over to a corner of the hall, talking in a low volume. After five minutes, they walk towards the storage room again. I position myself to see into the storage room and listen to them. One girl is helping another girl to sit on top of the madras (the madras is placed against the wall with the high end up). The girl on the madras helps the other girl up. The other girls climb up on some other equipment. The girls sit in the storage room on different equipment, talking. They look over to me and tell me that they are pretending to be outside riding horses. One girl jumps down and closes the door. I hear laughing. Adam approaches the room, but the door is locked. Adam uses his finger to knock on the door, but the door does not open. He then uses his fist to knock harder. The girls open the door. He says that this is enough and that they need to get out of the storage room. He tells them that they are not meant to sit in this room and that it is a storage room for equipment. The girls walk out. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7).

This situation, in which girls are in the foreground of a disturbance, is not common in the empirical data. However, it has analytical significance in examining girls' different ways of protesting. The following fieldnote is from a conversation that happened just a few minutes after the situation with the foam madras. I followed the girls into a small room next to the PE hall and asked for permission to talk about this experience. The conversation moved from one girl to another, and all girls seemed to agree, nodding as one of them talks:

> *Mary:* It's just that we become so frustrated with the adults sometimes, like everything that is fun is just noise to them. *Scarlet:* We just want to have fun, and it's not like we do these things to bother the adults. We are told that we can do as we like in these lessons, but it's just not true'. *Emily*: It's not like we try to break things; we are careful. We would have told the adults or simply stopped what we were doing if something did break. *Mary*: 'It's like they focus more on common decency (folkeskikk) now that we are in Grade 7, and you know, I think we behave quite well. But it's like we cannot or like it's not allowed to have any fun'. *Me:* What do you mean by fun? *Victoria*: Like letting out energy. It's like you know, we need to let out some energy'. *Mary:* Yeah, totally, and you know just don't sit still. We sit still a lot at school, I think. *Scarlet:* I also

agree. A lot of things at school is alright, but it is just so boring. *Emily*:
And it's so controlled by the adults. *Victoria*: Yeah, I feel that it's like everything
is more serious now, almost like we prepare for secondary school with more
focus on manners and common decency (folkeskikk). You know, it's like a set
schedule and plan for every lesson, and we need to follow all the messages that
come and listen to what all the adults are saying. *Mary:* We like our teachers,
especially Robert. He is fun, but he is also very serious. If he says something,
you know, no one will want to do anything silly again. *Scarlet:* I think we all
feel a bit like everything that is fun for us is perceived as bad behaviour by the
adults – and that really sucks. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7).

The girls' behaviour in this situation takes on the playful pulse and the open and
loose rhythm. Having fun is a playful bodily practice. They play with the foam
madras, laugh and play. The sound they make comes from their laughter and
movement, while throwing themselves on the madras. The disturbance occurs
when the youth worker tells them that they are not allowed to use the madras in
the way that the girls are using it. The girls use the madras the way it is not
supposed. On the way to the class that same morning, the social worker
responsible for the activity class explains that these lessons follow national
school policy linked to health and wellbeing, saying that school must facilitate
and encourage children to be more active during the school week. He says that
this weekly 60-minute activity class realises this goal in the school policy and
thus offers children some physical activity. According to the social worker, one
aim of this class is to allow children to be free in what they want to do, as long as
it can be defined along the lines of physical activity. The emphasis on 'free class'
is confirmed by the girls, but they are clear in that they do not experience this
freedom in practice. As shown in the conversation with the girls and the
fieldnotes from the actual situation, they experience the professionals' concern
about the possible consequences being so high that it would reduce their scope of
freedom to engage in their preferred activity during this class. This situation has
other moments of disturbance, and there is a gap between what the children
experience as meaningful and what the professionals define it as. The four girls
are friends and spend much time together. Similar to Aurora in the whistling
situation, these girls are seldom involved in disturbances and usually do as they
are told. They play in football during breaks with the boys, dance, chat and
engage in other activities. They seldom raise their hands to speak in class or

speak up loudly in the classroom. This specific form of disturbance, in which the girls laugh loudly and use the madras in ways that it is not supposed to be used, is similar to the disturbances in which boys are in the foreground, as discussed in Chapter 7.1.2. However, there is a difference in that only the four girls are involved, so the disturbance does not involve other children, as it often does when boys are in the foreground. Another situation in which girls are in the foreground occurs in a Norwegian class in Grade 7. It does not directly relate to playful bodily practices, but it shares some of the same elements. It is linked to how some girls prefer to be identified as follows:

> It is a plenary discussion on analysing a commercial. One girl (Taylor) uses the word 'supe' in the plenary discussion when referring to how girls and boys are presented in commercials. *Carl* (teacher): 'What do you guys mean by supe? *Taylor:* Well, some of us girls believe that we are people before a gender, and that 'supe' is kind of a new gender, but most of all a person. *Carl*: I did not know that. I thought supe had to do with people who are attracted to intellectuals. No, I have never heard about this before. This sounds like some nonsense stuff. I believe there are two genders and only two. Several of the children raise their hands. *Carl:* Let's stop this debate and move on.
> When Carl returns the topic to the task at hand, the raised hands are put down. (Fieldnote; Grade 7).

Later, on the same day, several girls approached me in the wardrobe:

> *Taylor*: Do you know what a supe is? *Me:* No. Can you explain it to me? *Taylor:* It means that she is neither a boy nor a girl. I am not gender-kind. I am kind of both boy and girl but still not. It's simply just a new way of being gender-kind of. *Janet*: We are persons, not just a gender. *Mona*: We do it because the teachers so often split us into boy groups and girl groups, and we don't like that. Also, the boys are very tiring. *Heidi:* Yeah, they are insanely tiring at times. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7).

This disturbance differs from the others, as it involves SUPE as a specific word, and there is less focus on sound and movement than on the actual disturbance. The teacher considered the input from the girl using SUPE in class nonsense and dismissed it as unimportant to follow up and discuss. The intensity travels when children start to raise their hands in class to create a form of communal sensation

among some of the children interested in this topic. The girls involved in the wardrobe discussion also look at each other when SUPE is mentioned in class. Several girls in Grade 7 say the identifying with SUPE, and it seems to be important and meaningful to these girls as they relate it to their experience of being split into groups or treated based on their gender rather than as persons.

This division of gendered groups for tasks, the description of SUPE and the girls' experience of how boys are tiring at times indicate a form of gender segregation in the social life among children in Grade 7. Bjerrum Nielsen (2009) finds that gender among children can be used as a 'border control' through which children experience a sense of belonging. The notion of SUPE can be related to border control, but it is more tied to a transcendence of what is experienced as a particular gender role and where the border is troubled. Bjerrum Nielsen finds that the negotiation about gender borders through activities is less obvious and evident in higher grades such as Grade 7, which is usually stronger than Grade 1 (Bjerrum Nielsen 2009, p.65). The idea of SUPE can be seen as a disturbance of boundaries on gender and that it transcends gender focussing on being a person independent of gender. One question I try to answer in Chapter 7.2 is whether using SUPE is one way that the girls protest against a certain role that they must assume as girls in school. This is a disturbance not directly shown on a bodily level but takes place in a more subtle and sublime way.

7.1.2 Boys in the foreground in a disturbance

I now review the situation I presented in Chapter 6.1 for the purpose of this analysis—the math class in Grade 1, in which boys seem to have the most active role in the disturbance. The situation involves a segment in which four boys put their thumbs down when they are asked to put it up, and it is followed by Phillip and the tapping pencil incident. Boys are active in starting a disturbance and intensifying it. They are the last to stop the disturbances, whereas girls join last and stop the disturbances before the boys. The girls express the same joy in participating when immersed in the collective of tapping pencils. I present a short recap of the situation:

> Phillip begins tapping his pencil against his desk in a slow rhythm. It makes a
> sound loud enough that everyone can hear it. More children join, first the boys
> and then the girls. Paul, another teacher in the room, says, 'No, no, no'. Two of

the girls stop. Phillip, who started it, looks around and intensifies the tapping and laughs more loudly. This increases the volume and intensifies laughter from the other children. Some of the girls who left join again. Then, Emma raises her voice, but her tone is low. 'Now, you need to stop'! The children continue to laugh and smile for another second or two. The laughing stops. Most of the girls stop immediately, but a few more boys are still involved. Phillip is the last to stop with a girl, Marie. There is now silence in the room. (Fieldnotes; Grade 1)

Phillip is often in the foreground of disturbances in Grade 1. The other boys in the foreground in this situation—those putting their thumbs down—are also actively involved in other situations. There are many girls involved in the math situation in Grade 1, and they vary across situations. Camilla in Grade 1 follows the boys in many disturbances, in which the boys are in the foreground. Camilla spends more time with boys than with girls, and she is active in football with boys, which is rare among the other girls in Grade 1. This feminine position is rare in the empirical material, but it is also found in Grade 7 (Andrea). Camilla said in field conversations,

> Camilla: It is more fun with boys. I like Legos and football cards like them. I also like the boys because they are more into what I like compared with the girls. I also find other girls boring compared with the boys. (Fieldnote, Grade 1)

This disturbance involves a pencil, while the previous situation with the girls in Grade 7 involves a foam madras. Disturbances independent of gender usually involve children using an object or their body (e.g. whistling or the thumbs) against expectations. Similar to the whistling and foam madras scenarios, a sound is made from the pencil tapping against the desk. This sound is not made legitimate or significant by the teacher. Few words are used, and the use of the body is more extensive. Bodily sounds and movements in the foreground involve smiles, laughter, pointing thumbs, and pencil tapping against the desk. The teachers react similarly in the whistling and madras scenarios—they immediately ask the children to stop and refer to their actions as noise and nonsense. This disturbance takes place in a setting in which the teacher has initiated a pedagogical activity. Another situation in which boys are in the foreground of a disturbance occurs in Grade 7 during the weekly session in the school library as part of the Norwegian subject,

We walk from the classroom towards the school library. *Carl* says that: 'This session is important to stimulate the joy of reading (leseglede), and so I try to sit and read in these sessions'. We arrive. Children are renting books. Some sit down on some big cushions and read, while some lie on the floor. Others sit leaning against the wall or under a staircase on large beanbags. Some boys lying on the floor use some pillows for a small pillow fight. They laugh and smile, while the books they have chosen lie over their chests. One boy is touching his feet against another boy's, asking him to smell his toes to identify whether it is the socks or the shoe that smells. The other boy takes his hand and 'throws' the leg of the boy away; they laugh loudly. Carl approaches and stops the boys. *Carl:* 'We are in a library, and we cannot behave like this in here. You make so much noise. You really just need to get your act together (skjerpe dere) because you are disturbing everyone else here'. The boys stop and look at each other with subtle smiles before picking up their books again and look at them. The movement and volume stop. (Fieldnote Grade 7)

This situation takes place seconds before another one, in which boys are in the foreground in a disturbance under the stairs in the library. This scenario is presented in Chapter 5.5.1 and includes four boys and three girls sitting on beanbags. The boys laugh, fart and jump on top of each other on the beanbags. The girls are sitting still, watching and joining the boys by laughing. Carl, the teacher, asks them to calm down, and he positions their doings as disturbance, noise and nonsense. The boys are the most active in this situation, laughing the loudest and moving with the biggest movements, including rolling around in the beanbags. What is interesting in this situation in which the children are sitting under the stairs in the library compared with the situation above and those in the library is that the boys lead disturbances or are the only ones involved. Several boys are involved in all the situations, and a few girls join in the latest situation under the stairs. There is also a typical material signature of a relatively high level of sound and movement compared with, for example, the whistling situation with Aurora, and the boys do not react with the same level of frustration in the corrections made by the teachers compared with the girls in the foam madras situation. The boys seem to be in the foreground. Andrea, the girl involved in the situation under the stairs, reveals in several field work conversations that spending time with the boys is easier than with girls:

> *Andrea*: 'It's kind of less drama, and I can be more direct with the boys. It's simply more fun. Also, its less talking, less serious and just less complicated. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7)

Andrea enjoys spending time with boys, but she is not as active in the disturbances as the boys. The more active role taken on by the boys is shown in that they are more bodily involved in a disturbance by laughing louder and moving more. I never see them look towards the teacher like the girls do in the same situations. The girls, including Andrea, take on a supporting role by laughing with the boys, but they do not play with the beanbags or jump on other bodies, like the boys. The boys are more heavily immersed in the situations, rolling around more. One concrete expression of this is that whereas the girls' faces are turned towards the teacher, the boys under the stairs in the library have their faces squeezed against the beanbag or another boy's body. One can also interpret the girls' role as more strategic because they avoid being told off as much as the boys in these situations. They become invisible compared with the louder boys, despite being involved, even though they are more in the background. The boys in the situation with the books and the beanbags in the library are active boys visible in many disturbances, but there seems to be a change in who takes the lead and who follows.

Four boys in Grade 7 are not that visible in the disturbances. They did not want to take part in the focus groups and are more interested in games and computer games than football, which most of the other boys play and are interested in. These four boys also exhibit playful bodily practice, but they narrow it down into chatting about and using their bodies to play out different characters and scenes from the games they played. These four boys also use humour as a way of being playful and interacting with each other, such as telling each other jokes. When other boys cause a disturbance, these four boys seem to follow, support and cheer for the boys being in the foreground of the disturbance. However, aside from being a 'supporter', they appear to genuinely find taking part in the disturbance to be fun, as they all laugh and smile. Although expressing different interests and positions in a disturbance, these four boys, similar to all the other children, express a certain fatigue in school:

Me: How do you like school? *Stuart:* I find school boring. *Robin*: Yeah, a place where there is little room for creativity. *Scott*: It's like there's no space for playing computer games. *Nicolas:* Or, like, do any other fun stuff we like to do. You know, school is school. It's not room for other things or our things here. (Fieldnotes; Boys Grade 7)

Their responses are characterised by a sense of resignation, as if they have given up on school as an arena for the kind of activities they find meaningful. These boys are not in the foreground of disturbances, but they, too, find school boring. They find that there is no space in school for the things they find meaningful, such as being creative and playing video games. They also express a similar gendered positioning as many other boys, considering their role in school. In my observations, there is little evidence of the frustration expressed by many girls, as will be shown in Chapter 7.2. This still indicates diversity in the group of boys. It is important to note that although the masculine gendered positioning studied in Chapter 7.3 applies to many boys, it cannot be applied to everyone. The boys who are active and visible in the disturbances are at the forefront of this analysis in both grades. They represent a diversity in academic performance from high to low and are seemingly well liked by their peers, with many friends in the class. Some of these boys, especially those in Grade 7, are popular among girls. This image is slightly more complex for the girls, as the girls in these situations vary more than the boys.

7.1.3 Patterns of gender, positionings and protest

There are several gendered positions, meanings and discourses related to femininity and masculinity in the material. Therefore, this analysis aims not to reject or neglect other gendered positionings but to highlight two gendered positions that are related to gendered meanings in terms of disturbing and protesting. The feminine position of protesting is different from the masculine position, which has implications for the children's access to the ignorant position. The differences in terms of gender cross-age and different girls and boys. I have already pointed out other gendered meanings in the material, including many girls taking on a position closer to many boys. I now discuss some additional gendered positionings that are relevant to deepening the analysis of the positions studied in Chapters 7.2 and 7.3 concerning the nuances of who takes part in disturbances.

In some situations, some girls in Grade 1 take on the role of assistant to the teacher. This positioning is the opposite of disturbing and protesting. Examples of the 'assistant role' are explaining the task to other children in class after the teacher has explained it, asking other children to be quiet or calm down and reiterating to the children that the teacher has just asked them to be quiet and work, and helping other children in tasks that they do not understand after finishing their own work. This role taken on by some girls has been confirmed in other research, including a large study that followed a school class from Grade 1 to Grade 10 (Bjerrum Nielsen, 2009). Bjerrum Nielsen (2009) finds a complexity in this role in that it is expressed as both moralisation, by commenting on the expected and correct behaviour, and caring when the girls genuinely help other children in class. The findings in my study support this double meaning of the teacher's assistant role taken on by some girls. What is interesting in Bjerrum Nielsen's findings is that many of these girls neglect following the rules themselves. She argues that it seems that for some of these girls, maintaining the rules on behalf of others becomes a strategy for escaping the rules for themselves. The latter result is not evident in my material. Conversely, the girls take on the teacher's assistant role, mostly to do exactly what is expected from them. In fact, these girls can be considered what Bjerrum Nielsen (2009) calls invisible children in school because they simply 'flow' with and follow the rhythm of the rational position without protest. These are children in a position that smoothly act in accordance with what is expected from them, contributing to a smooth operation of school. Another pattern related to gender evident in the empirical material across both grades is related to playfighting. Many boys playfight during breaks and in spaces in which there are no professionals present, whereas I have no observations of girls playfighting. Boys across both grades seem to enjoy playfighting. Specifically, many boys in Grade 7 express in focus groups and field conversations that playfighting is fun, enjoyable and a way to let out energy. They describe it as having helped them learn about each other's boundaries in what is hurtful and not, and that they have clear rules about what is allowed and not. For example, hitting each other in the face or genitals is not allowed. They also know who likes it rougher and who is more into it only for fun. When girls across the grades talk about or are asked about playfighting, they refer to it as something that is not allowed and that only boys do. The notion of

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not being allowed is prominent, and the girls do not reflect much on it or give reasons for why they are not playfighting. This gender difference is interesting in terms of how children take different positions and roles in disturbances. Many boys who engage in playfighting do not talk about it as not being allowed and do not seem to care too much that it is not allowed when asked about it. They say they make sure not to do it in front of professionals. Aside from this, they do not seem bothered that they engage in something that is not allowed in school. When asked about the same issue, many girls are concerned about it not being allowed, and this prevents them from even considering doing it. This approach to a phenomenon, such as playfighting, supports the overall gendered positions studied in Chapters 7.2 and 7.3. Many boys seem to have a relaxed approach to playfighting in school and consider it meaningful, whereas most girls say they are not involved because it is not allowed. This indicates that the children's stance on playfighting is part of a larger pattern of gendered positions in the empirical material.

7.2 Feminine ambivalent frustration

The empirical material has other gendered positionings and related meanings, as presented in Chapter 7.1, including some of the girls being teachers' assistants and other girls engaging in a gendered meaning that is more typical for most boys in this material. What is unique about the feminine position I describe here is that it relates to a specific gendered meaning many girls tend to take on as a form of protest or disturbance against the role of being the 'good girl' and the well-behaved pupil—the rational bodily position. As shown in Chapter 7.1, similar bodily patterns among children across grades are related to the differences in discourses on feminine versus masculine positioning. One interesting pattern in the feminine gendered positioning is the tension between how many girls act and how they express their ambivalence towards and dislike for their own behaviour. Therefore, I analyse and study their *doings* on an equal level to what they *verbally express* due to the tension between them.

Many girls in Grade 7 elaborate on this matter in the focus groups and fieldwork conversations partly presented in Chapter 7.1.1. Girls in Grade 1 also relate to this but in fewer words and with less extensive reflection than the girls in Grade 7. This means that most of the empirical material about this comes from Grade 7. The experiences I draw on come from focus groups conversations and less

formal field chats Interestingly, experiences and reflections verbally expressed by many girls in Grade 1 can support and indicate similar positioning to the girls in Grade 7. It indicates, following the continued analysis, further that the frustration and dissatisfaction hinted to by several girls in Grade 1 grow more intense entering Grade 7.

Many girls in Grade 7 resist a particular way of being girls in school, the phrases below are from different girls from focus groups and field conversations illustrates,

> We don't want to be 'perfect' all the time. We must also be someone else.
> It's difficult being told off. Its uncomfortable, so we mainly do as we are told.
> I think its tiring like just being kind and gentle, we cant just be good.
> We don't want to just be 'good girls' (Norwegian: flinke piker).
> We want to be someone who's not just little angels.
> We just want to have a little fun, to get out steam from our bodies. You know, ventilate from doing what we are told.
> (Focus groups and fieldnotes field chats)

For these girls, school is experienced serious, and the expectation is to be rational, calm and proper. The teachers and other professionals are according to these girls the ones leading, organising and making the decisions. They indicate in the focus groups and field conversations that they feel forced to simply play along. They experience what I call *ambivalent frustration*. They act according to expectations because they want to do well in school and dislike being told off by teachers or getting attention in front of their classmates after doing something 'wrong' based on the expectations in the official school life. However, they also feel intense frustration. It becomes apparent reviewing the empirical material, including the situation with the foam madrass presented in chapter 7.1.1 that they genuinely feel that they are well-behaved and do what the teachers ask of them (as supported by the observations in the fieldwork). However, even the smallest thing done outside the rational position is treated seriously. They express the frustration of being pinned down, not being able to have fun and the need for being released from the image of being 'little angels'. It can seem as if they seek to be a bit bad or crazy—to 'simply have fun'. In a study following the same class from Grade 1 to Grade 7, Bjerrum Nielsen (2009) finds a gendered pattern

in how girls are oriented towards relations and conflict (p.195–195). This pattern supports the findings of my study, as there is a strong conflictual and relational dimension in ambivalent frustration. However, the ambivalence of the girls to their own doings in my study adds to Bjerrum Nielsen's findings and expands the complexity of the feminine gendered position in school.

Most consider that expectations toward the calm and rational position are the core desired behaviours in official school life. Their behaviours, often in accordance with being a 'good pupil', confirm the findings of the national and international rapport on gender differences in Norwegian schools that there is a gap in Norwegian schools in that girls do better on all levels than boys (Bjerrum Nielsen, 2009; NOU, 2019:3; Borgonovi et al., 2018). The story about girls winning dominates the current public story in Nordic countries about gender in school. This story sets up the narrative that girls are the presumable winners and boys are the losers (Aasebø, 2021). In this narrative, girls are perceived and bound as the typical 'good pupil', the ones who behave well according to expectations, perform well and are kind and gentle. Many girls express intense frustration and ambivalence towards this narrative of the well-behaved female pupil. They create resistance and distance to this position and position themselves closer to the ignorant bodily position. This act of repositioning is tied to their frustration due to feeling trapped in and tied to a role that suppresses their need to, *have fun, be free to move, run, do crazy things, chat and laugh.*

As studied in Chapter 5, girls stress the need to let off steam from their bodies and to move after sitting still for long periods of time. In Chapter 5.3,

> Emily remarks: I think we sort of depend on the breaks to let out some steam from our bodies after sitting still so much, you know (Focus group; Grade 7).

She says that they depend on breaks, which is consistent with the experiences of other girls who do not get release in the same way during class and would have enjoyed it. The girls' other experiences presented in Chapter 7.1 include being afraid to be told off by the teacher in front of other pupils and wanting to do well in school. Overall, these experiences contribute to the reduced space available for girls to protest and act against their expectations. These comments show the

tension between their actual behaviours and feelings and their experiences of
these behaviours.

In Grade 1, many of these dimensions are confirmed but with less frustration and
fewer words. This indicates similar experiences, but the girls in Grade 7 express
deeper sensations of being trapped or defined as someone they do not want to be.
This is not stressed by the girls in Grade 1, but most of them talk about the
tension between what they do and what they genuinely would have liked to do.
For example, I observe that girls usually join in the morning song and sing at the
expected volume, sing the right words and do all the signs (a song with sign
language). However based on the conversations and interviews, several girls find
the morning song quite boring, too long and difficult with all the signs.
Nevertheless, they still sing along because they are told to do so. Moreover,
when asked about what they do in school, the girls answer with greater reference
to the rational position compared with the boys. For example,

> We need to sit still in class so we can listen to the teacher and learn.
> If we are not still, we risk not hearing what the teacher says.
> It is important to do what we are told otherwise we get told off.
> (Focus groups and fieldnote field chats)

These experiences by the girls in Grade 1 are supported by the girls in Grade 7.
The other girls in Grade 1 also want to play more and asked for example often
teachers why they cannot be on the trip to the woods every day. Interestingly, the
girls refer to the rational position when asked about what they do in school, but
they refer to the qualities of the ignorant position, such as *laughing, playing,
dancing, running and being outside*, when asked about what they enjoy doing.
Therefore, although more girls than boys adjust to and behave according to the
rational position of being a good pupil, they apparently do not want to identify
with it. They seem to protest against being a good girl. They want to disengage
with the feminine notion of 'little angels' and 'good girls' (flink pike) instead of
being identified with it. The notion of SUPE used by some girls is interesting,
considering this resistance to be identified as 'little angels' or 'good girls'. As
reviewed in Chapter 7.1.1, for some girls, SUPE is an expression used to position
them not as a gender but as a person. This active positioning can be interpreted as
one way of resisting the norms governing the rational position of being 'little

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angels', 'good girls' and 'perfect pupils'. This indicates that these girls do not see themselves as proper girls or at least protest it and try to move away from it in search of something else. They want to be closer to the ignorant position, deviating, protesting and creating new stories. SUPE is a concrete attempt to create a new story about being 'good girls' in school. They seem to resist the current narrative about successful girls in school, which is related to being academically strong, quiet, proper, gentle and calm (Aasebø, 2021), as these ideals are rated low by many girls. These expectations seemingly trap them, make them too serious and boring and suppress their playful, explorative practice. The practice and the part of them they supress can be connected with their embodied agency and ignorant position. All the children, including the girls, unanimously rate this practice as genuinely meaningful and important, a practice that provides them spaces to be more of 'themselves', a reference made by several children in Chapters 6 and 7. This practice is conducted by those who resist and who not only adjust but also challenge, disrupt and push for new identities.

The final dimension in the feminine gendered position is how girls seldom lead the disturbance but follow the boys initiating it. This is pointed out in Chapter 7.1, especially in disturbances in which boys are in the foreground. Girls tend to join the disturbances initiated by boys, typically through laughter. As indicated in Chapter 7.1, the volume of their laughter is often lower than that of the boys. They also tend to look more often at the teacher and leave the disturbances more quickly and before the boys do. This more subtle 'supporting' role in many disturbances can be considered a dilemma. This dilemma involves the feeling of ambivalence, including getting release, letting off steam and wanting to have fun on the one hand and fearing doing something wrong and its consequences on the other hand. The girls' background role in disturbances is an attempt to address this dilemma, as they get closer to accessing the ignorant position by being involved in the disturbance but in a more subtle way than the boys. This is an expression of the girls fearing doing something wrong; thus, they just take part but not the lead or most of the teacher's attention. The girls consider their involvement as highly meaningful on a deep level, relating this practice to the playful practice through which they 'can be more themselves'. However, they also present subtle signs of distress when caught by the teacher when looking in

the teacher's direction. This support the ambivalence many girls experience, indicating that they are not passive about disturbances but are instead open to allowing their bodies to be infected by the moment. However, it seems like the socially gendered structures in this school influence the girls to experience both ambivalence and frustration concerning their own involvement. These findings contribute to previous research on gender in school and present an alternative narrative about girls in school. Gender is connected as a significant dimension of democratic education in terms of accessing an ignorant position.

7.3 Masculine relaxed sarcasm

Many boys present as active and visible in a moment of disturbance. The boys in Grade 7 elaborate on this matter in the focus groups and fieldwork conversations. They are not as verbal as most girls in Grade 7 but are more verbally explicit than the boys in Grade 1. The boys in Grade 1 also relate to this but with fewer words and reflection. Most of the empirical material showing the boys reflecting on this is from the focus groups and fieldwork conversations with the boys in Grade 7. However, there are certain experiences and reflections verbally expressed by the boys in Grade 1 that can support and indicate similar identity constructions apparent among the boys in Grade 7. Most boys across grades, similar to the girls, consider that most of the things happening in school have already been decided upon by teachers and that there is little room for them to speak up about what they want to do differently. Like most girls, most boys experience they can always make suggestions to the student board but cannot decide and are never a part of the decision making in the 'important stuff',

> We can use the student board for different things, but its normally not like really important stuff like you know how much time we should spend in school, how much breaks we should have or like what subjects or yeah. School is boring, but we love breaks, just playing football and have fun. I guess we do mostly as we are told, but we find ways to mock the teachers a bit you know, or have fun you know, let out our energy, playfighting, or yeah. (Field chat, Boy grade 7)

The boys confirm the experience of most girls that school days are steered and organised by adults and that they must play along with it. They also confirm and are explicit about the rational body in school as the dominating body that they should follow. This involves sitting still at their desks while working.

One interesting difference between girls and boys across grades, but is more evident in Grade 7, is that boys do not tend to talk about frustration with respect to this. The boys across grades highlight that they find school boring and love the breaks because they can play football and run outside. The boys in Grade 1 stress the importance of playing, whereas those in Grade 7 stress letting off steam and energy, talking, playfighting, fooling around and having fun. They make specific references to that of engaging with the ignorant position—*playing, having fun and engaging in nonsense* (tøys og tull)— as being highly meaningful, although they express no ambivalent frustration, which is evident among the girls. Many boys take on a *relaxed sarcastic* position when reflecting on the expectations in official school life attached to the rational position and the order of the timetable. The boys do not seem to have any active resistance to the rational position, and they do not talk about and construct expectations attached to this pupil role to being good boys or little angels. These boys' experiences involve how they talk about their involvement but not their actual involvement. Their active involvement in disturbances is a ventil of distress and of energy and is perhaps thus a contributing factor as to why most boys can have a relaxed sarcastic approach in talking ironically about it as they get release and let off steam in the foregrounded role in disturbances. The girls' resistance and frustration are replaced by a form of sarcasm among the boys. The sarcasm is evident when they humourously mock each other for disrupting class, playing or being engaged in fun and nonsense. For example, they tell me cheekily that they never disrupt class, are always well-behaved, always listen to the teacher and never fool around. They can utter these words in conversations while laughing and engaging in playful activities, such as throwing pillows at each other in the library, throwing a water bottle or playfighting with each other while waiting outside the classroom. The reason I add being relaxed to sarcasm is that it presents sarcasm as a way to reduce the authority of the rational position, playing with and mocking what is experienced as a serious and boring school day. They seem to have a relaxed attitude towards the different expectations of trying to regulate and manage their bodily expressions in school. Their visibility in a moment of disturbance and their fear of being told off by a teacher in front of their peers indicate that they hold little concern about acting in accordance with the rational

position. This relaxed sarcasm is evident, as the boys do not talk about the rational position as actively pinning them down or defining them.

These masculine ways of positioning among the boys support previous studies describing '*lads*', a concept originally introduced by Paul Willis in his classical study in 1978, or the kindred concept of *laddish behaviour* (Aasebø, 2012; Epstein, 1998; Frosh et al., 2002; Jackson, 2002; Jackson, 2006). Most of the boys described in these studies are defined as 'rebels' or as boys engaged in anti-school subcultures presenting negative attitudes to education (Willis, 1978). They are usually underachieving boys, are tied to the working class and have anti-school identities (Epstein, 1998; Aasebø, 2012). However, the boys in the present study are not underachievers and do not have typical anti-school behaviour. They are all high-performing pupils and, despite being active in disturbances, are not observed to be involved in more serious deviant behaviour consistent with violence, drugs or vandalism. Although several studies have shown a correlation between 'laddish behaviour' and underachievement, this is not always necessarily a justified link (Jackson, 2006). Most boys do not confirm this link, as they are all high-performing pupils. What the relaxed sarcastic positioning indicates is an apparent, effortless approach to what goes on at school. An approach in which they are not stressed in school, laugh about it and 'joke around'. This kind of positioning confirms and adds to previous studies on 'effortless achievement' (Jackson & Dempster, 2009). This discourse is considered to have a strong correlation with masculinity (Hodgetts, 2008; Jackson & Dempster, 2009). There seems to be a hegemonic masculinity attached to this positioning related to a variant of laddish behaviour in which efforts must be effortless. According to Hodgette (2008), to be a boy means to gain success without trying (p. 476). Jackson and Dempster (2009) argue in their analysis that a key factor of this discourse is the idealisation of natural abilities in the surroundings. The effortless masculine approach found in these studies fits the masculine relaxed sarcastic positioning indicated by the results of my study. However, this form of masculine gendered meaning, similar to the positioning described here, is more subtle and less dominating, popular and powerful today than what it was 15–20 years ago evident reviewing the literature over the last decades (Aasebø, 2012; Aasebø, 2021; Epstein, 1998; Jack & Dempster, 2009; Bjerrum Nielsen, 2009).

Many of these dimensions are confirmed in Grade 1 but with fewer words and a more distinct focus on bodily needs, what is enjoyable to do and what is experienced as irrelevant and boring. The boys in Grade 1 are visible in disturbances, just as the boys in Grade 7, and breaks and the ignorant position are expressed as very meaningful. The latter takes almost all the focus in conversations among the boys in Grade 1 compared with the formal expectations of them derived from the rational position and the order of the timetable. Therefore, they highlight what they enjoy doing in school when I talk with them and ask them about what they do instead of focusing on what they 'should do' in terms of the rational position. For example, I observe that more boys than girls in Grade 1 leave their chairs, talk or use humour to mock or make fun of something the teacher has said and done. There are several examples in the empirical material in which the boys in Grade 1 make fun of different pedagogical approaches to settle the class. For example how the teachers clap three times when they want to convey a message to the children, for example, if they want them to be silent, if there is a change from playing to working or if they are about to have what they call 'ryddetid' (time for tiding up). One example is a situation in Grade 1, in which the pupils are in the wardrobe after a break:

> More and more children enter the room, finding their place, taking off their coats and sitting down on small benches placed before their hangers and lockers. The teachers, Emma and Ella, ask the children still standing to please sit down. Two boys try to leave and move to the classroom. The teachers physically stop them and guide them back to their designated seats in the wardrobe. One of the boys does it repeatedly, and the teacher is there every time to guide the boy back to his seat. A third boy claps his hands three times in the same rhythm as the teachers do to signal something. Another boy joins the clapping and then a girl. Then, the two boys who initially tried to walk into the classroom also start clapping in this specific rhythm. This all happens in seconds. The teacher says, 'What is happening now? That clapping is for adults because it means that a message is coming. If you all start to clap, it becomes confusing'.
> (Fieldnotes; Grade 1)

Phillip, who initiates pencil tapping in the math class presented and analysed in Chapter 6, is also in the foreground in this situation. He is the one who starts

clapping before more children join him. All the children involved in this situation smile and laugh, and the teacher is agitated, as indicated by her loud voice and obvious frustration when she says that it is confusing when the children clap. The boys are in the foreground, and they make fun of the teacher's method of maintaining silence in the class. The clapping combined with children's laughter is typical for disturbances, and it opens the floor for open and loose rhythms. However, the teacher stops this, and the situation is readjusted back to a tight and organised rhythm. In this example, the boys clearly have fun, and the approach to clapping is considered an expression of their sarcastic relaxed position. The children make fun of the clapping; they are sarcastic about it and do not take it seriously. They are aware that their action is not allowed, but still they are obviously having fun with it. This indicates a relaxed positioning, as they are not concerned or frustrated like the girls being told off or caught by teachers doing something wrong. Most boys seem to assume a relaxed sarcastic positioning towards the expectations of the rational position. In a study that followed the same class from Grade 1 to grade 7, Bjerrum Nielsen (2009) finds a gendered pattern of how boys are oriented towards competition and hierarchy (p.195–195). My results do not confirm these findings because, in my study, the relaxed sarcastic attitude is the pattern among the boys rather than the competitive hierarchical pattern.

The narrative of the calm and proper pupil is tied to traditional feminine ideals. Many boys have a relaxed sarcastic attitude towards this constructed feminine ideal. They have a mild resistance to the rational position like the girls, but the frustration evident among most girls is replaced with a dimension of boredom mixed with humour, sarcasm and generally a relaxed attitude. This combination allows them to draw more on the ignorant position without being very concerned about it. Instead, they play with it and challenge and disrupt it with humour and sarcasm. If I review what the boys are saying about their active doings in disturbances, it is possible to see that perhaps the boys' active role in disturbances is a way of accessing a meaningful life not on the timetable (Chapters 5.5.4)), which is a way of getting release, a ventil, leading to a situation in which it becomes easier to be ironic and sarcastic about it. This can be seen as a way of letting out any frustration they may hold, while most girls hold on to it, contributing to their frustration.

In summary, the current chapter shows that more boys draw on the ignorant position in interactions with school professional and may therefore have more space to be closer to the ignorant citizen as individuals who rupture authoritative and positive identities and push for new identities and stories. Note that the gendered positions I bring to the foreground are not static and not the only ones, but one out of many. However, it is important to identify these positions as feminine and masculine to create space for different experiences and opportunities for different children. For example, most boys have a greater space to deviate, resist and protest the rational body than girls.

7.4. Gendered pattern in accessing the ignorant position

The different gendered collective orientations show that feminine gendered positioning is inferior to the rational body compared with the masculine relaxed sarcastic position. This indicates that the opportunities to access the ignorant position in situations involving professionals, those who resist, disturb and push for new stories and identities, are reduced for many girls who identify with the ambivalent and frustrated positioning compared with many boys in a relaxed sarcastic positioning. This has implications for democratic education following an agonistic approach to democracy because it may reduce the scope for many girls to engage in a radical pluralism and agonistic struggle, which Mouffe advocates. Mouffe argues for a constant redrawing of boundaries and disturbances of positive identities, which must come from different collective identities to uphold conflict and struggle. If the opportunity to engage in this is reduced for most girls, these girls may lose space and position to criticise, influence, negotiate and engage in struggles about boundaries and positive identities in school. The critique of the girls can be considered legitimate grounds for engagement in an agonistic struggle. This is a struggle between different discourses about different ways of doing, thinking and constructing gendered meanings linked to being a 'good girl', a good pupil and ultimately to a good citizen. However, most girls consider these barriers too tall to disturb or challenge. A consequence of this can be that girls adapt, supress their feelings of injustice and frustration and ultimately are offered less space in democratic education to be citizens who resist and challenge the authority and hegemonic identities. The protests from most girls become invisible and masked in their 'good behaviour', whereas the protests from most boys become more visible and

take hold of this democratic space in a different way. This is discussed in Chapter 7.2, which shows how girls are the presumable winners and boys are the presumable losers in the current school system. Girls have been reported to have stronger political efficacy than boys (Huang et al., 2017; Ødegård & Svagård, 2018), consistent with the narrative that girls do better in school than boys. The discussions on these gender gaps are usually on how schools can develop and adjust to boys' needs and development; girls can become invisible in this discussion on the exclusive needs of boys. The protests from the girls expressed through their ambivalent frustration indicate that there are differences and nuances to the narrative about the 'girls winning' in terms of democratic education and the space to resist and challenge the current hegemonies in school.

SUMMARY

This analysis studies gendered positions with respect to how different children relate to the rational versus the ignorant position. The analysis indicates that most boys in this school were more involved in disturbances than most girls. Most boys have a relaxed and sarcastic approach to their involvement in disturbances, whereas most girls approach their lack of involvement in disturbances in situations involving professionals with greater ambivalence and frustration. The results suggest that gender influences children's access to moments of subjectification and ignorant position. The analysis suggests that the active role of boys in disturbances can offer them greater opportunity to deviate, resist and access the ignorant position in these situations. Conversely, most girls seem to obtain a more inferior position with a reduced space to deviate, resist and access the ignorant position.

8. Productive ruptures in playful interactions

This chapter deepens the investigation of the role of ruptures and conflictual events in bodily playful interactions between children. The practice displayed by children in disturbances is usually stopped and rejected as noise and nonsense. Therefore, it is interesting to follow this practice to spaces in which it could unfold without a professional stopping, adjusting or regulating it. Up until this point, the analysis has examined disturbances as positioned in official school life and its role in the encounters between the official and unofficial forms of school life. This analysis examines and deepens the understanding of the role of ruptures or conflictual events in unofficial school life. This chapter examines the following research question*: What is the role of ruptures and conflictual events in interactions between children?* Along with agonistic pluralism, the concept of Merleau-Ponty's pre-reflexive subject is used to study children's bodily forms of expression to address the role of disturbances. The analysis elucidates how children's bodies are at the forefront in the interactions in these spaces and indicates how ruptures and conflictual events are made legitimate and play an active role in the interactions.

8.1 The empirical material used in this analysis

This analysis mainly draws on fieldwork observations of the interactions between children in situations in which a professional is not immediately present. The only adult present at the time of the observations was me. Reflections on my presence in the field are discussed in Chapter 4. These interactions and social processes are influenced by power relations and social structures, but the premise for this analysis is that there is no designated adult officially responsible or made legitimate as the leader of the group. I put in motion the results from Chapters 5 and 6 on the ignorant position and analyse the empirical material considering an agonistic approach to democratic education. The situations take place in three different spaces: the wardrobe with Grade 7 and between the trees and the Lego room with Grade 1. The previous analysis chapters show that children's bodily playful practices, including collective laughter, are a key disturbing element in school, including their use of space and objects against expectations in official school life. This analysis deepens the analysis of this practice by studying situations in which it is allowed to develop and is not stopped or positioned as a disturbance by school professionals.

8.2. Identifying acts as expressions of playful citizenship

This chapter aims to analyse the role of ruptures and conflictual events in interactions between children and determine whether it is possible to consider children's playful interactions and practice as a possible arena for democratic practices. I follow Nome (2022) when labelling the incidents examined for this part of the analysis. Nome (2022), working within ECE, applies Mouffe and the concept of agonistic pluralism in his study of conflicts between toddlers in nurseries. Nome (2022) labels different incidents in his analysis invitations, interruptions, initiatives, negotiations or protections. Nome (2022) uses these labels to work with the empirical material, but he does not present the labels specifically in his analysis. I do not rigidly follow Nome's approach, but I find these labels useful in operationalising the concept of agonistic pluralism in the empirical material. These labels help the analysis in opening the situations to examine them as a possible democratic arena because they resemble actions that can be related to democratic practices and expressions of citizenship viewed from an agonistic approach to democracy. I labelled the different incidents as invitation, resistance, protection, disruption and negotiation. These five labels are used to open an analytical space for identifying different acts that can be examined in terms of agonistic pluralism.

8.2.1 The wardrobe and a constant flow of ruptures

The following analysis relates to the incidents and situations in the Grade 7 wardrobe. This space in the school is where children in Grade 7 are mostly among themselves, out of sight of professionals. A typical scenario in the wardrobe is that the children are either on their way in or on their way out. All children pass through the wardrobe from class and out or in from breaks. Some children are more visible and active than others in the classroom and in disturbances. The boys climbing the lockers involve the boys participating in the focus group, and they are in the foreground in many disturbances. However, other boys are also involved in these situations, for example, as guards. This is the same difference among the girls, but there seems to be greater variety in terms of who is most active, loud and visible. Most girls tend to be more in the background, engaged in the moment but often with less movement and sound, consistent with the observation of 'gendered space' studied in Chapter 7. Regardless of who is in the background and foreground, there is a certain pattern

of invitations and ruptures in the interactions that most children play along. These patterns are evident in many interactions among the children, regardless of popularity, status in the group of friends, etc. The wardrobe in Grade 7 is one place in school where these flows of interaction are distinctively expressed. This is a place in school where children are out of the gaze of professionals. The open and loose rhythms with a pulse of playfulness dominate this space, and the children unanimously describe it as deeply meaningful. The playful bodily practice is evident, and there is laughter, smiles, chatting, hugging, braiding each other's hair, poking and playfighting constantly taking place. What is analytically interesting is that all these activities disrupt and complement each other. A typical scenario is two children talking about something, and then a third child enters and pokes the back of one of the children talking. The child who was poked pokes back, and this turns into a small or big playfight or a big hug involving two or several children. The turn of events in the interaction can also move to new topics in the conversation, or it can make the children run around the wardrobe or walk towards the classroom. The interaction can change in seconds, for example, from a conversation about a videogame to a test they are having or about boys and girls. SUPE, meaning having no gender, is an example presented in the analysis in Chapter 7. The child who does the poking initially disrupts the conversation between the first two children. The children conversing do not consider it a negative disruption, as they seem to accept it as an invitation to turn the interaction in a new direction. The poking, or the disruption is accompanied by laughter, subtle grins and eye contact between the children. This gesture seems to help accelerate and move the interaction in a new direction. The negotiation taking place in situations in which there are no obvious conflictual events is what I interpret as 'non-explicit'. A negotiation spirals off from the initial disruption, and it continues in the flow between the invitation and the disruption through constant and sudden turns of events in the interaction that move in a constant flow between disruption and invitation. If some children do something in the wardrobe that is not allowed in school, there is a greater tendency towards what I call an 'explicit' negotiation, which involves disagreement or conflict. I now present one situation with this quality:

> I am standing in the corner of the wardrobe with Grade 7. As usual, there is a lot of noise, laughter and chatter, and clothes are taken off as they are all on their way in from their break. One boy starts to climb up on one of the lockers. By

opening the door to his locker, placing his foot in it and using a long broomstick, he manages to climb on top of it. A group of boys cheers him on, clearly finding this event amusing. More children look over to the boy and laugh, with some even clapping their hands. I can hear a group of girls saying that it is just so typical of the boys and that it is just so stupid. One of these girls walks over to the boy, takes the broom standing by the locker, sticks the broom up the boy's buttocks and says, 'You should get down from there'. The boy instantly jumps down from the locker. With a grin, he starts to make fencing movements with his hands towards the girl, pretending that he also has a stick or a sword. The girl looks back towards the group of girls she left, looks at the boy, and the subtle grin also appears on her face. The girl looks around again and this time she calls for backup. Most of the other girls in the wardrobe come over, and they start to chase the boys. They run after boys, and then the boys run after the girls. Some lock themselves in the bathrooms to hide, and they laugh and run some more. They are suddenly engaged in what appears to be hide and seek. Finally, they are called by the teacher to come to the classroom. (Fieldnotes; Grade 7)

I first discuss the grin on the boy's and the girl's faces in the situation. It appears on the boy's face when he jumps down from the locker, and it appears on the girl's face after she has poked the boy and looked reassuringly back towards a group of girls. This subtle gesture is usually present in children's bodily playful practices, initiating and accelerating the playful pulse or triggering conflictual events between children. In the situation above, the grin appears when the boy jumps down and when the girl looks back towards her group of friends and then back to the boy. The girl seems annoyed at first, but the boy's grin changes the atmosphere in the room. When the girl returns with a grin, the escalating conflict changes into something new. This turn in communication between the children is led on by the grin, as no words are spoken in this moment. The grin works as a form of invitation, a wordless question from the boy taken up by the girl at the level of their bodies. The observation that the gesture is a form of invitation is based on Merleau-Ponty's concept of the 'gesture'. According to Merleau-Ponty, the gesture does not make a child cognitively think about a gesture from another child but that it is joy, anger or sadness. From this perspective, the boy's grin does not make the girl cognitively think about the meaning of the gesture; instead, the girl reads it at a bodily level. Through this bodily gesture, they become engaged in a bodily flow in which they inhabit each other's bodies. The gesture can be seen as a form of bodily question presented from one body to

another. According to Merleau-Ponty (1994, pp.151–152), gesture is prescribed meaning from the point of view of the viewer. The empirical material seems to support this theoretical observation, as the subtle grin is given different meanings depending on whether the viewer is a child or a school professional If the viewer is a professional in the locker situation, the meaning tied to the gesture will be rejected and stopped as an unwanted signal and will not be taken up the way the girls do. The body of adult professionals relates often to the gesture differently from that of children. If the viewer is a child, the gesture tends to be considered a question and an invitation to nourish the interactions. This difference in who is at the receiving end of the gesture illustrates Merleau-Ponty's point that a gesture is ambiguous. The meaning of the gesture is is given meaning based on the viewer.

Children who are not directly involved are either laughing or applauding. Some laugh, as they are excited and find the situation genuinely funny. Others, especially girls, laugh because they see the event as something 'childish' (a commonly used word), such as the girls in this situation, who initially consider the boy's climbing as something stupid. The 'poking girl' *disrupts* the climbing activity, and it is taken up by the boy as an invitation that creates new events. The girl manages to stop him from climbing and, through this, *protects* what she sees as right in that situation. However, the disruption is taken up as an *invitation* and is not *rejected*. Therefore, it does not end the *negotiation* by re-adjusting it back to a tight and organised rhythm, which usually occurs in the classroom.

A girl interrupts the unallowed climbing activity and a boy does the climbing. This represents a tendency in the empirical material of the female position, discussed in Chapter 7. Some girls, especially in Grade 1, become teacher's assistants who ensure adherence to the rational position. This means that the 'poking girl's' action could also have been done by a teacher but perhaps without a stick involved. There are situations in which the 'unallowed activity' just stops, and the children continue on to the classroom. However, it usually continues with new events, such as the situation above. What is analytically interesting is that this negotiation takes place with respect to these events. The negotiation in the empirical example is developed by this circle of life between disruption and invitation, and there is no authoritarian order to stop it. The girl becomes an *agonist* when she pokes the boy's buttocks. Her attempt can be considered

protection from what she perceives as a wrong or dangerous thing to do, or she knew it is not allowed and feels the need to stop the boy from climbing to avoid being told off by the professionals, as mentioned by some girls in the focus groups reported in Chapter 7. Regardless of her intentions, she shows *resistance* towards climbing in front of the other children, thus disrupts and stops the climbing. This resistance creates a moment of *confrontation* when the boy jumps down from the locker and the *struggle* can take many routes at this point. This moment involves an element of risk on behalf of the girl as she puts her actions on display for all the other children to see without knowing the response she will get. This risk involves her being rejected at some level, for example, by being ignored when the climbing continues, laughed at or pushed into a more antagonistic struggle in which she is not seen as an equal in the negotiation. However, the disruption and resistance from the girl is not rejected as a problem but rather taken up by the boy as an invitation. Although the girl is initially clearly annoyed with the boy, she considers the behaviour stupid and does not make it legitimate as something that should be done in the wardrobe. The boy's response is anchored on the playful pulse, and he considers her act as an initiative and an invitation. The intensity of the negotiation travels quickly, from initial irritation to a playful negotiation.

The interaction between the boy and the girl begins at a point that is not allowed, according to official school life. The girl, who is the agonist, protects what she thinks is right. However, at the same time, when her resistance and initial disruption to climbing are taken up as an invitation, the negotiation moves away from an interaction in which she rejects the boy based on the definition of his doings as nonsense to a *mutual playful struggle*. The struggle follow the open and loose rhythm and a flow of playful bodily movements in which small disruptions and turn of events nourish new opportunities and patterns of interaction.

8.2.2 Between the trees and conflictual events create new stories

Although the above situation in Grade 7 involves irritation from the girl, conflictual events seem to be more common in the interactions between children in Grade 1. These are conflicts featured by children being genuinely upset with each other, including gestures of being upset, frustrated and angry. The subtle grin can still be found in the interactions in Grade 1, despite a stronger presence

of conflictual encounters. I present the following empirical example, due to its richness and relevance in describing these conflictual events. I first show the empirical example before examining the different segments of the interaction. The is a situation from one of the weekly trips to the woods in Grade 1:

> We are back in the woods, a little hill next to the school building. I walk around, and the children pop out from behind the trees before they run off between them. I can see three girls sitting at the end of a path in an open space with big rocks. They do not pay attention to me when I arrive. I sit down on a rock two metres from them. They sit close, almost like in a circle. It seems as if they have used some items from nature at their disposal to build something. Small rocks are placed together in a pile inside a circle of leaves. Two sticks sort of stick out of this arrangement. Lilly puts green moss under the rocks while Sarah puts moss over them. Tina keeps adding small rocks in the middle of the arrangement. Lilly now finds a long stick lying next to where they are sitting. She tries to break it. When she cannot break it, she starts to poke Tina in the back instead. Tina leans forward away from the stick, telling Lilly to stop. Tina turns her body away from Lilly, like she is saying with her body that she wants to continue with this (arranging the stones) and not the stick. Lilly laughs and continues poking Tina like she is trying to tickle her. Tina does not smile. She tries to take the stick from Lilly. Tina manages to take it from her and starts to poke Lilly instead. Lilly tries to take the stick from Tina, but she does not manage to do so. They appear focused and have eye contact. There are no grins on their faces when Lilly tries to take the stick back. Sarah leaves the rock arrangement and places herself next to Lilly and Tina, bending down on all fours. Sarah squeaks like a horse and calls out, 'We can be horses and the sticks can be whips'. Lilly and Tina turn their bodies to look at Sarah. They laugh, and their body language is relaxed. (Fieldnotes; Grade 1)
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> ....
>
> I ask what they are doing, and they reply in a chorus, 'Oh, we were playing horses'. They laugh. I ask what they were doing before that. I point to the arrangements with rocks, moss, sticks and leaves. Lilly says, 'Oh that. Hmm, I don't know. We sort of just pretended that the rocks were puppies. They were kind of lying in a basket, and the moss were like blankets'. Tina: 'The sticks over there (she walks over and touches the sticks) were kind of a gate into the basket'. I ask, 'How did you come up with that'? They are all quiet for a few seconds. Sarah says, 'I don't know. It was just fun'. I ask, 'Did one of you come up with this play'? Its' silent for a few seconds; they look at each other. Tina

replies, 'No, not really. You know, this area here, we haven't seen it before. We discovered it today, and we just found these rocks'. I ask, 'Did you decide on who does what'? Lilly: 'No, not really. It just sort of happened, kind of. I ask, 'What about the other play with the sticks'? Tina: 'Oh, that. Hmmm. I guess that also just kind of happened. Lilly found a stick or something, and she poked me with it'. They laugh. They continue riding around like they are on a horse, running and making sounds like a horse. After a few seconds, they stop running and sit down. They look at me. I ask, 'So, how is it like being out here in the woods'? Sarah: 'It's not something we have to do out here, we can just play. You know, in school, we're always with adults, and they say that it is play, for example, math games. It's okay, but it's not playing, really, because the teacher sort of just tells us what to do. Here, we just figure it out in a way. I don't know, things just happen. (Fieldnotes; Grade 1)

There is a bodily flow in the interactions between the girls, similar to the children in the wardrobe in Grade 7. It appears so effortless, simple and yet so advanced and neatly interconnected. This strikes me as a form of resonance of the social, which MacDougall (2006) describes as complexly interlaced, almost like the rhythms and meanings of a poem (p.96). The girls' bodies are more dominant than the words. They do not exchange words when I arrive, and the changes they make during the play are manifested in their bodies using their arms to put or remove moss from the stones, the arm of one girl poking into another girl or the third girl positioning her body near two other bodies, changing the pace of the situation. The few words expressed seem inferior to bodily movement. For example, Sarah first positions her body by kneeling next to Tina and Lilly, and they change the rhythm of the situation before Sarah finishes her sentence. The poking of the stick also comes before any verbal utterances. Lilly does not change her movements or rhythm of poking Tina, even when Tina says stop. However, when Tina takes the stick from Lilly, the interaction changes. The bodily initiative from Tina in taking the stick enables Tina to 'fight' back, and she and Lilly start a fight with the stick without more words being spoken. Their bodies appear to have a strong effect on the flow of the situation. When Sarah leaves her doings of arranging the rocks and approaches Tina and Lilly fighting about the stick, her body seems to lead to the change in the struggle about the stick. Many of their bodily movements can be studied as gestures, such as the grin in the wardrobe situation discussed in Chapter 8.2.1. The girls are involved in a continuous bodily interpretation of each other's gestures, and through the

lens of Merleau-Ponty, the girls seriously recognise and take the gestures presented in the situation as opportunities for new developments. Mutual recognition takes place through gestures. Merleau-Ponty (1994, p.152) argues that these acts can contribute to a re-establishment of experiencing the other, a recreation that intellectual analysis makes difficult. This opens a space in which the other is a potential new story, new opportunity and new interaction. This is evident in the situation between the trees when there is a turn of events due to, first, Lilly poking Tina and, second, Sarah entering and changing the interaction between Lilly and Tina. Tina may first change her experience of Lilly being poked by the stick as Tina becomes angry with Lilly. However, there seems to be a reestablishment of their experience of each other when Sarah enters. Anger and irritation are reduced, and the situation becomes a new playful event with the horses.

I highlight these two specific incidents, as they represent the most prominent conflictual events in the interaction. The first segment occurs when Lilly finds a stick and starts to poke Tina, and the second segment involves the incident when Sarah enters the interaction between Lilly and Tina. When Lilly starts to poke Tina, she *disrupts* the first 'play arrangement' with the rocks. Tina tries to *protect* the current arrangement by telling Lilly to stop and leaning her body away from Lilly, looking away from Lilly towards the first play arrangement. Lilly continues the *disruption*, and a *negotiation* is established. Tina continues to protect the play involving the rocks. She resists poking from Lilly by trying to take the stick away from Lilly. Tina manages to take the stick from Lilly and is able to protect her initial interest in maintaining the order of the first play arrangement. The interruption from Lilly leads Tina and Lilly into a *confrontation* about the stick. Tina could have taken the stick, thrown it away and returned to the first play arrangement she originally protected. However, she continues to stay in the conflict over the stick, remaining in the confrontation instead of returning to the first order of the play.

Sarah enters the interaction between Tina and Lilly at this point. Sarah disrupts the conflict concerning the stick by positioning her body next to Lilly and Tina – squeaking like a horse. Tina and Lilly do not *reject* Sarah's disruption, nor do they try to protect their struggle over the stick. The rupture from Sarah is taken up as an invitation to move the conflict into a new story, a new play arrangement

and a collective play in which the sticks obtain a new meaning—horses. The first play arrangement changes through different actions from the girls, with few words spoken. Their bodies seem to be in the foreground of the different actions, which can be seen as early expressions of citizenship. The girls are caught up in the consciousness of the ignorant position in which 'things just happen'. Their actions are not driven by what they have learned is the right thing to do but what they experience as meaningful. This makes the actions derived from this position active because these acts at the level of the body may go against what is considered the learned way to be (Merleau-Ponty, 2014). The conflict between Lilly and Tina could have been stopped if a professional came to the scene, as conflicts are often adjusted or stopped by professionals. However, this did not take place, and Sarah's interruption in the doings of Lilly and Tina takes a very different approach compared with most school professionals involved in conflicts in school.

The girls open a space where they engage with the ignorant position and can access space for democratic subjectification. They are actively involved in the situation, engaging their subjectivity with and to the world, with all the risks that it entails. These are complex endeavours, and they are not from the girls' point of view directly active on a cognitive and verbal level but highly active on the level of the girls' bodies, as if they live the chiasm, as described by Merleau-Ponty. The chiasm, as presented in Chapter 3.1, indicates that it is not possible to separate subjectivity from bodily existence, as we live in the chiasm, an entangled state with the world. With his concept of temporality, or 'time of the body', he illustrates one core part of the chiasm—how subjectivity is time. Subjectivity and time are immersed in the field of presence, creating a particular temporal consciousness. This consciousness refers to an active presence in the phenomenal field, which is a perceptual domain the body has power over, an active act of non-reflexive intentional movement (Merleau-Ponty, 2014). Analysing the situation with the girls between the trees supports previous analysis of the notion of 'things that just happen'—that being in this consciousness is experienced as meaningful for children. This experience can be explained by Merleau-Ponty's claim that presence in this phenomenal field is the root and groundwork for the social and is what makes our lifeworld perceive as whole and full of meaning from the day we are born. These layers of the ignorant

position imply that the engagements between the trees, similar to the Lego room and in the wardrobe, involve the children throwing their subjectivity at play into the world, and this 'throwing' is linked to how I study these acts as possible expressions of citizenship.

There is no authoritarian order in this situation, which suppresses the different initiatives as irrelevant, noise or nonsense. Lilly is the first *agonist* to represent the current order with an alternative. She disrupts and pushes Tina from the first play arrangement. Lilly changes its location and moves it into conflict. There is no authoritarian order rejecting and positioning the doings from Lilly as noise or nonsense. Tina protects her interest in the first play, but instead of rejecting Lilly, she takes up the interruption from Lilly as a form of invitation to engage in a negotiation about it. Sarah enters as the second agonist, rewiring the situation by initiating another alternative—an alternative that moves into a new play arrangement. Sarah represents the agonist who pushes against the first order of the play. Tina tries to defend her interest in maintaining this first order. Sarah represents plurality and alternatives, finally moving the situation into something new. Interestingly, the stick follows the situation from being the agonist Lilly's ally to a co-creator of a collective new play arrangement. Tina and Lilly clearly enter into a genuine confrontation, but this does not prevent Sarah from joining. It is uncertain whether Sarah wants to end the conflict or simply take a new turn with the sticks by coming up with the idea of riding them like a horse. However, the girls are involved in the bodily playful practice that involves consciousness in 'things that just happen'. This, along with how the children reflect on their doings in the conversation immediately after the incident, makes it reasonable to assume that Sarah did not plan to intervene with a specific idea to prevent the conflict. The situation shows that Sarah is driven by the flow of the bodies, sticks and surroundings, wanting to join despite the confrontation between Tina and Lilly. Regardless of the girls' intentions in the situation, their actions involve an element of risk, especially Sarah and Lilly, who take on the agonist positions. They both risk being rejected for their disruption and repositioned by the other girls back to the original order of the first play arrangement. However, their presence in the situation, their intentions on a pre-reflexive bodily level of wanting to belong in the situation and this sense of belonging are stronger than the supposed risk of getting rejected or ending in a conflict/confrontation. In fact,

the girls have a very relaxed approach to being in conflict, as the incidents of conflict and confrontation seem to nourish the interactions between them instead of stopping them. The conflict is not perceived as negative or problematic; it seems as if it is not at all paid much attention to by the girls. Recollecting the incident, none of the girls specifically talk about the conflict. They only highlight the stick, the poking, rocks and horses. This, along with my observations of other situations with the children in Grade 1 that often include conflicts, can indicate that conflicts in interactions are normal and not something the children try to immediately prevent or stop. They move with it as a common part of daily interactions. These conflictual events are usually stopped and adjusted when professionals are present, and many school professionals seem to perceive them negatively, entailing many adverse consequences. There is a fear of possible consequences that rarely happen but that is perceived as something that can happen, such as serious accidents or violence among the children involved in a conflict. Ella, one of the contact teachers in Grade 1, reflect upon a different dimension of conflict in relation to the space in the woods. She reveals in the interview that conflictual encounters between children usually take another form in the woods.

> Ella explains: 'conflicts are allowed to develop in the woods as there is nothing that moves us forward, like the timetable. We have an open schedule, and this makes space for conflicts to be taken seriously in a way, which we find important. (Interview, teacher, Grade 1)

Ella refers to conflicts in positive terms because she and Emma have agreed on the importance of children experiencing and being involved in conflicts,

> Ella: Emma and I encourage children to solve conflicts themselves because this is an important skill to learn, although it takes time and the children do not always manage this in the classroom to the same extent. In the classroom, we must simply just move to the next subject or next task, the next in line, and this constant moving to something new sort of kills the energy during conflicts. (Interview, teacher, Grade 1)

Ella stresses how the features of the conventional classroom, the pulse of order, the timetable and the task supress opportunities to engage with conflicts, and she

has clearly a positive outlook on conflictual events among children reflecting on them. This is interesting, considering that Ella, similar to other teachers, usually stops conflicts in her teaching and in school. This can indicate that despite a more positive attitude towards conflict, it can be difficult to find space to allow them to emerge and develop with all the considerations they must make as teachers.

8.2.3 The Lego room and the struggles over Lego bricks

The interaction studied in the following also involves conflictual events, and the empirical example serves as a rich description of what appears to be typical situations observed in the Lego room. The Lego room is equipped with Legos in different sizes, colours and forms. The room is used as a station in station teaching (stasjonsundervisning), which is part of the children's 'playtime' during breaks or as a 'reward' after a session of working in their workbooks at their desks. It is a room without windows and with many boxes with Legos. The door to the room is never fully closed, always halfway open. I seldom observe professionals in this room. This means that the children are out of the gaze of the teachers in this space, as the teachers are reading or writing at the stations in other rooms. The Lego room is popular among children, most popular among boys. Therefore, most of the children in the situation below are boys. I typically sit in one corner, and I sometimes chat with the children or play with Legos. The situation I report on was observed towards the end of my last period in the field. I know the children well and have spent much time in the Lego room. Therefore, in this situation, I am neither talking with them nor playing. I only observe:

> There are four children in the Lego room today. The children worked on their workbooks, and their teachers gave them a few minutes to play. These four children have chosen the Lego room. All the children are focused and involved with the Legos by the time I enter. I sit down in one corner. None of the children greet or acknowledge me when I enter. There are three boys and one girl. Michael says to the other children that another boy gave him the Lego in front of him. It looks like a castle with one high tower. Margret and Martin tell Michael that he cannot take the Lego because it is meant to stand until after. Michael repeats that he was given the Lego and that it is now his to use. He gently pulls the Lego closer to his legs. Margret and Martin repeat that they are not meant to take the Lego that others have built. Michael reiterates that the Lego is his and that they are just trying to fool him because they want it. Margret and Martin say that it is not true. While they hold this conversation, Margret and Martin are

building their respective Legos. Michael is not building anything but is just holding onto the piece that he repeatedly claims was given to him by another boy. There is a moment of silence. Michael continues to touch the Lego in front of him, pulling it closer to his body. (Fieldnotes; Grade 1)

Michael looks over to Henry, another boy in the room. Michael stretches out his hand towards the pile of Legos in front of Henry and takes a piece from this pile. Henry continues to build on his piece and does not reject to Michael taking a piece from him. No words are spoken. Michael then says, 'I think it is sort of not fair that it is just going to stand there'. Henry, who has not spoken now, says, 'But perhaps the boy that gave it to you meant for you to take care of his piece and not rebuild it or do anything with it'. They continue to build in silence. Henry now gives Michael some pieces from his pile. Henry reaches over his hand. Michael accepts without a word and starts to build a new piece. After a while, Margret reaches her hand towards the pile to grab a piece. Henry quickly says no and takes all the pieces in front of him and tucks them under and between his legs. He sits on his knees on top of the Legos. No other child has now access to this Legos. Not even Michael. Margret tells Henry that he can get two pieces from her pile. 'Now you almost have it all—so I can give you two and you can give me one. We can exchange. Henry looks at her and looks down. He does not say a word. He does not move to give her a piece, only looking down at the Legos. Margret keeps holding her hand with the two pieces towards Henry. A few more seconds pass. Martin and Michael are now busy building something else, sometimes looking over to Margret and Henry. After a few more seconds, Henry looks up towards Margret's hand. He takes the two pieces. He finds one piece and gives it to her, and then he finds another one. He almost gives it to her but returns it to the pile, reaching under his knees. He stands up and pushes all the Legos away from his body. Now, everyone can reach the pieces. The pile of Lego is now in the middle of the children, and they continue to build with the pieces between them. (Fieldnotes; Grade 1)

Michael can be considered an agonist; he *disrupts* the rule that Martin and Margret try to protect. Martin and Margret's *resistance* and Michael's actions create a *negotiation* in which Michael repeatedly speaks up for his interest in the castle while Martin and Margret try to protect the order of a rule in the Lego room. The *struggle* is not stopped by an authoritarian order to decide upon who will be the 'winner'. Instead, the struggle remains undetermined. The situation takes a turn when Michael reaches out for a Lego piece from Henry's pile. At

this point, Henry also becomes involved in the struggle in an attempt to protect the order of allowing the Lego castle to be left alone. An interesting turn in events takes place. Directly after Henry has tried to verbally protect the order of leaving the Lego castle alone, Michael reaches out to take a Lego piece from Henry. Henry does not resist this act from Michael. Henry does not seem to see this as a disruption and does not attempt to protect his pile. Henry seems to follow Michael's interruption as an invitation; as a few moments later, Henry gives more pieces to Michael. Perhaps Henry does not have a need to protect his pile. Henry could also see this as an opportunity to protect the order of leaving the Lego castle alone because when Michael builds using the pieces from Henry, he does not build on the Lego castle.

Following Michael, Margret also reaches out her hand toward Henry's pile. However, Henry immediately resists this act from Margret. Henry pulls the Legos closer to his body, protecting them from Margret. The negotiation on the Lego castle now shifts. Michael is no longer at the centre of the interaction, but Margret and Henry are. Henry resists and protects his interest in keeping the Legos away from Margret. Margret does not leave the negotiation, and she can either uphold the negotiation or withdraw. Margret does not withdraw but instead reaches out her hand. This gesture is eventually taken up as an invitation by Henry, and he gives Margret a piece. On his knees, he releases the pile of Legos from being within his territory and turns it into a collective pile from which everyone can take. Margret becomes the agonist towards the end of the struggle, as her rupture, which is through a struggle, becomes productive and is taken up as an invitation by Henry to create a new playful collective about the Legos.

There are two main struggles in this situation. The first struggle involves Michael's disruption of the order of the Lego pieces already built to be left alone. Michael is an agonist who interrupts an order resisted and protected by the other children. Michael pulls the Legos closer to his body, creating a visual border between him and the other children and placing the Lego castle between him and them. The Lego castle is an artefact he uses to defend his interest in using and playing with the castle. The other three children are engaged in protecting the order that Michael pushes against. There is no rational solution to the first stage of the struggle. The intensity of the struggles shifts and moves with Michael's

gesture of reaching towards Henry's pile of Lego. Michael is still the agonist disturbing the Lego territory of another child. However, Henry does not resist. When Henry takes Michael's disruption as an invitation, the roles in the struggle shift. Margret now enters as the agonist, rupturing Henry's pile of Legos. Henry protects his pile of Legos by pulling it under his knees. Similar to Michael, he defends his interests by creating a visual border between him and the other children. Margret negotiates this resistance and protection from Henry by reaching out to her hand. Margret does not withdraw, and her hand becomes the centre of attention for a moment. The children look at her hand with the Lego pieces in it. Margret's hand becomes an *agonistic gesture* that rewires the interaction. This gesture creates tension that intensifies the struggle, and, as in the wardrobe and between the trees, the gesture takes on an important function by acting as an invitation and contributing to changing the situation. When Henry gives Margret a Lego piece and releases his protective hold of the pile of Lego, the struggle decreases in intensity. The attention is now on a playful collective around the Legos, as Henry pulls out the pile of Legos from under his knees, and the four children turn their focus on the pile and start to collectively build together. A new togetherness is formed by the children building in pairs and individually through the struggles to a collective around Henry's pile.

The first struggle ends with a withdrawal and the interaction remains unresolved. Michael's initial action is an invitation to disrupt the order of the rule that protects completed Lego pieces from reconstruction and play. Although he repeatedly says that he was given the piece, touches it and pulls it close to his body, his actions are not sufficient for the other children to release their protection and withdraw from the negotiation. They are not open to disrupting this order, and the democratic experiment of the first struggle ends when Michael turns his attention to Henry. In the final struggle, Margret is the agonist, and Henry's dilemma is whether to include Margret in his Lego play. Henry decides to let Margret in, accepting her interruption as an invitation. It becomes productive and nourishes the democratic experiment: the intensity of the struggle diminishes, and a new collective is formed.

SUMMARY

The results of this analysis support previous studies (Nome, 2020; Grindheim, 2014; Tofteland, 2017; Johansson & Emilsson, 2016) in that children can engage and experiment with citizenship through various forms of playful interactions, including bodily forms of expressions. These interactions and bodily practices are acts in which children offer their subjectivity to the world and risk being rejected and 'readjusted'. These are acts in which they experience resistance, winning and losing conflicts, taking up new turns of events and entering them without an authoritarian order present to regulate them. Based on these grounds, children can engage in interactions of equals in which lies the potential for agonistic struggles over differences in interest, whether it is over a climbing a locker, a stick or a Lego brick.

9. Discussion and Conclusion

I claim to have answered the following overall question: *what is defined as a disturbance in school, how is it negotiated, and how does this affect children as democratic subjects*. The first part of this chapter summarises the analysis in response to this question. The remaining parts explore educational policy for playful citizenship, some limitations of my research and recommendations for future research. I end the thesis with some reflections on practical pedagogical implications of playful citizenship before making my closing remarks.

The results support previous research indicating that a disturbance from the point of view of school professionals is *defined* as any off-task behaviour that disturbs learning. Most children in my study express and *define* the same off-task behaviour as a deeply meaningful practice. A disturbance involves *negotiations* between different pulses, rhythms, and different forms of school life, and of children making sound, movement and using objects and space against the set expectations linked to the rational calm and regulated body. Teachers' responses to disturbances ranges from the most common response of not making it acceptable to the less common of making it acceptable. The different responses involve different positional movements from positioning children as noisy and not ready to someone with original positive contributions potentially transforming lesson plans. The results suggest that a disturbance caused by children's playful doings potentially ruptures power relations and the role of the teacher. The teacher's role is pushed into the background, and the response is what teachers describes as from the gut, featured by frustration where they experience a loss of their pedagogical mask and ambivalent tension torn between pedagogical reasoning and institutional demands. I show in analysis chapter 6 that ambivalence, loss of the pedagogical mask and frustration can be seen to have links to a general incapacity within an adult oriented perspective to understand agency on children's premises, including their playful forms of expressions. This incapacity seems to contribute to a process of exclusion among school professionals experiencing to be pushed aside, or even for brief moments, superfluous in the presence of children's playful collectives. Teachers' responses, positionings of children and the negotiations *affect children as democratic subjects*, reducing their opportunities as ignorant citizens, or create space for its

emergence, causing a disturbance to be a potential productive rupture characterised by a playful form of citizenship that I return to in chapter 9.1.

One important result is that what most children find deeply meaningful is daily in the official forms of school life, defined as negative disruptive noise and nonsense. This may be an expression of modern Western schooling's reduced ability to work in what Løvlie (2021), calls a genuinely child-centred way. Another Norwegian philosopher, stresses that legitimate resistance from children in school today is too often approached as individual problems with the child (Moen 2023, p.42-44). Disturbances caused by children can according to my study be seen as legitimate resistance, but like Moen stresses it is commonly approached as linked to children's individual disruptive behaviour and this barricades the vision of understanding it from the premises of children following a more child centred approach as advocated by Løvlie (2021). Djupedal (2023), a recent doctoral study, found that the school in Norway has expanded with 1359 hours since 1990 which makes up two whole school years. This means that children in Norway today spend much longer hours in school compared with children just a few decades back. Their childhood is increasingly spent in a pedagogical institution, and Moen (2023) argues that considering how school occupy much more of children's time, it has been surprisingly little development in school on caring for other needs children have besides learning. Moen (2023) alarmingly argues that for some children school is a place of serious social and emotional neglect because it is not able to care for the whole child, but primarily puts emphasis on academic learning. Professor in Psychology, Ole Jacob Madsen share Moen's worry. He writes that modern western schooling is an 'accumulative institution' that increasingly risk a colonisation of children's life worlds (Madsen 2023). A Norwegian professor in history, Espen Schanning, extends this worry. He writes that the Norwegian education that we see today is a '*necessary evil*' (Schanning 2022), He asserts that a large proportion of children and young people find official forms of schooling unbearable or simply unmanageable. However, the majority put up with it, or at least tries, because the ticket to the so-called successful life in Norway depends on graduating from upper secondary school (Schanning, 2022, pp. 423–430). In difference to Schanning I suggest that it is reasonably to suggest that many children in Norwegian schools enjoy official forms of school life, albeit my results support

his point that expectations and activities in official forms of school life are often far less meaningful to children than the life they initiate in unofficial forms of school life. Schanning refers regardless to something deeply serious—that too many children do not find school meaningful; they only survive it due to a fear of 'falling out' of the grand collective in which the ticket to success is the final diploma, which supposedly proves their abilities and potential as a future citizen. Therefore, his observations are a significant and deep critique of current institutions and structures. The worries and conclusions advocated by these scholars encourage us to reflect on how school would be without children's vitality, movements and sound, which feature the unofficial forms of school life. Perhaps the unofficial forms of school life and the disturbances they create are what makes it possible for many children to accept and engage with the more official forms of schooling.

The structures criticised by these philosophers and scholars are developed, produced and defined from a certain adult position. A school oriented towards children's forms of living and knowing must *reorient* itself away from measuring children against a specific Western-oriented able-bodied adult, favouring reason speech and rationality as the key capacities for its citizens. Rollo (2020b) argues that there is a 'liberal democratic preoccupation' with able-bodied forms of agency that continuously supress children as fully abled citizens. This suppression prevents their involvement in state decisions and political processes and feeds into a deep epistemic injustice rooted in a colonial logic that allows millions of children worldwide to be continuous primary victims of conflicts they have no cause in creating, such as the climate crisis, war, starvation, human trafficking and global pandemics (p.77). Rollo (2020b) argues that the handling of COVID-19 is one example in which the protection of adult interests and older adults has endangered children and their future. He analyses how public health decisions often reflect political efforts to secure privileged groups, further endangering the more marginalised groups, such as children (p. 75). We saw in Norway how children living in hostile home environments or those without carer support to help them with schoolwork at home suffered from closed schools during the pandemic. Moreover, children as a group were detached from their peer groups and denied important social contact due to public health decisions that took heavy measures to prevent a disease that most children would not even

suffer symptoms from. Rollo (2020b) argues that a world dominated by adult needs must move towards an 'intergenerational democracy'. Older people must trouble their perspectives and be willing to learn from children so that we can develop solid intergenerational democratic infrastructures from which people of different ages and life situations can learn from each other. For contemporary philosophers, this reorientation, requires philosophical enquiry to disturb the 'truths' defined by the limitations of adults' consciousness and to acknowledge the limitations of a logo-centric, Western-oriented understanding of philosophising (Biswas, 2020). Biswas (2020, p. 180) asserts that philosophical resilience beyond rational skills is best trained in the presence of children. I suggest the same for the future of democratic resilience in primary school, thus following the significance of playful citizenship. According to Mouffe:

> It is not by providing arguments about the rationality embodied in liberal democratic institutions that one can contribute to the creation of democratic citizens but by multiplying the discourses, the institutions, and the forms of life that foster identification with democratic values. The question at stake is not of rationality but of common affects. (Mouffe, 2022, p. 21)

Connecting this to democratic education in primary school, I suggest that children as a group can guide how this multiplying endeavour expands voice, reorienting towards passion as a key democratic virtue linked to common affects, collective forms of engagement and embodied forms of living. Based on the results, I assert that we can find new formulations for the democratic project in primary school by learning from children. In summary, I propose five reasons why it is important to expand democratic practice and thinking in primary education. First, it has to do with how commitment to academic performance often is superior to topics such as democracy and participation. Second, the current research base indicates an empowerment gap between children regarding how democratic education is wired today and how younger children are often excluded from most of the conventional democratic infrastructures in schools, including the student board. Third, the neo-liberal political discourses Mouffe criticises for transforming citizens into political consumers risk influencing the direction of democracy to the extent that even democratic living in school is perceived possible to manage with certain sets of procedures, competences and frameworks. The framework for democratic competences to sustain democratic

cultures developed by the European Union (presented in Chapter 2.1.3) is a current example of this. These tendencies can prevent democratic education from understanding democracy as lifeform as important, including dimensions of agonistic participation involving passion and democratic subjectification. Instead, there is a focus on a qualification route in which democratic education is reduced to a concern about children's participation in and learning about an already-established order with the frameworks and procedures already in place. A fifth reason underpinning the need for new formulas for the democratic project in primary school is the concern that one particular form of participation through 'voice' becomes an idea almost exclusively embraced in purely positive terms. This focus on democratic participation in school have I argue led us to forget to ask what kind of participation we invite children to engage in and what we want the participation and 'voice' to be. If participation and 'voice' are not considered a core conflictual component of democracy in schools, then we risk having consensual participation that Mouffe argues could lead to self-exploitation of the people taking part in the consensus. Instead of agonistic participation, it may become a passive contribution towards a consensus framed by someone else out of reach of influence for those invited (Hirsch & Miessen, 2012). Norwegian children know much about democratic systems and principles, but this does not translate to political participation in society found in the most recent ICCS, as presented in Chapter 2. Perhaps this is a consequence of consensual participation in which children are invited to participate through a narrow adult-oriented idea of voice in which the structures are not up for discussion, creating a false sense of participation. The children in my study say they are invited to participate, but they say they cannot really influence what they refer to as the 'important stuff' in school. This can indicate a consensual form of participation that struggles to activate children's engagement for political participation in society, space for passion, events of democratic subjectification and a common space in which we can learn from children's ways of protesting and voicing their forms of knowing. We cannot just look at children in isolation as participants in a structure. Following Mouffe (2022, p. 21), we must profoundly examine the structure we ask them to participate in the name of democracy.

9.1 Playful citizenship

I use the terms *playful citizenship* and *productive ruptures* to capture and characterise the qualities of participation that I have observed through my research. The following sections summarise the framing of these concepts.

The results suggest that work with democratic practices in school takes place through the official forms of school life featured by tight and organised rhythms with a pulse of order. These practices are initiated by teachers, has an individual orientation and requires bodies that master the capacity of speech and reason. The democratic body becomes often synonymous with a civilised, socially regulated body that has what school professionals refer to as freedom with responsibility. This responsibility does not refer to responsibility to speak up on matters of for example inequality or injustice but includes the expectation to follow rules and contribute in civilised ways to the learning collective. Majority votes and engagement in the student board is also emphasised within official forms of school life as important for the democratic infrastructure in school. This form of citizen and citizenship, or form of democratic living, is far from what many children in my study find meaningful. The analysis suggests that social interaction featured by open and loose affective rhythms with a pulse of playfulness is considered more meaningful by children. This playful life has a strong collective orientation, communication is featured by bodily forms of expression and conflictual encounters are common and treated as productive ruptures of interaction rather than problems to overcome. Based on the results of my study, I propose the term *playful citizenship* which involve these elements. This is a form of citizenship in which children's bodily playful practices are not positioned as noise, nonsense or negative problems but as nourishment to new ways of being and doing. I try to encapsulate this by offering the term *productive ruptures*. The vitality of unofficial forms of school life and the negotiation between official and unofficial school lives cause disturbances or what can be seen as potential productive ruptures where new horizons can emerge. This includes when a disturbance is made acceptable by a teacher and transforms into a potential productive rupture, as studied in Chapter 6.2. The response in these situations seems to be featured by a release from the timetable and an openness to the task. Moreover, a strong commitment to the now overrules a perceived potential risk of chaos, and new forms of togetherness, including stronger

communal sensations between children, and children and teachers, are formed. Productive ruptures and playful citizenship are conceptual language I use to capture these alternative horizons and conceptualisations of disturbances, attempting to move beyond adult-centred understandings towards a stronger orientation of children's forms of agency, their ways of knowing and living, and how agency can be expressed in collective relations through communal sensations expressed in children's playful collectives.

Most children in my study describe playful bodily practices as 'something that just happens'. The children link this notion to deeply meaningful forms of living, including feelings of joy, fun, freedom, being more themselves, being in a collective with others and venting to get breathing space, not led on by adults. The sensation of 'things that just happen' is a form of existence that creates space for a different body compared with the calm body expected in the official forms of school life. The expectations of officially schooled bodies are the ability to be calm, avoid conflicts, not disturb others and manage the role as a responsible individual learner and future independent citizen. The body that moves with the consciousness in which 'things just happen' co-exists with a powerful bodily commitment to the now, in which the collective seems to play with and embrace disruptions as a nourishing factor for interaction and forms of living. This form of living is a basis for understanding productive ruptures and playful citizenship. In the following section, I discuss what my study point to as four key elements of playful citizenship: playful, bodily, collective and conflictual elements.

9.1.1 Playful existence and democratic living

The *playful elements* resemble to what has been written about play and play theory. Sutton Smith (2015) argues that play has a strong existential dimension and makes life worth living in many ways. Play in its most fundamental forms is irrational, spontaneous and unpredictable (Sutton Smith, 2015). These characteristics indicate that children do not necessarily intentionally initiate or consciously reflect on the play in which they engage or initiate (Øksnes & Sundsdal, 2020, p. 120). The empirical concept of '*things that just happen'* supports these theorisations of play, and although I do not examine play per se, the playful form of existence permeating the unofficial forms of school life strongly resemblances play as a phenomenon. I am particularly interested in the relationship between the playful existence that children find meaningful and

democratic living. The relationship between play and democracy has drawn more attention over the last few years, including its role in transforming social patterns and structures (Koubovà et al., 2022, p. 3). Recent studies from Norway and beyond (Koubovà et al., 2022) have shown that one important dimension of this relationship is that play can be seen as nourishing communal sensations and is a practice that has the potential to challenge, disrupt and resist social norms and hegemonic forms of power (p. 4). The results of my study support these arguments when play is aligned with playful. My analysis suggests a link between the playful form of existence expressed by children and its potential in creating opportunities for children to engage in democratic living, including space to deviate and resist dominating ideals, structures and distinctions, considering what a 'good citizen' should be. I develop this link by theorising the results through the 'ignorant citizen'. The ignorant citizen is a playful citizen who practices playful citizenship. I do not intend to articulate a relationship between playful and citizenship to show how playful should be adapted towards the goals of democracy and citizenship in education in its current form. It is simply used to promote playful as legitimate *in itself* by nourishing a certain form of citizenship that can help us reconfigure democracy and what it means to live more democratically in primary school.

Children as ignorant citizens are openly searching citizens who consider and trouble predefined ways to behave according to orders, boundaries and definitions made legitimate and imposed upon them in school. The open searching attitude is a feature of the ignorant quality that involves resistance to being domesticated into pre-existing identities and constant engagement in chaotic unfinished business. Working with Ranciere (1991), Haynes and Kohan (2018) argue that hesitance toward to making anything definite crafts space for a searching pedagogical attitude. They write, 'being a teacher is being on the move, being a searcher' (p.212). This searching attitude should they argue also apply to constantly critically reflect on the values and beliefs that underpin their teaching behaviours and practices. This reluctance to make anything definite indicates openness to the unknown and undetermined. The ignorant citizen causes recreations that encourage a constant redrawing of boundaries and indicates that the ignorant citizen is not a predefined identity that can simply be taught and learned but can emerge again and again whenever a critical moment is

constituted by children's bodily playful practices, causing disturbances or in their peer relationship engaging in conflictual encounters as studied in chapter 8.

This does not imply that any disruption of a given order is democratic (Biesta, 2011) or in accordance with playful citizenship. I have studied and offer a particular take on 'disturbing behaviour' in moderate disturbances not linked to violence, racism or other antidemocratic practices. The interpretation of and balance between equality and liberty will always be the reference points in a democratic project (Mouffe, 2005a), and the four elements, playful, bodily, collective and conflictual are the basis for playful citizenship and for productive ruptures. The reference to freedom and equality in playful citizenship involves a radical commitment to greater political equality for children as a group and their primary forms of agency, including the playful nerve and existence in their practices. I offer a conceptual base for approaching this, but it must always be responded to within embodied situated practices, contexts and relationships. This means that the school professional has a responsibility to consider whether a disturbance can become a productive rupture and to what extent the four elements of playful citizenship are present. This is a continuous and demanding work, but if we want to work with democracy in primary education we should be geared more towards children's playful form of living and knowing. Benson (2022) advocates that all societies, markets, streets and estates can benefit from more play and that children's spontaneous play can challenge power relations, act as form of resistance and be considered an unofficial form of power (pp.233–234). Benson stresses that unofficial forms of power can recognise some of children's urges to play as political, and my results support her observations. My study includes also the actual act of being playful, and I suggest that playful citizenship must be taken seriously to activate not only children's embodied agency but also the negotiation between this form of citizenship and other forms. Playful citizenship rests on embodied forms of agency, and the greater task is to ensure the equality of these forms of agency as a form of power recognised within the official realms of democracy in democratic education.

9.1.2 Bodily agency disturbing the hegemony of voice

The *bodily elements* relate to embodied forms of agency more than linguistic forms of agency characterised by reason and speech. Playful citizenship encourages reflection on the limitations of voice as a political concept and

illuminates other forms of agency of significant value in primary democratic education. The forms of expressions initiated by children in the unofficial forms of school life are spontaneous practices, often with few words spoken and a strong bodily presence, as if they present directly as bodily actors to others; that is, they do not, in the first instance, represent themselves or the world through language (Rollo, 2016a, p. 239). I understand this practice as expressing children's primary modes of agency, a non-representational and non-discursive way of engaging with the world (Rollo, 2016a; Merleau-Ponty, 1994). This form of embodied and affective enactment of intentions is a mode of agency that comes into being throughout human life but is more prominent among young children. Childhood, in this sense, becomes a mode of being and not of cognitive development (Biswas, 2020). These forms of agency are different from the linguistic conditions of agency common in democratic politics, and this underlines that democratic systems today are designed and dominated by adults, for adults (Rollo, 2016a; 2020a). Children are 'only' a represented interest instead of being present in the now as an equal democratic subject (Rollo, 2016a). According to Rollo, we can promote children's democratic participation in school, such as participating in the student board, but if children do not find it meaningful, if it is driven from an adult-oriented perspective and if children have no genuine say, then we have failed. My results suggest that this is a risk in how current democratic education is framed. Therefore, I propose that playful citizenship and productive ruptures can supplement and contribute to a readjustment toward greater emphasis on children in the now as equal democratic subjects.

One significant dimension of this is to disturb the hegemony of 'voice' in terms of democracy and participation in school. Following Mouffe (2014, p.151), I understand hegemony to relate to practices we initially perceive as coming from natural given order but are actually practices that try to ensure a form of social order and that always exclude other possibilities. Every social order is hegemonic in nature and therefore inherently political (Mouffe, 2014). I claim that this applies to what I refer to as 'social order of voice' in democratic education. If every social order is hegemonic by nature, it will inevitably convey a certain structure of power relations, and the agonistic struggle will relate to the 'configuration of power relations that structure a social order and the hegemony

it constructs' (Mouffe, 2014, p. 151). One expression of the hegemonic voice is that participation in school and democratic education are mainly limited to speech, critical thinking, reason and the capacity to take part in the student board or develop a rational argument when taking part in school discussions. These capacities are considered necessary for mastering democratic participation. I am not proposing that this is negative, nor that it should be eradicated, but I argue that this hegemony excludes other possible ways of participation and makes it difficult to genuinely recognise embodied forms of agency as equal to the hegemonic voice.

Formulating this argument, I am inspired by a postcolonial stand in which one argues that this hegemony is based on a social order that defines democratic citizens, including reason and speech, with reference to able-bodied, adult European citizens (Rollo, 2016a; Rollo, 2016b; Rollo 2020a; Rollo 2020b). The notion of the capable 'adult citizen' suggests that it is the favourable agency held by this particular citizen for democratic processes. Therefore, children or other people who do not master these specific capacities are made less relevant and significant in democratic participation. Rollo (2016a) argues that we must level up embodied agency as significant for democratic politics; otherwise, it will never become accessible to children. There are nuances to this statement. For example, are the differences between children aged 3 and 16 relevant, despite being positioned by Norwegian law as children. However, embodied forms of agency are clearly more prominent in children as a group than in adults, and my study shows that embodied forms of agency are meaningful and prominent among children in Grade 1 who are just about to start school and those in Grade 7 who are about to leave primary school. This indicates that ignorant citizenship apply across chronological ages and disturbs the hegemony of voice through powerful forms of embodied agency.

The ignorant citizen connects the body that is not yet a discursively inscribed, schooled body, a body that has not adjusted to and resists the right way of being in school. This body acts on active intentional movements at the level of the body derived from the pre-reflexive subject. The subjectivity of this body activates a particular consciousness in which things just happen. If school seek to be an institution for children, it should be a space where these acts of freedom is not

constantly rejected but negotiated and engaged with. For Mouffe, it is not possible to engage in democratic processes characterised by agonistic pluralism without denying the rational essential subject. One core point in the radical theory of democracy is that if we are not able to question and disturb what we take for granted as normal, we become blind to hegemonic identities and the deep power structures in which all human beings are implicated in any society. When children are measured against the calm rational body, they are constantly positioned as someone in need of being adjusted, regulated and supported to conform to this way of being in this world. This supposes that children are reduced to someone less able, as they are constantly measured against something that they apparently have not yet fully achieved. Instead of measuring children against these scales for when they can participate in the current given normality, I argue that we must take them seriously as people today. Recognising this implies that it is not enough to recognise the current democratic infrastructures in school as valid and positive for children to participate and that it merely is a matter of securing a better practice in them. We must ask how expectations and what are made legitimate in schools as the democratic way of being condition and construct children's identities and opportunities. My research suggests that one such construction involves identifying children as not ready, noisy thieves of learning and individuals who make nonsense. All human beings are learners in need of resistance and adjustments from the surrounding society. However, the structure of schools, including democratic education, rigidly positions children as learners in need of teachers input and regulation which I find concerning because it neglects the interdependence between the two groups, which is fundamental to ensuring a stronger democratic culture in school. Moreover, it neglects the rich potential in democratic education for imagining what possibilities can open when considering children as guides in finding new democratic formulas for primary school. Following Rollo (2016a; 2016b; 2020a;2020b), there is a need for democratic systems and structures to learn and be open to children's mode of agency, including a greater focus on exploration and play. Political equality for children must be structured according to the mode of agency children exercise:

> When it comes to children, the aim is not for those with the requisite intelligence to speak for children to include them. Nor is it to show that children can speak intelligently for themselves. Rather, the aim is to reject intelligence as a measure of political worth and inclusion. When we fail to do this, we preserve and

reinforce the standard of speech and reason that gives life to the pernicious
colonial logic of exclusion and domination. (Rollo, 2016a, p. 33)

If those working for democratic education do not recognise that the democratic
body must welcome other forms of agency, I am concerned that we uphold one
hegemonic democratic body and supress others as ignorant, disturbing and
problematic bodies. This involves deep power relations that subject children's
forms of agency inferior to other forms of agency, a suppression that ultimately
includes children in democratic processes only as represented interests or future
adults and never as flesh of today.

9.1.3 Collective resistance and alternative identity formations

The *collective element* shows how the ignorant citizen is a collectively oriented
citizen engaging in formations and reformations of collective identities that are
open to a constant flow of alternative ways of being. This is evident, for example,
in how children's playful collectives resist, play with, deviate or challenge power
relations in school. The concept of passion makes it possible to ask crucial
questions for democratic politics today (Mouffe, 2014); how is the formation of
collective identifications created, and what part does affect play in this. One of
the main reasons for asking these questions is that a democracy must have
genuine alternatives to positive hegemonic identities (Mouffe, 2005a). Mouffe
stresses that there is no exact recipe for how this will occur in actual life and that
it all depends on the specific form of the agonistic struggle. However, one
condition to be fulfilled is that there should be available alternatives because
there can be no agonistic struggles without any hegemonic counter-projects
(Mouffe, 2014, 2005a). Biswas (2020) argues that what can appear as 'small for
adults matters much'. I propose that children's bodily playful practices can be
seen as noisy negative off-task disturbances or constant 'small' possible
hegemonic counter-projects in which productive ruptures push into those in
charge for new players to offer new stories and turns. Children's playful bodily
collectives do not fully achieve the position of a hegemonic counter-project in
situations involving children and school professionals. However, it creates a
struggle, a fissure in the hegemonic identity grounded by official school life and
the pulse of order, and these fissures show the order and the positive identity.
The teacher's role, positioned as the main guardians of the pulse of order, are
pushed out of place, and a response is triggered in which teachers negotiate the

expectations of the tight and organised rhythms and the pulse of order. Tofteland (2015) applies the radical theory of democracy in studying discourses evident during mealtimes in nurseries. Similar to my study, she finds that different discourses emerging among the children, although not a full-bodied hegemonic counter-project caused by democratic politics, still serve as a significant resistance to a hegemonic practice bound as the given order teachers expect in terms of mealtimes. Different acts from children can be seen as children's way of being active citizens, challenging the hegemonic practices established in the institution in which collectives of children poke into institutional structures and orders. Mouffe (2005a) asserts that institutions in a democracy must have flexible structures with space for alternatives to ensure radical pluralism. This is important to earn the name of being an institution with democratic institutional structures. Relating this to children's collectives and disturbances, children create ruptures in rigid institutional structures. This can be seen as productive ruptures that show alternative and different ways of knowing and living and create grounds for new subjectivities, stories and identities in which children are active in meaning-making, not passive 'passengers' adapting to the demands of the order. If playful citizenship is seriously combined with faith in children as democratic subjects in their own right, then it is possible to imagine children's collectives as achieving counter-hegemonic status in schools where children are respected as equal in addressing issues of deep injustices on different forms of knowing and living.

Democracy does not operate only at a cognitive level and, therefore, cannot simply be taught. It is according to Biesta (2011) impossible to make a rational decision to become democratic. The formation of these collectives among children does not operate on a rational cognitive level. The children do not make a rational decision when weighing up alternatives and deciding on a conscious mental level whether to join or not. They do not make rational decisions about being democratic, as they simply follow the consciousness of where things just happen. The collective affect seems to infect the children and pull them in due to a desire to belong and participate in the playful collaborative 'we' formed among the children. In his ethnographic studies of nurseries, Berentzen (1994) finds that these kinds of 'we' are spaces in which children can acquire a sense of control over their situation by resisting the expectations from the teachers. This is a

space in which children are active in the meaning-making process (Berentzen, 1994). This sense of being active can be tied to the ignorant position and of being a democratic subject, a subjectivity accessible through the 'we' in the collectives among children. The collectives seem to fuel a desire among the children to be in this world, not withdraw from it. Children experience this as meaningful, and it can be seen as an engagement with and exposure to the experiment of democracy in which people engage their subjectivity in undetermined processes (Biesta, 2011). It is a process with the potential to generate new political subjectivities, formations, reformations and maintenance of collective identities (Mouffe, 2014).

9.1.4 Conflictual life forms and agonistic looking

The final dimension of playful citizenship is the *conflictual element*, which is intrinsically entangled within the distinct bodily signature of children's playful practices. Chapter 8 shows that children's bodies are in the foreground in situations, whether in the wardrobe, between the trees or in the Lego room. They are attentive to other's bodies, and they seem to be affectively attuned to the actual gesture of the other, reading it at the level of the body, as Merleau-Ponty suggests. MacDougal (2006) finds that we are so caught up in a world dominated by concepts, or as Merleau-Ponty (1994, p. 152) stresses, 'intellectual analysis', that we find it difficult to look at anything attentively. MacDougal (2006) stresses that an attentive 'looking' beyond the 'conceptual world' requires putting ourselves in a sensory state of vacancy and heightened awareness (pp. 7–8). This way of looking indicates the notion of Merleau-Ponty's (1994) pre-reflexive subject and the sensory state of being in a space where *things just happen*. Based on this, it is possible to understand children's bodily playful interactions in these situations as involving this attentive 'looking', posing wordless questions to other children. This can be seen as an agonistic form of 'looking' because it comes from the pulse, rhythms and practices in the ignorant position. Moreover, conflicts are not avoided or suppressed but made legitimate through constant struggles over borders, whether it involves sticks, climbing lockers or Lego bricks. Mouffe (2005a, p.103) finds that there will always be differences in interest in any human collective and that it is the recognition of conflict and the refusal not to suppress it by an authoritarian order that keep democracy alive. This means that playful citizenship can be seen as creating spaces in which children experiment among equals, practice and access the

groundwork for agonistic democratic living. This form of agonistic citizenship features the domain of the ignorant citizen and is linked to a deeply meaningful existence that opens up the space where events for democratic subjectification can take place. If this form of citizenship is rejected again and again as too risky, noisy, nonsense and irrelevant, we could reduce children's opportunities to access the groundwork for radical democratic living and, to influence and teach us about how we can advance democratic living in school. One consequence is that we create distance between children and the world, with children withdrawing from the agonistic looking find the world too difficult and lose ground for engaging their subjectivity to the world. This distance means that school potentially suffers severe loss of what I consider our most important guides for enhancing democratic education towards a radical democratic living.

9.2 Different opportunities to engage in playful citizenship

The overarching social structure governing school rests on the view that the teacher is seen as the classroom leader and the children are those who need regulation and knowledge from the teacher. As shown in Chapter 5, the rational body is central to the maintenance of this particular social structure, in which this division of roles is necessary for its smooth running and operation. The teachers are positioned to manage the timetable and official forms of school life, and the children lead what Goffman calls the inmate world, the unofficial school life and the flow of life where things just happen. The rational body demanded from children in official school life is associated with the legitimate identity children are meant to align their expressions and behaviours to. An important question is to what extent this creates different opportunities for different children. The analysis in Chapter 7 suggests that gender may influence different children's opportunities related to resistance towards the hegemonic identity and engagement with the ignorant position. These gendered orientations materialise in different patterns of behaviour and bodily expressions in a moment of disturbance and in the experiences and feelings of one's own involvement in school. For example, there is a gendered difference with respect to the level of stress and frustration experienced in responding to expectations in the tight and organised rhythms, which for many girls is shown as having to be 'little angels'. Biesta (2011) is concerned that the idea of the 'good citizen' could contribute to a pinning down and domestication of people into a pre-set civic identity. Following Mouffe, Biesta worries that different interpretations of citizenship

may disappear and that the order will no longer be contested but treated as the given natural hegemony of social life. The agonistic struggle, which is the democratic spinal cord according to Mouffe, could be paralysed, and this could immobilise the discursive struggles and leave citizens expected to adjust to a given order feeling frustrated. Many girls in my study are frustrated and ambivalent because they try to adjust to the pulse of order as a given order they feel they cannot challenge or change. The girls seem to have an exclusive experience in which their interpretation of citizenship linked to playful citizenship is considered irrelevant by those in authority of the pulse of order. These girls engage in potential productive ruptures when they join children's playful collectives in disturbances and in life beyond the view of professionals. However, some of the girls' are frustrated about the power structures that uphold and constitute the pulse of order in school, where they are positioned as individuals needing to adapt and adjust. Frustration is related to a feeling of being defined into a role in which they feel trapped as someone they do not want to be or are ambivalent about being, related to feelings of being domesticated into an identity of being 'little angels'.

These experiences can be associated with traditional ideals about femininity, a set of idealised standards for girls and female bodies. Although referring to the tight and organised rhythms as a dominating way of life to follow, most of the boys do not seem to experience being limited by it to the same extent as some of the girls. These boys express a relaxed attitude characterised by humour and sarcasm, through which they play with and make fun of expectations. Conversely, some of the girls usually act in accordance with the pulse of order, wanting to please the teacher and other school professionals but also wanting to break free from it. The narrative in Nordic countries about girls as winners in schools involves a dimension in which we must ask what being a winner of Norwegian school entails. Norwegian schools have become increasingly influenced by results and performance in math, reading and writing in Norwegian. This is illustrated, for example, by how Norwegian is given more hours on the timetable than arts & crafts or music. According to many scholars, these developments have led to a disproportionate focus on academic performance and social regulation (Løvlie, 2021), meaning that girls are winners in a system premiering self-control to achieve high academic performance. The

focus on academic performance in addition to the order of the timetable, including the task, and rules and regulations on civilised behaviour, is influential in positioning girls as winners. Acting according to traditional feminine ideals of being calm and regulated, and high academic performance seem to be the winning recipe. However, the same recipe seem to contribute to domestication and pinning certain girls down from being ignorant citizens. The masculine relaxed sarcastic positioning appears less pinned down by this domestication. Aasebø (2012), studying gender in upper secondary schools, and Bjerrum Nielsen (2009), examining gender differences in a Grade 10 classroom, find similar gendered meanings in their studies. Both of these studies identify a masculine positioning expressing as a similar ironic, humourous and playful attitude towards schoolwork and school in general (Aasebø, 2012; Bjerrum Nielsen, 2009). Bjerrum Nielsen (2009) argues that this attitude can contribute to a losing position in school, but that it can be positive in terms of creativity or gaining a career path, for example, having confidence to take on challenging positions (Bjerrum Nielsen, 2009). My results suggest that there is a subtle, almost invisible but powerful line of subordination with respect to creating different opportunities for different children in school. This includes that some girls experience reduced space and greater barriers in accessing the ignorant position compared with many boys.

The children foregrounded in my study are generally in classes defined as 'good classes' according to their teachers. Gilliam propose that classes categorised as 'good classes' by teachers are considered well-functioning, harmonious and civilised collectives (Gilliam, 2015b, p.145). Learning environments are characterised by relations of solid collaboration in which it is acceptable to tell adults if something is wrong (p. 150). The classes I have spent time in support this description, and this overall civilised togetherness makes even moderate disturbances distinct and visible. The moments of disturbance I have studied between school professionals and children do not involve harassment or violence but rather 'ignorant bodies' in movement, talking and using their body against the parameters of the body aligned with the civilised collective. The winning role girls are awarded in the narrative about Norwegian schools can be read as winners of these civilised collectives. However, the girls in my study who identify with the ambivalent frustration say they often want to deviate and break

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free from the civilised collective to be more of themselves, someone who is not just a good girl. The notion of being someone else is usually associated with qualities related to the ignorant citizen. There appears to be a strong need to belong to and be with someone and something beyond the civilised classroom collective. Many girls search for a collective in school in which they are positioned and taken seriously as someone not being a 'good girl'. The notion of wanting to be more themselves can indicate that they seek to be taken seriously as individuals on their premises and not 'merely' as good girls. This can indicate that some girls have a genuine desire to engage in doings that deviate from and resist expectations in official school life. However, this desire is experienced as a disturbance to a hegemonic official school life, and thus, their approach is to act like little angels carrying this desire, or what Mouffe (2014) calls 'passion', 'inside' themselves instead of sharing it in a collective. Many boys on the other hand can seem to find release through more active roles in disturbances in encounters between school professionals and children. Therefore, some children have the opportunity to take on a more relaxed sarcastic approach to the rational position compared with others.

9.3 Educational policy for playful citizenship

Democratic citizenship and democratic participation are emphasised in Norwegian educational policy and core curriculum. Playful citizenship and productive ruptures may supplement the discussions considering national curriculum and policy on democratic education as a vocabulary to enhance knowledge and practice on democracy and democratic living in primary schools. This can support a reconceptualisation of children's voices and participation and connect democratic practice in schools more with children's ways of knowing and living. This can seem radical and difficult, considering the current democratic politics and the infrastructure for participation in schools. However, it is important to recognise that young people's way of engaging does not necessarily fit into our traditional democratic formal channels (Ødegård, 2012, p.55). In 2012, Norwegian scholar Guro Ødegård already emphasised that it was time to discuss the willingness and ability of the current democratic infrastructure in Western societies. This she suggested would include schools to offer spaces in which young people can participate on their terms (Ødegård, 2012, p.55, my translation). This is about being open to taking alternative voices seriously and welcoming a renewal of democratic politics, principles and procedures (Ødegård,

2012). Too many contemporary democratic practices with young people have merely been changes in the procedures of already established forms of participation (Ødegård, 2012). Other Norwegian scholars support this observation, arguing that there is a need to supplement conventional democratic activities in democratic education to nourish children's political engagement (Biseth et al., 2021). Scholars outside Norway have also stressed this. For example, Biswas (2020) and Rollo (2016a, 2016b, 2020a; 2020b), asserts that democratic politics and the notion of 'voice' and political participation are still hardwired in adult-oriented perspectives and institutions. Concerned about democratic education merely being about transforming the classroom into a mini parliament and children into small adults, Biesta (2015) asserts that democratic education has become too much about inserting children into already established orders and too little about working with subtle processes related to democratic subjectification, including activating passion and desire for democracy. Another worry is that the adult-oriented outlook makes it difficult to enhance democratic education in the form of agency closer to children's way of knowing and living. If policy and school curricula are trapped in a conceptualisation of voice and agency defined and measured against capacities more prominent in adult bodies, then we are, despite good intentions, far from ensuring political equality for children as a group in society. I offer a new outlook on democratic living in school and hope that playful citizenship, productive ruptures and the ignorant position can be vocabulary that can contribute to new discussions on democracy in primary school.

9.4 Limitations of the study

All studies have different elements and limitations. This includes dilemmas from conducting research in a school, among children, etc., which I have addressed in Chapter 4 and will not repeat here. Engaging in playful citizenship and disturbances as potential productive ruptures can be difficult in the current Western schooling characterised by a powerful accountability discourse favouring pressure on performance, result orientation and testing of children. The school and teachers must work and navigate under these conditions, linking their teaching to specific learning outcomes. Hence, it may be difficult to make space for playful citizenship because this might not immediately give better scores in the learning outcomes in Norwegian or math. Making space for unofficial forms of school life may in fact in the contrary take time away from working with

subjects to reach set learning outcomes. It can also be challenging to consider disturbances as potential productive ruptures because they may rupture the teacher's planned teaching agenda and create a sense of not meeting the expectations according to the national curriculum. I have only been in one school, but the goal in qualitative research is not representation but to develop a structure of meaning that is substantial and transferrable to other contexts. The knowledge developed through this study has transferable potential, as I have studied familiar situations but within a new conceptual and theoretical framework. It can be argued that it is somewhat dichotomic to associate the analysis with official and unofficial forms of school life and a rational and an ignorant position (or body). However, I have made this choice to analytically study complex layers of social processes and interactions in different situations, and it follows that of working with RA, that one aim is to identify key affective features, such as showing different pulses and rhythms. Without this move, I would not have been able to study and obtain distinct qualities and the intersections between the different rhythms and pulses of these lives. Another limitation is whether the results and arguments of my study are interpreted as a proponent of uncritically accepting all forms of disturbances in school. Therefore, it is crucial that one understands the movement from disturbances to potential productive ruptures in the context of disrupting current dominating understandings of voice and participation and in the four elements of playful citizenship. It is hoped that this thesis, in its totality, offers and clarifies the conceptual knowledge and context needed to understand its results and arguments. Finally, I encourage more educational research on social life and 'unofficial' processes and interactions in school considering democratic education. This could include developing the concepts of playful citizenship and productive ruptures or directly using concepts from Mouffe's agonistic model in democracy, both theoretically and empirically, to develop its relevance and usefulness in theoretical and practical pedagogical expansions considering democracy in school.

9.5 Practical pedagogical implications

Interpreting children's playful bodily collectives as nourishing democratic living requires a reconceptualisation of democracy and participation in school, including a readjusted focus from the individual child's voice to collective and

embodied forms of agency. The following sections explore the dimensions of how schools could initiate work and relate to this.

Greater awareness of the limitations of *teaching about* democracy considering democratic education in primary school is firstly involved. I suggest that primary education should reflect on how it could give greater emphasis to democratic living for the whole school practice, not just isolated from certain subjects or lessons. McCutcheon[20] and Haynes (2022) argue that democratic education must be 'lived out' in the whole school practice on all levels, from management to the relationships between school professionals and children. They argue a major risk is involved if school management and other school professionals assume that because certain democratic infrastructures are in place, such as the student board, children experience democratic living (McCutcheon & Haynes, 2022). A democratic school following their argument demands professionals have a humble attitude towards existing knowledge, be attentive to learning in everyday school life as a space for democratic experiences and cultivate and nourish these experiences daily (McCutcheon & Haynes, 2022). With my study, I hope to offer insights into and knowledge of how unofficial forms of everyday school life can play a role in cultivating space for democratic experiences. This involves school professionals not only facilitating space for these life forms but also reflecting on and recognising that children are already living and knowing through unofficial forms of playful citizenship and that the task is to learn from that and make it significant in school. As McCutcheon and Haynes (2022) stress, *transformation takes place in relationships*, and engagement with playful citizenship requires school professionals to understand the relationship with children to have a form of interdependence through which learning from children is possible. It will be difficult to develop a pedagogical practice in which disturbances and conflictual events are considered potential productive ruptures if professionals are unable to imagine and be open to listening and learning from children as pupils in school.

Curiosity in learning from children is a basis for considering playful citizenship. As the results of my research suggest, one such learning process is that professionals challenge their attention to and understanding of disturbances by

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[20] Dr. McCutcheon is a longstanding principal at Balbriggan Educate Together School in Ireland. He retired from this position in 2022.

exploring them from the vantage point of children. This could mean a humbler attitude towards rejecting disturbances as noise and nonsense and reflections on how unofficial forms of school life, the open and loose rhythms, and the playful ignorant citizen can earn greater attention and space as a legitimate and significant form of knowing and living in primary school for democratic living. Schools can also learn from how children engage in ruptures and conflictual encounters as productive in their playful collectives, thus becoming more attentive to the productive dimensions of disturbances. This could come about as a more searching and playful approach to disturbances activated in the classroom from the ignorant position and a humbler attitude towards the limitations of the teacher's constant intentions to solve perceived conflictual events among children. School professionals need to acknowledge that there is little education without hesitation (Biesta, 2019, p. 83). My results encourage hesitance in not stepping in immediately to intervene, trusting that children—through their forms of knowing—can deal with conflicts themselves and that some conflicts, although difficult, are important, considering democratic education as agonistic struggles and a form of groundwork for democratic living. Other empirical studies also encourage hesitance and warn against authoritarian shortcuts to a consensus, such as the complete rejection of conflicts or disturbances in which children are not given the opportunity to negotiate and deal with the disagreements themselves (Johansson & Emilson, 2016; Grindheim, 2014a; Tofteland, 2012; Nome, 2020). According to Mouffe (2005), there is no civilisation in avoiding agonistic struggles, as the alternative is usually suppression by an authoritarian order to engage in processes in which the key goal is rational consensus. The opposite is what is civilised for Mouffe: the capacity to engage in processes in which there is no immediate goal of a rational consensus. I suggest that children's playful bodily practices and collectives can be seen as agonistic struggles on the level of the body in which they engage in the world as ignorant citizens. According to Merleau-Ponty (2014), there is a potential for freedom in the tension between acting on intentions at the level of the body to what is felt as meaningful and what is taught and learned as the right way as a pupil. The reconceptualisation of disturbances to understand them as possible productive ruptures recognises this potential for freedom. This is not a neo-liberal narcissistic form of freedom about us and our 'wants' but rather a humble yet radical freedom that emerges when children engage in a collective

form of living committed to the now in which things just happen. If we recognise that 'little things matter much' (Biswas, 2022), we can realise that what is often rejected as simple noise and nonsense, a phase of childhood that will pass, can be seen as a form of knowing and living that can transform and radicalise democratic living in school.

9.6 Closing remarks

In her most recent book, Mouffe (2022, p.4) advocates that radical democratisation is not about a radical break to remove all current political institutions aiming for a new political order but it is to engage, trouble and profoundly change the existing through radical democratic procedures called 'radical reformism'. I do not encourage the erosion of institutional structures in schools but rather a profound troubling of the ways primary schools operate considering democracy and democratic living. Pedagogues working with democracy in primary school should pause, hesitate and doubt their own supposedly superior position and recognise that what children bring into the encounter is as important as what the teacher brings in. The role of pedagogues in primary democratic education can be to use their power of voice and representation to recognise embodied forms of agency to have similar value to the agency of voice for participation in school. If we want to enhance primary schools as an arena for democratic living, I suggest that we supplement conventional democratic activities and view democratic education to include practices and spaces for playful citizenship and productive ruptures. This is challenging because playful citizenship tends to create ruptures in current power relations and is not always the ideal and expected way of being in school. However, this is not about accepting all forms of disturbances but about recognising that *little things matter much* and learning from what is experienced and defined as deeply meaningful by children.

We cannot understand playful citizenship and the ignorant position as separate phenomena as they move on a continuum and emerge from negotiations between disturbances and productive ruptures. They are a combination in which the different pulses and 'school lives' nourish each other, play together and uphold constant struggles, bringing substance to different ways of living and knowing. However, it is concerning from a democratic perspective if official forms of school life become hegemonic to the extent that alternative forms of agency,

living and knowing, initiated by children, are continuously rejected because they mean fewer alternatives and scope for agonistic confrontations. This can also be seen as a continued denial of political equality for children as a group in which these forms of agency are prominent. I suggest that instead of voicing our concerns about an authority crisis in school, we can ask the extent to which democracy and democratic living benefit from discussions where the authority express their fear of scaling down from their superior position. Children's bodily practices, as examined in my study, and their vibrating vitality are forms of agency that do not always fit into established structures and are experienced as noise and nonsense, creating both tension and frustration for the ones in authority. Perhaps this fear of losing authority contributes to why it holds such a distinct democratic value because it indicates that children challenge and show power relations and uphold constant negotiations of the current story, ensuring spaces for new stories and beginnings. As scholars and pedagogues, we may instead of fearing losing authority ask what authority is, who does it belong to and why, what do we want it to be in school, and if one argues authority is important, what kind of authority is necessary in school to nourish relationships between children and adults contributing to genuine respectful relationships.

Democracy is not self-sustainable; it is always to come. Although it is important to learn about democracy and its different principles and structures as part of the current story, I argue that this is not enough to trigger equalising events, experiences of deviation, resistance negotiation and, in a deeper existential dimension, passion and desire for democracy that can nourish a radical democratic citizen. If we want to keep democracy alive, we must live it, and based on my study, we can learn from children in school. Playful citizenship and productive ruptures involve forms of democratic living in school that can teach us a great deal about how to trigger democratic mobilisation in education. However, this requires society to slow down and schools to trouble accountability in academic performance and learning outcomes as its key objective. This also demands a searching school that takes on a humble approach towards its own limitations and is brave, imaginative and aware that children are flesh in front of us every day ready to teach us.

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Appendices

1. Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) approval
2. Consent form for professionals
3. Consent form for carers/parents
4. Consent form for children
5. Interview guide for professionals
6. Interview guide for children

1. NSD APPROVAL

Vurdering

Referansenummer
805724

Type
Standard

Dato
16.09.2021

Prosjekttittel
Democratic practices in school, children's democratic subjectification in moments of disturbance An ethnographic study exploring democratic practices in primary school in Norway

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
Universitetet i Agder / Fakultet for humaniora og pedagogikk / Institutt for pedagogikk

Prosjektansvarlig
Lene Cherize Haugland Sirevåg

Prosjektperiode
01.08.2019 - 01.03.2024

Kategorier personopplysninger
Alminnelige

Rettslig grunnlag
Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene kan starte så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det rettslige grunnlaget gjelder til 01.03.2024.

Meldeskjema ⬈

Kommentar
NSD har vurdert endringen registrert 06.09.2021.

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 16.09.2021. Behandlingen kan fortsette.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
NSD vil følge opp underveis (hvert annet år) og ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet/pågår i tråd med den behandlingen som er dokumentert.

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Elizabeth Blomstervik
Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

2. Consent form for professionals

orespørsel til om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet.

Ivordan forstår og praktiserer skolen demokrati og lyttende praksiser?
Iarns medvirkning i skolen.

ette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke hvordan kolen forstår og praktiserer demokrati og barns medbestemmelse. I dette skrivet gir vi deg nformasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære.

akgrunn og formål
ormålet med studiet er å studere hvordan skolen forstår og praktiserer demokrati og nedbestemmelse. Prosjektet søker kunnskap om skolen som institusjon og hvordan det er å være arn og voksen innenfor skolestrukturen knyttet til medbestemmelse og demokrati. Studiet vil tforske hvordan medbestemmelse praktiseres og forstås i skolen ved å studere samspillet mellom arna og skolen. Undersøkelsen gjennomføres med utgangspunkt i en åpen innstilling om hva edvirkning er og hva praksisen i skolen kan fortelle om dette. Studiet skal gjennomføres på to ulike arneskoler i første og syvende trinn. Studiet er et doktorgradsprosjekt som går over fire år. Studien tår under veiledning av professor Turid Skarre Aasebø ved Universitetet i Agder.

Iva innebærer deltakelse?
eltakelse innebærer å åpne opp for et feltarbeid i en første og en syvende klasse ved skolen. Indersøkelsen skal gjennomføres gjennom tre perioder på 1-2 måneder. Undertegnede vil følge og ære sammen med elevene gjennom deres skoledag hvor samspill mellom voksne og barn, og barn i amspill med sine omgivelser vil bli observert. Observasjoner noteres ned via skriftlige feltnotater og ia videoopptak. Video brukes for å presisere og fange opp detaljer i situasjoner og samspill hvor det r mye som foregår samtidig som i en klasseromssituasjon. Bruk av video vil gjennomføres etter vtale og kun i spesifikke situasjoner. Bruk av video forutsetter skriftlig samtykke fra alle. ideoopptak vil kun være tilgjengelig for undertegnede og mine veiledere.

eg ønsker å gjennomføre en fokusgruppesamtale med lærere og sosialfaglig personell mot slutten av eltarbeidet. I fokusgruppesamtalen vil det bli benyttet digitalt taleopptak som skal slettes etter at ntervjuet er skrevet ut (transkribert). Det kan også bli aktuelt å gjennomføre noen individuelle amtaler med elever.

Indersøkelsen er etnografisk orientert. Det betyr at jeg på forhånd ikke observerer eller intervjuer ned klare kategorier eller spørsmål, men at det jeg observerer i stor grad danner utgangspunkt for amtalene med både ansatte og elever. Fokusgruppesamtalen med de ansatte vil knyttes til de valg e gjør og deres ideer om det å praktisere demokrati og medbestemmelse. Samtalene med elever vil s utgangspunkt i hvordan de oppfatter skolearenaen med tanke på praktisering av medbestemmelse g demokrati.

Det er frivillig å delta
Deltakelsen skal selvsagt være frivillig både for elever og ansatte ved skolen og så lenge studien pågår kan hver enkelt deltaker trekke seg uten å oppgi grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du velger å ikke delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Som forsker er jeg underlagt taushetsplikt, og alle opplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Identifiserbare opplysninger som navn på skole og videofilm vil kun være tilgjengelig for undertegnede og veiledere. Skriftlige notater, analyser og senere publikasjoner vil anonymisere all informasjon, og navn på skole, barn og voksne vil bli anonymisert. Alle personsensitive opplysninger tilknyttet dette prosjektet, inkludert videofilm, vil bli oppbevart passord beskyttet på UiA server. Informasjonen vil bli slettet etter prosjektets slutt, i 2023. Jeg behandler dine opplysninger basert på ditt samtykke.

Du har rett til å få innsyn i opplysninger som er registrert om deg, disse opplysningene kan du få utlevert en kopi av, du kan be om å få dem endret eller slettet. Du har også mulighet til å klage til personvernombudet eller datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

På oppdrag fra *Universitetet i Agder* har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Ta gjerne kontakt om du ønsker mer informasjon om prosjektet.

Kristiansand, 2019

Prosjektansvarlig Lene Cherize H. Sirevåg, 41214779, lene.c.sirevag@uia.no
Hovedveileder til studiet professor Turid Skarre Aasebø, turid.s.aasebo@uia.no.
Vårt personvernombud: Ina Danielsen, ina.danielsen@uia.no
NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Prosjektansvarlig,

Lene Cherize H. Sirevåg
PHD stipendiat
Universitetslektor
UiA

Samtykke

Jeg ønsker å delta i denne studien.

Navn blokkbokstaver: _____

Signatur _____   Dato

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3. Consent form for parents/carers

orespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt til foresatte.

Ivordan forstår og praktiserer skolen demokrati og lyttende praksiser?
Barns medvirkning i skolen.

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å samtykke til at ditt barn kan delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor ormålet er å undersøke hvordan skolen forstår og praktiserer demokrati og barns medbestemmelse. Dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære.

Bakgrunn og formål
Formålet med studiet er å studere hvordan skolen forstår og praktiserer demokrati og medbestemmelse. Prosjektet søker kunnskap om skolen som institusjon og hvordan det er å være barn og voksen innenfor skolestrukturen knyttet til medbestemmelse og demokrati. Studiet vil forske hvordan medbestemmelse praktiseres og forstås i skolen ved å studere samspill mellom barna og skolen. Undersøkelsen gjennomføres med utgangspunkt i en åpen innstilling om hva medvirkning er og hva praksisen i skolen kan fortelle om dette. Studiet skal gjennomføres på to ulike skoler i første og syvende klasse. Studiet er et doktorgradsprosjekt som går over fire år. Studien står under veiledning av professor Turid Skarre Aasebø ved Universitetet i Agder. Informasjonen fra dette studiet skal analyseres og vil resultere i artikler og rapporter som til slutt benyttes til å utvikle kunnskap om medbestemmelse og demokrati i skolen.

Hva innebærer deltakelse?
Undersøkelsen går ut på at jeg skal observere og følge elever gjennom deres skoledag. Jeg ønsker å observere samspill mellom voksne og barn, og barn i samspill med sine omgivelser i ulike situasjoner gjennom skoledagen. Undersøkelsen skal følge en første og en syvende klasse på to ulike skoler gjennom tre perioder på 1-2 måneder. Observasjoner noteres ned via skriftlige feltnotater og via videoopptak. Video brukes for å presisere og fange opp detaljer i situasjoner og samspill hvor det er nye som foregår samtidig som i en klasseromssituasjon. Bruk av video vil gjennomføres etter avtale og kun i spesifikke situasjoner. Bruk av video forutsetter skriftlig samtykke fra alle. Videoopptak vil kun være tilgjengelig for undertegnede og min veileder.

Det kan bli aktuelt å snakke med elever individuelt eller i grupper. Samtalene vil da ta utgangspunkt i hva jeg observerer i undervisningen og på skolearenaen for øvrig Det vil dreie seg om elevenes opplevelse av og hvordan de oppfatter skolearenaen særlig med tanke på praktisering av medbestemmelse, demokrati og det å bli lyttet til.

Det er frivillig å delta
Deltakelsen skal selvsagt være frivillig og så lenge studien pågår kan hver enkelt deltaker trekke seg, uten å oppgi grunn. Alle opplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg eller ditt barn hvis ditt barn velger å ikke delta eller senere velger å trekke seg. I og med at elevene er under 15 år må jeg ha samtykke om deltakelse fra deg/dere som foresatte.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Som forsker er jeg underlagt taushetsplikt, og alle opplysninger om ditt barn vil bli behandlet konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Identifiserbare opplysninger som navn på

skole og videofilm vil kun være tilgjengelig for undertegnede og veileder. Skriftlige notater, analyser og senere publikasjoner vil anonymisere all informasjon, og navn på skole, barn og voksne vil bli anonymisert. Alle personsensitive opplysninger tilknyttet dette prosjektet, inkludert videofilm, vil bli oppbevart passord beskyttet på UiA server. Informasjonen vil bli slettet etter prosjektets slutt, i 2023. Jeg behandler opplysninger om ditt barn basert på samtykke fra deg/dere og ditt/deres barn.

Du har rett til å få innsyn i opplysninger som er registrert om deg og ditt barn. Disse opplysningene kan du få utlevert en kopi av, du kan be om å få dem endret eller slettet. Du har også mulighet til å klage til personvernombudet eller datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Jeg vil be dere/deg om å returnere svarlappen om samtykke til kontaktlærer.

På oppdrag fra *Universitetet i Agder* har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Ta gjerne kontakt om du ønsker mer informasjon om prosjektet.

Kristiansand, 2019

Prosjektansvarlig Lene Cherize H. Sirevåg, 41214779, lene.c.sirevåg@uia.no
Hovedveileder til studiet professor Turid Skarre Aasebø, turid.s.aasebo@uia.no.
Vårt personvernombud: Ina Danielsen, ina.danielsen@uia.no
NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Prosjektansvarlig,

Lene Cherize H. Sirevåg
PHD stipendiat
Universitetslektor
UiA

Samtykke/tillatelse (Returner til kontaktlærer, på mail eller send med eleven). Husk at det må levers med signatur.

Barnet mitt kan delta i dette studiet:

Elevens navn: ....

Navn foresatt: _____

Signatur foresatt: _____ Dato:

(kryss av det som passer):

☐ Kan videofilmes_____   ☐ Kan ikke videofilmes

☐ Kan intervjues individuelt/   ☐ Kan ikke intervjues individuelt/gruppevis
   gruppevis

☐ Kan intervjues individuelt,   ☐ Kan intervjues i gruppe, men ikke individuelt
   men ikke i gruppe

4. Consent forms for children

Til elever i første og syvende trinn.

Tittel på prosjektet: Hvordan forstår og praktiserer skolen demokrati og lyttende praksiser?
Barns medvirkning i skolen.

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor jeg skal undersøke hvordan skolen i Norge jobber med demokrati og barns mulighet til å bli hørt. I dette skrivet gir jeg deg informasjon om prosjektet og hva det vil bety for deg å delta. Jeg ber deg om få hjelp fra en voksen til å lese denne informasjonen. Dine foresatte/foreldre har også mottatt informasjon om dette prosjektet.

Hva er dette prosjektet og hvorfor gjør vi det?

Jeg skal studere hvordan skolen forstår og jobber med demokrati og medbestemmelse. Jeg ønsker å finne ut av hvordan det er å være elev i forhold til det å medvirke og å bli lyttet til. Jeg kommer til å være sammen med din klasse en del gjennom neste skoleår hvor jeg håper å få lov til å være sammen med deg og klassen din når dere har undervisning og når dere har friminutt. Jeg ønsker å forstå hvordan det er å være elev på skolen for å utvikle ny kunnskap som kan bidra til at vi forstår og får mer innsikt om barns medbestemmelse og det å lytte til barn på ulike måter i situasjoner. Studiet er en del av noe som heter en doktorgrad. Det betyr at jeg går på en skole for voksne, et universitet, hvor jeg skal jobbe med dette i fire år. Jeg får hjelp av en som er professor som heter Turid Skarre Aasebø.

Hva betyr det å delta?

Undersøkelsen går ut på at jeg skal være sammen med deg og din klasse i noen uker gjennom det neste året. Jeg kommer til å notere litt ned i en liten bok, og hvis det er i orden for deg og dine foreldre/foresatte så ønsker jeg også å filme litt med et videokamera. Jeg ønsker å filme for å kunne se litt nærmere på noen situasjoner slik at jeg kan se ulike situasjoner enda nærmere og for å huske detaljer bedre. Det vil kun være jeg og den som hjelper meg som har tilgang til videoen. Alt jeg skriver ned i filmen kommer til å lagres på trygg plass ingen andre har tilgang til, og jeg kommer til å slette alt når jeg er ferdig med dette prosjektet.

Om det er greit for deg så ønsker jeg å få snakke litt med deg alene eller i en gruppe med noen andre i din klasse for å snakke litt om hvordan det er å være elev, hva du tenker om demokrati og medvirkning og om det å bli hørt på skolen.

Som forsker må jeg passe på og jobbe etter det som heter taushetsplikt. Det betyr at jeg vil ta godt vare på opplysninger om deg og lagre det på en trygg plass hvor det kun er jeg og den som hjelper meg som kan se det. Jeg kommer til å skrive litt om det jeg kommer til å finne ut av i dette prosjektet og da skal jeg ikke bruke ditt navn, navnet på skolen din eller andre opplysninger som gjør at andre kan forstå at du har vært med å delta.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig for deg å delta, og du kan når som helst si at nei jeg vil ikke delta mer på dette. Dersom du ikke ønsker å delta likevel er det helt greit og du trenger ikke si noe om hvorfor. Om du ikke vil delta likevel kan du snakke med en voksen på skolen, gi beskjed til dine foreldre/foresatte eller til meg. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli slettet. Du kan også be om å få se på/lese

personopplysningene som er registrert om deg, og be om at de bli endret. Du kan også få hjelp til å klage om du mener at opplysningene om deg ikke blir behandlet riktig. Siden du er under 15 år må jeg også spørre dine foresatte/foreldrene om de synes det er greit at du kan delta. Det er også derfor de har fått et eget ark med informasjon. Jeg behandler opplysninger om deg basert på din tillatelse.

Ta gjerne kontakt med meg om du vil vite mer.
Telefonnummer: 41214779, mail: lene.c.sirevag@uia.no.

Om du mener at noe er feil, eller at opplysningene som er registrert om deg er blitt behandlet feil og du ikke ønsker å snakke med meg kan du ta kontakt med hun som jobber mye med dette på Universitet (skolen) der jeg jobber: Ina Danielsen, ina.danielsen@uia.no, telefon: 452 54 401. Eller du kan ta kontakt med den nasjonale gruppen som følger med på at alle forskningsprosjekter i Norge behandler all informasjon om deg trygt og i tråd med dine rettigheter: Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost personverntjenester@nsd.no eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Prosjektansvarlig,

Lene Cherize H. Sirevåg

_____

Tillatelse (ta med deg denne lappen og lappen dine foreldre/foresatte har signert på, eller be dine foreldre/foresatte om å sende den på mail til din kontaktlærer). Tusen takk.

Jeg ønsker å delta på dette

Mitt navn: ....

Mine foreldre/foresatte synes det er greit at jeg deltar: ☐ JA   ☐ Nei

Navn på mine foreldre/foresatt: _____

Signaturen min
                    Dato:
_____

(kryss av):

☐   Det er greit at det filmes når jeg er tilstede

☐   Det er ikke greit at det filmes når jeg er tilstede

☐   Det er greit at du snakker med meg alene eller i gruppe med andre i klassen

☐   Det er greit at du snakker med meg alene, men ikke i en gruppe med andre i klassen

☐   Det er greit at du snakker med meg i en gruppe, men ikke alene

☐   Det er ikke greit at du snakker med meg alene eller sammen med noen i klassen min

5. Interview guide for professionals

Intervjuguide intervju ansatte

DEL 1:

1. Hvilke vurderinger gjør du deg i forhold til følgende situasjoner (forstyrrelser) og rutinepraksiser (morgenrutiner+) i deres hverdag her på skolen?
2. Hvordan overveier/vurderer du barns innspill i disse situasjonene, og hva er det som påvirker dine vurderinger i hvordan du mottar det?
3. Hvilken former for deltakelse inviterer ditt fag og dine timer til?
4. Hvilken former for lyd og bevegelse fra barn anerkjennes i skolen, og varier dette ut ifra situasjon og hvor dere er?
5. Hvilke vurderinger gjør du deg om barns latter og lek på skolen?
6. Hvordan opplever du å være lærer på utflukter og turer med dine elever sammenlignet med å være på skolen og i klasserommet?
7. Når det gjelder bruk av ulike ting så har jeg lagt merke til at det er en stol dere kaller voksenstolen, kan du fortelle meg litt mer om den?
8. Kan du utdype dette med at dere ofte nevner at det er mye krav til elevene (spesielt første trinn)
9. Jeg ser at dere bruker en del tegn og utrykk i dialogen med barna, kan du si litt mer om dette (*spesielt aktuelt for første trinn*)
10. Dere er tydelig på at dere har mye fokus på folkeskikk i 7 klasse, kan du si litt om hva deres forventninger er og hvorfor dette er et fokus (*spesielt aktuelt syvende trinn*)

DEL 2:

1. I hvilken grad og på hvilke måter får barn erfare det å utøve innflytelse på skolens praksis?
2. Er det noen former for deltakelse/innspill fra barn som anerkjennes over andre? I så fall hvilke?
3. I hvilken grad og på hvilke måter får barn erfare demokrati i praksis på skolen?
4. I hvilken grad og hvordan opplever du at skolen som institusjon jobber med barns demokratiske deltakelse? Både i praksis og gjennom læreplaner/formålsparagrafer osv.

6. Interview guide for children

Intervju guide barn

De fleste elevene gikk jeg sammen med rundt på skolen under intervjuene, med noen satt vi oss inn i et rom etter ønske fra elevene. Jeg kom alltid med konkrete eksempler til barna i samtalen. Spørsmålene er kun en guide.

1. Hva pleier dere å gjøre i disse ulike områdene/rommene?
   a. Hvilke ting pleier dere bruke her? (*Vise tingene til barna & gjerne være i rommet*)
   b. Hvordan bruker dere disse tingene
   c. Hvordan har dere lyst til å bruke disse tingene?
   d. Hvilke former for lyd lager dere her?
   e. Hva gjør dere med kroppene deres her? Sitter, ligger, løper (bevegelse)
   f. Hvorfor tror dere det er sånn at det er akkurat det dere gjør her?
   g. Er det noen som bestemmer/forteller dere hva dere skal gjøre her?
2. Hva pleier de voksne å gjøre her?
3. Sier de voksne at du skal bruke rommet og tingene på en bestemt måte? (hvordan)
4. Har voksne ulike navn på rommene og tingene?
5. Hvordan bruker de voksne disse rommene/stedene og tingene?
6. Er det noen som noen ganger forteller deg at du ikke følger med slik den voksne ønsker? Hva gjør du i så fall? Hva er det du ikke følger med på?
7. Hvis du blir fortalt av en voksen at du ikke følger med eller at du gjør noe de voksne ikke ønsker du skal hva har du gjort da? Hvilke situasjoner kan det skje i?

DEL 2:

8. Hva tenker dere er demokrati og medvirkning?
9. Er dere med å påvirke ting som skjer på skolen? I så fall hva?
10. Hvem bestemmer hva på skolen og hva må man gjøre for å kunne være med å bestemme det som skjer på skolen?
11. Hvordan er du med å bestemme/påvirke ting som skjer på skolen og i klasserommet?
12. Hvis dere har vært med på å påvirke til at noe endret seg på skolen hvordan var det å være med på?
13. Hvilke muligheter mener du at du får gjennom å delta på skolen?

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