This thesis brings together childhood studies and the problem of environmental degradation. It focuses on intergenerational and interspecies relations and aspects connected to sustainability issues. The discussions centre on three contexts: a sea (the Öresund region), a desert (the Sonoran Desert), and the school strikes for the climate (global). Taking an approach inspired by phenomenology, these contexts are examined using the notion of appearance. Questions are asked about which subjects and objects (can) appear – where, when and to whom – and about the conditions for and implications of those appearances. The purpose of the thesis is twofold. One, to develop an appearance-oriented framework that can serve ethico-political theorising, with specific regard to children, generations and non-human species in times of environmental degradation. Two, to discuss appearance(s) in relation to specific sustainability activities, linked to the three mentioned contexts. Central scholars drawn upon are Hannah Arendt and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as feminist scholars' development of their theorising.
Spaces of appearance
Intergenerational and interspecies relations in the Anthropocene

Elisabeth Kring

Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Child and Youth Science at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Friday 24 January 2020 at 13.00 in De Geersalen, Geovetenskapens hus, Svante Arrhenius väg 14.

Abstract
The thesis brings together childhood studies and the problems of environmental degradation and climate change. It focuses on intergenerational and interspecies relations and aspects connected to environmental sustainability. The discussions centre on three contexts: a sea (the Öresund region), a desert (the Sonoran Desert), and the school strikes for the climate (global). Taking an approach inspired by phenomenology, these contexts are examined using the notion of appearance. Questions are asked about which subjects and objects (can) appear – where, when and to whom – and about the conditions for and implications of those appearances (or their absence). The project is twofold: i) developing a conceptualisation of appearance that can serve ethico-political theorising, especially in regard to children, generations and non-human species in times of environmental degradation, and ii) discussing appearance(s) in relation to specific sustainability activities, linked to the three mentioned contexts. Central scholars drawn upon are Hannah Arendt and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as feminist scholars’ development of their theorising.

Proposing a dual take on acting, it is suggested that creating change in regard to environmental degradation is a matter of both collective political action (creating an Arendtian inter-subjective space of appearance) and an individual body-subject’s way of interacting with objects that appear to it. Further, the reversibility of acting is emphasised, that is, that one who can act can also be acted on, and in this way, capacity (acting) is interlinked with susceptibility and vulnerability (being acted on). However, it is argued that different human and non-human subjects are not equally vulnerable, nor equally responsible, with regard to environmental degradation. Given differences between generations and between species in relation to temporal and spatial “points of appearance” – the points where one appears, or will appear – it is proposed that we should also discuss how the world itself appears to different subjects from their respective point of appearance.

Keywords: children, generations, species, the environment, appearance, temporality, political action, the acting body-subject, school strike for the climate, Arendt, Merleau-Ponty.

Stockholm 2020
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:diva-176117


Department of Child and Youth Studies
Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm
SPACES OF APPEARANCE

Elisabeth Kring
Spaces of appearance
Intergenerational and interspecies relations in the Anthropocene

Elisabeth Kring
Författarens tack


Contents

BEGINNING ........................................................................................................ 1
  Introduction .................................................................................................. 1
  Sea and desert ............................................................................................ 4
  Outline of the thesis ................................................................................... 6
  Research about children and childhood ................................................... 7
    Childhood and temporality ...................................................................... 8
    Childhood, nature and animals .................................................................. 11
    Environmental and sustainability education .......................................... 13
    Children, space and politics ...................................................................... 15

SETTING I: AMONG IDEAS AND CONCEPTS .................................................. 21
  1.1 To appear or not to appear ..................................................................... 23
    Reading appearance .................................................................................. 23
    Appearance as being ............................................................................... 26
  1.2 Appearance and acting .......................................................................... 30
    Space of appearance ................................................................................ 31
    Birth .......................................................................................................... 33
    The acting body-subject .......................................................................... 34
  1.3 Appearance and standpoint ................................................................... 37
    Seeing ........................................................................................................ 38
    Knowing .................................................................................................... 40
    Judging ....................................................................................................... 42
  1.4 Appearance and thinking ...................................................................... 46
    Directed thinking ..................................................................................... 46
    Representative thinking .......................................................................... 48
    Transformative thinking .......................................................................... 52

SETTING II: BY THE SEA .................................................................................. 57
  2.1 Time, change and generations ............................................................... 62
    Nature conservation .................................................................................. 62
    Temporality as relationality ...................................................................... 66
    Actors and storytellers ............................................................................. 68
    Natality and the new ............................................................................... 74
2.2 Animals and angles.................................................................78
  Under the surface .................................................................... 79
  Touching and being touched ................................................... 82
  Facts and values .................................................................... 89
  Judgment and plurality ........................................................... 92

SETTING III: IN THE DESERT .........................................................97
3.1 Inclined (toward) plants ..........................................................101
  Saguaro-and-me ..................................................................... 102
  The first appearance .............................................................. 106
  A thorny problem .................................................................. 110
  Skin and flesh ....................................................................... 113
3.2 Moving children .................................................................120
  The (non-)appearing body-subject ......................................... 122
  Stopping and being stopped .................................................. 125
  Reaching for water .................................................................. 129
  Legal and political objects ...................................................... 133

SETTING IV: AT THE SCHOOL STRIKE FOR THE CLIMATE .......... 137
4.1 Students in the streets ........................................................... 139
  Who or what ........................................................................... 141
  Starting from asymmetry ....................................................... 143
  Stop-and-think .................................................................... 147
  Fossil fools ........................................................................... 150

BEGINNING ANEW .......................................................................156

Svensk sammanfattning .............................................................. 163

References .................................................................................. 166
BEGINNING

Introduction

The common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die. It transcends our life-span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only with those who live with us, but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after us. (Arendt, 1998, p. 55)

The common world, Hannah Arendt writes, “transcends our life-span into past and future alike”; we share it with those who were here before, and with those who will be here after us. In other words, we could speak of generations that come and go, that appear and disappear. Although Arendt in her writings mainly focused on the human world (and specifically the public sphere), we could broaden the scope and talk about Earth as a common world that we share across generations, and also across species. And given the importance of this shared world, we might want to ask: what is its current status?

We receive reports of this status through lived experience, by living (and for some of us dying) through phenomena like droughts and floods linked to climate change, and by for example seeing and mourning a glacier being lost, as happened recently in Iceland (Henley, 2019). We also receive information from science, and things are looking bleak. Rockström et al. discern nine Earth system processes that we need to attend to, and boundaries related to these processes that we should not transgress if we are to maintain a “safe operating space for humanity” (2009, p. 472). These boundaries concern climate change, loss of species, ocean acidification, global freshwater use and changes in land use (e.g. deforestation), to mention some. The authors emphasise that the boundaries are interdependent and suggest that we are close to crossing several boundaries, and that those of climate change and loss of species have already been transgressed. International bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) have provided several scientific reports informing us about existing and coming consequences of climate change and loss of species (i.e. IPCC 2018; IPBES, 2019).
Although information from scientific studies has been spread through mass media, reaching a large number of individuals, it is information that tends to become stuck between the almost ungraspable magnitude of the problem(s) and the everyday lives we all live, filled with personal joys, sorrows and routines. Scientific facts do not seem to be enough to create change; the facts have been around for some time now, yet things are not improving, at least not on the scale or at the pace they have to. In addition, scientific studies of, for example, declining freshwater or desertification tend to tell us quite little about the political, economic and social relations that led to this situation, or ways of changing it. We need scientific facts, but we also need something else when we conceptualise the problem and try to envision possible solutions.

It has been suggested that we live in an epoch that can be called the Anthropocene, which would refer to “a new geological era, one in which humans act as a main determinant of the environment of the planet” (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 209). The Anthropocene is a concept that brings human-nature relations together with temporality, and as such, it is interesting with regard to intergenerational and interspecies relations. Although there is a debate within geology about whether Anthropocene is a technically suitable term or not, the term has caught on within other disciplines and strands of society (see e.g. Sörlin, 2017 for a discussion). The concept of Anthropocene and the issue of environmental degradation have been picked up in the humanities and social sciences. Environmental humanities, political ecology, environmental education, and environmental psychology are for instance some research fields that can be mentioned. Fields like these study environmental issues with regard to topics such as politics, art, culture, pedagogy, and social issues. Questions such as the following are asked:

What are the stakes (promises, risks) involved in narrating and managing, living and theorizing in the human/environmental interface? What matters, practices, identities, ethics, aesthetics and imaginaries (including the notion of the Anthropocene itself) are emerging and interacting to shape competing worldviews on this interface – and to the benefit or detriment of whom, or what? (Neimanis, Åsberg and Hedrén, 2015, p. 68)

My study belongs to the research context outlined above. The thesis brings together environmental issues and the interdisciplinary field of child and youth studies. How can we theorise regarding children and generations in relation to the problem of environmental degradation, and vice versa, how can we theorise environmental issues taking children and generations as a departure point? Linking back to the quotation from Arendt, I begin with our appearance on Earth, this common world that “we enter when we are born” and “have in common not only with those who live with us, but also [. . .] with those who will come after us”, or with another word, future generations. I ask: what does
it mean to appear in this common world that is Earth, during this epoch that is the Anthropocene? How we can think about and conceptualise appearance in ways that can help us address issues that relate to children and the environment, including ethico-political aspects of intergenerational and interspecies relations?

The thesis engages in processes that I describe as thinking-from and thinking-toward. This means thinking from spaces, positions and situations where appearances take place and are at stake, and thinking toward appearing children and non-human species, as well as toward the problem of environmental degradation. To help me with this thinking, I turn to Arendt and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and to feminist scholars who develop their theorising. Both Merleau-Ponty and Arendt engage with what it means to appear, and although they do it in somewhat different manners, their approaches overlap.

My purpose is to develop theorising regarding appearance, with specific regard to children, generations, species and the environment, and to turn to three spaces to discuss who and what appear in these, with a focus on intergenerational and interspecies relations. These spaces are a sea (Öresund), a desert (the Sonoran Desert), and the “space” of the school strikes for the climate. These spaces are further outlined later on.

The main questions guiding me in my research are the following:

- How can appearance be conceptualised and elaborated in ways that enable ethico-political theorising? And, relatedly, how can the concept serve as a methodological approach?

- How can appearance be discussed in regard to children, generations, species and environmental issues?

- Who and what appear – and to whom – in the addressed spaces of a sea, a desert and the school strikes for the climate, given the study’s overall focus on children, generations, species and environmental issues? What are the conditions for, and implications of, the appearing subjects and objects?

The questions above outline both conceptual and material aspects of appearance. I do not regard the conceptual and the material as belonging to different orders, but rather as constituting different dimensions – an abstract and a concrete dimension, respectively – of the same order, that is, the order of this world (see Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 224 for a related discussion). I refer
to the more theoretical part of the thesis as well as the actual spaces discussed as settings. The first setting is a “space” of ideas and concepts, the second setting a sea and the third setting a desert. The fourth setting consists of the political (and physical) space of the school strikes for the climate. The school strikes began to take place during the second half of 2018, when I was already more than halfway in my PhD studies. However, I found the school strikes too interesting in regard to my overall focus on children and the environment not to include them. The choice of a sea and a desert – and more specifically, the Öresund region and the Sonoran Desert – is perhaps less self-evident than that of the school strikes (as these latter explicitly involve both children and environmental issues), and hence the choice of a sea and a desert is explained below.

Sea and desert

The (seemingly) contrasting environments of the sea and the desert tend to represent different, not to say opposite, things in the human imagination. The sea often comes to stand for life and vibrancy, while the desert serves as a symbol of death and emptiness. However, I see the flourishing of life and the threat of death in both places, with the threat of death especially in the context of environmental degradation. The ocean\(^1\) and the desert are places where climate changes have and will become intensely manifest, and that which these places embody – water and a warm/dry climate, respectively – are phenomena that in different ways are at the core of sustainability challenges. The ocean and the desert also have in common that they constitute challenging contexts for humans to appear in (also beyond the effects of climate change). That might be a reason why they, each in their own different manner, have a certain mystical air about them.

As for the sea, the specific place I turn to is the Öresund strait, which encompasses the national border between Sweden and Denmark. When it comes to the desert, I have chosen the Sonoran Desert, which extends from the southern USA to northern Mexico. Just as Öresund does, the Sonoran Desert encompasses a national border, namely that between the USA and Mexico. I mainly stay within the part of the Sonoran Desert situated in the state of Arizona in the USA. The Sonoran Desert and Öresund became my chosen desert and sea precisely because they are both located in border zone areas. The topic of national borders is not the main focus of this study, but constitutes a background to it, especially in the chapters on the Sonoran Desert where I touch upon migration issues. I also mention cross-border collaboration in the Öresund region.

\(^1\) Although an ocean and a sea technically are different things, I use these terms largely interchangeably.
Border zones actualise and politicise appearance, as they very much are about regulating appearance in regard to specific spaces, and more specifically, in regard to the two sides of a border. This regulation of appearance is interesting in relation to the Öresund region and the Sonoran Desert as these places are characterised not just by the national borders they encompass, but also by including many zones of protected nature, such as national parks and nature reserves. Protecting nature is also about regulating appearance, albeit in different ways and for different reasons (mostly) than the ways and reasons surrounding the maintenance of national borders. In this regard, the Öresund region and the Sonoran Desert raise questions about the relation between nature and culture, and between nature and nation. Who can or cannot appear in these conserved natural areas and border spaces? On a personal note, I can add that I grew up close to the coastline of Öresund and later in life spent a year in Mexico. Although I was not near the Mexico-US border at the time, the border was quite present in Mexican politics and culture (as it is in US politics and culture), and captured my attention.

Connecting two (seemingly) disparate places like I do here with the Öresund region and the Sonoran Desert is something that has also been done by Cindi Katz in her book _Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children’s Everyday Lives_ (2004). She looks at children’s lives in Howa, Sudan and New York, USA, respectively. She describes her project as a “countertopography”, writing that “the notion of countertopography is meant to invoke the connections among particular historical geographies by virtue of their relationship to a specific abstract social process or relation” (2004, p. xiv). The processes that Katz focuses on are economic development and globalisation. I would not frame my thesis as a countertopography, because space is not my main object of study and I do not conduct an in-depth ethnographic study like Katz does. However, I find the description of countertopography fruitful for my purpose. Like Katz, I also connect two places through linking them to larger processes. In my case, these processes consist of environmental degradation and sustainability agendas (and hence constitute processes that open up for a connection to the third space addressed in the thesis, the school strikes for the climate). Paraphrasing Katz’ title, my project could perhaps be seen as related to, and relating about, growing up environmental.

My intention is not study the spaces of the Öresund region and the Sonoran Desert as spaces, nor to capture the entirety of relations that take place within them, or phrased differently, the entirety of relations that constitute them. In line with Doreen Massey, I understand space as “the product of interrelations” (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Such an understanding, Massey writes, requires the
existence of plurality, that is, a multiplicity of entities that are in relation to each other. These interrelations are constantly being (re-)made.

Precisely because space on this reading is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. [. . .] Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far. (Massey, 2005, p. 9)

One could say that I zoom in on some of the interrelations, or “stories-so-far,” that form part of the Öresund region and the Sonoran Desert (although these stories are not necessarily about Öresund or the Sonoran Desert). I do this by applying a framework of appearance, discussing who and what appear, and the conditions for and implications of those appearances. I do not only discuss actual appearances, but also potential appearances, and absence of appearances. When approaching these places (and the wider themes of oceans or deserts in general), I have sought out initiatives and issues that relate to environmental sustainability and that address or involve children or young people, or have bearing on intergenerational relations. These initiatives and issues extend beyond the human and encompass interspecies relations.

Outline of the thesis
This first chapter of the thesis consists of the introductory text above, and a research review below. The review is to be understood as a mixture of outlining theory regarding children and childhood as well as presenting research that relate to themes that the thesis addresses. The review is followed by Setting I, where I develop my theoretical and methodological position and discuss the notion of appearance. Setting I is structured in line with the three concepts that I link to appearance – acting, standpoint and thinking.

Setting II focuses on Öresund, with the first chapter consisting of a discussion of generations, action and temporality in regard to environmental degradation. The second chapter engages with sea animal encounters, scientific approaches and subject-object relations. Setting III concentrates on the Sonoran Desert, and one chapter zooms in on cacti. I follow traces of children, and also maternal figures, in relation to the life of the saguaro cactus and shared cross-species vulnerability. The following chapter focuses on different child subjects that move within the desert, and the conditions for their appearance in this space. Setting IV addresses the school strikes for the climate and consists of only one chapter. Each of the chapters in Setting II-IV starts with a short prelude with reflections of a methodological and personal nature. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter called “Beginning anew,” where aspects highlighted in different settings are brought together.
The structure of my thesis is similar to the structure of Sarah Whatmore’s book *Hybrid Geographies* (2002), which also addresses human-nature relations. Whatmore writes that the chapters in her book can be read in three ways: “as cross-cutting conversations [. . .]; as thematic sections [. . .]; or as individual essays” (2002, p. 4). In my thesis, the *cross-cutting conversations* taking place throughout the text are related to appearance. The four settings (a conceptual space; a sea; a desert; the school strikes for the climate) can be seen as *thematic sections*. Each of the chapters (especially in Settings II, III and IV) addresses different phenomena and can be read as *individual essays*.

**Research about children and childhood**

My study addresses a wide range of activities, such as educational activities, recreational activities, migration, legal action, and political manifestations. In my appearance-oriented approach to these activities, temporality (“appear when?”) and spatiality (“appear where?”) are important dimensions, as is relationality – who and what appear to whom? Aspects of temporality and spatiality have been studied within the field of childhood studies in different ways, as has the topic of children’s relations to non-human nature and animals. How are children – as a category and as actual living children – positioned in relation to time, space, other beings (human and non-human) and environmental issues? I present some ways in which researchers have discussed these questions, in order to situate my own study in a wider context. Given my focus on appearance, this review can be understood to revolve around how children appear within different contexts, and, on a meta-level, how the child subject appears to childhood researchers. The researchers and texts referred to here differ widely in terms of study objects, theoretical frameworks and methodologies, and they belong to different fields, however, they all relate to children, childhood, youth, generation or education. They address dimensions of temporality, spatiality or relations to non-human nature and animals.

Environmental sustainability is an issue which includes all the above-mentioned dimensions – time, space and human-nature relationality – and it is also closely related to politics. How does political acting and governing today affect human (and non-human) life and wellbeing in the future? The child tends to occupy a central place in relation to this, as being the one environmental sustainability is for, and also the one that will have to ensure it in the future, and hence needs to learn about it today. These questions are discussed in the review. The review is divided into four themes (which have a certain interconnectedness):
Childhood and temporality

Childhood and environmental issues, especially when the latter are phrased in terms of conserving and sustaining, are both linked to time. Aspects of temporality have been discussed at length in childhood studies. Researchers in the field of childhood sociology have discussed and criticised how children are understood as becoming, that is, as unfinished and incomplete (Jenks, 1996; James et al., 1998); “childhood is spoken about as: a ‘becoming’; […] growing up; preparation; inadequacy; inexperience; immaturity” (Jenks, 1996, p. 9). This is contrasted with adults, who are understood as fully being. The argument is that children should not be seen as less being than adults are. Another entry point in the discussion is that both children and adults could be seen as simultaneously being and becoming, since the ontological base of being is a constant process of becoming, and this applies to adults as well as children (Lee, 2001; UpRichard, 2008; Prout, 2005).

Starting from an ontology of becoming, Nicholas Lee (2013) discusses childhood in relation to climate change. Drawing upon Deleuze, he suggests “Life”, “Voice” and “Resource” as “multiplicities” that can help us understand how childhood is enacted (Lee, 2013, p. 48). Both childhood and environmental challenges are by Lee conceptualised in terms of “bio-social events”:

Seeing childhood and environmental challenges and opportunities in terms of the same analytic device [“biosocial event”] arguably draws the two otherwise separate sets of issues into close alignment. I think this alignment is desirable in our present context where issues of sustainability, resource scarcity and intergenerational justice are raising questions of what can and should be made of childhood in response. (Lee, 2013, p. 157)

Lee here raises questions about “intergenerational justice” in relation to childhood and environmental challenges. Generation as a concept has been discussed within childhood studies, and within other disciplines such as sociology. Karl Mannheim (1952) was one of the first sociologists to theorise generation. He proposed that generation should be understood as a sociopolitical category, and that people in the same age become a more or less coherent generation through experiencing the same historical events during their youth. Jane Pilcher discusses Mannheim’s conceptualisation of generations and suggests that it entails broad issues such as “the nature of time,
the relationship between biology and the social, and socio-psychological connections of language and knowledge” (1994, p. 481).

Based on Mannheim’s conceptualisation, Leena Alanen (2001; 2009) elaborates a generational perspective in relation to children/childhood. Alanen proposes “generational order” as a concept to highlight power relations that surround ideas and practices regarding children. Childhood is seen as a category that cannot be comprehended without an understanding of how it is formed by and interacts with adulthood, or another generational category.

Childhood moreover is not a stand-alone category: it can be an intelligible category (as has been shown in childhood studies) only in its necessary interrelationship to a counter-category, which in modern societies tends to be adulthood, but may also be some differently constructed generational category. Thus, generation – or (inter)generationality – should be for the social study of childhood, the equivalent of gender in feminist studies and class in class studies. (Alanen, 2016, p. 159)

Alanen suggests that the notion of generation emphasises an understanding of child subjectivity as relational, and she points out similarities between the notion of generation and the notion of gender. The parallel she makes to the category of class is also presented by Jens Qvortrup, who takes on a structural approach and emphasises economic structures in regard to children and generations (e.g. 1993; 2009). Alanen not only compares generation to gender and class, but also seeks to create an analytical framework where these three (and other) categories are understood as intersecting.

In this way, one could on the one hand speak of intragenerational relations, discerning difference within the group of for example children, and on the other hand intergenerational relations, focusing on differences (or similarities) between generations. Peter Hopkins and Rachel Pain propose intergenerationality to refer to “the relations and interactions between generational groups. Viewing intergenerationality as an aspect of social identity suggests that individuals’ and groups’ sense of themselves and others is partly on the basis of generational difference or sameness” (2007, p. 288).

Another theme related to temporality that has been highlighted within childhood studies is the link between children and the politics of securing a certain kind of future. Katz (2008) describes how contemporary societies’ anxiety about the future along with a sensation of ontological insecurity – rooted in threats such as environmental degradation – affect the understanding and organisation of children and childhood. Using obesity as an example, Bethan Evans discusses how childhood and children’s bodies become sites of intervention in a biopolitical “war on obesity” (2009, p. 21), marked by pre-
emptive action. Kevin Ryan suggests that “governing children is a way of acting upon the future” (2011, p. 3).

Such a child-futurity nexus has also been criticised in queer studies, with suggestions of alternative ways of approaching temporality. An example is Kathryn Bond Stockton’s (2009) proposal that children grow “sideways” instead of “up,” and Jack Halberstam’s (2005) writing about subjects’ resistance to following a heteronormative life trajectory, including patterns of reproduction. Lee Edelman (2004) suggests that “the Child” has become a symbolic image that marks all political analysis and intervention and he calls this “reproductive futurism,” which he critiques from a queer point of view as consolidating heteronormativity. Edelman writes that “[t]he child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention” and suggests that “the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought” (2004, pp. 2-3).

Rebekah Sheldon (2016) picks up Edelman, among others, in her analysis of how “the Child” has become a central figure in political rhetoric and different kinds of fiction that address environmental degradation and catastrophic scenarios in the future:

Through the combined influence of physiology and psychoanalysis, the child as cipher for the future of the adult and the child as cipher for the future of the species intertwined and engendered the vulnerable, innocent child whose rescue from harm appears tantamount to the future safety of us all. (Sheldon, 2016, p. 4)

Children and future generations are seen as at risk because of the escalating environmental degradation. This has led to attempts to govern the future, which raises questions about whether such directed governance shut down alternative futures. Sheldon argues that the figure of the child fosters a non-future in a sense that it is built on repetition, a sameness or self-similarity, which strips the future of everything that is not already here in the present. Rejecting an obligatory self-similar logic, new ways of doing humanity could open up, Sheldon suggests.

Humanity is a central category in terms of the notion of the Anthropocene, as is the way that humans understand themselves in relation to nature and other species. Children occupy a specific position in this regard, as they have been seen as not yet “fully” human (as mentioned above in the context of the being/becoming debate), and hence, as pertaining more to “nature” than adults do. I continue with the theme of childhood in relation to nature and other species below.
Childhood, nature and animals

Ideas about “nature in children” and “children in nature” capture a doubleness of how the link between children and nature has been understood (Hawkes and Egan, 2016). Gunilla Halldén (2011) shows how the notion of children has been linked to a nature/culture dichotomy, where both children and nature have been conceptualised as Other in relation to adults and culture, respectively. Children have been depicted as “closer” to nature than adults, due to ideas about children’s spontaneity, purity, lack of rationality and less exposure to civilisation. Childhood, Halldén writes, becomes a symbol for a lost natural state (2011, p. 49). These ideas are attributed to Rousseau and romanticism, but Halldén argues that they still are present today. One idea concerns how children are understood to be constituted somewhere between irrational nature (animals) and rational humanity (adults). Another idea is that children benefit from spending time in nature and with animals (see also Myers, 1999). Elizabeth Gagen (2007) extends the topic to include colonial reasoning, linking how children and non-Western cultures have been conceptualised. Gagen suggests that the ideas of child development and cultural/economic development have interconnected histories and points to imperialist processes of infantilisation of “primitive” cultures and cultural-scientific primitivisation of children.

Both children and nature are, in a parallel manner, often understood as vulnerable. Affrica Taylor (2011) discusses how children and nature have been linked together through the association of the dualisms childhood/adulthood and nature/culture: “The tropes about the purity and vulnerability of wilderness echo the commonly circulated tropes about the purity and vulnerability of innocent children” (p. 428). However, Taylor does not seek to separate the child from nature, but to re-configure the (Western) human relationship to nature, and her entry point to this is through childhood, as suggested by the title of her book Reconfiguring the Natures of Childhood (2013). Her aim is to “bring reconceptualizations of nature from science studies and human geography into conversation with reconceptualizations of childhood” (2013, p. xv) and to “do nature otherwise in early childhood studies” (2013, p. xv, emphasis in original). Taylor writes, together with Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, that there is a strong connection between interspecies and intergenerational justice and that “ant, worm, child encounters raise questions about our entanglements and mutual vulnerabilities with other species in these challenging ecological times” (Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015, p. 509).

Joanne Faulkner (2011) also discusses childhood, animals and vulnerability. Faulkner proposes that humanity’s inevitable vulnerability in this world is denied through adults casting certain subjects – children and non-human
animals – as vulnerable, hence enabling adults (along with a humanity into which children were never fully invited) in contrast to be cast as invulnerable and in control. “Through the relation to children and animals, we attempt to negotiate our own vulnerability by projecting it into these figures of ultimate exposure,” Faulkner writes (2011, p. 78). However, this sense of being secure and in control is always haunted, due to humanity’s dependence on the ecological environment and hence its inescapable vulnerability.

Turning to a sociological context, Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart (2014) discuss children and animals through a lens of power relations. Rather than placing children and animals together in a joint position of being Others, they discuss how animals become Others to children in everyday life. Through socialisation processes, children learn how to relate to animals depending on the context and the animal. Cole and Stewart suggest that the question “friend or food?” provides insight into how the animal is positioned – ranking from (semi-)subject to object – and how children learn to separate between loveable and disposable animals. Stewart and Cole (2009) also discuss how not just different species are given different levels of subjecthood (although always a limited such), but also how one and the same species, e.g. a rabbit, can travel through different positions, ranking from being seen and handled as vermin or food/meat to achieving semi-subject status as a pet or a respected wild animal.

There are several occasions where animals enter into children’s lives for pedagogical reasons. Jane Bone (2013) sketches out a number of contexts where animals are or can be used as “educators” for children. On a more critical note, Helena Pedersen (2011) discusses power dimensions regarding the appearance of animals within education. She discerns “three main areas of animal appearance” (Pedersen, 2011, p. 12). These areas are constituted by animals as sites of sentimentality, animals as teaching and learning tools, and animals as trope and the “antithesis” of the human. Pedersen points to processes of domination and instrumentalisation of animals. Patricia MacCormack (2013) also discusses human-animal relations in an educational context, putting forward a “non-anthropocentric pedagogical ethics” that leave non-human animals be: “Toward a non-anthropocentric pedagogical ethics, I posit the idea of pedagogical grace, which is the unthinking of man simultaneous with the leaving be of the nonhuman – teaching ways to unthink the self in order to open up the thought of the world” (2013, p. 13). Below I continue on the topic of education and non-human nature, turning to environmental and sustainability education.
Environmental and sustainability education

One central way in which children are positioned in relation to issues of environmental degradation and sustainability, is as learning subjects. Several of the examples I will address in the upcoming chapters come from a context of environmental and sustainability education, although mostly an informal such. In line with the idea of sustainable development, UNESCO has developed a concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The aim is that the learning will be transformative and that “ESD empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity” (UNESCO, n.d.). However, not all educational activities that address environmental issues are categorised as ESD. There are other conceptualisations such as Environmental Education (EE), Sustainability Education (SE), and the encompassing one of Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE). I use ESE in order to have as broad approach as possible, but use ESD when the researchers make a point of discussing precisely the version of ESE that ESD constitutes.

As mentioned above, ESE is a field that places environmental issues in a pedagogical context (see e.g. Sauvé 2005; Sandell, Öhman and Östman, 2005; Jickling 2014; Davis, 2015). The educational activities do not have to take place in nature, but are generally based on a moral imperative taking a stand for environmental sustainability (although there is variation regarding what sustainability is perceived to be). ESE is complex in the sense that it encompasses policy, practice and research. David Kronlid and Johan Öhman (2013) suggest that ESE could benefit from a more developed ethical conceptual framework, encompassing a variety of environmental ethical theories, to expose and clarify the different ethical positions taken within ESE approaches. ESE also overlaps with other areas of pedagogy such as outdoor education (e.g. Dahlgren and Szczepanski, 1997; Änggård 2014), place-based education (e.g. Elfér 2011; van Eijck and Roth, 2010) and school subjects such as natural science. Margaret Somerville and Carolyn Williams (2015) present a review of research on “sustainability education” (their chosen terminology).

---

2 The notion of sustainable development was popularised through the Brundtland report Our Common Future submitted to the UN (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Its definition of sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

3 There has been much discussion on which concept to use. McKeown and Hopkins (2003) discuss whether ESD and EE represent different approaches or could be seen as interchangeable. For some researchers, ESD and EE represent different approaches; see for example Jickling and Wals (2008) and Kopnina (2012), who criticise ESD for lacking radical potential due to its (neo)liberal position of not regarding the co-existence of economic growth and environmental sustainability as conflictual. While I note differences between the concepts of for example ESD and EE, my objective is not to sort out or discuss such differences.
in early childhood education. They divide the existing research into three categories: connection to nature; children’s rights; and posthuman frameworks. As for empirical studies, Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér (2013) for example shows that applying ESE in preschool is a rather complex matter.

In terms of critical and discourse theory-oriented research, Beniamin Knutsson (2013) suggests that ESD is marked by a post-political sustainable development discourse that depoliticises environmental issues and obscures ideological conflicts. Annika Skoglund and Mats Börjesson (2014) start from Foucauldian grounds when analysing how a certain kind of childhood subjectivity is formed within ESE. This childhood subjectivity can be understood as a competent, environmentally friendly child who will guide adults to make the “right” decisions regarding different environmental issues. On a similar note, Johan Dahlbeck writes about what kind of pupil that emerges in the ESE material he studies. He suggests that the pupil portrayed is “a self-governing individual whose ability to imagine how certain types of behaviors will lead to certain types of consequences becomes decisive for the well-being of the individual and by extension for the progress of the human social world at large” (Dahlbeck, 2014, p. 163).

In the same vein, Malin Ideland and Claes Malmberg (2015) present the notion of “eco-certified children” (Swedish: det kravmärkta barnet) as they use the Foucauldian concepts of pastoral power and governmentality to analyse teaching material addressing sustainable development. Ideland and Malmberg (2014) also argue that a colonially marked us/them dichotomy is present within the discursive foundation of ESD. They show how Swedish textbooks about sustainable development draw upon a white saviour logic, where children are taught that Western efforts and knowledge systems are the solution to the problem. Sofie Hellberg and Knutsson (2016) propose that ESD in different parts of the world has different content, depending on the socio-economic status of the country and the students. Their conclusion is that “[s]ince different populations are prepared for entirely different lives and lifestyles, ESD actually helps to sustain the generic life-chance gulf that separates wealthy mass consumers from poor subsistence level populations” (Hellberg and Knutsson, 2016, p. 11).

Taking issues of inequality to a context of the non-human, Pedersen (2010) and Richard Kahn (2009) belong to the field of Critical Animal Studies and criticise subject/object positions and power asymmetries between humans and animals within ESE, and they suggest an animal liberation approach instead. Hanna Sjögren (2016) raises similar questions about how animals are positioned as consumable others in her study of sustainability issues within Swedish teacher training. Teresa Lloro-Bidart and Valerie Banschbach (2019) provide an overview of perspectives on human-animal relations in regard to
ESE, with a focus on critical perspectives. Leesa Fawcett (2000) draws upon ecofeminist theories and suggest “narrative ethics” as an approach to hear the silenced narratives of non-human species within ESE. Marcia McKenzie, Paul Hart, Heesoon Bai and Bob Jickling (2009) reflect upon how “re-storying” and imaginative thinking can form part of ESE, opening up for resistance and ideas about how we can live and act differently.

Given the outline above of different approaches to ESE, a core question I discern is how “open” (as in not very rigidly defined) as well as politically radical (or not) the objectives of ESE should be. This includes aspects of human-animal relations, and intersectional dimensions within the human. Cole advises “environmental educators to rethink notions of environment and environmental literacy by addressing the ways power, race, class, gender, and politics shape human interactions with the land” (2007, p. 36). Cole points to the need of an intersectional, political analysis when it comes to “human interactions with the land.” The way space is lived and politicised is a central issue within environmental sustainability, and I now turn to the theme of children and space.

Children, space and politics

Environmental degradation actualises questions about space in several ways, for example the threat of some places becoming inhabitable, or cultivated land becoming infertile. Spatiality as an analytical dimension has been addressed within childhood studies and has a central place within the field of children’s geographies (Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Aitken, 2001; Katz, 2004; Holt, 2011; Horton and Krafl, 2006; Ansell, 2009.). Children’s geographies addresses issues relevant for this study, such as how space is lived by children, the local and global dimensions of childhood, and migration related to children. Children’s geographies also has a tradition of discussing power relations between adults and children, the politics of childhood, and children’s (political) agency (Philo and Smith, 2003; Hörschelmann, 2008; Kallio and Häkli, 2010; Skelton, 2013; Benwell and Hopkins, 2016).

Besides the category of children, the categories of generation and intergenerationality have also been discussed in relation to space. In a book about intergenerational space, Robert Vanderbeck and Nancy Worth (2014) propose that “[s]paces and places are not merely static arenas in which relationships between people transpire, rather, they are both constituted by and constitutive of social relations, including relations of age and generation” (p. 2). Hopkins and Pain (2007) suggest intergenerationality as a key concept in their effort to build “relational geographies of age,” which is an attempt to conceptually expand children’s geographies beyond ‘only’ children.
Vanderbeck (2007) presents a research review addressing intergenerationality in relation to space, and he notes that much research on generations and spatiality focus on intrafamilial relations. He therefore calls for studies of the role of spatiality in regard to extrafamilial intergenerationality.

Issues of environmental sustainability raise questions about spatial and political dimensions of intergenerational relations beyond intrafamilial contexts. These questions link space to time (and hence to closely related aspects presented earlier under the heading “Childhood and temporality”). How nation-states understand themselves – what they are and what they want to become – affects current as well as future generations, and relations between generations. Evans and Emma-Jay Honeyford (2012) analyse how young people are positioned in UK sustainable development policy, pointing out that the latter places a problematic emphasis on futurity that risks overlooking the wellbeing of present children and also creates a “shared temporal logic of childhood development and economic development” (p. 73). Stuart Aitken, Ragnhild Lund and Anne Trine Kjørholt (2007) also address the link between the development of children and the development of (“underdeveloped”) nations, arguing that both of these entail a problematic notion of teleological closure. Children/nations should become like “us,” that is, adults/Western nations, and the path to be taken as well as the end goal is already mapped out, foreclosing different ways of being.

Children become important nodes in regard to national self-images, as children can either maintain or reject such images when they become adults and are the ones governing. Staying with the topic of nations, but turning to the space of their borders, Aitken and Vicky Plows (2010) write about young people living and moving along the borders of US. They suggest that “within these various bounded, bordered and embodied places, young people’s identities and bodies become a battleground through which identity and maturation are negotiated, acquiesced, moved and migrated” (Aitken and Plows, 2010, p. 328). Borders are thus central to understanding the inclusion and exclusion of children in the national self-image, and this has been highlighted by several scholars. Spiros Spyrou and Miranda Christou (2014) bring childhood studies and border studies together in discussing how borderlands affect and are affected by children and notions of childhood. Andrew Burridge (2010) has done research on young people taking political action and setting up No Border camps at the US-Mexico border, protesting US immigration policy. Heide Castañeda and Milena Melo (2019) have studied how immigrant youth without US citizenship experience passing, or not passing, through checkpoints at the US-Mexico border. Jacqueline Bhabha (2009) draws upon Arendt when discussing irregular migrant children who “lack their own government” and Bhabha calls them “Arendt’s children,” due to their lack of the right to have rights.
Sana Nakata (2008) and Kirsi Kallio (2009) also turn to Arendt to discuss children and civic rights, but they partly take a critical stance toward Arendt. This is due to Arendt’s failure to recognise the political agency of children, and her rejection of schools as places where politics can or should happen (see Arendt, 2006). Nakata and Kallio both make reference to Arendt’s writing about a specific incident, consisting of a group of Afro-American high school students meeting an angry white mob when they tried to enter a newly integrated school in 1957 in the US (the text can be found in Arendt, 2003). As mentioned, the issue at stake here is whether these children can, or should be, seen as political actors, and whether the school is or can be seen as an arena of politics. Vicky Lebeau (2004) explains Arendt’s scepticism:

‘Have we now come to the point,’ Arendt wonders, ‘where it is the children who are being asked to change or improve the world?’ As various commentators have pointed out, that question depends on Arendt’s fine, and contentious, distinctions between the private, the social and the political spheres, on her idea of the school as an institution there to support the child’s move from home and family to the public life of the world. (Lebeau, 2004, p. 55)

Also Kallio notes that Arendt’s position is, at least in part, linked to ideas about protecting children from the responsibilities and potential hostility of the political sphere.

However, it can be noted that Arendt did not write much about children, nor about education (apart from an essay on the topic found in Arendt, 2006), precisely because she placed children and education outside of her main interest: politics. Yet, there are ways of linking Arendt’s thinking about politics to education, as shown by Sharon Todd (e.g. 2007; 2016), who writes within the field of the philosophy of education. Among other things, Todd picks up Arendt’s notion of plurality. Todd writes: “an ontology of plurality offers us a way of rethinking the vulnerability that inheres in political exchange, and this is extremely important from an educational point of view” (2011, p. 110). Related issues about subjectivity, relationality and alterity are also addressed within philosophy of education (e.g. Biesta, 2006; Säfström, 2005; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005).

On a related note, philosophy of childhood relates children and childhood to philosophical theory, including to questions of ethics and difference (e.g. Bahler and Kennedy, 2016; Matthews, 1996; Welsh, 2013; Bohlmann and Hickey-Moody, 2019). In his book Ethics in Light of Childhood, John Wall proposes that “considerations of childhood should not only have greater importance but fundamentally transform how morality is understood and
practiced” (2010, p. 1). Wall starts his book by asking questions about childhood in relation to the category of the human and matters of ethics and politics: “Childhood faces humanity with its own deepest and most perplexing questions. What does it mean to be human? What should relations and societies strive for? What is ultimately owed to one another?” (2010, p. 1). I will borrow these questions from Wall and let them serve as a bridge to the last paragraphs of this chapter, where I recapitulate and interconnect some aspects of the themes presented above.

* 

Taking Wall’s first question about what it means to be human and linking that to the categories of children and childhood, we can recall the connection between children and the future. As I have written above, children become the projection surface of fear and anxiety in relation to an unknown future. Hence childhood must be controlled as a way to govern the future. Nevertheless, in an opposite yet interlinked manner, children can also be positioned as bearers of hope and as the ones who will create change so that we will have a future that is different from the present. In terms of temporality and futurity, childhood becomes the means of creating either same-similarity or radical difference when it comes to human future.

In the above example, it is the future that will be the same or different; however, we could also conceptualise children themselves as same or different in relation to adults. This has a temporal aspect that has been highlighted by the being/becoming debate, that is, whether children embody time and change to a larger extent than adults. On a related note, children have been seen as closer to nature and as more similar to animals than adults, pointing to the idea of “full humanity” as not something that one is born with, but rather something one develops into. This can be questioned by either acknowledging children as fully human from the start or, on the contrary, conceptualising adults as being as much nature and animals as children, including being vulnerable.

I situate Wall’s second question (“what should relations and societies strive for?”) in the context of issues surrounding space and politics. How should humans coexist with each other on Earth, including issues related to nationality and distribution of wealth? Where can which children appear, given their different nationalities? We could also discuss space in terms of political space, and investigate what possibilities children have (or do not have) to engage in politics, and how this affects what societies strive for.

The question of what we should strive for is linked to Wall’s third question on what is “owed to one another.” Both these questions are central within ESE, which engages with human-nature and human-animal relations. How should
we relate to other species and nature: do we owe them something? Here different positions are taken within ESE. Regarding intrahuman relations, one can ask: what is owed to the humans most affected by environmental degradation and climate change in the global South, especially since they tend to be the least responsible for the situation? The question of what we owe to one another can be seen as one traversing all four themes I have presented in the review (time; nature and animals; ESE; space and politics) and it is certainly a relevant one in regard to intergenerational relations. Is something owed to generations living in the future, given escalating environmental degradation, and which generation should act to improve the situation (including learning about it)?

I finish here by returning to the Arendt quotation that started this chapter, and my tweaking of the quotation, that is, posing Earth as something we share with “those who live with us” (relations across space) and “those who will come after us” (relations across time). What we have in common, is that we all appear, or will appear, on Earth (as well as disappear). And while we are here, we appear in different spaces – in nature, in educational contexts, in a political sphere, to mention some. We appear to different human and non-human subjects, who, in return, appear to us. It is through appearance (and other concepts I link to it) that I address the issues outlined in the review above. In the upcoming “Setting I: Among ideas and concepts” I present my take on appearance as a theoretical, methodological and ethico-political concept.
I start here by returning to these two questions, linked to the purpose of the thesis, outlined in the Introduction: How can appearance be conceptualised and elaborated in ways that enable ethico-political theorising? And, relatedly, how can the concept serve as a methodological approach? I set out to discuss what it means to appear, and the conditions upon which oneself, others and things appear. I seek to elaborate appearance in ways that can address issues related to children, generations, species and environmental sustainability, including the interconnections between them. What is at stake when it comes to appearance(s) in the Anthropocene, when oceans are polluted, droughts hit time and again, and the climate is getting warmer (to mention but a few aspects)? How can we think regarding intergenerational and interspecies relations in a context of environmental degradation and climate change? It is with the framework of appearance, outlined here in Setting I, that I later on approach the upcoming settings of a sea, a desert and the school strikes for the climate.

Appearance is a rather wide concept, and it describes something fundamental. Appearance could refer to the appearance of myself as well as the appearance of an Other or an object before me. In this way, the concept sheds light on intersubjectivity and relations between subject and objects. Appearance can further be related to appearing on Earth (that is, to live) and to appear in a specific space. Similarly, appearance can be linked to temporality, to appearing at a certain point in time. In this sense, there is a “when” and “where” of appearance. We can also ask who or what cannot appear, or should not appear. And since subjects and objects appear to someone, there is the matter of what they appear as. In other words, I ask where the concept of appearance can take us and what we can do with it, especially when it comes to addressing intergenerational and interspecies relations in the Anthropocene.
It was primarily Arendt that got me to pay attention to the richness of appearance, but Merleau-Ponty is also central in my theorising.4 Arendt has been fundamental for me when it comes to reading appearance as political (and related to something collective), while Merleau-Ponty has been vital in understanding appearance in terms of lived embodiment (and related to an individual subject). Apart from Arendt and Merleau-Ponty, I draw upon other scholars – especially Judith Butler, Adriana Cavarero, Sarah Ahmed and Linda Zerilli – in my creation of an “appearance framework”, primarily to capture different aspects of power relations. In order to make appearance relevant to intergenerational and interspecies relations in the Anthropocene, I link appearance to acting, standpoint and thinking, with the aim of opening up for discussions about politics, embodiment and knowledge production. How can we think and how should we act in times of environmental degradation, and from which standpoint(s) do we do so?

Setting I can be understood as an abstract “space” of ideas and concepts, in comparison to the more concrete settings that follow afterwards. I relate to the abstract and the concrete as distinguishable from each other, but not dichotomous. Merleau-Ponty suggests that the abstract and the concrete – or using his terminology, the invisible and the visible – contain each other, and have a relationship of reversibility. He writes about this reversibility as “an almost carnal existence of the idea, as well as [. . .] a sublimation of the flesh” (1968, p. 155) Further, he describes concepts and ideas using the term “dimension” (1968, p. 224). In this vein, I think of the abstract and the concrete as dimensions, containing each other.

Theory and methodology are at the core of Setting I; nevertheless, I continue to unravel theory throughout the thesis. After this introduction, Setting I continues with a chapter called “To appear or not to appear,” in which I give some background and wider context to appearance (“Reading appearance”) and present appearance in terms of (mode of) existence (“Appearance as being”). This is followed by three chapters that are dedicated to acting, standpoint and thinking, respectively.

4 As for Arendt’s and Merleau-Ponty’s interest in children and childhood, I have previously mentioned that Arendt did not have such an interest. However, Merleau-Ponty did, and among other things, he gave lectures on child psychology and pedagogy (collected in Merleau-Ponty, 2010). Despite Merleau-Ponty’s theoretical engagement with children in some texts (e.g. 1964), I mainly focus on other texts by him that have been more fruitful for my discussions. Nevertheless, there is a strong link between his thoughts regarding children and his thoughts regarding intersubjectivity and embodiment (see further Welsh, 2013), and the latter are ideas that I engage with.
1.1 To appear or not to appear

Reading appearance

Important also is to ask: Whose stories do we read, and how important might the story be in telling a history, in explaining how science changes, or in making clear how a philosophical concept works, or can work? (Butler in interview with Ahmed, 2016, p. 492)

In line with the above quotation, I here write about “whose stories” I have read, in order to sketch out how the concept of appearance “can work.” Bringing scholars in dialogue with each other, I present my take on appearance and concepts that I connect to appearance. These other concepts – acting, standpoint and thinking – all figure explicitly in Arendt’s writings and are at least implicit in Merleau-Ponty’s work.

Appearance is a central concept in phenomenology, a philosophical tradition within which Husserl (2012) and Heidegger (2010) have prominent positions. In Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception (2012), one can read that phenomenology is “the study of the appearance of being to consciousness” (p. 62). There is a subject pole and an object pole to consciousness; the conscious subject is conscious of something. Phenomenology addresses how things appear to us. Emphasis is placed on our lived experience of the phenomenal world, and our being in the world. An example is Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (2010), which seeks to understand how a woman is, and how lived experience is gendered. As for the roots of phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty remarks:

It has been en route for a long time, and its disciples find it everywhere, in Hegel and in Kierkegaard of course, but also in Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. [...] It is less a question of counting up citations than of determining and expressing this phenomenology for us, which has caused – upon their reading of Husserl and Heidegger – many of our contemporaries to have had the feeling much less of encountering a new philosophy than of recognizing what they had been waiting for. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. lxxi)

Merleau-Ponty describes phenomenology as something that its disciples “find everywhere,” and the mentioning of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud would place
phenomenology as something not completely different from, but rather partly overlapping with, other theoretical strands. While I have not gone to Marx, Nietzsche or Freud to find phenomenology in their writings, I would say that theoretical frameworks that they have inspired others to develop (such as critical theory, discourse theory and psychoanalytical theory) contribute important insights to phenomenological ideas, and elements from such other frameworks appear implicitly and sometimes explicitly in my text. Of the two main scholars in this study, only Merleau-Ponty is considered to be a central phenomenological scholar (and even he did something somewhat different when he took on ontological questions in The Visible and the Invisible). Although Arendt’s writings can to a large extent be seen as consistent with phenomenological ideas, she is seldom referred to when phenomenological scholars are listed. Other more contemporary scholars who have been important to me and figure in the text are not necessarily labelled as phenomenological either. So, my starting point is the concept appearance rather than phenomenology as such.

It has been fruitful to bring together Arendt and Merleau-Ponty because of the similarities and differences between these two scholars. If Merleau-Ponty helps us to understand appearance as lived embodiment, including the joy (but also distress) of the lived body, Arendt highlights what is at stake when it comes to appearance in terms of politics and power. They have enough in common to be ontologically and epistemologically compatible, but there are also enough differences in terms of focus and approach that it is worth including both. An example can be given regarding for instance how they write about temporality. Merleau-Ponty and Arendt are similar in their understanding of how the past and the future emerge. For Merleau-Ponty, this happens through a subjectivity that shatters the plenitude of being, carving out a temporal perspective (2012, p. 444). For Arendt, it happens through a man who breaks the continuum of time through his standpoint (the point where he stands), creating a gap between past and future (Arendt, 2006, p. 10). These two descriptions have something central in common, namely that they place an appearing subject at the centre. The two conceptualisations are similar in terms of understanding the subject as being positioned, not just in time, but

---

5 While describing strands of theory that I relate to albeit not primarily draw upon, it can be noted that I share the interest of posthumanist scholars regarding life forms beyond the human (see e.g. Wolfe, 2010; Braidotti, 2013; Åsberg, Hultman and Lee, 2012), including extending subjectivity beyond the human. However, my take on the subject, relatiomality and agency, is more phenomenological than posthumanist, although I consider the ontological foundations of these theories overlap to some extent.

6 As for defining Arendt’s writings, Amy Allen notes that “Arendt’s work notoriously confounds attempts to characterize it – both because of the complex, wide-ranging, even sometimes apparently contradictory nature of the work itself and because of its refusal to adhere to neat disciplinary boundaries” (2008, p. xi).
also in space. However, while there are clear similarities, there are also differences. The difference I focus on here does not primarily relate to the ontological foundation of the conceptualisations, but rather to how these conceptualisations are presented to the reader.

Merleau-Ponty takes us to a river when he discusses time, and it is not only due to Heraclitus’ legacy, but also because Merleau-Ponty wants us to understand the conceptualisation through an embodied and, might I add, pleasant entry point. So there we are by the river, moving from different positions, all of which relate to different places on or by the river. It is quite peaceful and we even, “after two days of waiting,” experience seeing the piece of wood float by that we that we tossed into the river at its source (2012, p. 433). Maybe we, when reading this, wander off in our imaginations and pretend that the piece of wood is a yacht for small creatures, and maybe we add some birdsong to complete the picturesque image.

Moving on to Arendt, the potential lack of birdsong is the least of our worries. In order to aid her conceptualisation of time, Arendt calls in the master of Angst, Kafka. We are dropped off at a battleground, with a man who is not only caught in the fighting of others, but who is also fighting himself, and fighting not one but two forces:

The scene is a battleground on which the forces of the past and the future clash with each other; between them we find the man whom Kafka calls ‘he’, who, if he wants to stand his ground at all, must give battle to both forces. Hence, there are two or even three fights going on simultaneously: the fight between ‘his’ antagonists [past and future] and the fight of the man in between with each of them. (Arendt, 2006, p. 10)

So we have a battleground and we have a river at our disposal when we try to grasp what time is, and by extension also what appearance is. Recalling the quotation from Butler in the beginning of the chapter, we can ask: “Whose stories do we read, and how important might the story be [. . .] in making clear how a philosophical concept works, or can work”? I think we need both the river and the battleground, both the wonders and the conflicting interests, when conceptualising appearance. During my reading of the stories (to use Butler’s word) I draw upon to develop an “appearance framework”, I have lamented my lack of philosophical training. This leads me to agree with Ahmed:

It is a risk to read philosophy as a non-philosopher. When we don’t have the resources to read certain texts, we risk getting things wrong by not returning them to the fullness of the intellectual histories from which they emerge. And yet, we read. The promise of interdisciplinary scholarship is that the failure to return texts to their histories will do something. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 22)
I bring the scholars I read to the context of childhood studies and to the dilemmas of the Anthropocene. One could say that I follow Arendt and Merleau-Ponty in their problems, while I simultaneously link these problems to the issue of environmental degradation. As for Arendt, I have taken advantage of the openness characterising several of her concepts and used the notions and dimensions of the concepts that have been most fruitful for my discussions. I believe I have her blessing to do so, given these words: “Each time you write something and you send it out into the world . . . everybody is free to do with it what he pleases . . . You should not try to hold your hand now on whatever may happen to what you have been thinking for yourself” (Arendt quoted in Canovan, 1992, pp. 2-3).

As mentioned previously, apart from Arendt and Merleau-Ponty, I draw upon Butler, Cavarero, Ahmed and Zerilli when elaborating my “appearance framework”. In terms of the latter four, I primarily use texts in which they in some way engage with Arendt or Merleau-Ponty by critiquing or developing their concepts and discussions. This critique or development plays an important part in my theorising of appearance, especially in terms of relating appearance to ethico-political issues and relations of power. In this regard, I also turn to other scholars who do not have an explicit relation to Merleau-Ponty or Arendt. These other scholars are mainly, but not exclusively, from feminist traditions (e.g. feminist methodology and ecofeminism) where issues regarding bodies, nature and power have long been discussed.

I start my outline of appearance below by discussing appearance in relation to being. This lays the foundation of the following three chapters that address acting, standpoint and thinking, respectively, including why and how I relate these concepts to appearance (and to each other).

**Appearance as being**

“In this world which we enter, appearing from a nowhere, and from which we disappear into a nowhere, Being and Appearing coincide,” Hannah Arendt writes (1978, p. 19). As appearance and being coincide, to appear is to exist, in a sense of living in this world. When people die, they disappear. Future generations are people who have not yet appeared, but whose appearance we anticipate. When discussing appearance in *The Life of The Mind*, Arendt seeks to “dismantle metaphysics” (1978, p. 212), and she sees being as inseparable from bodily/material appearance. Arendt is critical of what she calls “the two-world theory,” which is built on a hierarchical dichotomy separating “(true) Being and (mere) Appearance” (Arendt, 1978, p. 23). Although she rejects the idea that there is an inner “truth” behind appearances, she does propose that
there is an interiority behind appearances. Appearances both expose and protect from exposure. Appearing entails having boundaries and a surface that at once connect and separate one from the world. Arendt suggests that this surface is a site of meaning: “Since we live in an appearing world, is it not [. . .] plausible that the relevant and the meaningful in this world of ours should be located precisely on the surface?” (Arendt, 1978, p. 27).

Appearance presupposes relationality; at least one of the units involved in an act of appearance needs to be a subject(ivity) that the appearing unit appears to. Two interrelated aspects of appearance can be discerned; I appear myself, and the world (including others and things) appears to me:

Nothing could appear, the word “appearance” would not make sense, if recipients of appearances did not exist – living creatures able to acknowledge, recognize, and react to – in flight or desire, approval or disapproval, blame or praise – what is not merely there but appears to them and is meant for their perception. (Arendt, 1978, s. 19)

We can hence speak of a doubleness of appearance; one appears oneself, and objects and others appear to one. “[A]ll sense-endowed creatures have appearance as such in common, first, an appearing world and second, and perhaps even more important, the fact that they themselves are appearing and disappearing creatures” (Arendt, 1978, p. 20). Although Arendt almost exclusively focuses on humans, this writing about senses and the previous quotation referring to “living creatures” open up for understanding animals – and I would add plants, since they can sense as well (see also Marder, 2013) – as both appearing themselves and having a world appearing to them.

Merleau-Ponty expands more than Arendt on the idea of animals as sensing and perceiving subjects (see e.g. Merleau-Ponty, 2003 on animals perceiving their environment, and Oliver, 2007; Weisberg 2015 on Merleau-Ponty’s view of animals). Speaking of animals and plants as appearing and having a world appearing to them would also be in line with ecofeminist theorising, which extends subjectivity to non-human life although appearance might not be a key concept used (see e.g. Plumwood, 1993; Mathews, 2003; Gaard, 2017). Further, there is a strand within phenomenology, sometimes referred to as ecophenomenology, that focuses on non-human nature and humans’ relation to it (i.e. Brown and Toadvine, 2003; Abram, 1997; Bannon, 2014).

Staying with the topic of sensing and perceiving but focusing (primarily) on humans, I continue with Merleau-Ponty’s writing about the body-subject and the body-object. One is a subject to oneself, perceiving the world, and an object to others in a sense that one is being perceived by them (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). Nevertheless, just as I am for-myself, that is I am a subject, I can grasp
that others also are for-themselves, that is, that they also are subjects, to whom I am an object (of perception). Merleau-Ponty describes this as follows:

If another person is truly for-himself, beyond his being-for-me, and if we are for-each-other and not separately for-God, then we must appear to each other, we both must have an exterior, and there must be, besides the perspective of the For-One-self (my view upon myself and the other's view upon himself), also a perspective of the For-Others (my view upon others and the view of others upon me). (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. lxxvi)

In an encounter with others, I apprehend that I become an object to those other subjects; I appear to them as they appear to me. However, Merleau-Ponty proposes that being embodied means experiencing not only others but also oneself as an object. One’s appearing body is an object not only to others’ perception, but also to oneself. One example of this is that one can touch oneself (or e.g. see, hear or smell oneself); my right hand can touch my left hand, which means that I am both touching (being a body-subject) and being touched (being a body-object) (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 141). Merleau-Ponty refers to the reversibility of touching and being touched (and seeing/being seen, etc.) as “chiasm”. As mentioned, there is both intrasubjective and intersubjective reversibility, that is, I can touch and be touched by myself, and I can also touch and be touched by other subjects. The world as such is for Merleau-Ponty founded on chiasmic relations (1968), and he discusses this reversibility in terms of “flesh”, a notion I return to in one of the desert chapters.

Reading appearance through a theoretical framework that poses the embodied self as being both body-subject and body-object, it could be proposed that we appear not only to others but also to ourselves. Nevertheless, we only appear to ourselves in part, as we, for example, cannot see our own heads (without a mirror) or the insides of our bodies. We also cannot see the point where we appear precisely because we occupy it; we rather see from it. Also a part of one’s psyche, the part that belongs to the unconscious, can be spoken about in terms of something that does not appear (easily) to us. While we might not be revealed fully to ourselves, the others we encounter are even less revealed to us. Alterity cannot be captured and it is uncategorisable; I cannot fully know the Other.

Yet, we categorise those whom we encounter, and appearances are at the core of this categorisation. We appear as something to others, for example as human or animal, as adult or child, or as a certain gender, although we might appear differently to ourselves. As Butler shows in Gender Trouble (1990), we can shake up appearances, opening up for new content in regard to
established categories, or creating new ones. That we appear as something does not mean that this “something” is not contested or performative in character. The relationality of appearance does however mean that we cannot fully control how we appear to others because that power lies within the “recipients of appearances,” to use Arendt’s words. Yet, as Cavarero (2000) points out by extending Arendt’s theorising, this is also promising, because through appearing to others, we can by mediation get in contact with things about ourselves and our lives that do not appear to us; such things appear to others precisely because they are others, perceiving us and the world from another point.

How we appear to others is not only a matter of how we look, but also of how we speak and act. To give an example related to climate change and the school strikes for the climate, a common comment is that the roles are reversed regarding who appear to be adults and who appear to be children. Striking children in Australia have for instance said: “We’ll stop acting like adults if you stop acting like children”. Adults do not appear as adults, because they do not take responsibility for climate change, while children do not appear as children, because they are on strike, which is usually framed as an activity for adults. This example makes visible one aspect of the intersection between appearance and action. I outline more aspects in the next chapter, which focuses on acting.
1.2 Appearance and acting

As mentioned in the Introduction, the Anthropocene can be described as an era when “humans act as a main determinant of the environment of the planet”. Human action has led to environmental degradation and climate change, but, it is also human action that can change the situation. That (political) action should be taken is a key demand among those who mobilise for environmental sustainability, including the students who school strike for the climate, as the below school strike sign reading “Act now” suggests.

*School strike sign in Stockholm: “Act now!”*
For Arendt, appearance and action are two closely related concepts; it is ultimately through action that we appear as unique existents. She outlines a “space of appearance,” which is an intersubjective and political space that comes into existence when people act. Further, to act is for Arendt to bring something new into the world, or phrased differently, to begin anew. In this sense, she conceptualises action as a second birth.

Acting as a concept is more explicitly present in Arendt’s writings than in those of Merleau-Ponty, however, an acting body-subject is certainly central in the latter’s works. Similar to their different conceptualisations of temporality, acting is for Arendt a matter of politics, whereas for Merleau-Ponty it is to a large extent a question of lived embodiment and of subject-object relations. Precisely because Arendt and Merleau-Ponty approach action differently, I find them both useful for my purpose. This chapter outlines theorising regarding space of appearance, birth and the acting body-subject. Besides Arendt and Merleau-Ponty, I introduce theorising by Butler, Cavarero and Ahmed, as they have provided important critiques and developments of these themes.

**Space of appearance**

Arendt’s emphasis on human diversity and plurality – “men, not Man, live on the Earth” (1998, p. 7) – and the uniqueness of each human being, is manifested primarily through what she refers to as action. She writes that “to act [. . .] means to take an initiative, to begin” (1998, p. 177). Action is contrasted to labour (reproductive tasks) and work (production of objects). *Vita activa*, meaning “active life”, consists of labour, work and action, and although all these activities are necessary to sustain human life, action is privileged by Arendt. Unlike labour and work, action is unpredictable; it is something new and is unexpectedly set in motion. It is through action and speech that humans are defined as humans.

When we act, a space of appearance opens up: “It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly” (Arendt, 1998, p. 198). Although we all appear just by being embodied, and hence also possess a certain bodily uniqueness, we appear as unique in a more refined way when we act and speak, distinguishing ourselves and revealing uniqueness in regard to our “personal identities”:

In acting and speaking, *men show who they are*, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while
their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. This disclosure of ‘who’ in contradistinction to ‘what’ somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does. (Arendt, 1998, p. 179, my emphasis)

Through action and speech, one appears as someone (a who) doing something (unique and unexpected), and not just as a body that appears without requiring any effort to do so. When one acts, one becomes a who rather than just a what. However, becoming a who, that is, differentiating oneself from the rest, requires the presence of others, to whom one appears.

For Arendt, it is through action, or more specifically, the “acting together” of several, that the political and public (a space of appearance) come into being:

According to this self-interpretation, the political realm rises directly out of acting together, the ‘sharing of words and deeds.’ Thus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it. (Arendt, 1998, p. 198)

Butler (2015a) discusses Arendt’s notions of acting together and space of appearance. Although Butler agrees with Arendt that politics can be seen as a space of appearance, Butler highlights that “forms of power” differentiate between those who qualify for appearance and those who do not:

What we sometimes call a “right” to appear is tacitly supported by regulatory schemes that qualify only certain subjects as eligible to exercise that right. So no matter how “universal” the right to appear claims to be, its universalism is undercut by differential forms of power that qualify who can and cannot appear. (Butler, 2015a, p. 50)

Butler’s critique of Arendt is that Arendt in her outline of appearance and action omits the inequality between subjects that exists beyond and before the creation of a space of appearance, which means that some subjects are disqualified from even entering (or rather, co-creating) such a space. There is a question that precedes the Arendtian space of appearance: what are the conditions for appearance and who can and who cannot appear? And those that are qualified to appear, do they appear on equal terms, or are some disadvantaged? Categories of for example age, gender and race would be very relevant in this regard. Below I discuss conditions of appearance and relate them to age and gender, although in a somewhat different way than the questions above do. I present Arendt’s link between action and birth, and Cavarero’s development of this notion.
Birth

When connecting action and beginning, Arendt compares action to not just a (new) beginning in a general sense, but to the specific beginning that is a physical human birth. “With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance” (Arendt, 1998, p. 176, my emphasis). Interestingly enough, Arendt takes the notion of birth – and natality – to describe action rather than labour, which otherwise would seem to fit better with the concepts of birth and natality given that labour for Arendt is about reproduction of (biological) life. In addition, Arendt regards children, who would be a group otherwise closely linked to birth, as apolitical (2003; 2006). However, it is the link between birth and beginning that makes Arendt understand action in terms of birth and natality:

[O]f the three [labour, work and action], action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities. Moreover, since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought. (Arendt, 1998, p. 9)

Continuing her elaboration on the link between birth and action, Arendt proposes natality as the prime category of political thought. Birth and natality are of course interesting concepts in relation to the field of childhood studies, and perhaps even more so when this field is linked to issues of environmental sustainability, as this raises questions about future generations.

Cavarero suggests that “in Arendt’s peculiar vision of politics, birth remains a greatly innovative, decisive, and surprising concept that is, in essence, neither investigated with clarity nor explained in detail” (2016, p. 113). Cavarero expands on the notion of birth and proposes that Arendt miss some central things in her reference to physical birth, and that these things – if one sticks with comparing action to birth – will also affect how we understand action. One thing that Arendt leaves out is the mother. The mother, Cavarero writes, is not just any other among the Arendtian others to which one appears; the mother is the origin for one’s appearance in the world and the one always and by necessity there when one appears as a newborn:

The relations between the characters on the stage – the baby and the others, as Arendt would say – do not imply any equality or symmetry. More than the others, understood as mere ‘spectators’, it is the mother who earns herself a prominent role in the inaugural scene. If one eliminates her figure, the scene...
ends up losing its specific traits, which is to say, the very traits that make the first appearance an originary dependence rather than a theater of interdependence and mutual appearance. (Cavarero, 2016, p. 116)

Cavarero critiques Arendt for not picking up on the radical potential of asymmetrical relations, even though the very theme (birth) that Arendt chooses gives her a great opportunity to do so. Cavarero highlights that there is a lack of symmetry not only because one’s first appearance – that is, being born – would not happen were it not for the mother, but also because after one has just been born, one depends on the (m)other for survival. The relation is not one of reciprocal horizontality, as in Arendt’s version of action and space of appearance, but one of unevenly distributed dependence. Cavarero asks:

What might happen to the horizontal relation of reciprocity, which defines politics as the scene of appearance, if it is the unbalanced relationship between the newborn and the mother that serves as a premise for securing the ontological root for action? (Cavarero, 2016, p. 120)

The asymmetrical relation between mother and infant is a condition inherent in life itself, and as such it is not something to do away with, but rather something that calls for attention to how we deal with difference and unevenly distributed dependence, Cavarero suggests.

The above can be contrasted to a kind of asymmetry that is not inevitable but the result of “differential forms of power”, to speak with Butler, granting privileges to some while excluding others (see also Butler 2004; 2009). Butler distinguishes between precariousness and precarity; if precariousness is existential and describes the bodily vulnerability of all (human) lives and of being alive, then precarity is more political, describing how some lives/bodies are in a particularly vulnerable position due to violence, oppression and discrimination (2004). Both Butler and Cavarero highlight (in similar yet different ways) vulnerability, dependence and embodiment in relation to appearance and action, seeking to extend Arendt’s theorising.

Contrary to Arendt, embodiment is fundamental to Merleau-Ponty’s theorising, including to his ideas about what it means to act. For him, a body-subject and objects that appear to it are central in terms of the link between appearance and action, something I continue discussing below.

**The acting body-subject**

Merleau-Ponty outlines a bodily-oriented phenomenology in several texts. At the centre is an acting subject, and he writes that “[c]onsciousness is
originarily not an ‘I think that,’ but rather an ‘I can’” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 139). Merleau-Ponty emphasises the idea that consciousness is embodied, and it is through a non-dualistic view on mind and body that he theorises what it means to perceive things and how things appear to us. Being embodied entails being located spatially and temporally and being in relation with the things that surround one, things that one intends. Intending something is to direct oneself toward it. Merleau-Ponty highlights the bodily dimension of this: “consciousness is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body [. . .] to move one’s body is to aim at the things through it” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 140).

Being an embodied consciousness – or a lived body – entails having a body schema, that is, an awareness of one’s body in relation to objects and tasks, for example grasping objects by extending the arm. The body schema is a “global awareness of my posture in the inter-sensory world [. . .] my body appears to me as a posture toward a certain task, actual or possible” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 102). My body exists toward its tasks and “the ‘body schema’ is, in the end, a manner of expressing that my body is in and toward the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 103). My being is a being-in-the-world, and there is a directedness; I am toward the world, the object and the task through my body: “This is to say that the body schema is not merely an experience of my body, but rather an experience of my body in the world, and that it gives a motor sense to the verbal instructions” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 142).

The tasks one’s body undertakes, one’s actions, can turn into habits. Merleau-Ponty understands habits through the body schema’s interrelatedness between “verbal instructions” and “motor sense.” To him, a habit “is neither a form of knowledge nor an automatic reflex [. . .] It is a question of knowledge in our hands, which is only given through a bodily effort” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 145). He gives the example of how the typing subject knows where the letters are on a keyboard. When typing these words about habits, I do not have think about where the letter H is on the keyboard; my body knows where it is and reaches for it the moment I decide that “habits” will be the next word that I write. I use the index finger on my right hand to hit the H. If someone were to say that using another finger will increase my typing speed, I do not know that I would bother switching fingers, because changing this habit would take a lot of effort. Acquiring a new habit requires reworking and renewing one’s body schema, that is, a habit cannot be picked up by pure thought but has to be “understood” by the body and go through the body as it is the mediator of a world.

Ahmed follows up on Merleau-Ponty (and Husserl) and suggests that phenomenology can help us to understand “the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds” (2006, p. 2). Regarding climate change,
we can see that underlying habits have come to shape not only our bodies but also the world. How we eat, consume and transport ourselves, to mention a few things, have shaped the whole Earth system, as suggested in the concept of the Anthropocene. An important dimension of Ahmed’s inquiry is the arrival of certain objects within our reach: What are the trajectories of those arrivals? How did these objects arrive, and why did this and not that object arrive before a certain subject? Ahmed suggests that it is not just a matter of where we move or what we turn to in a certain moment. What is reachable for us is a question of sedimented habits in our bodies – our historical reaching patterns – and she points out that our bodies are shaped by that which has been within reach: “[T]he history of bodies can be rewritten as the history of the reachable” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 55). Ahmed links reachability to power relations and proposes that e.g. “the ‘matter’ of race is very much about embodied reality” which can be understood as a question of “what is and is not within reach” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 112).

In a similar way, one could think of age and childhood as a “matter” of what appears within reach (or not) for those who are categorised as children. Which subjects (can) reach for which objects, and what are the consequences of different reaching powers? We could also ask questions about the reachability of subjects themselves: Which subjects are being reached for, and which subjects do the reaching? Who has the power and possibility to refuse to be reached for – to refuse to be touched, lifted up or moved – if this is undesired?

In this chapter, I have discussed appearance and acting by bringing together theories regarding space of appearance, birth and an acting body-subject. I have presented two dimensions of action. By drawing upon Arendt, Butler and Cavarero, I have discussed action as something political and intersubjective. In addition to this, I have turned to Merleau-Ponty and Ahmed to depict action as a matter of an individual body-subject’s way of interacting with objects. The next chapter focuses on the point where one appears – one’s standing point, or standpoint. If the discussions above have been about acting from the point of one’s appearance, the following chapter addresses seeing, knowing and judging from this point.
1.3 Appearance and standpoint

One of the propositions of this thesis is that we occupy different locations in relation to environmental degradation and climate change. Where and when we (will) appear on Earth affect the ways in which we are affected by for example extreme weather events. Given that such events are expected to increase in the future, children and coming generations will be more affected than today’s adults, and those lacking economic and material resources will be the ones most exposed. Environmental degradation and climate change also affect the very conditions of where and how one can appear. This chapter focuses on the location of one’s appearance, one’s standpoint.

Standing by the sea (Öresund)

Standpoint – the point where one (or an Other) is standing – is an important notion in Arendt’s writing about thinking and judging. Another possible way of describing a standpoint would be as a “point of appearance.” However, such a phrasing would lose the important double meaning of standpoint, as standpoint can also refer to an opinion. I am also interested in the act of standing (as in having a certain posture), which is inherent in the notion of standpoint, something which I follow up on in one of the desert chapters. My
objective is not to provide a conceptualisation of standpoint itself, but to use the point where one stands as a rather literal departure point for discussing how we come to see, know and judge the world.

Several scholars have found standpoint to be a useful concept. A standpoint theory has been developed within feminist studies. It is a theory that focuses on the relation between the location of the knowledge-producer and the knowledge produced (i.e. Harding, 1987; 2004; Hartsock, 1998; Smith, 1990). The approach taken by feminist standpoint theory is similar to, but not identical with, my own framing of standpoint. However, my use of standpoint is certainly indebted to the wider field of feminist methodologies (extending beyond standpoint theory) and their focus on the connection between embodied situatedness, values, knowledge and power (e.g. Haraway, 1988; Longino, 1990; Hill Collins, 1990; Alcoff and Potter, 1993). There are several scholars within childhood studies that have drawn upon feminist methodologies, and some have also suggested a child standpoint (theory) (Alanen, 2005; Mayall, 2002; Fattore, Mason and Watson, 2017).

By starting from standpoint – the point where one appears – I connect appearance to seeing (embodiment and perception), knowing (science and knowledge production) and judging (opinions and politics), and suggest interrelatedness of these phenomena.

Seeing

The seeing subject is an important theme in Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception. What and how do we see? In front of my eyes, I have a visual field, and my vision is limited to things within this field. However, if I move my head or whole body, the range of my visual field also shifts. New objects will appear before me, or I will at least have access to new angles of the same objects that I saw before I moved. However, this also means that I will lose access to previous angles on these objects: “[E]xternal objects themselves never show me one of their sides without thereby hiding from me all their other sides” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 93). Merleau-Ponty writes about sides of objects that can appear to us and disappear from our view, and he notes that the object itself can appear to us and disappear from our view, a fact that is central to its very objecthood: “[T]he object is only an object if it can be moved

---

7 My focus here is on vision and seeing, but not without noting that not all of us can see (with our eyes), and hence the seeing subject can never be taken for granted. On a related note, Weiss (2015) and Reynolds (2017) provide overlapping yet different analyses of Merleau-Ponty and ableism.
away and ultimately disappear from my visual field. Its presence is such that it requires a possible absence” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 92).

Keeping the above in mind, we can ask questions about which objects appear within the visual field of whom. We can also ask which side of an objects that is seen by whom, and hence investigate where the spectators are located in relation to one and the same object. Similar questions can be raised with specific regard to age categories. Which objects and sides of objects appear to us depending on whether we are adults or children (if there is a difference)? Whose “version” (that is, which side) of the object comes to be regarded as the best one? Further, we could perhaps also see the category of children, for example, as one side of those subjects labelled as children. This side might be valid, but nevertheless remains only one side of these subjects. What other sides of a child subject, or an adult subject for that matter, remain hidden to us if we (adults and children) do not “move around” and look from other angles, but instead stay with this one-sided view?

Regarding what seeing and perception are, or how they come into being, Merleau-Ponty remarks that “[t]he perceptual ‘something’ is always in the middle of some other thing, it always belongs to a ‘field’” (2012, p. 4, my emphasis). A thing is “in the middle of” another thing; it is a matter of focus.

A saguaro cactus standing in the middle of this photograph of the Sonoran Desert
Focusing on something else than the saguaro cactus in the picture above is of course possible; there are plenty of other focusable objects. However, irrespective of the object of one’s focus, there remains a figure-ground distinction. Merleau-Ponty proposes that this distinction is at the core of consciousness, writing in his working notes in *The Visible and the Invisible* that “[t]o be conscious = to have a figure on a ground” (1968, p. 191). He uses the terms “differentiation” and “integration” to describe the process of a figure-ground distinction. A figure appears through becoming differentiated from that which surrounds it, and it disappears through becoming integrated (once again) with that which surrounds it.

Merleau-Ponty links seeing to knowing, or vision to knowledge: “It is at the same time true that the world is what we see and that, nonetheless, we must learn to see it [. . .] we must match this vision with knowledge” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 4). I continue discussing knowing below.

**Knowing**

As noted above, consciousness and (visual) perception are for Merleau-Ponty linked to distinguishing figures from a (back)ground. Further, he writes about seeing and not-seeing, suggesting that “there is always an horizon of unseen or even invisible things around my present vision” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 225). Jonna Bornemark (2018) engages in a discussion similar to that of Merleau-Ponty, but focuses explicitly on knowledge. She writes about the relation between knowing and horizons of not-knowing, and also about different ways of knowing. Bornemark proposes that knowing can be understood as either intellectus or ratio, and that knowing always stands in relation to not-knowing.

Intellectus helps us to navigate in a world where there is always an excess of impressions. Intellectus discerns structures, categories and meaning – and thus creates direction – within overflowing streams of impressions and horizons of not-knowing. The quest is not to overcome knowledge gaps or to colonise that which we do not know, but to find our place within it. Even if intellectus discerns (possible) categories, it stays in contact with the uniqueness and particularity of subjects, things and situations, and intellectus is open to new ways of transforming the not-known into something comprehensible. Ratio, on the other hand, picks up and crystallises categories discerned by intellectus, and cements their forms into clear units, demarcated from each other, which can be counted and measured. Ratio takes the categories for granted, without questioning their form or relevance. Bornemark suggests that we need both intellectus and ratio, but that ratio is given priority over intellectus in a
contemporary, Western context, and that this brings about certain complications.

Linking Bornemark’s discussions to environmental issues, I believe that we neither can nor should understand environmental degradation only with ratio, posing the problems – and solutions – as matters of fact. This does not seem to be effective enough when it comes to creating political change. Further, science in the form of scientism might have had something to do with the problems arising in the first place. I agree with Val Plumwood (2002) and Carolyn Merchant (1980) that science definitely has played, and continues to play, a central role in anthropogenic environmental destruction. One of Plumwood’s points is that although this partly has to do with how scientific results have been taken up by political, economic and social forces, it is also due to some elements inherent in science itself, such as the de-enchantment of the world and the objectification of nature. The stakes are high; how we know the world certainly affects how we live (in) it. Nevertheless, science has also been vital in showing that environmental degradation takes place (a statement Plumwood and Merchant also would agree with). So the point is not that we do not need facts, but that we should understand their limits, including the problems that arise when ratio outmanoeuvres intellectus. As Bornemark argues, facts, or ratio, cannot in themselves provide meaning; we need to be aided by intellectus and horizons of not-knowing to create meaning.

In line with the above, it is an important matter not only of what we know, but also how we come to know it. Being embodied and embedded means that one perceives the world from a certain perspective. This perspective is, by necessity, only partial, because we are in the midst of the being, and we have a world through our bodies; we are not disembodied vision, looking at the world from above or outside. Merleau-Ponty discards the idea that things are either subjective or objective, and instead proposes that things are relational:

The considerations regarding scale, for example, if they are really taken seriously, should not relegate all the truths of physics to the side of the ‘subjective’ – a move that would maintain the rights of the idea of an inaccessible ‘objectivity’ – but they should contest the very principle of this cleavage and make the contact between the observer and the observed enter into the definition of the ‘real’. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 16)

There is a relation between the observer and the observed, and (knowledge about) the observed will be affected by the location of the observer. Merleau-Ponty refers to quantum mechanics, as does Karen Barad (2007) in her writings about methodology some decades later. Ideas about relationality, situatedness and partial perspectives are at the centre of feminist methodologies (see e.g. Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2004; Naples 2003 for
overview of feminist methodologies). Feminist methodologies highlight how knowledge production is linked to power relations, with these latter affecting who can be knowledge producers, and what perspectives that can be taken. Childhood studies scholars also make similar points, focusing on age categories (e.g. Alanen, 2011; Christensen and Prout, 2002; Spyrou, 2018).

Donna Haraway proposes that “[s]truggles over what will count as rational accounts of the world are struggles over how to see” (1988). One’s seeing is inevitably partial, not absolute. Nevertheless, our partial perspectives intersect, because both the perspectives and that which they are perspectives on belong to the same world, the one world we live in. In Merleau-Ponty’s words, the views of others and oneself are “inserted into a system of partial perspectives, referred to one same world in which we coexist and where our views intersect” (1968, p. 82). This “one and the same world” and the objects that we have in common in it are the topic of the following discussion about judging.

Judging

That others see what I see, that the objects that appear to me appear to them as well, is for Arendt what ensures my certainty of the actual existence of these objects:

That appearance always demands spectators and thus implies an at least potential recognition and acknowledgement has far-reaching consequences for what we, appearing beings in a world of appearances, understand by reality, our own as well as that of the world. In both cases, our ‘perceptual faith,’ as Merleau-Ponty has called it, our certainty that what we perceive has an existence independent of the act of perceiving, depends entirely on the object’s also appearing as such to others and being acknowledged by them. (Arendt, 1978, p. 46)

We, the spectators, gather around an object and when we acknowledge that it appears to (all of) us, its existence is confirmed for each one of us. Reality is for Arendt intersubjective, and this intersubjectivity and its reality-affirming qualities are enabled by the spectators’ different locations. It is the plurality of the spectators’ locations that confirm the sameness of an object, and that enable a common world: “For though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, those who are present have different locations in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects” (Arendt, 1998, pp. 57-58). In this thesis, I approach the sea and the desert as common worlds that a large number of perceiving subjects share and in relation to which we have different locations.
Arendt takes our different locations in a political direction by turning to the Greeks and discussing the link between *dokei moi* ("it appears to me") and opinion:

In a sheer inexhaustible flow of arguments [...] the Greek learned to exchange his own viewpoint, his own ‘opinion’ – the way the world appeared and opened up to him *dokei moi*, ‘it appears to me’, from which comes *doxa*, or ‘opinion’ – with those of his fellow citizens. Greeks learned to *understand* – not to understand one another as individual persons, but to look upon the same world from one another's standpoint, to see the same in very different and frequently opposing aspects. (Arendt, 2006, p. 51)

These different locations of the perceiving subjects – locations that are connected through a common world and shared objects – form part of Arendt’s outline of judging. Arendt suggests that we move beyond our standpoint, and try to understand the standpoints of other(s) and take them into account when we form an opinion.

When Arendt develops her notion of the faculty of political judgment, she turns to Kant, but not to his writings on morality, such as the categorical imperative. Instead, she picks up *Critique of Judgment*, which concerns aesthetic, reflective judgment. Arendt use the word “taste” to refer to judgments that discern and seek to decide if something is beautiful or not. Arendt suggests that there are similarities between taste judgments and political judgments.

In aesthetic no less than in political judgments, a decision is made, and although this decision is always determined by a certain subjectivity, by the simple fact that each person occupies a place of his own from which he looks upon and judges the world, it also derives from the fact that the world itself is an objective datum, something common to all inhabitants. [...] They [taste judgments] share with political opinions that they are persuasive; the judging person – as Kant says quite beautifully – can only ‘woo the consent of everyone else’ in the hope of coming to an agreement with him eventually. (Arendt, 2006, p. 219)

While taste judgments are doubtlessly subjective, they also go beyond the subject(ive), for several reasons. One, the judgment is *about* an object, which belongs to a world that is “an objective datum, something common to all inhabitants”. Judgments are about something shared, hence they extend beyond the judging individual. Two, the judgment seeks to say something not (only) about the “private feelings” (Arendt, 2006, p. 219) within the judging subjects themselves but about qualities of the object itself, e.g. its beauty. One

---

8 See Beiner and Nedelsky (2001) for elaborated discussions regarding Arendt, Kant and judgment.
tends not to say that “this object is beautiful to me,” but just that “this object is beautiful.” This is partly because the subjective dimension “to me” is already implied, but partly also due to opposite reason: I make some general claims about the character of the object. Three, the statement about the object’s beauty is intersubjective, which is linked to the former arguments; if I locate beauty within the object and not within me (as a private feeling), then it ought to be beautiful to you as well. However, this might not be the case, and then we can argue, each of us trying to “woo consent” from the other regarding our opinion. This wooing, or searching for agreement, also takes us beyond ourselves:

Kant insisted upon a different way of thinking, for which it would not be enough to be in agreement with one’s own self, but which consisted of being able to ‘think in the place of everybody else’ and which he therefore called an ‘enlarged mentality’ [...]. The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others. (Arendt, 2006, p. 217, my emphasis)

In line with this, Arendt describes political judgment as “the ability to see things not only from one’s own point of view but in the perspective of all those who happen to be present” (Arendt, 2006, p. 218). Arendt links political judgment to the particular and contextual and not to a priori, universal rules. If political judgment concerned the latter, the process of seeing things from the different points of view of those who are present would be useless, or even impossible.

Zerilli notes that the “political” in Arendt’s ideas about political judgment can be interpreted in two ways. The “political” can either refer to “that about which a judgment is made – that is, about an external and prior or given object that is independent of the judgment itself (e.g. the office of mayor)” (Zerilli, 2016, p. 8). Or, she continues, “the ‘political’ arises as something internal to the process of judging itself” (2016, p. 8). Zerilli proposes that it is mainly the latter version that Arendt lays out when she discusses political judgment. This means that political judgment is not only about different political opinions that subjects can have in regard to a given issue or object, but also about how objects come to appear as (or do not appear as) potential objects of political judgment in the first place:

Arendt’s turn to the third Critique advances a form of interpretive understanding focused on the creation and maintenance of the common world and how it is that new “objects” of judgment – or, more precisely, matters of common concern – can come into view for us. (Zerilli, 2016, p. 9)

Zerilli mentions housework and sexuality when she discusses how objects that traditionally might not be seen as political can come into view as such (that is, as objects of political judgment), as they have through feminist claims (2016,
Objects that are relevant in the context of my study include air and water in different forms (e.g. sea levels and drinkable water), as they are objects that have come to be politicised to a larger degree as environmental degradation has escalated. The school strikes for the climate can be seen as contributing to increased politicisation of certain objects and phenomena linked to environmental degradation.

Zerilli takes Arendt in a direction that makes her more compatible with the somewhat more fluid approach to perceived reality that I presented in my writings about seeing and knowing. There I drew upon Merleau-Ponty and Bornemark to describe objects as coming to appear for us through oscillation between differentiation and integration within a field, and against horizons of the not-seen and not-known. By turning to Zerilli, I add (political) judging to seeing and knowing as a practice that involves differentiating objects (from a background), in this case political objects. Which objects appear, and to whom, as objects of political judgment?

It should be noted that Arendt often insisted on separating judgment and knowledge, suggesting that knowledge, unlike judgment, is that which cannot be argued about (because knowledge is truth) and hence knowledge cannot be an object of different standpoints, contrary to what I have outlined above. However, Zerilli (2016) proposes that Arendt does not always advocate a strict division between knowledge and opinion. Also, even if one (unlike Zerilli) would attribute such a strict division to Arendt’s theorising, there is no reason why we cannot develop her thoughts in a slightly different direction. What remains undisputed, nevertheless, is that Arendt regards the faculty of thinking as central to judgment. In the upcoming last chapter of Setting I, I turn to thinking.

---

On a side note, this Arendtian position does of course have a somewhat different flavour in the light of our present “post-truth” era, that is, a time when scientific facts regarding for example climate change can be posed as something one can choose to believe in or not, and thus posed as an object of judgment rather than knowledge.
1.4 Appearance and thinking

At this moment in time, we constantly receive new scientific facts about environmental degradation and climate change. But, how can we think about these facts, what they mean and should mean for how we live, including how they make us understand and approach intergenerational and interspecies relations? Thinking is a crucial activity when it comes to creating change, because we need to reflect upon what is wrong, why it is so, and what can be done in order to create a different scenario. Relating thinking and appearance to each other, I ask: how can one approach the concept of thinking with regard to appearing subjects and objects, and in relation to politics that affect the conditions of appearance?

This chapter is a bit more reflective and argumentative than the two preceding chapters, as it contains an outline of how I position myself in regard to some ethical aspects of doing research. I discuss thinking as directed, representative and transformative. Directed thinking draws upon the phenomenological idea that one is conscious of something and that one is directed toward the object one is conscious of. Representative thinking is an Arendtian notion that deals with thinking “in the place” of other subjects, to refer back to Arendt’s use of Kant mentioned earlier. Finally, transformative thinking is my way of phrasing thinking that aims to achieve (political) change.

Directed thinking

In The Life of the Mind, Arendt seeks to understand what thinking is and how it is done, and also where we are when we think. The activity of thinking means for her withdrawing from present appearances, but the mind is still focused on appearance: “Our mental apparatus, though it can withdraw from present appearances, remains geared to Appearance. The mind, no less than the senses, in its search [...] expects that something will appear to it” (Arendt, 1978, p. 24, my emphasis). Thinking means that things appear, become visible, to the mind and within the mind. Arendt remarks that one does not leave the world of present appearances when one thinks; one is still in and of such a world, despite the mentioned withdrawal that comes with thinking. Here Arendt refers to Merleau-Ponty: “As Merleau-Ponty once put it, ‘I can
flee being only into being,’ and since Being and Appearing coincide for men, this means that I can flee appearance only into appearance” (Arendt, 1978, p. 23).

Merleau-Ponty, on his part, also connects seeing and thinking, for example when he writes about “a field of the nameable” (1968, p. 154) and “a gaze of the mind” (1968, p. 155). As seen in the previous chapter, he links being conscious to having a figure on a ground, or put differently, having a figure appearing against a background. In terms of knowledge production, it is crucial to ask the following questions: What appears to the “gaze of the mind” of those of us who work as researchers? Why does this appear and not that when we think? Researchers do not only exert power over how we depict things. Our power also lies in choosing which things to depict, in deciding where and on what our gaze settles, which figures we discern from the (back)ground, and where we perceive the horizontal line bordering to the not-seen (and hence also not-known) to be.

*Information sign at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum: “Seeing the Invisible” – what appears to whom?*

Based on the above reflections about thinking and appearance, I describe my thesis as engaging in thinking-toward and thinking-from. This approach poses
thinking as situated and directed, related to the point of location where one appears. It is in line with the phenomenological proposition that consciousness is directed; one is conscious of something by directing oneself toward that something, from the point where one is situated. The thinking related to my study is directed toward a number of life forms (e.g. children, cacti, crabs) and toward a problem, that of environmental degradation (a problem that is simultaneously material, social and political). I suggest that understanding environmental degradation – how it works, what is at stake, how to stop it, etc. – requires thinking-toward generations and species. One could also start at the other end: if we want (future) human and non-human life to flourish, we need to direct our attention toward environmental degradation.

Thinking-toward does of course imply thinking-from (that is, from a certain location), otherwise toward would not be an appropriate concept. The idea of thinking-from (albeit phrased differently) is at the heart of feminist standpoint theory, and it is central to Haraway’s notion of “situated knowledge” (1988). The thinking in this thesis is done from the larger time-space that is the Anthropocene. It is furthermore thinking-from the contexts in which I am located, contexts such as Sweden and academia. It is also thinking-from the exact position of my located body, from the point where I appear. In this way, I want to emphasise the embodiedness and embeddedness of thinking. On a related note, both from and toward point to boundaries (of the self) and to difference (in the sense of alterity), the fact that I and others are distinguishable from each other. However, we are also in relation to each other, connected through sharing the world and things, and through lived embodiment, being both subjects (to ourselves) and objects (to others and ourselves). If I can see others, I can also be seen by others.

As noted above, thinking-from and thinking-toward go together in a sense that toward only makes sense if it starts from somewhere. In my thesis, I think from my position, letting my thinking go toward certain others, in order to think from their position, looking out toward the world as it appears to them. Thinking-from and thinking-toward are connected to each other, and the process becomes a matter of bouncing back and forth between “from” and “toward”. However, one may ask if it is really possible to think from the positions of others, and, if it is possible, if one really should do so, or if this is problematic. I discuss this below, starting by addressing Arendt’s notion of “representative thinking.”

**Representative thinking**

Arendt discusses something she refers to as “representative thinking,” which I started to unravel in the discussion of judging in the previous chapter,
although I did not use the term explicitly. Representative thinking is exercised by listening to others and imagining what the world looks like from their standpoints:

The more people’s standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion. (Arendt, 2006, p. 237)

Thinking is here a pre-step to forming an opinion and making a political judgment (which in turn is a pre-step to acting). Such a judgment is more “valid,” to use Arendt’s word, the more standpoints one can take into account. In this thesis, I take a more-than-human (species) and more-than-the-now-existing-human (future generations) approach regarding which standpoints that can be taken into account when thinking and judging. What judgments do we make if non-human species and unborn generations’ standpoints count as well?

Representative thinking is, as the name suggests, representative. To think from the position of an Other is in a sense to think for that other. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa comments on this matter in the following way:

‘[T]hinking from’ might be called a form of thinking-for, in order to recognize its specific pitfalls such as: appointing ourselves as spokespersons for the marginalized, using marginalized ‘others’ as arguments we might articulate anyway, or fetishizing the experiences of ‘the marginal’ as inspiring or uplifting. (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, pp. 208-209)

As Puig de la Bellacasa notes, representing others is problematic, even when the intentions are to counteract marginalisation. Gayatri Spivak remarks that representation includes two dimensions, and she refers to the German verbs *vertreten* and *darstellen* to explain this (1990, s. 108). *Vertreten* (*företräda* in Swedish) is for example political representation, and can be thought of in terms of *proxy*. *Darstellen* (*framställa* in Swedish) means to depict, and Spivak’s example here is that of a portrait. Spivak’s point is nevertheless that these two dimensions are intertwined:

The relationship between the two kinds of representation brings in, also, the use of essentialism because no representation can take place – no *Vertretung*, representation – can take place without essentialism. What it has to take into account is that the “essence” that is being represented is a representation of the other kind, *Darstellung*. (Spivak 1990, s. 109)

Linking this to my notion of “directed thinking,” I would say that thinking-toward for example a child/crab/cactus, in some sense involves essentialising
these both at a collective and at an individual level. On a collective level, I think about what it means to be any child/crab/cactus, and on an individual level, I think about what it means to be this specific child/crab/cactus, focusing on the unique essence and experience of the individual. Thinking about the child/crab/cactus in both of these ways would entail representing them in terms of portraying them (darstellen). The risk involved in this move is that of colonising the other and appropriating otherness.

Thinking-from the position of a child/crab/cactus also entails representing them in terms of acting as a proxy (vertreten). I think for them. This comes with these risks mentioned by Gesa Kirsch: “We risk misrepresenting others (it is not a question of whether, but how much), we risk speaking for those who do not wish to be spoken for, and we risk speaking in voices that silence others.” (1999, s. 63) Feminist postcolonial scholars have raised important
questions regarding voice in relation to subject positions and power relations, highlighting aspects of race and nationality besides gender (i.e. Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1999; Anzaldúa, 1987). Related issues have also been highlighted within childhood studies, where aspects such as representing children’s interests, listening to their voices and applying (adult) researcher reflexivity have been addressed, including from critical perspectives (see e.g. James, 2007; Spyrou, 2011; Åkerlund and Gottzén, 2017).

So, there are these risks, but also the risks that come with not engaging in representation. What happens if we do not think toward those others who are marginalised or without status, if they are not deemed worthy of our attention or not seen as having anything to contribute when we theorise? And what happens if we do not think from their positions toward the world as it shows itself to them, even though this involves the risky move of thinking-for? One way of dealing with the problematic thinking-for, is to take a thinking-with approach instead, as some scholars engaging with the more-than-human have done, for example Haraway (2016) and Puig de la Bellacasa (2012; 2017). While I am sympathetic to this approach and it overlaps mine, I think the phrasing of thinking-with runs the risk of obscuring that it is also a thinking-for, at least I believe I would run this risk in my thesis. If thinking-with really means thinking with others, I believe it requires some kind of acknowledgment from the other that this is something done together, and that would require a lot of communication. While Haraway’s thinking-with her dog Cayenne is linked to her sharing her life with Cayenne (2003; 2007), and hence having close human-animal communication, I cannot say that I have such a close connection to the others that figure in my study.

In addition, the concept of thinking-with is often accompanied by an ontological departure point that is in line with theoretical propositions such as intra-action (Barad, 2007) or vital materialism (Bennett, 2010) rather than the phenomenological framework that I mainly draw upon. However, just like these mentioned scholars, my premise is also an ontology marked by relationality. Nevertheless, I adhere to the first-person perspective and view of agentic subjects that phenomenological theory puts forward. I believe that this approach is helpful when it comes to dealing with the issue of researcher

---

10 Although it can be noted that thinking-toward others can of course also have the motive of discrediting or excluding them, so thinking-toward is not caring or inclusive per se.

11 I here remain with a notion of the counterpart of the “with” being a subject and not for example a concept; Puig de la Bellacasa, (2012) for instance proposes that we think-with the concept of care. I could possibly phrase my approach as thinking-with appearance, but I prefer thinking-from and thinking-toward appearance as I believe that this better captures situatedness and direction, and also appearance(s) as something embodied and material.
accountability. It is I that have chosen what to study, how to study it, and what conclusions to draw (although such choices are of course influenced by contexts and others), and hence I am also the one responsible for the outcomes and consequences of these choices.

Returning to Arendt’s representative thinking and reading this through Spivak’s discussion of representation, I would say that representative thinking is mainly linked to vertreten (proxy) rather than to darstellen (portray). Although these two dimensions cannot be separated (as noted earlier), they can be distinguished and I would say that we can choose to focus more on one dimension than on the other. When thinking-toward the child/crab/caucus, my aim is not to continue the directedness of my thought through their embodied appearance into their hidden core (their alterity and uniqueness) and to capture and portray that core. My aim is rather to stop at their skin (or shell) line and bounce off that line and direct my gaze and thinking out again toward the world, toward that which we have in common and share, and hence to think toward the world from these others’ locations in it. The thinking-for inherent in representative thinking is thus a mix of thinking-toward and thinking-from, and most importantly, it is a way to think about our common world, and how we can live and act in this world in ways that are meaningful, just and sustainable from more points of appearance than the one occupied by oneself.

Transformative thinking

As mentioned earlier, my research involves not just thinking-from different subject positions, but also from the time of the Anthropocene, and it hence entails thinking-toward the problem of environmental degradation and toward the possibilities of changing how we live and relate. In this sense, my thinking is political. Margaret Canovan notes that Arendt regards political thinking as inherently contextual and linked to real political events: “Authentic political thought necessarily arose, she [Arendt] believed, out of real political events, and had to be rethought in response to them” (Canovan, 1992, p. 5). In her book Between Past and Future, Arendt refers to her work as “exercises in political thought” and links such exercises to “the actuality of political incidents”:

More specifically, these are exercises in political thought as it arises out of the actuality of political incidents [. . .] and my assumption is that thought itself arises out of incidents of living experience and must remain bound to them as

---

12 See Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (2017) for a discussion regarding posthumanism, researcher subjectivity and accountability.
the only guideposts by which to take its bearings. (Arendt, 2006, p. 14, my emphasis)

I would posit my study in a similar way, an exercise perhaps not in, but closely related to, “political thought.” I see reflections on ontology and epistemology as inherently political, in line with Annemarie Mol’s idea and description of ontological politics as “a politics that has to do with the way in which problems are framed, bodies are shaped, and lives are pushed and pulled into one shape or another” (Mol, 2002, p. viii). I also place my study in relation to “the actuality of political incidents” – to use Arendt’s words – and in my case, these incidents have to do with rapidly increasing environmental degradation and climate change. Further, I share Arendt’s assumption that “thought itself arises out of incidents of living experience.” What we have then, is a thinking that is situated in relation to lived experience as well as political incidents (two phenomena that of course are interlinked).

This thinking about our common world – how we shall live (in) it – is where thinking meets action. In The Human Condition, Arendt writes: “What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing” (Arendt, 1998, p. 5, my emphasis). Regarding her “exercises in political thought” mentioned above, she continues to explain these as follows: “Since these exercises move between past and future, they contain criticism as well as experiment” (Arendt, 2006, p. 14). Linking (political) thinking and methodology to past and future, as Arendt does, resonates with this study, as issues of environmental degradation and intergenerationality certainly move between the past and future. Arendt links the temporal modes of past and future to two ways of engaging methodologically: criticising and experimenting, respectively.

I will take this further by turning to an essay by Butler entitled What is critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue (2001). In this essay on critique, she suggests that the question about what we are to do (and not to do) is preceded by questions about who this “we” is and how it emerges. “[T]he question, ‘what are we to do?’ presupposes that the ‘we’ has been formed and that it is known, that its action is possible,” Butler writes (2001, n.p.). Butler links critique to asking questions about this “we” and about “the values that set the stage for action” in regard to an acting “we” (2001, n.p.). She points to the conditions upon which both “we” and “action” emerge. The focus of Butler’s essay is primarily on the formation of subjectivity, and in that sense its focus differs somewhat from my own on the physical appearance of subjects and objects (which, nevertheless, can be related to Butler’s focus). However, in line with Butler, I also engage in looking at conditions, in my case the conditions upon which subjects and objects appear. Furthermore, I share her view that while critique is always critique of something, and in that sense
particular, critique is also in contact with generality; Butler speaks of a "constrained generality" (2001, n.p.). It is within such a constrained generality that I locate critique that refers to conditions, such as conditions of appearance.

Connecting Butler with Arendt’s double move of criticising and experimenting, it can be said that although Butler does not go so far as to apply the concept of experimenting, she identifies a similar double movement within critique itself:

The critic thus has a double task [. . .] What this means is that one looks both for the conditions by which the object field is constituted, but also for the limits of those conditions, the moments where they point up their contingency and their transformability. (Butler, 2001, n.p.)

The critic’s double task, according to Butler, is to look at conditions and the transformability of those conditions. When looking at the transformability of conditions, we might want to take it one step further and experiment, like Arendt, to try out different ways of thinking about these conditions. In doing that, we might end up analysing some conditions of appearance in need of transformation due to being excluding, unjust or violent, for example when certain subjects are not allowed to appear in a certain space due to their age, ethnicity or gender. However, we might also find some other conditions of appearance – like a liveable Earth – where it is not the conditions themselves that need to be (or even can be) transformed, but rather our way of sustaining these conditions (or not).

* 

The richness of the concept appearance is that it encompasses existence as such, intersubjectivity and subject-object relations (objects being things and not other subjects here, although other subjects appear as objects of one’s own perception, as Merleau-Ponty remarks). This makes the concept broad, and that is not without complications, but I posit the broadness as a strength, not least because I see existence, intersubjectivity and subject-object relations as three interlinked phenomena, and all of them as important when it comes to addressing matters of ethics and politics.

Linking appearance to thinking and acting is done with the intention of looking into the conditions for and implications of appearance(s). What appears to us when we think, and how does that affect how we approach the world and politics? And as for acting, how does one’s actions enable or prevent the appearance of others and objects? These are only two out of the many questions that can be asked when appearance is linked to thinking and acting. Both thinking and acting start from the point where we appear – our
points of appearance or standpoints – and this embodied location affects what and how we see, know and judge. However, being located does not equal solipsism or determinism; we can always engage in what and how other subjects see, know and judge from their locations, and by that widen our perspectives. Moreover, our perspectives are connected by that which they are perspectives *on*, and both our perspectives and ourselves are part of one and the same world.

In this first setting, I have developed an “appearance framework,” and as such approached appearance in generalised terms and in a rather abstract manner. In the upcoming three settings, I discuss the appearances of specific subjects and objects in specific contexts, and in doing so linking appearance to the particular and concrete. Thinking, acting and standpoint are important notions that I bring with me into these following discussions. First stop: the sea shore.
Besides binding together two kind of waters, fresh water and sea water, Öresund binds together two countries, Sweden and Denmark. The land areas surrounding Öresund are referred to as the Öresund Region, a bi-nationally shared space. Öresund is not just shared between humans; it is also home to a number of non-human species. There are many efforts to protect and conserve natural areas and non-human species in the area.

Both Sweden and Denmark are considered countries at the forefront as far as sustainability is concerned. Copenhagen aims at becoming the world’s first carbon-neutral capital in 2025. In 2018, the Swedish city of Malmö was appointed Ocean Action Hub by the UN, which means that Malmö will work in different ways to strengthen the marine environment of Öresund. In a press release related to the news of Malmö becoming an Ocean Action Hub, city representatives stated that the city intends to increase knowledge and awareness among children and young people regarding the marine environment of Öresund (Malmö Stad, 2018).

In Setting II, I mainly focus on four centres that inform about and display marine environments, and especially the waters of Öresund. The centres are situated at different locations along the Öresund shore. Besides these centres (further detailed below), I also discuss material from an educational project called Öresundsklassrummet (Swedish: ‘the Öresund classroom’), a bi-national project that seeks to enhance the knowledge of Swedish and Danish school students about environmental issues. Öresundsklassrummet encompasses activities such as workshops, exchange visits and field trips. The cities of Copenhagen and Malmö are behind the initiative which started in 2010, and is described as “cross-border and interdisciplinary collaborations on sustainable development in schools and other learning environment in the Öresund Region.” One of the components of Öresundsklassrummet is the Climate Ambassador Education, a training programme comprising a number of workshops and assignments. The idea is that the participants learn how to “transform knowledge into action” and the programme includes an advocacy exercise. This approach of linking knowledge to action made the project relevant to my research focus. I collected the material, consisting of texts, pictures and videos, from the project’s website (oresundsklassrummet.eu).
Returning to the centres, two of these are located in Sweden (Naturum Kullaberg in Höganäs and Naturum Öresund in Malmö) and two in Denmark (National Aquarium Denmark in Copenhagen and Öresund Aquarium in Helsingör). All of the centres engage in informational and educational practices that seek to contribute to enhanced knowledge and awareness about the waters of Öresund in particular, and oceans of the world in general. I conceptualise these centres as involved in edutainment. It should, however, be noted that the centres do not themselves explicitly use the term edutainment to describe their activities. Edutainment is a term which combines the words education and entertainment (Balloffet, Courvoisier and Lagier, 2014) and can be described as follows:

Edutainment promotes recreational learning and knowledge transfer in non-traditional informal settings, including: the home, museums, information centres and observation platforms. [. . .] Edutainment typically involves an entertaining method of educational delivery in that it can hold the attention of an audience, very often with emotional response among audience members, and can potentially draw in people who may have otherwise been ‘turned-off’ by the notion of participating in education as a recreational activity. (Moss, 2009, p. 248)

The chosen centres are interesting in terms of my research purpose, as they mix fact with fun, and knowledge with politics (linked to environmental sustainability). The centres are also places where others and things appear – places of encounters – and hence open up for a discussion of appearance, including arranged forms of encounters between species.

Each of the two centres in Sweden is a naturum: Naturum Kullaberg (located in the municipality of Höganäs) and Naturum Öresund (located in the municipality of Malmö). A naturum is a visitor centre related to protected natural areas, such as national parks and nature reserves. The word naturum combines the Swedish words natur (“nature”) and rum (“room”). The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, which holds the rights to the naturum trademark but does not necessarily run these visitor centres (that is often done by municipalities or county administrative boards), provides the following description:

A naturum serves as a gateway to nature. In a naturum, you find out more about the animals, plants, geology and cultural history that have shaped the area you are in. There are often exhibitions suitable for the whole family at naturums. Other common activities are themed evenings, films and specific activities for children. (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.)
The quotation captures some of the reasons why I have chosen to study exhibitions at naturums. Because naturums are intended to be “gateway[s] to nature,” they are interesting to consider in the light of how we understand and interact with nature, including how we appear in nature and how nature appears to us. The facts that naturums receive a lot of visitors (and Naturum Kullaberg is one of the most visited naturums in Sweden) and that naturums have families and children as explicit target groups make them relevant to my study – presumably they have an impact on how children and young people understand and approach nature and non-human species.  

On the Danish side of Öresund two aquariums were studied: Öresund Aquarium and National Aquarium Denmark. As can be seen from its name, Öresund Aquarium specialises in displaying flora and fauna from the Öresund area. It describes itself as “a small and charming saltwater aquarium” and “a knowledge-based centre for the marine environment.” Öresund Aquarium forms part of the Department of Biology at the University of Copenhagen. Children and families are addressed and indoor exhibitions as well as outdoor activities target children and young people. Children can have birthday parties at Öresund Aquarium, something the centre shares with the other aquarium I studied, National Aquarium Denmark. In contrast to the smaller Öresund Aquarium, National Aquarium Denmark (or Den Blå Planet, “the Blue Planet,” as it is known in Danish) is the largest aquarium in Northern Europe. The primary target group is families with children and the aquarium exhibits and informs about species not just from Öresund but from marine environments all over the world. National Aquarium Denmark is a commercial foundation that describes its main activities as “focusing on exhibitions, dissemination, education, research, the environment and nature conservancy.” Just as with the naturums, I find the aquariums interesting and relevant as they attract a lot of children, and seek not only to educate the visitors about nature and non-human species, but also have individuals from other species appearing in front of the children in aquarium settings.

13 It should be noted that Naturum Öresund was not a naturum until the last couple of months of my thesis project. Material was gathered there while it was still Marine Education Center, an independent centre run as a cooperative (Swedish: ekonomisk förening). However, given that the description of a naturum above fits well with the activities of Naturum Öresund also when it was Marine Education Center, and that an application and decision process regarding the evolvement started before the actual change took place in 2019, I have decided to refer to the centre as Naturum Öresund throughout the thesis. This also helps (future) readers to understand which specific institution I refer to, should they wish to seek further information about it.
Although each one unique, all four centres (the two naturums and the two aquariums) have some things in common, which are important reasons why I have chosen them. First, they keep a balance between informal and formal education. Besides being open to families and children who come during leisure time, they also offer educational activities to school classes. This means not only that they attract a lot of children in total, but also that their informative capacity is deemed to be compatible with school curricula. Second, the centres mix education with entertaining experiences, such as looking at and possibly petting sea animals (all four centres have aquariums). Third, they offer a range of activities, beyond “mere” textual material and aquariums, such as crab catching in the sea. Especially the naturums offer activities outdoor for children and young people, for example going on tours in the area or cleaning beaches from waste. My impression was that the naturums also placed stronger emphasis on promoting environmental sustainability in general, beyond conserving Öresund and its species. Naturum Öresund for example works actively with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
When visiting the centres, I viewed installations, texts, pictures, posters, videos, books, etc. – everything I thought could possibly be relevant in relation to my research purpose. My focus was primarily on information and activities targeting children, young people or families, but I also looked for aspects that I thought had bearing on intergenerationality. Sometimes the target group of children would be mentioned explicitly, at other times I interpreted children to be a target group given how texts, pictures and spatial arrangements were framed and set up. During my visits, I collected different kinds of information material, took photographs and wrote down my own reflections. Doing research at sites that can be described as public requires ethical reflection, and perhaps even more so when children are involved, as they in many cases have been brought to these sites by adults rather than going there on their own (even though the visits might have been proposed by the children). I did not try to hide the fact that I was doing research, nor did I declare my purpose to staff or visitors. I wandered around and took photographs and if someone had asked what I was doing or why I was there, I would have answered that I was doing research. This actually happened once, when I was greeted by staff upon entering Naturum Öresund and they asked how I had heard of the place. Besides the information I retrieved through visiting the centres, I collected additional information from related websites.

While the four centres and Öresundsklassrummet constitute my main examples, I also discuss other things that are somewhat beyond these but still are on the general topic of oceans. The first chapter in this setting focuses on intergenerational relations, and temporality and action are important aspects here. The second chapter addresses interspecies relations, and discusses connections between seeing, knowing and judging.
2.1 Time, change and generations

Öresund, July 2018. I am on a ferry passing over the waters of Öresund, going from Helsingborg (Sweden) to Helsingør (Denmark) to visit Öresund Aquarium. This is nice, I find myself thinking, while looking out on Öresund through the large ferry windows. Then I remember that I recently learned that ferries are rather polluting means of transport. I also remember crossing the Atlantic Ocean with an aeroplane to go to the Sonoran Desert. Then I find myself thinking that my study, despite its environmentally friendly message, will in no way compensate for these emissions. I try to decide whether this is more ironic than sad, or more sad than ironic, and I settle for equally sad and ironic. I comfort myself with some crisps, which unfortunately are not organic, which would perhaps have helped my case just a tiny bit. And then we suddenly arrive in Helsingør! I had forgotten how quickly Öresund is crossed even though I did it on several occasions when I was a child. Time is a peculiar thing.

This chapter deals primarily with two things: action and temporality. Merleau-Ponty serves as the main guide in relation to temporality, and Arendt as the one in relation to action. However, as I outlined in Setting I, I take a broader view of action in comparison to Arendt’s understanding of the concept. Arendt’s notion of action and the capacity to act can in my interpretation not be separated from actions (in the plural) that seek to sustain the Earth and the continued appearance of ecosystems and species, including humans. I seek to show how action is linked to appearance in the sense that action, or a lack of action, conditions future appearances in a context of environmental degradation. Further, I trace issues of responsibility and aspects of intergenerationality within this mix of action and temporality.

Nature conservation

In 2015, the United Nations launched its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to succeed the Millennium Development Goals. As indicated by their name, these new goals places a stronger emphasis on sustainability, including environmental sustainability. Naturum Öresund works with the SDGs in their
pedagogical programs. Goal 13, “Climate action,” targets climate change, while Goal 14, “Life below water,” concerns conserving the oceans, seas and marine resources. Goal 15, “Life on land,” addresses the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity. On the SDG website presenting Goal 15, there is a quotation from environmental activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai: “We owe it to ourselves and to the next generation to conserve the environment so that we can bequeath our children a sustainable world that benefits all” (my emphasis).

Nature reserves, of which there are many within the Öresund region, is a way of conserving the environment. There are approximately 3,500 nature reserves in Sweden and they constitute 85% of all protected nature areas; the remaining 15% include national parks and other kinds of legally defined protection areas. This information about nature reserves is presented in a leaflet produced by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. As with the quotation from Maathai above, future generations are evoked in this text. The first sentence on the first page of the leaflet reads as follows: “Nature reserves are one of the most important ways of conserving the finest nature in Sweden for future generations.”

Kullaberg Nature Reserve

A paragraph headed “Plants and animals – a part of our culture” informs the reader that during the last 50 years, humans have affected and destroyed natural places at a greater rate than ever before in history, which means that it cannot be taken for granted that such places and the biodiversity they contain will exist in the future, unless protection measures are enhanced.
Strengthening the protection of nature will mean that “also our children will be able to experience the power, diversity and magic of nature.” Conserving nature is in this leaflet linked to futurity, and this temporal mode is linked to “our children” and “future generations.”

This link is made very explicit in another leaflet specifically about the Kullaberg Nature Reserve, where Naturum Kullaberg is located. The leaflet contains a photograph of a child standing on a cliff, holding the hand of an adult, captioned by a line reading “The future – let the children experience Kullaberg, but keep an eye on them!” Framed this way, the future needs not just to be saved for the sake of children, rather, children are the future. Another example of this is related to an activity programme for children and young people linked to Kullaberg Nature Reserve called Junior Ranger. The idea of the programme is to engage children and young people in the maintenance of protected natural areas. The Kullaberg Nature Reserve Junior Ranger programme is part of a larger European Junior Ranger programme run by the EUROPARC federation, a network of protected areas such as national parks and nature reserves in Europe. A brochure about the EUROPARC Junior Ranger programme states the intention: “we can provide the chance for Europe’s young people not just to learn about Europe’s protected areas but more importantly to appreciate that they are the Future... it’s in their hands!” (my emphasis).

Both children and nature conservation are conceptualised in terms that link them to temporality/futurity and this is further enhanced when they are coupled. Children become the component without which sustainable development hardly can be conceptualised; they are the “for whom.” The children-futurity link has been discussed, and criticised, to a great extent within childhood studies (see e.g. Jenks, 1996; James et al., 1998). There is much value in questioning a child/adult dichotomy and the problems entailed in conceptualising children in terms of temporality and futurity. Yet there is something about the biological materiality of environmental degradation that does drive a wedge between adults and children, separating them out on a collective level, and possibly structuring them into categories of generations. It can be boiled down to this: children are more likely to be alive in 60 years’ time than adults. They will continue to appear after adults have ceased to do so. What will the possibilities for human thriving – perhaps even human survival – on this planet look like then, given for example oceans full of plastic?

The topic of plastic in the ocean is a one that several of the educational centres address. Many of the facts related to this problem are focused on a temporal aspect. At Naturum Kullaberg, one can read that it takes 450 years for a plastic bottle to decompose; 90% of the garbage found on the shoreline need more
than 100 years to decompose. In 2050, there will be more waste than fish in the oceans, if nothing is done about the issue in the near future. At Naturum Öresund, there is a large board with a drawing of two children and an adult who are swimming in the ocean (see photograph below). Their faces are cut out, so that visitors can insert their own faces to complete these drawn bodies. Above the picture there is a question asking “Who do you want to swim with?” Pieces of waste next to the swimming humans answer “us” and a green crab says “or me.”

At Naturum Öresund

The temporality of appearance does not just involve children, but also who and what will appear alongside children in the future. Will they swim with fish and crabs or with plastic waste, as the two options on the cardboard at Naturum Öresund suggest? Appearing is an act of co-appearing, where children in the future will appear either with preserved biodiversity, or with
plastic. Michelle Bastian (2012) discusses ecological crises and conceptualisations of temporality and suggests that approaches to time are ultimately about what relations can or should exist:

[I]n the current context of multiple ecological crises, time needs to be more clearly understood [. . .] as a powerful social tool for producing, managing, and/or undermining various understandings of who or what is in relation with other things or beings. Seen in this way, the act of ‘telling the time’ gains a political and ethical dimension that is absent from our usual understandings of time-keeping. (Bastian, 2012, p. 25, my emphasis)

I interpret the earlier mentioned future-oriented statements about nature conservation and the facts on plastic decomposition (or lack of decomposition in the near future) as engaging in a concept of time linked to a notion of “who or what is in relation with other things or beings.” Bastian proposes that statements about time “enact particular forms of relationality” (2012, p. 26). Merleau-Ponty also connects temporality and relationality, and as I have mentioned in Setting I, he uses water flowing in a river to describe this. This discussion continues below by momentarily exchanging sea water for river water.

**Temporality as relationality**

As usual with Merleau-Ponty, the body-subject and a first-person perspective are central to the analysis:

[Time is neither a real process nor an actual succession that I could limit myself simply to recording. It is born of my relation with things. In the things themselves, the future and the past are a sort of eternal pre-existence or afterlife; the water [of the river] that will pass by tomorrow is currently at the source, the water that has just passed by is now a bit further down into the valley. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 434)]

Time is potentially in the things themselves; however, time only emerges when one relates to these things. Materiality carries the past and the future and makes these temporal modes of non-being come into existence by passing through the present, through being. That which was or will be passes through that which is. However, this requires a subjectivity that shatters being in itself: “It [the past or the future, respectively] only exists when a subjectivity comes to shatter the plenitude of being in itself, to sketch out a perspective there, and to introduce non-being into it” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 444).

This reasoning can be applied to something concrete. The Öresundsklassrummet website provides the transcript of a speech given by
three child Climate Ambassadors when Copenhagen hosted a reunion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2014. The speech includes the following words: “We are children and you should listen to us. We did not decide to burn fossil fuels but we are the ones who will feel the consequences on our bodies” (my emphasis). The future is here introduced through the materiality of bodies belonging to children, including the bodies of the three children present at the meeting, speaking to an audience. In this example, time goes through bodies and their relations with things, in this case fossil fuels (or rather, the material effects caused by burning fossil fuels). Lived bodies that feel, will feel the marks on their bodies in the future. This future already is in a sense that the same bodies that exist today will feel things and be marked in the future.

A comparison can be made to Merleau-Ponty’s example of running water in a river, where the water that one saw passing by yesterday, or will see passing by tomorrow, already exists somewhere else today – it is already somewhere. However, in the case of the river, the subjectivity (the I of the looking body-subject that shatters the “plenitude of being in itself” by relating to water in a way that evokes the non-being of that which was and will be) relates to something other than itself by relating to the river and the passing water. In the case of the children talking about burning fossil fuels, the things related to are their own bodies. Their bodies are “shattered” by a subjectivity (in this case, their own) in a way that brings out time, or more exact, that brings out the future. We can say that the children here relate to their bodies as objects, as body-objects, but the relating is done by a body-subject. I will return to this doubleness of the body-object and body-subject, but first expand a little on how Merleau-Ponty places the body-subject at the core of temporality: “A past and a future spring forth when I direct myself toward it and reach out toward it. Time in Merleau-Ponty’s version is linked to the body-subject. The future is a matter of intending, directing and reaching, “I am already directed toward the present that is about to arrive, just as my gesture is already at its goal” (2012, pp. 444-445, my emphasis). The present that is about to arrive, that is, the future, is explained through the bodily action of a gesture. Dimensions of time such as the future are intended; one is directed toward and reaches for such dimensions, just as one as a body-subject intends and reaches for things in a spatial context. If we conceptualise the future this way, as something that one is directed toward and reaches out toward, we can conclude that both children and adults can direct themselves and reach out toward the future. Yet I would suggest that children and adults are differently situated, because the intended future is one in which adults will have ceased
to appear but children continue to do so (albeit then as adults). Both adults and children can intend and reach out toward such a future, but children are the only ones that will reach it in a sense of arriving to it. They will appear in it and through that be (body-)objects among objects. In relation to time and the future, children are both (body-)subjects and (body-)objects, whereas adults are not; adults are only (body-)subjects intending the future and not the materiality of the (body-)object through which that intending is realised. In connecting this reasoning to the discussion about “being” and (or versus) “becoming” in childhood studies, I would agree with those who regard both children and adults as both being and becoming (e.g. Uprichard, 2007; Prout, 2011), yet I would still conceptualise children as somewhat more becoming, due to their expected appearance not only now but also in the future, for decades to come.

We can all intend the future, that is, bring it into being through our subjectivity in the present, but we will not all appear in the future, that is, inhabit it as both subjects and objects. The future as a space (of appearance) is expressed in this sea-related quotation from the website for school strikes in Australia, in which children say: “We want a safe future. [. . .] Where everyone can enjoy our beautiful environment, clean air, clean water & a healthy Reef” (School Strike 4 Climate Australia, my emphasis). The future is a “where” in which ideally a healthy Reef, among other things, appears. The topic of coral reef is addressed also by National Aquarium Denmark, which has an exhibition about coral reefs called “The Coral Reef – The Fragile Wonder of the Ocean.” Aquariums with corals are complemented by interactive exhibitions for children with large built corals and visitors can for instance listen to the sound of coral reef creatures as they communicate. Visitors can also take part of the somewhat more discouraging information that “[u]nfortunately, the future for corals looks bleak.” The increasing temperatures of the oceans pose a threat to the survival of the coral reefs, and “[w]ithin 30 years we risk losing some of Earth’s most important coral reefs.” Coral reefs can hence be added to the already mentioned fish and crabs that may or may not appear in the future, and hence may or may not be in relation with children (following the notion of temporality as relationality), depending on how we act in the present regarding environmental sustainability.

Actors and storytellers

My material demonstrates several ways in which adults seek to engage children and young people in environmental matters. The problem of plastic and other types of waste in the ocean is a central theme and something highlighted at Naturum Öresund. The walls of the centre are hung with posters, made by schoolchildren, that inform about the problem and suggest
solutions. The suggestions include for example paying divers to pick up waste from the ocean, and promoting textile bags instead of plastic bags. One way that Naturum Öresund works pedagogically with the SDGs, is through addressing how one can become involved in achieving global change at a local level. They ask “Which five goals are the most important to you?” and “What can you do in order to bring about change and be part of creating a more sustainable society?” The centre exhibits posters in which schoolchildren have answered these questions. With drawings, photographs and texts, they describe goals ranging from ending poverty to stopping climate change, depicting what kind of future they want to see. Given the context, specific focus is on Goal 14 about conserving the oceans.

Poster about plastic in the ocean made by school children at Naturum Öresund
Ideas for and hopes of change are mixed with a somewhat pessimistic note in one of the posters: “We wish that all people would be better at taking care of the ocean. We children might be the only generation that can save the oceans and Earth” (my emphasis).

Posing children as the last hope is a story also told (perhaps mainly) by adults. One example is through a slight children’s book that can be found at Naturum Kullaberg. The book is titled *Save the Ocean with Kaj the Shark: A Story About the Waste In Our Oceans*¹⁴ (Håll Sverige Rent, 2016) and the leading character Kaj and his friends, a hermit crab and a fish, go on a rescue mission to save a friend of theirs who has been captured by an anglerfish. Their trip is in several ways marked by waste that humans disposed in the ocean. At the end, Kaj and his companions manage to save their friend from the anglerfish. After celebrating their success, Kaj starts to reflect upon all the waste they encountered during their journey:

I am going to write a story, he thought. Because imagine if some grownups somewhere in Sweden would read the story to children. And imagine if the children then would fight to get the oceans clean and free from waste again. (Håll Sverige Rent, 2016, p. 13, my emphasis)

Öresundsklassrummet provides another example of children as “our” hope in regard to stopping environmental degradation. Indeed, the aim of the project is “to improve the frameworks for young people and their role in future sustainable development.” The Öresund Climate Ambassadors were tasked by the City of Malmö and the Foreign Ministry of Denmark with generating ideas on how schools in the Öresund region can implement the SDGs. A representative of the City of Malmö (an adult) justified the task with these words in a video clip presenting the activity: “We need to get new ideas, new thoughts, and that the children can . . . the children can provide us with a change of perspective.”

One can ask if it is reasonable to believe, and fair to expect, that children can come up with new ideas that are as yet unthought of, and that apparently are inaccessible to adults. However, I latch onto the “change of perspective” that is asked for, although not in the way I assume the city representative expected. A perspective is a point of view in a double sense: it is seeing things from a certain location, and having an opinion on a matter. If temporality is brought into the equation, we can examine the perspectives arising from the following passage of the children’s speech at the reunion of the IPCC in Copenhagen:

---

¹⁴ The original title in Swedish is *Rädda havet med hajen Kaj – en saga om skräpet i våra hav.*
We represent the future and as leaders of tomorrow, we are the ones will have to deal with those consequences *long after you are gone*. We are the ones *who will write the history books* and we are the ones will judge you by what you do, not what you say. (my emphasis)

With the phrases “as leaders of tomorrow, we are the ones that will have to deal with the consequences” and “we are the ones who will write the history books,” the future is not so much evoked in itself as is *the actual present as the past of that future*. The perspective on the present in this quotation is that it will one day be the past. With Merleau-Ponty, we could say that “prospection is an anticipated retrospection” or the present is an impeding past:

> [T]he actual present [. . .] must not be merely presented as present; it must already announce itself as an impeding past; we must sense weighing upon it the pressure of the future that seeks to depose it [. . .] every prospection is an anticipated retrospection (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 437)

So while children in the speech are linked to the future, or rather placed in it, it is not in order to speak about the future but about the present (as the past of that future). In this regard, children do provide a change of perspective in comparison to adults, because children – “who will write the history books” in the future – are the only ones who will one day actually have access to the perspective of looking at the present as the past. They will be spectators that can look at what happened and tell (hi)stories about it, because they will keep appearing also after present events, when adults have ceased to appear. Arendt discusses the temporality at work in storytelling: “The meaning of what actually happens and appears while it is happening is revealed when it has disappeared; remembrance, by which you make present to your mind what actually is absent and past, reveals the meaning in the form of a story” (Arendt, 1978, p. 133, my emphasis).

Children are situated as spectators in a way that adults are not due to the temporal location children will embody (as beings in the future) and in a sense already embodies today, to return to Merleau-Ponty’s idea that the future already exists today through a subjectivity intending it through materiality in the present (in this case the children’s bodies). Drawing upon Arendt, children can be situated as storytellers due to their temporal location (in the future); they “return” to the present from the future, revealing the story of the present. At this point, it seems fitting to remind ourselves of how Arendt uses the image of a battleground when discussing the past and the future. In this context, there is a battle between generations regarding the ‘true’ story: who can and should take action?
For Arendt, storytelling does not just entail a temporal component (a telling after action had taken place) but it also crystallises the two positions introduced above: the position of the actor and that of the spectator, who tells the story about the actor and the actions undertaken. There are several examples of children placing themselves outside the action, referring instead to adults as actors, or at least intended actors. One example from the children’s speech at the IPCC reunion in Copenhagen is “[I]t is not fair of you – the older generation – to make us – the children – clean up after you.” This message is echoed in the school strikes for the climate. “Why should we clean up after you?!” was for example asked on a sign displayed by strikers in Stockholm. This can be contrasted to earlier examples in this chapter regarding adult initiatives to get children to become involved in cleaning oceans and beaches from waste.

In a way, the story told by children is a story about non-action, about adults failing to act. The story is one without an actor who steps up and stops environmental degradation; the story is rather meant to produce such an actor, or to demand that action is taken. In fact, we could keep on twisting Arendt somewhat and even say that the story-telling of the children in this case is the primary action taking place; the demand to protect ocean environments is speech and action. One could say the position taken by the children oscillates between asking adults to act, and taking things in their own hands, not trusting adults to deliver. This lack of faith recalls a phrase quoted earlier in the chapter (from Naturum Öresund): “We children might be the only generation that can save the oceans and Earth.” Or as some school strike signs have put it: “The oceans are rising and so are we.” When it comes to rising sea levels, there are examples of children taking not just political but also legal action, suing national or regional governments. Taking a little detour from Öresund – but staying by the sea – we could look at the case of Levi Draheim, an 11-year-old in Florida whose home is threatened by rising sea levels:

With just 3 feet of sea level rise, Levi’s home will be in the sea, which is likely to happen between 2065-2083. Long before 3 feet of sea level rise, Levi and his family will be forced out of their home because of the increasing frequency and depth of flooding. (Reynold v. Florida, Jury Trial Requested, 2018, p. 6)

Together with seven other children and young people, Draheim has filed a complaint against the State of Florida. On the first pages, the reasons for the complaint are given:

They bring this action on behalf of themselves because climate change and the fossil fuel-based energy system created and operated by the Defendants does not and cannot ensure that Plaintiffs will grow to adulthood safely and enjoy the rights, benefits, and privileges of current generations of Floridians. (Reynold v. Florida, Jury Trial Requested, 2018, pp. 1-2, my emphasis)
These plaintiff children bring “[legal] action on behalf of themselves” and situate this action in relation to a potential loss of rights and privileges during their growing into adulthood, and the baseline for these rights and privileges is modelled on what current (older) generations enjoy and have enjoyed.

I here turn to Mannheim, because he makes some interesting points for this context. Mannheim (1952) compares the categories of class and generation. Although it is a comparison, and not an equation, the example above of children suing the state of Florida does situate generation as some sort of socio-economic class (see also Qvotrup (1993) for a discussion about the distribution of resources between generations). Generations are understood as having different, or unequal, access to “benefits and privileges” (although there surely also are class differences structuring access to material resources within generations). Mannheim’s conceptualisation of generation combines biology, in terms of age, with social and historical processes and with the lived experience of those processes. Furthermore, he discusses generation as a matter of location:

The fact of belonging to the same class, and that of belonging to the same generation or age group, have this in common, that both endow the individuals sharing in them with a common location in the social and historical process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experience, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action. (Mannheim, 1952, p. 291)

For Mannheim, belonging to a generation means having “a common location in the social and historical process,” and this potentially gives rise to specific experiences, modes of thought and types of action (interesting parallels can be drawn to feminist standpoint theory).

We can retrieve Mannheim’s idea and describe generation as something that (potentially) binds individuals together, yet try to avoid the trap of conceptualising generation in ways that are overly deterministic and essentialistic. The notion of location can be linked to the notion of appearance – how does where and when we appear affect us? I would also like to add “Earth system processes” to Mannheim’s social and historical processes, thus highlighting another dimension of location. In the Anthropocene, human-induced changes to Earth systems shape and bind together a (young) generation; at least in the examples discussed in this thesis. Generation as location can be seen as lived situatedness not just in relation to (chronological) time and (social) change, but also in relation to space and the state of Earth in an epoch of increasing environmental degradation. The “historically relevant action” on which the Mannheim quotation above ends, could then for example
involve filing complaints regarding rising sea levels that threaten the future space of appearance of a now young generation, as current beaches and homes will be under the sea in the future.

**Natality and the new**

Generation and action can also be linked through Arendt, by taking a little etymological (de)tour. The word generation traces back to the Latin verb *generare*, and its Indo-European root *gene*—meaning “to give birth,” “to beget.” When we act, Arendt proposes, “we insert ourselves into the human world [. . .] like a second birth” (1998, p. 176). *Birth* and its twin concept *natality* are at the centre of Arendt’s description of action and politics, because action is about bringing something new into the world. In regard to this thesis, the concept of natality can highlight the notion of *future* generations, that is, generations which have not yet been born. I have mostly discussed generations in terms of currently living children and adults—but sustainability rhetoric often alludes to unborn future generations.

As mentioned earlier, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency presents nature reserves as “one of the most important ways of conserving the finest nature in Sweden for future generations.” However, it is sometimes a bit unclear whether the words “children,” “next generation” and “future generations” mean different things in articulations of sustainability issues, or if they are merely synonymous to (now living) children (or perhaps the idea of the Child). Nevertheless, if we follow Merleau-Ponty’s theorising regarding temporality and materiality—or if we follow a scientific understanding or a common sense apprehension of how reproduction functions in general—any future unborn generations are by necessity dependent on the embodied beings of children today, so maybe it is reasonable that children and future generations get entangled, at least to some extent, within sustainability rhetoric.

Arendt’s linking of (political) action to natality and birth is certainly interesting in a context of childhood studies. Suddenly the otherwise rather depoliticised child comes to represent the essence of politics in its role of being a “newcomer” and “beginner.” Ryan (2018) picks up on the notion of natality in relation to childhood studies and sees the concept as having “radically generative and creative potential” (p. 308). However, he also sees a risk that natality shuts down, rather than opens up, a different future:

The kind of becoming portended by natality, which harbours the potential to disturb existing social arrangements, can also be harnessed to imagined futures which are projected through childhood. Taken one step further, if natality can
be tamed and trained, then it holds the key to prefiguring human futures. (Ryan, 2018, p. 308)

The question for Ryan is how we can draw upon natality without it being pressed into “the service of socially scripted destinations” (2018, p. 308). Sheldon (2016) does not focus on the concept of natality, but otherwise takes a similar position. She suggests that present discourses and politics regarding environmental sustainability use the figure of the child not to envision something new, but rather the opposite. She argues that when the child is presented as that which is threatened by ongoing environmental degradation, this child does not represent something new or unique, but rather the already existing and something “self-similar” to ways of being and living in the present. Sheldon proposes that the future – captured in the image of the Child – that is to be saved in political rhetoric is in fact a non-future in the sense that it is about preserving present ways of being rather than creating possibilities for something new to come. This yearning for sameness and self-similarity strips the future of everything that is not already here in the present, and it hence denies children the possibility of becoming and doing otherwise in the future. It favours repetition instead of novelty.

Ryan and Sheldon make important points, especially if we understand “socially scripted destinations” (Ryan) and “sameness” (Sheldon) in terms of maintaining the capitalist logic of unlimited economic growth. Opening to something else instead of such a logic would certainly be desirable if we are to deal with environmental degradation. However, we can ask if this something else necessarily has to be something new. Recalling an example mentioned earlier, schoolchildren in the Öresund region were targeted to come up with “new ideas, new thoughts” regarding sustainability issues. Emphasising newness in relation to children, and especially in connection with stopping environmental degradation, risks placing pressure and responsibility on children to devise something totally new and unthought of that can solve a problem they did not even create in the first place. Besides being unfair, there is the risk of exoticising child otherness, and exploiting such presumed otherness.

However, this issue also raises questions about the relation between “old” and “new,” and where we locate the new. Is the new to be found in the acting person (the newcomer, the beginner), in the activity of acting (beginning anew), or in the result of the action (something new being set in motion through action)? Retaining some openness in regard to where we locate the new seems vital, and this is also what I interpret Arendt as doing. The three possible locations (person, activity, result) are entangled to some extent. However, I favour the dimension of “beginning anew,” precisely because this does not focus primarily on the new as something substantial (a person or
In general, emphasising the new (and linking it to the public sphere), as Arendt does, comes with two risks. The first risk is that sustaining activities (e.g. reproduction), and the body-subjects that perform such activities, are devalued or rendered invisible, despite the fact that such activities create and enable (the possibility of) the new. This is also a point made by Butler (2015a) and Cavarero (2016) in their own ways, something to which I return in the following chapters. The second risk – one especially interesting in relation to environmental degradation – is that something new is not necessarily what is needed. We might rather need to retrieve something old, for example earlier ways of doing and relating that do not lead to climate change, polluted air and toxic soils. Yet we cannot go back in time, and for many reasons we would not want to, because several societal changes have also been beneficial. How can we think of the new and the old, respectively, in the time of the Anthropocene and in the spirit of taking action against environmental degradation?

Fanny Söderbäck (2012) presents an interesting suggestion with her idea of “revolutionary time.” She writes that “[t]wo models of time have typically been available when we try to envision temporal movement: cyclical time and linear time” (2012, p. 301). While cyclical time is marked by repetition, linear time is characterised by constant progress. Söderbäck suggests that both of these models of temporality are problematic in their own ways, and she draws upon Julia Kristeva to propose a notion of “revolutionary time” instead of cyclical or linear time:

[W]hat I call revolutionary time is meant not only to put an end to the dichotomy between these two models [. . .] but, more importantly, to achieve what these models of time have failed to do, namely, to set in motion a temporal movement that neither forgets nor repeats the past, a model of time that allows us to redeem the past and the present without instrumentalizing them in the name of a future always already defined in advance. (Söderbäck, 2012, p. 304)

Revolutionary time leaves the future open, yet does so without leaving the past or present behind, but instead by engaging in movements of return. The task is to both remember and forget (or leave behind) at the same time (Söderbäck, 2012, pp. 303-304). Söderbäck writes: “This dual task [remembering and forgetting] can be achieved through a view of time and our being-in-time as a perpetual displacement and renewal through the movement of return” (2012, p. 304). Return is not to be understood as the coming back of something old in the exact same format, rather, return creates displacement and alteration and, through this, renewal.
Revolutionary time in the epoch of the Anthropocene would mean, I suggest, remembering nature and biodiversity, remembering what it was like before large-scale environmental degradation and mass extinction of non-human species started. It would also entail forgetting those problematic practices and ways of relating that have led to and are maintaining this situation. It involves retrieving and leaving behind, maintaining and changing. The new is in this sense, to speak with Söderbäck, not so much new as a return, a displacement, an alteration or a renewal. The double move of maintaining and changing will require, I believe, all generations to be set into motion. Yet, beginning anew implies that the ones who begin anew have a history, and that they already had begun at least once before. In that regard, adults would, due to their age, be in a position with more opportunities to begin anew – that is, to act and bring about renewal – than children.

Adults and children are not equally situated in regard to the consequences of environmental degradation. The “revolution” implied in revolutionary time is, in my take of it, a revolution in which the future as a liveable space where appearance takes place is at stake. Such a space will be one in which mainly currently living children and unborn generations appear (because the adults of today will no longer be alive), and in this sense, I think there might be a point in insisting on linking children and the future together. Given that children have more at stake, I think that Kaj the shark is right in thinking that it will be children who will “fight to get the oceans clean,” however unfair this may be. On this shark-related note, albeit the shark here is a fictitious one, it can be said that addressing environmental degradation can hardly be done without taking human-animal relations into account. The next chapter focuses on sea-living animals and children appearing to each other.
2.2 Animals and angles

Copenhagen, January 2019. *We, the visitors, stand close to each other, competing for the best possible view in the so-called shark tunnel that can be found at National Aquarium Denmark. I pretend that I want to get a good view because of research reasons – which would perhaps (but probably not) justify that I am somewhat blocking the view of the many children in the tunnel – but I have to admit that it is also, not to say mainly, due to pure fascination and awe. We, the visitors, collectively gasp as a hammerhead shark appears above us as we stand in this glass-walled tunnel. We are enveloped by a large tank of water, a giant aquarium, where a number of water-living species roam above, under and around us. Here we are, appearing to each other. However, this is a highly arranged moment of appearance. How did we, beings of several species, end up here, and how are we positioned within this moment of appearance?*  

*Standing beneath an aquatic other in a tunnel at National Aquarium Denmark*
The chapter addresses interspecies relations, in a time of mass extinction of species. Ecosystems are disturbed and non-human species, including sea-living species, are disappearing at an alarming rate (see e.g. Rockström et al., 2009). Yet, this chapter focuses not on disappearance, but on appearance, or rather, on conditions for and effects of appearances. At the studied edutainment centres, aquatic others are brought into the field of vision of the visitors. Many of those visitors are children, who are an explicit target group of these centres. This chapter discusses the arrangements children encounter when paying a visit. Knowledge and emotions, and facts and values, intermingle at the centres. Child visitors learn about, look at, and touch aquatic others. But, on whose terms do others and things appear to us? Who becomes a subject and who becomes an object in these processes, and with what consequences? This chapter takes a look beneath the surface of these issues.

Under the surface

The experiences that visitors at the edutainment centres are presumed to have, are related to going “under the surface.” This phrase, or variations of it, occurs frequently. At Naturum Kullaberg, there is a large poster with the title “Under the surface” which has information texts about the rocks under the surface and algae and animals in the sea, including a pedagogic picture that shows what can be found at which depth. Close to this poster, there is a stand with the heading “Treasures from the seabed,” which displays and informs about different shells. Another part of the exhibition consists of a microscope accompanied by a sign urging visitors to “[l]ook closely at the ocean”. There is a poster promoting outdoor activities for children that aim at exploring what is beneath the surface. One of the activities is called “Water Camp.” This is a two-day camp directed towards children between the ages of 12 and 15 and led by marine biologists. The purpose is to explore and learn about “life under the surface” (my emphasis). Another hour-long activity has a similar theme but is directed toward younger children and toddlers and is called “What goes on under the surface” (my emphasis). It is described in the following way: “The guides of naturum [. . . ] welcome you to explore the fascinating life by the seashore and under the sea’s surface. [. . . ] [W]e supply you with landing nets, aqua scopes and magnifying glasses” (my emphasis).

Öresund Aquarium invites the visitors on a journey of exploration: “Join us on a journey below the surface and explore the diverse and unique flora and fauna” (my emphasis). National Aquarium Denmark aims at contributing to “a better understanding of the secrets of the sea” (my emphasis). Just as in the example above, the experience at the aquarium is described as a journey, and in this case, the journey is conceptualised as a safari:
At Den Blå Planet, National Aquarium Denmark, however, you can go on a
different kind of safari. One that takes you underwater in search of the
fascinating fish and creatures of the sea. We have our very own Big Five, which
you won’t want to miss when you visit the National Aquarium Denmark.

Also Naturum Öresund describes its educational activities in a similar manner,
as going underwater and “show[ing] what life looks like under the surface
of the Sound, both in the shallow and deeper waters” (my emphasis). Naturum
Öresund states that they seek to contribute to creating ocean literacy. The
concept of ocean literacy is described at the centre’s website, where there also
is a link to an UNESCO guide that further explains the notion. Ocean literacy
is about educating citizens about the ocean and ocean-related sustainability
issues, and this educational project is described in terms of countering
“blindness”, and it is deemed to increase not just knowledge but also a sense
of connection to the ocean: “what some scholars have called ‘ocean blindness’
can be countered by improving access to accurate and compelling ocean
education that strengthens the learner’s connection with the ocean”
(UNESCO, 2017, p. 15). A link is thus made between seeing, knowing and
engaging, a link I get back to later in this chapter, connecting it to theory
outlined in Setting I.

The UNESCO guide explains that ocean literacy rests on “seven essential
principles,” of which number 7 is “The ocean is largely unexplored.” This is
elaborated in the following way:

There are challenges and opportunities in this previously hidden realm, and yet,
despite the size and importance of the ocean, less than ten percent of it has been
explored. [. . .] Luckily new technologies, sensors, and tools are expanding our
ability to explore the ocean system. (UNESCO, 2017, pp. 54-55)

Being ocean literate includes taking on an explorative approach to the ocean.
In their book Cosmodolphins (2000), Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke posit the
oceans as the new deep frontier that are waiting to be explored by (Western)
humans now that “[t]he ‘insurmountable’ mountains, ‘impenetrable’ forests
and deserts of early modernity have long since been ‘conquered’, as have the
‘dark’ continents and ‘virgin lands’ of the classic colonialist period” (2000, p.
20). However, the oceans “perform as vast and sublime areas beyond human
control” and as such they “continue to be apparently unfathomable and
therefore terrifying and awe-inspiring in a classic sense” (p. 20). The
edutainment centres’ ambition to take us beneath the surface can be seen as
related to a desire to see that which is hidden, and to create feelings of awe
within the visitors.
Bryld and Lykke’s animal of choice in their book *Cosmodolphins*, namely dolphins, do not exist in Öresund but they have a rather close relative there, the porpoise. The porpoise (or to be more specific, the harbour porpoise) is a toothed whale and shares visual characteristics with dolphins. Toothed whales – porpoises, dolphins and orcas (“killer whales”) among others – can be found in many places in children’s culture and leisure activities. The TV series *Flipper* about a dolphin, the movie *Free Willy* about an orca and numerous dolphinaria in zoos around the world contribute to the (re)production of toothed whales as attractive objects for children. At Naturum Öresund, large replicas of porpoises hang above the visitors, just beneath the ceiling. Both Naturum Kullaberg and Öresund Aquarium have porpoise safaris on their activity lists. As with the previous example from National Aquarium Denmark, a reference to the practice of safari is being made. These tours involve going by boat to places along the coastline where porpoises might be spotted, and it is mentioned as one of the activities the Kullaberg Junior Rangers undertake.

In Bryld and Lykke’s writing about dolphins, they analyse dolphins as taking on a “noble savage” shape for humans, with the potential of teaching about humans the wonders and sacredness of nature. Dolphins and porpoises, and the depths of the oceans in general, can be seen as “objects of desire” whose desirability is linked to their otherness (dolphins and porpoises) and “farness” (the depths of the oceans), to use Ahmed’s (2006) terminology. There is a thrill in having that which is seemingly out of reach appearing to us, as could happen on porpoise safaris or by using technology that will take us to the depths of the oceans. Ahmed writes about the Orient and orientalism, but her argument could be applied to this watery context as well:

> [O]orientalism involves the transformation of “farness” as a spatial marker of distance into a property of people and places. “They” embody what is far away. Thus “farness” takes the direction of a wish, or even follows the line of a wish. The “far” often slides into the exotic, after all. [. . .] If the Orient is desired, it is both *far away* and also that which the Occident wishes to *bring closer*. (Ahmed, 2006, pp. 114-115, my emphasis)

What Ahmed suggests, and what the examples above point toward, is that there is a wish to make remote places, others and things appear to us. That wish can be realised either through *going there* (to the depths of the oceans) and have them (porpoises and other sea non-human species) enter into our fields of vision, or, we can *bring* that space, or at least those who live there, to our space above the surface. *Bringing here* is of course often preceded by *going there*. We can even fuse these activities by saying that one can go (there) on a sea safari and spot “the Big Five” while staying (here) inside a large building in Copenhagen, as mentioned earlier regarding the self-description.
of National Aquarium Denmark. The animals in the aquariums of the edutainment centres come to “embody what is far away,” in Ahmed’s words, and hence embody both exotic bodily aquatic otherness and the depths of the oceans (a place). While that which is “far away” is desired precisely because of its quality of farness and being exotic, it is at the same time something that one, because one desires it, wants to “bring closer” to oneself.

At Naturum Öresund, the visitors are informed that the animals in the aquariums have been brought in by children: “And did you know – we have caught all the animals together with the school classes that have visited us!” In a similar vein, Öresund Aquarium “offer[s] a wide range of year-round marine activities for children and adults,” including net-fishing of small sea creatures in the bay. There is a specific focus on catching crabs: “On all [summer] weekdays, you can go crab-hunting. First, we build our own crab catchers and then we go hunting along the jetties of the marina.” Öresund Aquarium also arranges “kids’ birthday parties” themed “The crab catcher,” which basically consist of the same activities described above, that is, building crab catchers and then going crab hunting. These animal catching activities differentiate subject and object positions. Ahmed writes:

The reachability of the other, whether the Orient or other others, does not mean that they become "like me/us". Rather they are brought closer to home, but the action of "bringing" is what sustains the difference: the subject, who is orientated toward the object, is the one who apparently does the work, whose agency is "behind" the action. (2006, p. 116, my emphasis)

Ahmed suggests that the action of bringing crystallises a difference between subjects and objects – someone is bringing and someone is being brought. Continuing this line of thought, we can ask what happens after this bringing action is finished. How does the subject-object relation evolve? I discuss this below, drawing upon a case of so-called touch pools found at the edutainment centres.

**Touching and being touched**

While children in the examples above are involved in the bringing, at other times they are invited to reach for that which already has been brought. At Öresund Aquarium, Naturum Kullaberg and National Aquarium Denmark

---

15 Rosemary-Claire Collard (2013) has studied wildlife trade, including the trade of zoo animals, and she suggests that critical attention should be directed to the processes of animal commodification that wildlife trade brings about. She suggests that such critical attention should highlight human-animal relationality and “ideas of what it is to be human and to what humans are entitled” (Collard, 2013, p. 4).
there are specific “open” aquariums to allow visitors to touch the animals. Children are the explicit target group of these so-called touch pools. Öresund Aquarium calls it a børnøreopool (literally meaning “children touch pool” in Danish), but in the English material it is just referred as a “touch pool” or “touch tank”: “In the touch tank, children and those young at heart have the opportunity to touch beach crabs, mussels, starfish and flatfish.” The touch pool in Naturum Kullaberg is called Klappakvarium in Swedish (a combination of the verb “to pet” and the noun “aquarium”). The Naturum touch pool is described as a “children’s favourite.” At National Aquarium Denmark, there is a touch pool, but also a large poster on a wall informing that a new touch pool will be installed in the summer of 2019. The poster includes an architectural picture of a larger touch pool with six children standing next to it.

The touch pools are all located in the middle of rooms, so one can walk around them as well as lean over them to look at them from above. This creates a panopticon-like setting, where the animals can be seen by the children from all angles, through the glass walls and open top of the aquarium. The idea of the touch pools is, as the name suggests, to give visitors the opportunity to touch the animals in the pools. The animals are reachable not just in the sense that they appear visually to the children, but also in a sense of being reachable to an outreaching hand. The animal others are reachable in this moment because they had been brought there in an earlier activity. Ahmed regards politics of domestication as an extension and continuation of the bringing activity: “Another way of considering this process would be to think of the politics of domestication: the other is reachable, as it has already been ‘brought home’” (2006, pp. 116-117).

However, is the brought animal only an object here? I link the fact that the touch pool is a “children’s favourite” at least partly to a recognition of the animals as being not only objects, but also subjects. The thrill of touching can be understood as inseparable from the fact that the animals are alive and have agency, which means that the outcome of the touching attempt is marked by uncertainty. Will the crab in the touch pool try to flee the approaching child hand? How will the crab in the touch pool – this specific embodied crab and not just the abstract, generic crab of exhibition texts – react to being touched? And how will the touching child react, what emotions will be felt? However, the uncertainty of this encounter, of any encounter between living beings, is at the same time something that the touch pools seek to reduce through their construction. The element of chance (and possible risks) involved in going out “into nature” searching for an animal you want to encounter and touch, is eliminated as the animal has already been caught and brought to you. Placed in a rather small aquarium, the possibilities the crab has to refuse to be touched by an approaching child hand are limited, and almost nullified.
The child-animal encounters at the edutainment centres involve the distilment of subject and object positions (see Pedersen, 2019 for a critical discussion about zoos as edutainment). Someone brings, and someone – some other – is brought. And after this action has taken place, someone looks and touches, and someone else is looked upon and touched. We could talk about a politics of touching and being touched. Eva Hayward (2010) writes about cup corals in a saltwater laboratory and the wonders of cross-species touching encounters, but she also notes that “cross-species sensations are always mediated by power that leaves impressions” (p. 592). The sea animals are in aquariums in order for them to appear to visitors. Yet, as Arendt noted, if something appears before us, we are by necessity appearing beings ourselves: “Living beings, men and animals, are not just in the world, they are of the
world, and this precisely because they are subjects and objects – perceiving and being perceived – at the same time” (1978, p. 20). Appearance among living beings is a mutual, interrelated affair; one is both subject and object at the same time, as Merleau-Ponty emphasises. A question that can be asked is then: to what extent does that obvious object position that aquatic others are placed in – being brought, seen and touched by humans in artificial environments – also allow them to have a not just a potential but an actual subject position? And does the arrangement open up for acknowledgment that we humans are perceived objects to them?

Plumwood (1993) suggests that we should take an intentional stance toward earth others, meaning that they too, and not just humans, should be understood as intentional beings, as subjects intending objects. Similar ideas can be traced in Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts on nature (2003). Plumwood explicitly links her intentional stance to ethics and politics. She proposes that “the intentional stance makes possible the conception of our relationships to earth others in ethical and in political terms, where ethics is defined as the domain of response to the other’s needs, ends, directions, or meaning” (1993 p. 138, my emphasis). An intentional stance does not only recognise earth others as subjects with their own needs and meaning, but also that these others can affect and change humans: “We can encounter the earth other as a potential intentional subject, as one who can alter us as well as we it” (1993, p. 137, my emphasis).

What can one make of Plumwood’s words in relation to living animals that are caught, brought, looked upon and touched in edutainment centres? Are they caught, brought and perceived because it seems to be a way of responding to their “needs, ends, directions, or meaning,” to speak with Plumwood? Perhaps we could say that their possibilities of extending in space and intending objects – activities strongly linked to being a subject – have been severely limited when they are put in an aquarium, in comparison to when they live in their natural habitats. Yet, and interestingly enough, their limited position as subjects, being rather locked into a “mere object” position, is precisely, it is argued, what makes us humans (or the child visitors) objects, in the sense that they (the animals) alter us. We can look at this example from National Aquarium Denmark:

The National Aquarium Denmark exhibits fascinating creatures from all over the world and wants to make a difference. We want to generate new knowledge and communicate our findings to guests and everyone we come into contact with, thus setting the hearts of children and adults beating for the wonderful world of aquatic life.
By arranging a setting where aquatic others are to be seen, touched and known as objects by a child subject, children are supposed to increase their interest in, and commitment to, goals of conserving the oceans and non-human species living there. That is, children are to be in an object position, being altered by aquatic others. We can say that children are now the ones (supposedly) being touched, or being moved (albeit not brought), if we evoke the connotations of “being touched” and “being moved” that refer to emotional states. Perhaps individual children visiting these centres are altered in the sense of becoming more interested in, and committed to, sea animals after having visited aquariums, perhaps they are not. Investigating this falls beyond the scope of this study. However, the acts and arrangement as such – consisting of catching, enclosing and displaying animals – would barely suggest that humans in general have altered their stance towards aquatic others, respecting the “needs, ends, directions, or meaning” of these others, to speak with Plumwood.

Besides merely looking at and touching animals in aquariums, young visitors to the edutainment centres can engage in scientific activities. Öresund Aquarium for instance has one activity for young people called “Ocean scientist for a day.” The purpose is not only that students enhance their knowledge about Öresund, but also to acquaint them with “scientific methods” and to “collect data” for an intended report. Also children from lower school grades are invited to activities where they are “introduced to simple scientific methods,” for example, a method to test whether the animals studied really live in salt water. Through scientific methods and equipment such as microscopes, aquatic others and also the ocean itself (e.g. through testing water samples) appear as objects of knowledge before the child. Science as a practice positions the involved parties differently, Plumwood (2003) and feminist methodologies remind us, and critical attention should be given to power relations that arise through scientific practices. Such critical attention includes notions of embodiment, vision and perspectives (see e.g. Haraway, 1988).

Linking the above to a notion of appearance, Arendt writes (referencing Merleau-Ponty) that appearances do not just reveal, they also conceal, because when things appear to one, they do so to an embodied and located subject, who perceive things from a certain angle and whose impressions are limited to the capacity of the organs of perception that the subject’s body possess:

"Nothing that appears manifests itself to a single viewer capable of perceiving it under all its inherent aspects. The world appears in the mode of it-seems-to-me, depending on particular perspectives determined by location in the world as well as by particular organs of perception. (Arendt, 1978, p. 38)"
The back or the inside of an object does not so easily appear to us, neither do aspects of this object that elude our human bodily perception qualities. Yet, science has found ways to compensate for at least some of these shortcomings. As Arendt writes, the scientist “cuts open the visible body to look at its interior or catches hidden objects by means of all sorts of sophisticated equipment that deprives them of the exterior properties through which they show themselves to our natural senses” (Arendt, 1978, p. 24).

Information about porpoises at Naturum Kullaberg
As the above photograph shows, at Naturum Kullaberg, one gets a glimpse of the interior of a porpoise through a picture of a bare porpoise skull found on a page that seems to be ripped out of a taxonomic textbook. However, the main focus of Naturum Kullaberg regarding the porpoise is how it shows itself to our “natural senses,” to use Arendt’s words; there is for example a video of swimming porpoises. As mentioned earlier, there are also the porpoise safaris. The organisers (Kullabergsguiderna, an external actor) of the porpoise safaris at Naturum Kullaberg provide the following suggestion: “We believe that showing and informing the public about these amazing mammals will lead to better protection of them” (Kullabergsguiderna, n.d.). Porpoises are at risk of becoming extinct, and the organisers propose that activities such as their boat tours is one way of counteracting that threat. The porpoise is hence understood as grievable (see e.g. Redmalm 2015; Stanescu 2012 for discussions about animal life as grievable life). Porpoises can be described as a “charismatic species,” that is, a species whose appearances and manners appeal to humans, which makes it easier to mobilise support to save them from extinction than when the threatened species is a less charismatic one, like an insect (Lorimer, 2007). The World Wildlife Fund, which engages in species preservation, states that “porpoises delight us with their playful antics and warm our hearts with their friendly faces” (World Wildlife Fund, n.d.). According to this description, the porpoise certainly appears as a “saveable” species – who does not want to warm their hearts?

Nevertheless, according to the porpoise safari organisers, the grievability of the porpoise cannot be taken for granted. The status and level of grievability depends on activities that entail showing and informing the public about porpoise life, as the quotation above suggests. That the porpoise appears to us – that we can see it – is what is assumed will lead to a change within the adults and children going on porpoise boat tours. Or actually, it is appearance (“showing”) coupled with knowledge (“informing”) that is assumed to evoke such a change. The same approach can be found at National Aquarium Denmark, exemplified in this quotation, presented previously in the chapter:

The National Aquarium Denmark exhibits fascinating creatures from all over the world and wants to make a difference. We want to generate new knowledge and communicate our findings to guests and everyone we come into contact with, thus setting the hearts of children and adults beating for the wonderful world of aquatic life.

New knowledge is generated through the exhibited creatures being “fascinating,” and the knowledge generated both builds upon and creates emotion, setting children’s hearts beating. This approach is echoed at all four edutainment centres, and within edutainment at large; the whole idea of
edutainment is mixing entertainment (emotion) with education (knowledge). I continue with this topic below.

Facts and values

What is specific to the kind of edutainment studied here, is that it is not just about learning through (positive) emotions and the involvement of bodily sensations (e.g. touching sea animals), but also that it seeks to “make a difference” – a societal and political difference in regard to conserving the oceans and the species in them. However, I would suggest that knowledge and facts (descriptions of reality) are always linked to different kinds of values, such as whether something is fascinating or good. I do not suggest that facts and values collapse into each other or that truth and opinion are the same thing, for all the partial perspectives surrounding knowledge. Stating this disclaimer is especially important in times like these when climate change and climate change deniers co-exist, and the latter include state leaders. However, if we believe that there is some kind of link between facts and values, it might be desirable to investigate what that link is, and how it works.

One can, for example, ask: what appears as objects of (potential) knowledge, why do they do so, and how do they come within reach? My next example takes us outside the edutainment centres for a moment to look at children, crabs and the Swedish west coast within a context of a scientific inventory project:

Almost all examples of the Asian shore crab that have been found so far along the Swedish west coast have been caught by children catching crabs. This is because there are not yet such large numbers of the species, which means that one needs to be at the right place at the right time to find one. But since there are thousands of children catching crabs during the summer, one of them is always in the right spot! Knowledge about the expansion of the species along the Swedish west coast during the current phase of establishment is in other words completely dependent on reports from children catching crabs! (Berggren and Karlsson, 2017, p. 23, my translation)

A spatiality of childhood, along with (a presumed) child affinity for intending crabs, is here evoked when children are referred to as being “at the right place at the right time” to facilitate the generation of scientific knowledge. The crab is an object of fascination to the child and the crab is an object of knowledge
to the scientists. One approach is sentimental and concerns values (crabs are fascinating and fun) and one is descriptive and concerns facts (leading to knowledge about the expansion of the crab species in question). Nevertheless, the point here is that the facts would not have come into existence had it not been for the fascination, as the quotation above makes clear: “Knowledge about the expansion of the species along the Swedish west coast during the current phase of establishment is in other words totally dependent on reports from crab catching children!” (my emphasis). So the facts were enabled by fascination. In addition, there are more ways in which facts and values mix here. The reason why facts about the appearing Asian shore crab are desired in the first place, is because this crab species creates unwanted changes in the ecosystems along the Swedish coast. In Sweden, the Asian shore crab is labelled an “invasive species,” a term used to describe species that are “alien”, that is, “non-native” and cause harm to existing species and the biological diversity in a specific environment. I return to ideas about the native and its opposite, the alien, in regard to different species (including humans) in one of the desert chapters.

Facts are here inseparable from values. The value is maintaining the ecosystems the way they are (were), and thus, it is a “fact” that the Asian shore crab is invasive, because it disturbs those ecosystems. Invasive and disturbing, or invasion and disturbance, can be seen as “so-called thick concepts – that is, concepts that are held to involve both a descriptive and an evaluative component” (Zerilli, 2016, pp. 13-14). Invasion is a descriptive term in the sense that it explains an expanding extension or reach of something, but invasion is also an evaluative term that marks such an extension as

---

16 As for one and the same object being different kinds of objects, Mol (2003) makes an interesting case in conceptualising an “object multiple” and suggesting that the disease that she studies (atherosclerosis) is multiple, and not just in an epistemological sense, but also in an ontological one. This means that there are not only different (epistemological) perspectives on the same object, but the object itself is not one but multiple. What the disease is, depends on who you ask, and on when and where you ask. This short description does not do justice to Mol’s work, but I nevertheless wanted to mention it, because even though I take a somewhat different approach, her work has been inspirational. In regard to the specific theme of aquatic others, it can be mentioned that Law and Lien (2012) draw upon Mol and depict a “salmon multiple” in their study of fishing industry practices.

17 The International Union for Conservation of Nature (n.d.) describes “invasive alien species” in the following way: “Invasive alien species (IAS) can have very severe effects on new environments. Many alien species become invasive, competing against or preying on native species, which can lead to their extinction and eventual ecological devastation”. See Colautti and MacIsaac (2004) for a conceptual discussion regarding the definition of “invasive” within ecology, including the difficulties with such a definition.
problematic or unwanted. The same goes for disturbance; it is an unwanted interruption or change of state.

The idea of “ecosystem services” – a concept applied within several scientific disciplines – can also be said to be both descriptive and evaluative. At Naturum Kullaberg, there is a poster on the wall explaining the concept (and this is representative of how it usually is explained): “Ecosystem services include everything that nature supplies us with in the shape of products and services that contribute to our wellbeing.” (The (neo)liberal and economic connotation of the concept ecosystem services has been noted by several scholars, as for example Jessica Dempsey (2013) and Christian Kull, Xavier de Sartre and Monica Castro-Larrañaga (2015). At Naturum Kullaberg, ecosystems are further explained in a more child-appealing manner on another poster. A drawn crab says “Look what I and my ocean can help out with,” and one of its claws points toward a list titled “Ecosystem services.” On the list, we find diverse things, such as seafood, oceans’ binding of carbon dioxide and oceans being sources of (positive) nature experiences for human individuals.

The idea of ecosystem services shares an interesting feature with ideas about (the eradication of) invasive species and the preservation of other species. The whole basis of these ideas is that facts and values are entangled; this is something that is acknowledged, instead of, as is often the case within at least the natural sciences, disclaimed. In fact, the point of scientific understanding and intervention here seems to be to link it to values and political action: positing, for example, the extinction of species as scientific and political at the same time. This might seem, or is, to some extent, welcome, at least for those of us who are sceptical about the separation of facts and values (and interested in environmental sustainability). However, there are some elements in this process of erasing the separation between facts and values that require scrutiny. If facts represent universality and objectivity, and values particularity and subjectivity, what happens when we start to upset these dichotomies?

There are three possible scenarios. One, values/particularity/subjectivity swallow and thus annihilate facts/universality/objectivity, leaving us with relativism. Two, the opposite happens, that is, facts/universality/objectivity consume values/particularity/subjectivity. I would say that this second scenario happens, at least partly, in the examples above. It is not difficult to mix facts and values if we treat a value like a fact, as something we all can agree upon, as something that we all regard in the same way, irrespective of how and where we are positioned in the world. Values have then lost the quality of being things we can disagree about. The (supposed) universality and objectivity of facts have invaded the concept of value to the extent that it has lost its defining feature, and that could leave us with totalitarianism, if we take
it to the extreme. This is one of the reasons why Arendt was so keen on separating science and politics, but if we bear this risk in mind, along with the opposite risk of relativism, we can sketch out a third scenario regarding the entanglement of facts and values.

If we attempt to link the subjective to the objective, Arendt’s ideas about aesthetics (or what she calls “taste”) and political judgment are helpful. Taste judgment and political judgment are not only subjective, because they are about something objective – about a *common object* in this shared world – and they move beyond the subjective in the sense that they make “universal” claims about the quality of an object (e.g. its beauty). Yet others might make different “universal” claims about the same object, and discussions can arise, where the parties try to convince each other. As presented in Setting I, Arendt, quoting Kant, writes that “[t]he judging person [. . .] can only ‘woo the consent of everyone else’ in the hope of coming to an agreement with him eventually” (2006, p. 219).

I think the idea of agreement is key here, or at least the process of *engaging in seeking agreement*. If the problem with relativism (the risk linked to values here) is that agreement is not a matter of interest and concern and perhaps not even possible, then the problem with totalitarianism (the risk linked to facts here) is that agreement is a non-applicable concept because differences – potential disagreements – are non-existing (or forbidden). In line with handling this double risk, the proposal is not to refuse the idea of the universal, but rather to look into how something comes to be positioned as universal in the first place. Steven Shapin (1984) makes an interesting point in regard to the topic of agreement and knowledge production by referring to Robert Boyle and his experiments with air in the mid-17th century. To establish a “matter of fact,” the scientist needed others to witness the experiment and its outcome and hence “matter of fact was at once an epistemological and a *social* category” (Shapin, 1984, p. 484, my emphasis).

**Judgment and plurality**

In this context of child-oriented edutainment focused on the sea and on environmental issues, it is interesting that Arendt draws upon aesthetics and taste in her discussion of political judgment. The porpoise, for example, can be considered an object of *taste judgment* (deemed appealing) as well as an object of *political judgment* (at risk of becoming extinct, and this should be avoided). At the same time, the porpoise is also an object of *descriptive judgment*, or phrased differently, an object of knowledge. If we discern these three judgments – taste, political and descriptive, respectively – and discern them as distinguishable but related, we can start asking different questions...
regarding how they are related. I have touched upon such questions earlier. Does knowledge generate political opinion? Or is it the other way around, does political opinion facilitate knowledge? When are knowledge and opinion almost indistinguishable, as perhaps is the case when it comes to species extinction and invasive species? What is the role of taste in regard to assembling knowledge (e.g. through children’s fascination for crabs) or creating political opinion (e.g. saving certain species (and not others) because of their perceived charisma)? And so on. Assembling knowledge, and knowledge as assemblage, through and with a myriad of actors and motives, are topics discussed in the field of science and technology studies (see e.g. Latour and Woolgar, 1979; Berg and Mol, 1998; Law, 2002), although the ontological departure point of those discussions tends to differ somewhat from mine.

In the case of the practices of edutainment institutes – such as aquariums and zoos – taste, knowledge and opinion merge to the extent that it can be hard to distinguish them. Beautiful or fascinating animals are shown (and touched), knowledge about them is presented, and conservation ideals are put forward; many aquariums also engage in practical conservation activities such as hosting or breeding certain species. All these things happen at once and intermingle. However, the question to be asked here is not only how judgments of taste, knowledge and political opinion relate to each other, but also how the process inherent in judgment itself plays out, or does not play out. Arendt suggests that (political) judgment is “the ability to see things not only from one’s own point of view but in the perspective of all those who happen to be present” (2006, p. 218). However, an essential question that arises in relation to this definition is the following: who happen to be present when one forms a political opinion? Why are some present, and not others? Another question is this: what does it take to qualify as a who, whose point of view should be taken into account?

I would say that in relation to several of the examples presented in this chapter, aquatic others appear to humans as objects of judgment – be it taste, political or descriptive judgment – rather than judging subjects whose viewpoints one should take into consideration in the judging process. Hence, the judgments are not really judgments in an Arendtian sense (in my cross-species application here), because they do not go beyond the human perspective. We simple stay within our “own point of view” (which is not to say that there are not conflicting interests and power relations within the category of the human). Zerilli notes that “[l]earning to see politically is to get the world in view by moving back and forth between perspectives” (2016, p. 32). Of course we cannot know what it is to be for example a crab (see further Nagel, 1974), and hence what kind of viewpoint a crab would have, but on the other hand, that is to some extent also the case also for interhuman relations. I cannot know
what it is like to be you, and what you see – and this is the whole point of the richness of different perspectives – but I can try to understand, including by drawing upon my imagination.

So, what would happen if we see aquatic others as subjects, and not objects, of judgment? It does not mean that our human perspective disappears or loses its value, but it does mean that we have to start compromising and seeking agreement. Plumwood expresses something similar: “Earth others can be seen not as objects for manipulation but as ‘other nations’ of roots or wings or legs, nations we must meet on their own terms as well as ours” (Plumwood, 1993, p. 137, my emphasis). Plumwood’s reference to other species as “other nations” can help us to make a cross-species interpretation of this important point raised by Arendt:

If a people or nation, or even just some specific human group, which offers a unique view of the world arising from its particular position in the world [. . .] is annihilated, it is not merely that a people or a nation or a given number of individuals perishes, but rather that a portion of our common world is destroyed, an aspect of the world that has revealed itself to us until now but can never reveal itself again. (Arendt, 2005, p.175).

What is at stake, then, when it comes to species extinction, is not just a loss for humans (a loss related to the beauty of e.g. the porpoise, or the “ecosystem service” that a less charismatic species performs) and not even only a loss for the extinct species itself, but a loss of our common world shared across species divisions. The “unique view of the world” that arises from “a particular position in the world” could refer to a species as a whole, or, it could refer to an individual. This means that something of the common world is lost not only when species go extinct, but also when a crab in the ocean is caught and brought and placed in an aquarium or touch pool. Because the crab is then cut off from that which we have in common, the sea, and its position within and perspective on the ocean are lost. Instead of having the sea as our common world, or a common object that could potentially give rise to a process of judgment in which we seek each other’s agreement, the crab loses its position as a potential judging subject and becomes instead the very object of judgment. Now, this transformation of the crab from a potential judging subject to a judged object could happen (and happens) also when the crab is not removed from the sea. However, if we let aquatic others remain in the sea, we at least let them appear beyond appearing only to us. As Kelly Oliver (2007, p. 16) points out, Merleau-Ponty concludes that animals show themselves to each other, and in discussing this, Merleau-Ponty actually uses crabs as an example. What is lost when we remove aquatic others from the ocean is not just a perspective on the ocean, but also sides of those others that cannot be revealed to humans, only to non-human species.
If we want to try to relate to aquatic others as judging subjects and not judged objects, I think there might be a point in focusing less on these very others and more on what we have in common, that is, sea (although we humans are mainly next to it rather than in it). Nevertheless, animal others remain relevant even when we focus on the sea, because “[i]f someone wants to see and experience the world as it ‘really’ is, he can do so only by understanding it as something that is shared by many people, lies between them, separates and links them” (Arendt, 2005, 128). We understand the sea by understanding it as something shared by many people and species, as something that we might relate differently to, but that we all depend upon and affect and are affected by. So rather than going “under the surface” in order to explore and map the sea scientifically – posing it primarily as an object of knowledge – we could relate to it as a shared, lived world.

The UNESCO ocean literacy guide mentioned at the beginning of this chapter contains this phrase: “Ocean literacy should be understood as the development of a civic relationship with the ocean” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 61, my emphasis). That literacy here refers to something civic recalls my earlier discussion of the intertwining of knowledge and politics. However, my point here focuses on the civic, or more specifically, on the suggestion that we should develop “a civic relationship with the ocean.” This opens up for seeing the ocean not just as something we have a relation to but with, suggesting mutuality. “[O]cean literacy is the ocean’s influence on us and our influence on the ocean,” as another definition in the UNESCO guide puts it (2017, p. 61). Expanding on such a notion of the ocean, we could draw upon Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod and Astrida Neimanis and see water as “lively materiality” with the “capacity to gestate life, transform, or destroy” (2013, p. 5). Or, using Plumwood’s words about a valley, the ocean can be regarded as an “intentional system” that could be “considered as part of a directional, developmental process of the earth” (Plumwood, 1993, p. 138).

However, I will not here follow up on these theoretical possibilities, but rather end this chapter with the idea of a “civic” relation to the ocean that can enable different relations with other species. There is much potential in the proposal of relating to the ocean in a civic way and seeing the ocean as a lived space that we share with other nations, be they human or animal. We are all citizens in relation to this space, which one may call a space of appearance. This is a common world that can be seen from many perspectives, and hence we must seek at least some agreement regarding how we live in it, so that it can be sustained and keep sustaining us. Now, it is time to move to another space of appearance: the desert.
SETTING III: IN THE DESERT

Just like the sea, the desert offers a multitude of possible appearances. If the Öresund part of the thesis had a certain emphasis on action, time and knowing – and connecting this to intergenerational and human-animal relations – this desert part is more centred on vulnerability, space and sensing, and addresses human-plant relations as well as both intergenerational relations and intragenerational differences between children.

A geophysical map of the Sonoran Desert shows a lot of dry areas and some mountains. A political map of the Sonoran Desert tells us that it spreads across the states of Arizona and California in the USA and the states of Sonora, Baja California Norte and Baja California Sur in Mexico.
A historical map tells us that the whole of the area used to belong to Mexico (and before Mexico’s independence, to Spain), before parts of it were bought by the USA in the middle of the 19th century. Before all of this there were, and still are, Native Americans living in the area. Apart from humans, other species live and move within the desert. This thesis mainly focuses on the part of the Sonoran Desert located in the US state of Arizona. I pay attention to natural parts of the desert (which otherwise includes urban settings), and especially to protected areas such as national parks.  

One way in which children appear in these protected areas of the Sonoran Desert is as “Junior Rangers”. The Junior Ranger programme is offered by the National Park Service (NPS), the US state agency responsible for the maintenance of national parks and other protected natural areas. The mission of the NPS is to preserve “unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations” (US National Park Service, n.d.). The idea of the Junior Ranger programme is to encourage children to spend time in the parks, learn about nature and commit to the value of protecting the parks. The NPS has Junior Ranger “activity guides” that are connected to specific parks. These guides take the form of booklets that encourage children to go out and explore the park and learn more about the local flora and fauna. I found these guides to be interesting, as they suggest not only that children appear in parks, but also propose how they can approach the parks and that which appears to them these spaces. I here specifically look at the Junior Ranger guide for the Saguaro National Park and that for the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Besides these guides, I also include some other NPS material.

In my search for appearances that take place in the desert, I also use poems written by children about the Sonoran Desert. The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM) – an indoor and outdoor museum that exhibits and educates about the local flora and fauna – arranges an annual Earth Day poetry contest for children in grades K-6. The instructions for participating are the following: “Each student who would like to enter should write a poem about the Sonoran Desert – how this place is their home, or animals, plants, the landscape, observations, feelings, hopes – whatever is important to that student.” (Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, n.d.) In 2017, over 500 entries were

---

18 See i.e. Gissibl, Höhler and Kupper, 2012 for discussions regarding the history and politics surrounding national parks.
19 It can be noted that this Junior Ranger programme in the US led by NPS has no connection to the Junior Ranger programme in Europe (including the one in Kullaberg Nature Reserve) mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, the objectives and activities of the respective programmes have similarities.
received for the contest. There are several winners each year, and the winning poems are put up on the ASDM website, which is where I found them (see Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, n.d., for the website address). Although the contest and hence setting for the poems is arranged and framed by adults, I see the poems as a way to include material produced by children in my discussion (compared to e.g. the adult-made Junior Ranger guides). I also liked the idea of drawing on poetic descriptions of the desert, including the desert as lived, in addition to the often fact-based and educational approach taken in the Junior Ranger material.

The second chapter in this setting focuses on how different child subjects are positioned in relation to the desert. I write about irregular migration in the area, that is, people crossing the US-Mexico border “illegally” and often by foot. When discussing irregular migration in the area, I use diverse sources such as newspaper articles, NGO reports and legal documents. These sources were found on the Internet, which is where I found most of the material discussed throughout this setting, including Junior Ranger material, children’s poems, and some children’s books about the saguaro cactus that I will mention. I did however visit the Sonoran Desert in Arizona a couple of days, during which time I went to the Saguaro National Park, including its visitor centre Red Hill. I also visited the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, mentioned above. I took photos and collected information material at the visitor centre and the museum. My approach in terms of what I looked for and how I did it, was the same as when I visited the edutainment centres in the Öresund region, which I describe in the introduction of Setting II.

As for the structure of Setting III, the first chapter will discuss shared precariousness cross species, giving examples that involve children and plants, and more specifically, cacti. In the second chapter, I address how vulnerability sometimes is less shared in specific contexts, due to political regulations and power relations. Here I take an intrahuman intersectional perspective, addressing differences between children. I approach the Sonoran Desert as living and lived space, however, it should be noted that I do not study a particular someone’s lived experience of the desert. I do, however, draw upon material that proposes ways in which the desert can be lived.

I conclude this introduction of the desert setting in the words of one of the children’s poems, to give you a sense of the Sonoran Desert and its inhabitants:

- Hot, dry, sandy, monsoons
- Cactus, rocks, cliffs, tumbleweeds
- Bushes, dust devils, snakes, roadrunners
- Jack rabbits, desert tortoises, lizards
Prairie dogs, coyotes, hummingbirds.
What am I?
Desert
(The Desert, Allison McDougall, grade 1)

The poem corresponds with Massey’s suggestion, quoted in the Introduction, that space “is a product of relations-between.” Massey further conceptualises space as “a simultaneity of stories-so-far.” In the two following chapters, I propose some stories-so-far of the Sonoran Desert.
3.1 Inclined (toward) plants

The Sonoran Desert, January 2018. When driving to the Saguaro National Park, I am guided by a map that I printed from Google Maps. The map is blurry and has marks on it that I made by hand with a pen after printing it. The marks point to places where I am going to turn, stop, fill up gas, etc. The marks could probably have been made on the computer before printing, and hence be more exact in terms of location, but I did not possess enough technological skills for that to happen. Heading to Saguaro Land, I wish I could say that I attach adventurous feelings to this map (as colonial as that may be in the context), but unfortunately, I mostly project anxiety on this blurry map with inexact marks. Will I find the way? Will I do so without causing accidents, given that driving cars is something I seldom do and do not excel in? And, I know it is illegal to "text and drive", but what does the law say about “looking often and obsessively to a blurry map while driving”? 

Saguaro in the Sonoran Desert
The saguaro cactus only occurs naturally in the Sonoran Desert. The saguaro cactus is one of the most emblematic species of the Sonoran Desert, and it lends its name to the Saguaro National Park (SNP). In the Junior Ranger guide for the Saguaro National Park, the saguaro is called a “symbol of the Sonoran Desert” (p. 4). The SNP Junior Ranger guide devotes a couple of pages to the saguaro. One page has the title “Saguaro National Park and You” and the following text: “Long ago, travelers to the West told stories of tall, stately cactus ‘forests’ growing around Tucson, Arizona. Because this place was so special, the United States Government set aside large areas of land to protect these unique plants and the desert they live in” (p. 18).

This chapter is yet another story about the saguaro cactus. How does it come to appear? And how does it appear to us, that is, which features do we notice? Do cacti and children have something in common? I draw mainly on Cavarero, Butler and Merleau-Ponty to discuss these questions.

**Saguaros-and-me**

Saguaro cacti are indeed “tall” and “stately” as the above quotation from the SNP Junior Ranger guide describes them. The cactus has a sole stem, perhaps with an arm or two or five, standing straight and upright like a pillar, striving towards the sky. It “stands like a statue” (Bash, 1989, n.p.) and “towers quietly over the desert” (Bash, 1989, n.p.), as the children’s book *Desert Giant: The World of the Saguaro Cactus* describes it. The appearance of the saguaro has been noticed among the children writing poetry as well:

```
The saguaro stands tall
Has stood through so many storms like this
May stand through many more
(Monsoon, Isabella Bushroe, grade 6)
```

Throughout time and stormy weather, the saguaro stands tall. A triad of straightness, height and temporality can be traced not only in regard to saguaros, but also to children, and to saguaros and children combined. The Red Hill visitor centre in the SNP has put up a large poster depicting a saguaro, with a height measurement line alongside, so that children can measure their height in comparison to that of the saguaro (see photograph below). The poster is called a “Children’s growth chart” and is also sold in the visitor centre’s shop. Some information about the saguaro is provided on the poster: “By age 10, the saguaro is still less than 1 foot tall.” This is complemented by the information that “[a]t its fastest, a saguaro grows about 5 inches per year.”
Height and age markers are common pieces of information about saguaros, especially mentioning the small size that saguaros still tend to have after ten years (both the SNP Junior Ranger guide and an ASDM fact sheet for children mention this). This information might be specifically interesting for the target group that would be around ten years old themselves. Saguaros are described in terms of being “young” and then growing into “adults”. It is no coincidence that the Latin name for the saguaro is *Carnegiea gigantea*, as it indeed is rather gigantic and often grows to be 12-18 meters tall. The saguaro may live 150-200 years. The lifespan of a single saguaro is connected to children and human generations in the children’s book *The 100-Year-Old Cactus*: “This is the story of a giant cactus. It began to grow long before you or your parents were born. In fact, it started growing before people had cars or radios, and it may still be growing when you have children” (Holmes and Lerner, 1983, n.p.).
The cactus/child/temporality intertwinement is also found in a suggested activity for children (Grade 4-8) called “Trees-and-Me Time Capsule,” which can be found on the SNP website. The activity is one of five so-called “Desert diversity games.” The idea of the Trees-and-Me Time Capsule activity is that children conduct a census in regard to both themselves and saguaros, conducting a mini-version of the formal saguaro census executed by staff and volunteers every ten years in the SNP. The Saguaro Census in the SNP follows the timeline of the US Census and is done in the same year. In the activity instructions, the US Census is explained as counting “all the people in the United States [. . .] mandated by the U.S. Constitution” every ten years. So, when the people of the US are counted, so are the saguaros in the SNP.

The alikeness of saguaros and people is made explicit in the above-mentioned children’s book Desert Giant: The World of the Saguaro Cactus: “Walking out among them, you might feel as though you’re surrounded by people – the Saguaro People” (Bash, 1989, n.p.). In the Trees-and-Me Time Capsule activity, both human people and “saguaro people” are to be counted and measured. The instructions start off by asking children to gather and record information such as the heights and waist sizes of all the students in their class. Thereafter, the children are to choose a plot of saguaros and gather similar information about them. Measuring the height of a (tall) saguaro can be a bit tricky, so there is a suggestion in the instructions that this can be done by letting one of the students stand next to the chosen saguaro while another student stands farther away and estimates how many “student lengths” the cactus measures. When the students and saguaros have been measured, the recorded data should be put in a container (a large popcorn tin is suggested), which will serve as a time capsule. The idea is that another class should open the container in the future. The outside of the container “should be decorated to indicate its purpose,” and the suggested wording is the following:

Trees-and-Me Time Capsule
Important Census Information
Do Not Disturb!!!!!!
To Be Opened By (5th grade, Biology. . .) Class
(Month) (Year)

Mixed information about cacti and children are hence to be buried and hidden to see the light in the future. The time capsule game provides an opportunity for the children to become the cacti’s storywriters and conceive of the cactus as a “narratable self” (Cavarero, 2000), that is, as a relational self whose lifestory is told by an Other who witnessed it. But, what kind of story is supposed to be written down and saved for the future? It is a story of measurements. The part of the cacti’s lives deemed worthy of saving for the
future is a story about feet and inches. To be fair, the children’s autobiographical story that is to be put in the time capsule is not more spiritual than the one written for the cacti; the writings about the children should also address height, according to the game instructions. Saguaro and children are measured standing up straight.

On a historical note regarding children standing up straight, the founding father of the term orthopaedics, the French doctor Nicole Andry, composed the term by combining the Greek words for straight (orthos) and child (pais). His book Orthopaedics or the Art of Preventing and Correcting Deformities of the Body in Children (1749) is mentioned by Foucault in Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1995). Placing orthopaedics in a context of disciplinary technologies, Foucault writes about the Mettray penal colony, which housed delinquent male children and young people. The colony chiefs and their deputies “were in a sense technicians of behaviour: engineers of conduct, orthopaedists of individuality. Their task was to produce bodies that were both docile and capable” (1995, p. 294, my emphasis). Both bodies and behaviour were to be straightened. Foucault includes the picture from the cover of Andry’s book which shows a crooked tree that is tied to a straight pole with ropes. The setting with the supporting pole and ropes is a horticultural intervention to straighten the tree.

Cavarero also discusses the link between a straight posture and high morals, and one example she gives is the admonition given to children to “stand up straight” (2016, p. 62), which alludes to both physicality and morality. Cavarero mentions both Andry and Foucault’s picking up of Andry and she highlights the tree and man (/child) comparison: “It is common knowledge that, already in ancient thought, the tree is the symbol of man himself, understood as a species” (2016, p. 59). The symbolism is based on verticality and “man is imagined as a tree that stretches upward on a perpendicular line that also designates his ‘rectitude’ and the ‘correctness’ of his position vis-à-vis the order of the universe” (Cavarero, 2016, pp. 59-60).

The saguaro cactus is not technically a tree but it is indeed “tree-like,” as it is described in an ASDM fact sheet for children. If verticality is the defining characteristic of a tree – at least it is the characteristic discussed in this text – then the saguaro in its extreme rectitude seems to even beat the average tree. In the saguaro, the upright species of humanity meets its equal, if not superior, in the interspecies race for rectitude. Standing up straight has otherwise been a rather human affair, at least according to humans, where the well-known picture of the evolution of homo sapiens shows a separation of humans from apes, visualised through the level of rectitude of the respective species. Stephen J. Gould (1979) discusses the scientific and cultural history of species, evolution and rectitude. The internal, micro-evolution of homo
sapiens at an individual level – growing from a baby into an adult – is depicted in a similar linear vein, where the first lying down, then crawling and then tottering child ends up a straight and well-balanced adult. Relatedly, Sander Gilman (2018) discusses meaning-making practices regarding postures and cultural understandings of different postures. The text below continues with the topic of standing up straight, discussing the idea of rectitude with regard to the intergenerational relation between mother and infant.

The first appearance

The uprightness of humans has paved the way for an ontology of rectitude, Cavarero writes, where the subject is to always keep his [sic] straight posture intact and autonomously self-secured. The upright, vertical self is independent and free. It is a self that stands tall and straight, maintaining its own balance, not leaning on or toward someone or something. Yet, Cavarero argues, such a subject is just an illusion:

> The simple fact that humans walk upright, using an erect posture, already contains an implicit geometry, supposedly immediate and natural, that is organized according to dimensions, lines, locations, and topologies which are, in turn, defined with reference to the absolute orientation of corporeal verticality. [...] However grounded in a naturalistic intuition of space it may seem to be, the individual who is vertically encapsulated in its autarchic pretense – in its freedom, autonomy, and independence – has no actual correspondence to real life. (Cavarero, 2016 pp. 128-130, my emphasis)

In her search for another subject ontology, but staying within the idea of geometry and postures, Cavarero quotes Arendt: “every inclination turns outward, it leans out of the self in the direction of whatever may affect me from the outside world” (Arendt in Cavarero, 2016, pp. 5-6). This inspires Cavarero to incline the subject, to bend it and attribute another posture to it. The inclined subject is inclined toward the other in this relational model of the subject. Turning to and leaning toward something or someone – inclining oneself – disturbs the stability of the (illusionary) independent, upright self. “[T]he thrust of inclination knocks the I from its internal center of gravity and, by making it lean to the outside, ‘be they objects or people’ [another reference to Arendt], undermines its stability” (Cavarero, 2016, p. 6).

In Arendt’s relational ontology, as we have seen in previous chapters, the self needs others to appear and as such, it is a dependent self, drawn to others. Cavarero’s literal and symbolic image of this is the iconic image of the mother who is leaning over her newborn child, bending down:
In the case of the maternal stereotype, which is in direct contrast with the verticalizing geometry of the autonomous subject and its possible symmetrical refraction, we are in the presence of a scene in which the vulnerable par excellence, the infant, not only unilaterally consigns itself to the other, but also, and more importantly, provides for originary bending, for a certain anomalous slope, for a posture. (2016, s. 14, my emphasis)

Cavarero is aware of the risk of reinforcing patriarchal ideas about women as mothers, and about mothers as self-sacrificing, when sketching “the maternal stereotype,” but she highlights the critical potentiality of the figure of the mother if one crystallises it “into a form – a simple, oblique line, the relational sign of a specific posture” (2016, s. 14). The inclined maternal line is, unlike the vertical line of an independent subject, a bodily and ontological posture that is grounded in the acknowledgement of vulnerability, interdependence and asymmetrical yet ethical relations.

The infant child comes to embody vulnerability in the scene depicted by Cavarero. However, her method of seeing the critical potential of stereotypes rather than doing away with them can be applied to children as well. The concept of the vulnerable and dependent child has been deservedly criticised within childhood studies, as that stereotype has positioned the child as a dependent Other in a dichotomous relation to an independent adult (James et al., 1998). However, the distilled line of an infant child – a line that is neither vertical nor inclined but horizontal, the line of someone lying down – could despite its stereotypical content tell us something about the vulnerability and dependency of the human subject in general. Likewise, a small toddler crawls, or totters in a rather unstable manner, and is far from the upright, adult subject whose balance is (supposedly) always under control.

Putting the above in connection with Arendt’s representative thinking, we could conclude that the standpoint of others that we should take into account when making judgments, does not necessarily involve these others standing. They could be lying down, swaying and falling, or sitting. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson refers to feminist standpoint theory when she proposes a “feminist disability sitpoint theory,” highlighting a “perspectival account of experiencing the world from a wheelchair” (2005, p. 1570). A similar point is made by Thomas Abrams, who moves “from phenomenological philosophy to disability studies and back again” and stresses that “[n]ot everyone – or everything – is upright” (2014, pp. 564-565).

The human condition of vulnerability is an ontological predicament shared by all persons, nevertheless, some positions, like that of a newborn child, are

---

20 Similarities can be drawn to “ethics of care” (Gilligan, 1982), which also highlights caring practices, although not focusing on postures.
characterised by being more exposed than others, being more dependent on others’ leaning over them and taking actions of care. What the scene with the newborn also underlines is that appearing is a relational affair. Our first appearance in the world, being born, is not a solitary event; there is by necessity always an Other, that is, a mother, in that scene. This mother is invisible when Arendt draws upon birth to describe action and appearance, Cavarero notes, and Arendt thus misses that our first appearance in the world is marked by asymmetry rather than that of two parties appearing on equal terms.

What about saguaro cacti then, humans’ fellow straight standing species? How would they fit into Cavarero’s theory of inclination? It just so happens that also in the case of saguaros, vertical appearances can deceive. For all the rectitude that saguaros embody, they too start their lives as vulnerable as human babies, dependent on the leaning of someone/-thing else. The SNP Junior Ranger guide explains: “If a saguaro seedling is to survive, it needs the protection of a ‘nurse plant’, a bigger, taller plant that acts like an umbrella and will protect it from the sun and freezing temperatures” (p. 3). A “nurse plant” leans its branches over the little saguaro – acting “like an umbrella” – and thus provides the conditions the saguaro needs to survive and grow. The SNP Junior Ranger guide makes sure that the information it provides on the nurse plant’s role is not forgotten, as it also has a follow-up question for the child reader, asking “How does a ‘nurse plant’ help the saguaro survive?” The children’s book Desert Giant also highlights the necessity of a nurse plant to provide protection to the young saguaro: “The only saguaros that have a chance of survival are those that begin their growth in the shelter of a ‘nurse plant’. The canopy of the larger tree protects the young saguaro and for many years it grows safely” (Bash, 1989, n.p.). Without a nurse plant, no saguaro survives. Without an inclined (m)other, no child survives.

The infant and the mother provide us with two positions: the cared for and the caring. However, loving and caring also include being vulnerable and losing some of one’s own balance, as one leans away from one’s own centre, toward and over the loved and cared for child/other. “The mother here is inclined over her child who, as an emblem of dependent and vulnerable creature, attracts her in a forward motion, in a protrusion beside herself that endangers her balance,” Cavarero writes (2016, p. 99, my emphasis). Should the loved other be lost, one loses a bit of oneself at the same time, or at least, one loses one’s balance. Brock Bahler makes a similar point regarding parent-child relations and draws upon Merleau-Ponty’s writing on the potential power of the other (the child) to decentre oneself (the parent) (Bahler, 2016, p. 102). If I lean over someone, then it is partly that someone who makes me bend by drawing my attention and making me want to incline myself (assuming it is at least partly voluntary). That is, there is a complex pattern of activity and passivity; I act
but am also being acted on. Bornemark (2016) presents the neologism “pactivity” to understand the interconnectedness of activity and passivity – of giving and receiving – and she uses being in labour and giving birth as an example of this.

In the case of the young saguaro and the nurse plant, the nurse plant can become severely affected by the nursing that has taken place. NPS informs that “[s]ome scientists believe that competition from the saguaro may lead to the death of the nurse tree by taking water and nutrients from the soil in the immediate area” (US National Park Service, n.d.). So, when the saguaro has survived, thanks to the nurse plant, and grown a bit bigger, it might be involved in causing the nurse plant’s decline and possible death. What can theoretically be drawn out of this sad scenario with the declining nurse plant? Perhaps that relationality is marked by reversibility and complexity. Roles can be reversed – the position of the vulnerable, once inhabited by the little saguaro, is now occupied by the nurse plant.

In relation to this theme (although focusing on the human), Söderbäck, suggests that Cavarero misses something in her analysis of the mothers and the event of birth:

> It is worth noting that Cavarero’s account takes a certain horizon for granted – one in which we have come to count on birth as an experience that first and foremost exposes the newborn to dependence and vulnerability, while the caregiver, securely, can lean in and offer support. This is a horizon premised on access to quality maternal and prenatal care, as well as the time and resources necessary for caregivers to provide quality care for their newborns. [...] If every day approximately 830 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth [...] then asymmetry works in reverse, and the birth of a child may not mark a new beginning as much as a life-threatening event for the gestating parent. (Söderbäck, 2018, p. 282)

So, also the mother herself is in a situation of dependency, needing inclined others to support her before and after she gives birth.

Another aspect of inclination, and this Cavarero notes, is that the inclined position does not constitute a caring act per se, but “only disposition to provide one” (2016, p. 105). She adds that caring stands in relation to wounding: “To think the maternal merely as care, however, not only risks repeating the stereotype of the self-sacrificing woman; it also, above all, obscures the ethical valence of inclination, which consists in the alternative between care and wound” (Cavarero, 2016, p. 105). Leaning over an Other not just offers the opportunity to care for that other, but also to wound them. This is especially the case in situations marked by asymmetry, as is the mother-infant relation: “Maternal inclination does not decide for good or evil; it simply bends over
the infant, outlining a scene in which good and evil, care and wound, enacted with full and unilateral power, cannot contemplate any retaliation” (Cavarero, 2016, p. 106). This chapter continues with a discussion of wounding relations, of wounding and being wounded.

A thorny problem

Besides its vertical appearance, another physical feature of the saguaro that is often noted is its spines. This is a trait it shares with many other species of cacti.

![Spines in the desert: a prickly pear cactus, with saguaro cacti in the background](image)

Cacti spines is a theme taken up by some of the children writing poetry. One of the poems describes an encounter with the cactus species cholla, which is known for its ability to easily and quickly stick to other things by using its spines to penetrate the surface of the other object and to then stay there clinging. They are called “jumping cholla” as it seems as if they jump onto the objects they stick to. The poem about the cholla cactus is called So We Meet Again Cactus:
Cactus pieces here and there
but I will not step in cholla again.

“You may have won yesterday
but you and your friends are going down.
I know that when the wind blows
hard your pieces of cholla jump
but I will get through your army.”
Let this be a reminder to you innocent people
to be aware of the killer cactus.
(So We Meet Again Cactus, Joshua Delfs, grade 6)

There is an “army” of chollas, and although they “may have won yesterday,”
they “are going down.” The child-cholla encounter is a hostile one, and
retribution is being sought. Humans and cacti share being vulnerable, due to
being alive and embodied, yet in this case this does not lead to care but the
opposite: the threat of you taking me down leads to me taking you down before
that can happen. The other is as vulnerable as I am, or in other words, we share
the general condition of precariousness that marks all life (Butler, 2009). The
key to non-violence, then, is turning this shared vulnerability into mutual
respect rather than a situation where I destroy you before you can destroy me.
However, within a framework where one needs others for one’s own
appearance, I cannot destroy you without at least partly destroying myself in
the same strike, so not responding with violence is in a sense self-preservative.
Butler discusses vulnerability and injurability:

That we can be injured, that others can be injured, that we are subject to death
at the whim of another, are all reasons for both fear and grief. What is less
certain, however, is whether the experience of vulnerability and loss have to
lead straightaway to military violence and retribution. [...] To be injured means
that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanisms of its
distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected
violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways. (Butler, 2004, p. XII)

How can one reflect upon injurability in the cacti land of the Sonoran Desert?
One of the children writing poetry has some thoughts, expressed in a poem
called A Thorny Problem:

Why do cactus poke me?
Why do they grow spines?
[...]
Cactus make a tasty meal
For predators and prey.
But thorns protect the juicy plant
So they will stay away.
(A Thorny Problem, Aryana Clinkingbeard, grade 3)
It a state of injury it is not easy to avoid responding with retribution towards the other who injured me, and it might be even harder to also try to reflect upon why that other acted in this way. A thorny problem indeed. The poem proposes that apparent hostility such as spines might not be an aggressive act towards me as much as an expression of self-preservation. And actually, spines are not only protective: they are also “the leaves” of cacti and help store water and provide shade.

A cactus can poke me, as the poem suggests, but I also pose a threat to the cactus. Not only on an individual level – the embodied I can wound a certain embodied cactus other – but also collectively. A report from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) released in 2015 concludes: “Our assessment revealed cacti to be one of the most threatened taxonomic groups assessed to date: almost a third (31%) of the 1,478 species evaluated are classified as threatened” (International Union for Conservation of Nature, n.d.). A cactus specialist group undertook a study with the aim of evaluating “the vulnerability and extinction risk of all known cactus species” and found that one of the major threats to cacti species was human use of land (e.g. residential and commercial development, agriculture and livestock ranching). Another major threat was human collecting and trading of cacti species for private ornamental collections.

Recalling Cavarero and an inclined position, in this case, the human leaning over cacti results in either removing plants (preparing the land for something other than cacti) or moving them somewhere else, to private collections. In terms of moving cacti to private collections, we could recall the words of Ahmed discussed in the last chapter, that of subjects bringing objects. Objects are brought to the home of the subject, where they appear for the subject, being in the subject’s field of vision. “[S]ome 86% of threatened cacti (203 cactus species) used for horticultural purposes (including private collections) are extracted from wild populations,” the IUCN informs us (International Union for Conservation of Nature, n.d.). In this case, appearing to humans literally means not only “being brought” but also risking disappearance as a species. Recalling the judgment of taste from the previous chapter, we can conclude that humans are inclined to find cacti beautiful and fascinating (incline has several meanings, after all), thereby placing cacti in a precarious position. Inclination as a concept works at several levels here, however, at all of those levels, inclination is marked by asymmetry: although cacti might poke humans with their spines, they do not pose a threat to humans in the same way that humans do to cacti. In the case of cacti, humans desiring them, bringing them to appear in the home, is what risks destroying them and bringing them to extinction.
Sometimes there is a fine line between sustaining and destroying. Feminist psychoanalytic scholar Jessica Benjamin suggests that we should differentiate between acts that make one feel that the other is doing something to one and acts that make one feel that the other is doing something with one: “[T]he question is whether doing is with or to: doing to me implies that complementary twoness of opposing doer and done to, while doing with suggests that shared state of fitting in, coordination” (Benjamin, 2017, p. 5). Benjamin seeks to move away from a destructive and irreversible relation between doing and done to, and a situation where “only one can live” (2017, p.19). She proposes shared recognition of subjectivity, even (and perhaps most importantly) when the partners are unequal: “Sharing begins in the earliest pre-verbal interactions: the creation of alignment in intentions or resonance or feeling, a degree of symmetry or sense of sameness even among unequal partners” (2017, p. 4, my emphasis). Like Cavarero, Benjamin refers to a mother-infant relation in her discussion of pre-verbal interaction and unequal partners, although both of them note that dependency and intersubjectivity go beyond such a relation. Butler writes that the bounded and living appearance of the body always means being exposed to others:

To find that one’s life is also the life of others, even as this life is distinct and must be distinct, means that one’s boundary is at once a limit and a site of adjacency, a mode of spatial and temporal nearness and even boundedness. Moreover, the bounded and living appearance of the body is the condition of being exposed to the other; exposed to solicitation, seduction, passion, and injury; exposed in ways that sustain us but also in ways that can destroy us. (Butler, 2015a, pp. 108-109, my emphasis)

This exposure – entailing the possibility for others to destroy as well as sustain one – is not so different for humans and cacti. I continue below on the topic of bodily boundaries and exposure, drawing upon an example of saguaro-animal relations.

Skin and flesh

Several of the books and information materials on the saguaro cactus mention its special relationship with the gila woodpecker. One of the children’s poems expresses saguaro-gila woodpecker interaction as follows:

If I were a saguaro cactus  
Living creatures would use me as their home.  
Gila woodpeckers and great horned owls  
Make a nest shaped like a dome.  
First they peck a hole in me.  
Then they fly away.
I make the dome get harder
It takes me days and days.
*(If I Were a Saguaro Cactus, Ezekiel Clickingbeard, grade K)*

The poem captures some of the ongoing cactus-animal interaction in the Sonoran Desert, focusing on the gila woodpecker. The gila woodpecker carves a hole in the saguaro where it lays its eggs and when hatched, the baby gila woodpeckers spend the first part of their lives in the nest inside the saguaro. Both *The 100-Year-Old Cactus* and *The Desert Giant* use the word *skin* when referring to what encloses the saguaro and is pecked through by the gila woodpeckers:

> The Gila woodpeckers are looking for a nesting place. They find the 100-year-old-cactus. [...] The woodpecker begins pecking through the *tough green skin*. [...] For several weeks the two birds chip away at the giant cactus. They get sticky and wet as they work building a narrow entrance and a deep room about the size of a small football. (Holmes and Lerner, 1983, n.p., my emphasis)

For both cacti and humans, skin is what separates us from others, but it is also through our skin that we physically connect with others. Didier Anzieu has focused on the skin within psychoanalytical theory and developed the idea of the Skin-Ego, which links the psychic with the physical (Anzieu, 2016). The self is an embodied self, and the skin marks the boundaries of that self. Relating this to a terminology of appearance, we can conclude that nothing can appear without boundaries that demarcate the appearing unit from that which surrounds it. The skin creates an inside and an outside: that which I am and that which I am not. Yet, it is a permeable boundary, and the skin is also very much affected and formed by what it touches and is touched by. The skin is not only a metaphor for the psychic self, but an important part in the making of that psychic self, in Anzieu’s non-dualistic view of the psyche and the body. In several ways, Anzieu’s theory resembles Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about the intertwinement of body and mind, but Anzieu has a different focus and aim, namely developing psychoanalytical theory and improving practices for treating suffering patients. Anzieu notes that the skin can give us pain as well as pleasure. In its doubleness, the skin is a place of both differentiation and of connection. It is “at once a system for protecting our individuality and a primary instrument and site of exchange with others” (Anzieu, 2016, p. 3).

Back to the saguaro. It is of course a risky business to attribute a psyche or consciousness to a saguaro cactus, so I will abstain from doing so, without denying the saguaro a basic notion of individuality and intentionality in a sense of directedness and a form of agentic capacity. We know that the saguaro, and its skin, is *acted on* as the gila woodpecker not only pecks it, but actually pecks *through* “the tough green skin,” as explained in the children’s
book. However, the saguaro is also active when being acted on; it builds a hardening, protective surface, as explained in the saguaro first-person perspective in the poem above, “I make the dome get harder.” What from the start was a pecking through the skin by someone else and from the outside, merges into a process where “[t]he saguaro flesh forms a hard, callous lining” along the surface of the hole/bird nest, as the Desert Giant book describes it (Bash, 1989, n.p.). Maybe we could conceive the saguaro’s situation here as being one of pactivity, of both passivity and activity. The making of a “hard, callous lining” prevents the saguaro from losing fluid at the same time that it makes the nest waterproof for the eggs and chicks that follow.

The saguaro, once sheltered by a nurse plant, is now the one embodying a “maternal line”, enabling the survival of someone else, in this case the newborn gila woodpeckers. The line here is not an inclined posture as much as it is the altered skin line of the (saguaro) body, an uneven line, marked by holes. It is important to remember, as Söderbäck reminded us earlier, that maternal action does not come without risks or sacrifices. While the saguaro in some ways benefits from interacting with and hosting gila woodpeckers (e.g. as the birds eat harmful bugs off the saguaro, and the birds also serve as pollinators), the saguaro skin is also damaged through this interaction to the extent that it needs to protect itself by forming a hard surface. Using this image as a metaphor for an emotional process of being hurt and responding by hardening, by developing a “thick skin”, is close at hand.

Using a “thick skin” metaphor (or analogy) and bringing in Anzieu and psychoanalysis might be to anthropomorphise the saguaro too much. Interestingly enough, Arendt, who is not otherwise known for taking an interest in things not human (and indeed her point in the quotation below is really about the workings of language and thinking in relation to the appearing world, but still) provides a reflection that can be seen as responding to this:

[I]f the rock in the sea ‘which endures the swift courses of whistling winds and the swelling breakers that burst against it’ can become a metaphor for endurance in battle, then ‘it is not . . . correct to say that the rock is viewed anthropomorphically, unless we add that our understanding of the rock is anthropomorphic for the same reason that we are able to look at ourselves petromorphically’ (1978, p. 109)

In this way, my text could be seen as engaging in cactomorphising humans as much as anthropomorphising cacti.

Returning to encounters between saguaros and birds, it can be noted the saguaro takes on a new shape and a thicker surface through its exchange with certain bird others. When Junior Rangers in an exercise in the SNP Junior
Ranger guide are asked to choose a saguaro and describe this particular saguaro, they should note the number of holes it has and which birds made them. Interaction with others is part of what marks a specific saguaro’s uniqueness in relation to other saguaros, as these interactions shape the boundary lines of the saguaro depending on where, how and how many bird-saguaro encounters took place. Ahmed and Stacey suggest that “skin remembers: skin surfaces record our personal biographies” (2001, p. 2). They ask for a “skin-tight politics” that has “inter-embodiment” at its core:

[W]e call for a skin-tight politics, a politics that take as its orientation not the body as such, but the fleshy interface between bodies and worlds. ‘Thinking through the skin’ is a thinking that reflects, not on the body as the lost object of thought, but on inter-embodiment, on the mode of being-with and being-for, where one touches and is touched by others. (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001, p. 1)

Ahmed and Stacey refer to both Anzieu and Merleau-Ponty. The relation between bodies and between body and world is at the heart of Merleau-Ponty’s theorising, and in his later writings he uses the word “flesh” to understand how both the body and the world are constituted. We already encountered flesh above in the form of the “saguaro flesh” mentioned in one of the children’s books. The word flesh has carnal associations, but Merleau-Ponty extends the connotations of flesh. To him, flesh refers to reversibility, e.g. touching/being touched and seeing/being seen, and it is the intertwinement of the sentient (sensing) and the sensible (the sensed), or the principle of this intertwinement. However, it is a principle that does not precede but simultaneously arises with and within the intertwinement itself. Flesh “is not matter, is not mind,” it is something “between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being” (1968, p. 13).

When exemplified through the seeing body being both an object and a subject, flesh can be understood as “neither thing seen only nor seer only, it is Visibility sometimes wandering and sometimes reassembled” (1968, p. 138). Through reversibility, the body-subject and body-object can be experienced as “one sole body before one sole world” (1968, p. 142). Merleau-Ponty extends this to intercorporeality: through the flesh – through sensibility – we are connected to each other. This complex theorising requires a lengthy quotation:

Why would not the synergy exist among different organisms, if it is possible within each? Their landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly: this is possible as soon as we no longer make belongingness

21 Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks (1986) provides more reflections on the matter of skin and subjectivity.
to one same “consciousness” the primordial definition of sensibility, and as 
soon as we rather understand it as the return of the visible upon itself, a carnal 
adherence of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient. [. . .] It 
is said that the colors, the tactile reliefs given to the other, are for me an absolute 
mystery, forever inaccessible. This is not completely true; for me to have not 
an idea, an image, nor a representation, but as it were the imminent experience 
of them, it suffices that I look at a landscape, that I speak of it with someone. 
Then, through the concordant operation of his body and my own, what I see 
passes into him, this individual green of the meadow under my eyes invades his 
vision without quitting my own, I recognize in my green his green (1968, p. 
142).

In the Sonoran Desert, the landscapes of children and saguaros interweave, 
and children and saguaros alike can be understood as belonging to the flesh, 
to a world-forming principle of “carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed 
and of the sensed to the sentient.” Sensing and being sensed in the midst of 
the same landscape, surrounded by other sensing organisms, the child and the 
saguaro have something in common. Maybe “the tactile relief given to the 
other” (the other here being a saguaro), does not have to be an “absolute 
mystery, forever inaccessible” to the child. There is a meeting point in sensing 
the same things (“this individual green of the meadow under my eyes invades 
his vision without quitting my own, I recognize in my green his green”), 
although children and saguaros most likely sense in quite different ways. 
However, with some added imagination, a child could try to “see” the desert 
with the “eyes” of a saguaro, as in this poem, titled If I Were a 100 Year Old 
Saguaro:

I would have seen beautiful sunsets
and desert animals running around having a good time.
The sun would be hot during the day
and sometimes a few bats would come by to eat the fruit off my arms at night.
[. . .]
I would have seen grasses slowly waving in the wind at me
and the rodents running by.
Coyotes howled at the full moon at night.
I would have seen the most important thing,
the nature all around me.
(If I Were a 100 Year Old Saguaro, Ashleigh Maxwell, grade 2)

We could also place this poem in a context of Arendt’s representative 
thinking, that is, to think the desert from the standpoint of others. This ties 
back to one of the main topics of this chapter, the topic of how we stand, 
straight or inclined, or if we do not stand at all but lie or sit down. I have 
discussed this in terms of how we relate to others, including whether we 
sustain or wound (or remain indifferent). The idea of an independent and 
indestructible self has been rejected for a dependent and vulnerable self born
out of, and always marked by, relationality. Nevertheless, I have given some examples of situations of asymmetry, where one party has more power than the other, or has power over the other. However, I have also tried to show that the capacity to act is inevitably intertwined with the condition of (potentially) being acted on. And this being acted on, one’s impressionability, can give pain as well as pleasure.

Butler writes about the intertwining of acting and being acted on, of activity and passivity, in relation to the formation of the subject. She suggests that “acted on, animated, and acting” is a triad that is chiasmic and sequential (Butler, 2015b, p. 15). There is some “animating exteriority” that provides an initial touch that makes the triad sequential and not only chiasmic:

If the touch not only acts on the “I,” but animates that “I,” providing the condition for its own sentience and the beginnings of agency, then it follows that the “I” is neither exclusively passive nor fully active in relation to that touch. We see that acting on and acting are already intertwined in the very formation of the subject. Moreover, this condition in which passive and active are confounded, a condition, more accurately put, in which the two have not yet become disarticulated, is itself made possible by an animating exteriority. (Butler, 2015b, p. 47)

What then, we might ask, is this “animating exteriority”? Butler engages in a discussion with Merleau-Ponty, and relates to his notion of the flesh and his writings on the philosopher and theologian Malebranche. I turn to the somewhat enigmatic and disparate working notes that Merleau-Ponty wrote before he died, notes that were to form the basis for a book he would be unable to finish. These notes provide an elaboration of his concept of the flesh (albeit a rather opaque elaboration): “Do a psychoanalysis of Nature: it is the flesh, the mother”22 (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 267).

I do not seek to enter a discussion on the tradition of linking or equating Nature with a mother figure, as in for example positing our planet as “mother Earth”. My point is rather that the trio flesh-Nature-mother (and with a touch of psychoanalysis) is an interesting one in regard to Butler’s outline of acted on and acting, and in regard to the discussions in this chapter. The flesh, Nature and the mother can all three – in their similarities and differences – be seen as constituting the initial and continuous condition for our appearance in the world. In this sense, humans and cacti are not that different. When we first appear in the world, we are dependent on others, thrown into asymmetrical relations. Although we later in life might be somewhat less exposed, our embodied appearances are still vulnerable and our skin impressionable. Our

---

22 As a side note, it is worth mentioning the critique and reflections Luce Irigaray (1993) has provided regarding Merleau-Ponty, flesh and mothers.
ontology remains one of dependence, but it is also in these relations of dependence – when we appear not just to but also for each other – that the joys and wonders of seeing and being seen, of touching and being touched, can take place.
3.2 Moving children

Academia, April 2019. *This chapter was difficult to write. How does one write about people who are in a situation of extreme precarity, including those who died because of it? How does one write about precarity without eliminating agency? How does one write about this, represent this, from a position of privilege? And then there is biopolitics. Implicit in Arendt’s writing, explicit in Foucault’s, and exploding as a concept since Agamben picked it up. In relation to biopolitical theorising, I always get stuck thinking about this question: is it, or is it not, desirable that life itself is politicised (and governed)? Is it sometimes so, and sometimes not, and if that is the case, when is it desirable, and when is it not? Somewhere here, my head starts to spin. But then I realise that I do not have to answer these questions, and that I cannot even do so. Not because researchers should not be engaged in normative questions, but because these questions need to be answered collectively and publically, not within the lone mind of some PhD student in a university office.*

The Sonoran Desert and its protected natural areas seem to attract visitors not just because of specific animals, plants or rocks, but because of the place in its entirety. The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM) explains that it is a founding partner in a local geotourism initiative that seeks to promote the biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert. It is explained that “[g]eotourism supports sustainability principles by building on a destination’s existing character – its sense of place – to emphasize the distinctiveness of its locale to both visitors and residents.” However, the part of the Sonoran Desert that is located in Arizona is distinctive not just for tourists and residents, and not just because of its natural settings and biodiversity, but also because it forms part of a migration route for people crossing the US-Mexico border. Due to this irregular migration, the area has been made into a militarised high-security zone with a large number of border patrol activities. The Trump
administration’s planned border wall will cut through the Sonoran Desert, including the part of the desert situated in Arizona.23

Children who spent time in the protected natural areas in Arizona close to the border are either residents living close by or tourists who come to enjoy nature, or they are migrants that cross the border under harsh conditions. The conditions under which these different children appear in the same space are not the same. Drawing upon Butler, we could speak of a space marked by “differential forms of power that qualify who can and cannot appear” (Butler, 2015a, p. 50). In this chapter, I look into the politics of appearance in the Sonoran Desert, including actual and potential effects of such politics. How does the right, or lack of right, to appear affect how one appears (or not) and

23 Although the context of the US-Mexico border in the Sonoran Desert is very different from that of the Swedish-Danish border in the Öresund region, the formerly “open” Öresund border became a migration policy hotspot when the Swedish government in 2015 decided to implement control mechanisms, starting to check identity documents of all the travelers, and closing the border to those who could not provide such documents. The aim was to diminish the number of (undocumented) migrants entering Sweden. A fence was put up at the last underground train station in Denmark before the train starts crossing Öresund to arrive in Sweden. The fence was referred to as a “wall against refugees” by a well-established Swedish newspaper (Magnusson, 2015).
inhabits space? I also link this to access to water, and how water becomes a political object. I use Junior Ranger material, poems written by children and facts about border-crossing in the Sonoran Desert to discuss appearance and embodiment, including how political regulation of spaces differentiates between bodies, with the consequences that some body-subjects end up in very precarious situations.

The (non-)appearing body-subject

A large number of Latin American children have crossed the Mexico-US border and walked through the Sonoran desert in order to start a life in the US. The US Customs and Border Protection estimates that during the fiscal year 2013/2014, 8,000-9,000 unaccompanied children crossed the border in the Tucson sector in Arizona (US Customs and Border Protection, n.d.). If one adds children who were travelling in the company of their parents/custodians, the total number of children crossing the border that year was even higher. Although the numbers decreased somewhat during the following years, many children continue to cross the border. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) concludes that Pima county (Tucson area and beyond) is “a notoriously dangerous crossing” where many migrants die during their journey (International Organization for Migration, 2017).

Vicki Squire has conducted research on border politics with a focus on migration in the Sonoran Desert and offers “an insight that various scholars have noted: that the physical forces of the desert have increasingly emerged as a means to control migrants over recent years” (2015, p. 12). Squire presents a critical analysis of border political strategies that cause migrants to take routes through the desert that are difficult to travel due to the terrain and climate. Juanita Sundberg and Bonnie Kaserman also write about migration in the Sonoran Desert and just like Squire, they highlight the danger migrants face when border policies lead to them being “redirected to harsh and sparsely inhabited lands” within the region. Sundberg and Kaserman comment that 40% of these lands “are federally designated as national forests, national parks, national monuments, and national wildlife refuges” (Sundberg and Kaserman, 2007, p. 727).²⁴

²⁴ A parallel can be drawn to the Mediterranean Sea, which has become part of a migration route for people seeking to enter Europe, despite this sea-crossing journey being notoriously dangerous for migrants. IOM reports that over 19 000 deaths, including children, are linked to migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea since 2014 (International Organization for Migration, 2019).
The Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (OPCNM) is a biosphere reserve located along the border and constitutes one of those protected land areas where national borders are crossed by migrants. The planned border wall will affect OPCNM; in fact, wall construction work has already begun in a part of OPCNM, despite environmental groups’ protests that it will have severe negative effects on wild life and biodiversity in the area, and the Tohono O’odham nation pointing out the significance of the land for their nation (Gilbert, 2019). An article in The Guardian describes the OPCNM: “Arizona’s Organ Pipe park is a ‘paradise’ for tourists but a death trap for migrants” (Carroll, 2015a). The Junior Ranger guide for the OPCNM offers another description of the park: “There is no better place on Earth than Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument to see and feel life at the edges and by doing so, perhaps learn a little more about ourselves” (p. 3, my emphasis). The OPCNM Junior Ranger guide provides a “Safety first” list (p. 4) with bullet points that might give a clue about what it means “to see and feel life at the edges” and that also might explain why the OPCNM is considered to be a “death trap for migrants.” The safety list says that a visitor should drink a lot of water, use sunscreen, look out for plants (e.g. cacti) that can injure one and stay in groups so that one does not get lost.

Nature tourists like Junior Rangers and migrating children appear within the same areas, yet they face very different conditions when doing so. With Butler, we can ask “[w]hich humans are eligible for recognition within the sphere of appearance, and which are not?” (Butler, 2015a, p. 36). The Junior Ranger programme is inextricably linked to the protected areas of the Sonoran Desert; a Junior Ranger is after all called upon not only to visit but also to take care of those areas. In return, the migrating child is marked by not-belonging. In official border political language, s/he is called an alien child. The double meaning of the word alien – a foreigner or a being from another world, respectively – might give some clues in terms of the conditions of the migrating child’s position. The fact that some children are just children, and other are aliens, reminds us that the possibility to appear can be a highly regulated affair that separates subjects:

But what if the highly regulated field of appearance does not admit everyone, requiring zones where many are expected not to appear or are legally proscribed from doing so? Why is that field regulated in such a way that only certain kinds

25 Although this topic is not addressed in the thesis, it should be noted that the Tohono O’odham nation, native to the Sonoran Desert, has long been negatively affected by US border policy and militarisation. Bradley Moreno, a member of the Tohono O’odham nation, says to The Guardian that the border line “cuts through our ancestral land, and it divides families that have been able to go back and forth freely since before the border line was drawn” (Levin, 2017). The politics of appearance in the Sonoran Desert certainly involve and affect those Native American nations whose reservations and spatial histories are situated close to the border.
How does one appear in a place where one is not allowed to do so? The “solution” is simply to not appear (visibly), but to hide. The OPCNM Junior Ranger guide repeatedly states that the Junior Ranger should “leave nothing but footprints” (e.g. p. 15), alluding to the avoidance of littering, but for the migrating child, footprints are something one does not want to leave behind. The passage below is the first lines of an article in The Guardian about border crossing and the Mexican town Altar in the Sonoran Desert:

The migrants who pass through this desert outpost seek invisibility even before they begin the great trek north. After dusk they flit around the stores lining the plaza to stock up on camouflage backpacks, black water bottles and special slippers to cover their tracks in the Sonora desert. (Carroll, 2015b, my emphasis)

Slippers made to cover tracks are purchased so that no footprints are left. Invisibility is what is sought. So while the Junior Ranger is discovering the desert, the migrating child is trying not to be discovered in the same desert. The SNP Junior Ranger guide suggests that readers should play “Desert Wildlife Detective” and track animal footprints: “Desert animals can be hard to see, but with careful observation you may be able to find some tracks along a park trail” (p. 10). Meanwhile, migrating children do their best to hide their tracks as to not to be discovered by the Border Patrol. How can we understand these different ways of appearing in space?

When Merleau-Ponty describes a body, it is a body marked by an “I can”; the body-subject is to a large extent defined by what it can do and its interaction with the world. Merleau-Ponty speaks of a body schema, and defines this as “a manner of expressing that my body is in and toward the world” (2012, p. 103). The body schema links motricity with intentionality and provides orientation in space. For the Junior Ranger, footprints can be, and are, left because the world is at one’s feet and the inhabiting of space – the right and possibility to inhabit space – is taken for granted as a starting point. One can wonder what happens to a person’s body schema and being in the world if one of the most fundamental habits, that of letting one’s feet touch the ground, is not to be recognised? If the impression of one’s feet on the ground – the result of being “in and toward the world” and inhabiting space – preferably should be erased, for example by wearing special slippers?

The involuntarily yet sought after invisibility when crossing the border and the Sonoran Desert consists of hiding from the Border Patrol and other people,
like nature tourists, who could report one to the authorities. At the same time that the Border Patrol tracks down irregular migrants – that is, by trying to see them – the government tacitly encourages the migrants’ invisibility by applying strategies that, as mentioned earlier, redirect the migrants to “harsh and sparsely inhabited lands” (Sundberg and Kaserman, 2007, p. 727). There the migrants are not seen but face such difficult terrain and weather conditions that both their migrating mission and their lives are in danger. This potential mortal price of invisibility is accompanied by a break with a fundamental dimension of bodily existence, that of the relationality of vision that Merleau-Ponty proposes, where seeing also means being seen. Arendt suggests that if one is a seeing being, this means not only that one can be seen, but that one desires to be seen:

> [W]hatever can see wants to be seen, whatever can hear calls out to be heard, whatever can touch presents itself to be touched. It is indeed as though everything that is alive – in addition to the fact that its surface is made for appearance, fit to be seen and meant to appear to others – has an urge to appear, to fit itself into the world of appearances by displaying and showing. (Arendt, 1978, p. 29)

Everything that is alive has an “urge to appear,” Arendt proposes. A lack of access to appearance – that is, to be seen without the violent or negative repercussions that follow being seen if one is a migrating child – would then deny one a fundamental aspect of one’s existence as an appearing being.

**Stopping and being stopped**

Being forced to hide limits where and to whom one can appear, also meaning that that which can appear before one is limited. Migrant children cannot explore the desert in the ways that Junior Rangers and poetry-writing resident children are encouraged to. The Junior Ranger guides depict a desert where there is always something to explore and discover. This is to a large extent a bodily discovering; the Junior Ranger is encouraged to see, hear, smell and touch the desert and the non-human life forms residing in it. The OPCNM Junior Ranger guide has a page with the title “Take a Hike!” with a pre-printed map to which the Junior Ranger is supposed to add details in order to personalise it, for instance, where the Junior Ranger saw “fascinating cacti” (p. 7). The double meaning of the expression “take a hike” seems tragically ironic, as migrating children also can be seen as compelled to “take a hike” in the sense of not being allowed to be in this space.

The OPCNM Junior Ranger guide encourages the Junior Ranger to “stop in a quiet area and stand very still for 3 minutes” (p. 7). The purpose of this break
is to experience the surroundings using one’s senses. The children are encouraged to write down three things heard, three things seen, and something smelled. Something similar to this sensing experience is expressed in a poem written by one of the ASDM poetry competition winners. The poem is called *The Desert’s Senses*:

I inhale deeply, smell creosote, the prairie grass, the smell all around me, Surrounding me

[...] The desert has enveloped me, smell, sight touch, and hearing; I am now truly alive, part of the desert. *(The Desert’s Senses, George Ballenger, grade 5)*

I interpret this poem and the above-mentioned Junior Ranger exercises as pointing toward an uninterrupted body schema in a sense that the body-subject very much is “in and toward the world”; the desert can be taken in and enjoyed without hindrance. The desert contributes to a feeling of being “truly alive” and it is not something that threatens, but rather something that envelopes the self. Even things that could be a source of bodily unease, such as the strongly shining sun, can be enjoyed with pleasure, as in another poem:

The hot rays of the sun boiling my skin. Feeling of excitement and a smile upon my face *(The Sonoran Desert, Ellenor Van Cleve, grade 2)*

However, the same sun that provides pleasure can also constitute a threat if you cannot withdraw from it, as would be the case for border crossers.

Ahmed (2006) writes on how Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about the body play out in regard to politicised bodily difference, marked by power relations (see also Fanon, 1986 and Young, 1980 for important critical development of Merleau-Ponty’s writings on the lived body). Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is one of motility. He writes that “[h]ow the body inhabits space (and time, for that matter) can be seen more clearly by considering the body in motion because movement is not content with passively undergoing space and time, it actively assumes them” (2012, p. 105). However, Ahmed notes that for some bodies, what is available is not an assuming of space through a (freely) moving body, but rather a “phenomenology of being stopped” (2006, p. 139):

A phenomenology of ‘being stopped’ might take us in a different direction than one that begins with motility, with a body that ‘can do’ by flowing into space. [...] Black activism has shown us how policing involves a differential economy of stopping: some bodies more than others are ‘stopped’ by being the subject of the policeman’s address. [...] Stopping is therefore a political economy that is distributed unevenly between others, and it is also an affective economy that
leaves its impressions, affecting the bodies that are subject to its address. 
(Ahmed, 2006, pp. 139-140)

Earlier we had a Junior Ranger exercise where stopping was a voluntary (pause of) movement – to “stop in a quiet area and stand very still for 3 minutes” – with the objective of fully embracing the desert through one’s senses. Stopping (others) as “a political economy” is another thing. Ahmed suggests that space shapes bodies and bodies shape space. The politically regulated act of stopping, and stopping some bodies more than others, shapes both bodies and space. We could also say that trying to avoid being stopped by hiding is also an activity that likely shapes both bodies and space.

Children are positioned in various ways within the politics of stopping. Two examples can be given to show this. They are examples that extend somewhat beyond Arizona but relate to border-crossing and environmental sustainability, respectively. In 2018, the Trump administration started to separate border-crossing parents and their children, due to an intention to start prosecuting every (adult) person who crosses the border illegally. Thousands of children were separated from their parents and treated as “unaccompanied alien children,” an article in The Guardian reports, which means that they were placed in the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (Holpuch and Gambino, 2018). This separation of family members received massive critique. The public was not only dismayed by the separations themselves, but also by the conditions under which the children were kept. There were reports and photographic documentation of children being kept in cages:

The Texas facility is known as Ursula, though immigrants are reportedly calling it La Perrera – dog kennel in Spanish – in reference to the cages used to hold children and adults who have ended up there after crossing the border from Mexico illegally. “One cage had 20 children inside. Scattered about are bottles of water, bags of chips [crisps] and large foil sheets intended to serve as blankets,” the Associate Press reports. (“Trump migrant separation policy”, 2018, brackets in original)

That the facility had cages evoked associations to animals and associations to being treated like animals. The other example I present here regarding stopping and being stopped also relates to migration and animalisation. The United States Forest Service (USFS) is an agency that seeks to “sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations” (US Forest Service, n.d.). The USFS has developed material for children similar to Junior Ranger guides. This material includes a “Non-Native Species Learning Kit” subtitled “Close the Doors!” The idea is that children learn about and engage in protecting nature against invasive species: “They’re munching our trees, invading our waters, and taking over our favorite natural communities. They
are invasive species!” (p. 2.). One part of the learning kit is titled “Homeland Security” and it is introduced with these words:

Homeland security isn’t just about securing the borders of our country from terrorist threats. We should also be concerned about another threat that could prove to be devastating to the ecology and economy of the United States – that is the threat of imported invasive species such as pathogens, plants, insects, and other animals. (p. 25)

The exercises in this part of the learning kit address children from the 6th grade and up and are framed by this question: “If we had tight security at all borders and the ability to interrogate all species entering the country, could we stop further invasions?” The exercises consist of role-playing staged at “entry points into America,” where one child plays a (human) officer and another an animal migrant, pretending to be human (instead of the invasive species). The officer “wears a badge and cap. A uniform-like costume would be great, but not necessary.” The child playing a representative of the invasive species Asian Long-horned Beetle “wears dark sunglasses [. . .] The ALB could be dressed in black.” Another possibility is that the second child plays a Snakehead Fish and “wears the fish head. Dark brown or black clothing is optional.” Below is an excerpt from the role-play with the Asian Long-horned Beetle (ALB) being interviewed, and stopped, by an Agriculture Specialist (AS) working for US Customs and Border Protection:

AS: Hello, welcome to America. Can I see your passport please?
ALB: I think I left it in my crate – I mean suitcase. Can you wait here while I go check?
AS: I’m sorry. I can’t let you leave this area without a passport. Where did you say you were from?
[. . .]
AS: (doubtful) Could I see your ticket?
ALB: I think it might be in the same place as my passport.
AS: So, you can’t produce a ticket or a passport? Are you here legally?
[. . .]
ALB: Don’t bother. You’ve got me! You’ll find me on the list. I’m the Asian Longhorn Beetle. (defiant) I was so close to making it. Stupid sawdust! I could have had it all, maples, horse chestnuts, elms, birches. You name it – it was mine. I could have made your life miserable. You thought gypsy moths were bad. I could have wiped out the entire maple syrup industry. I could have ruined tourism! But no, you have to see a little sawdust.

Summing up, we have one child with a badge, cap and preferably uniform stopping another child, preferably dressed in black and posing as an anthropomorphised or zoomorphised migrant without the legal right to enter the country, and with the intention of ruining the nature and economy of the
Recalling also the earlier example of migrating children kept in cages, we could say that we have two examples where Ahmed’s “phenomenology of ‘being stopped’” meets Agamben’s “anthropological machine” (2004). Such a machine involves procedures through which an opposition and hierarchy between human and animal is established, at the same time that not all humans are included in the human category.

Both examples link dehumanisation and animalisation to freedom of movement and space (or a lack thereof), and the categories of race and nationality play a part in this. Ahmed again:

We can hence redescribe the phenomenology of the ‘I can’ as phenomenology of whiteness. Such a phenomenology, in other words, describes the ease with which the white body extends itself in the world through how it is orientated toward objects and others. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 138)

She proposes further that “[c]olonialism makes the world ‘white,’ which is of course a world ‘ready’ for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 111). Certain objects are within the reach of certain subjects, and out of the reach of other subjects, and this creates a sharp differentiation between border-crossing children and Junior Rangers in the Sonoran Desert. Below I continue this discussion by turning to an object that we all need to have within reach: water. How does who you are affect the reachability of water?

Reaching for water

We all need water to survive. The Junior Ranger guides highlight this in relation to the Junior Ranger who visits the desert, saying that one should drink a lot of water when visiting the parks. The SNP Junior Ranger guide concludes that the saguaro cactus also needs water to live: “Saguaro cactus have shallow roots to drink as much rain water as possible. You don’t have roots, so you need to drink more often, even when you’re not thirsty!” (p. 4). Just like the Junior Rangers, the migrants travelling through the desert need water. The difficulties of carrying enough water for the journey can lead to dehydration, which in its extreme form is one of the causes of death for those migrants who do not survive the journey through the desert.

---

26 See Frawley and McCalman (2014) for discussions within environmental humanities about racialisation and human-animal relations in regard to the conceptualisation of invasive alien species.
The humanitarian organisation No More Deaths located in Tucson has its mission in its title: it seeks to prevent migrant deaths in the area. One of their methods is to leave big bottles filled with water in places that are known to be on migrant routes. However, this has been met by resistance. No More Deaths, together with the humanitarian organisation Coalición de Derechos Humanos, released a report that describes “the intentional destruction of over 3,000 gallons of water left out for border crossers, implicating the US Border Patrol in the majority of this destruction” (No More Deaths & Coalición de Derechos Humanos, n.p.). On the organisation’s website, one can see a video of border patrol officers kicking and pouring water out of bottles intended for migrants. In addition to this, members of No More Deaths have been fined and sentenced for littering when placing out water bottles; activist Walt Staton was sentenced to 300 hours of community service and a year of probation (Gandossy, n.d.).

Another activist, Dan Millis, was charged with “disposal of waste” when a Border Patrol officer found him placing out water bottles in the Buenos Aires Wildlife Refuge, a protected area situated in the eastern part of the Sonoran Desert in 2008. Squire (2015) tells the story of Dan Millis. He had decided to place water bottles in this specific area because two days earlier, he had found
the dead body of a 14-year old girl there. The girl turned out to be a Salvadoran migrant named Josseline, who was travelling with her 10-year-old brother in a group led by a coyote. She had become ill and could not keep up with the group, and eventually died due to illness and the cold nighttime temperature of the desert. Josseline and other migrants – children and adults – were and are the intended recipients of the water bottles that humanitarian activists leave in the desert, including the ones that Millis left near to the place where Josseline was found (and which led him to being charged, although he was freed of charge in a later appeal). Impeding border crossers’ access to water can be seen as a tacit strategy to combat unwanted immigration, Squire points out (2015).

No More Deaths has written several reports, one of which addresses the conditions of the short-term custody that migrants who have been apprehended by the Border Patrol are placed in. In this report, based on interviews with migrants during 2008-2011, one can read the following:

Agents denied water to 863 people and gave insufficient access to water to 1,402 additional people. *Children were more likely than adults to be denied water or given insufficient water.* Many of those denied water by Border Patrol were already suffering from moderate to severe dehydration at the time they were apprehended. (No More Deaths, 2011, p. 3, my emphasis)

The reasons why children were more likely than adults to be denied water can only be speculated about, and it is somewhat unexpected given that children are often perceived as more vulnerable and more innocent than adults.

The NPS website for the OPCNM advises park visitors not to give water to people in distress: “People in distress may ask for food, water or other assistance. It is recommended that you do not make contact” (US National Park Service, n.d.). It should not be denied that it could potentially be dangerous for visitors to provide water, etc., especially since not only migration but also cartel-driven drug trafficking take place in the Sonoran Desert. However, the message does cast doubt on the worthiness of protection of these “people in distress.” Following Butler (2009), one can ask which lives are deemed grievable in this specific space and hence worthy of protection – worthy of water – and which are not. The migrant child is not grievable to the extent that migration policy is changed, or even to the extent that water bottles can be left close to where she was found dead, as in Josseline’s case, so that other deaths can be prevented. The lives of border crossers are therefore to some extent placed outside the frame of the protection-worthy, even in protected natural areas (such as the Buenos Aires Wildlife Refuge where Josseline died) where the protection of life otherwise is a central mission.
Foucault’s description of biopolitics as “to make live and to let die” (2003, p. 241) seems applicable in this case. However, it extends beyond humans and takes on a trans-species approach. The questions of who/what is made to live, and who/what is to let die, is not so easily answered by using a human/non-human dichotomy (although the human/non-human hierarchy can hardly be said to be undone). The questions are rather answered by another question: who/what is deemed to belong to the space (of the US side) of the Sonoran Desert, and is hence made to live, unlike those/that who are unwanted in that space, who can be let die? For Agamben, biopolitics are channelled through the use of a state of exception, but by the use of this state not as an exception but rather a frequently applied procedure allowing the governing power to circumvent the law (1998). When a state of exception is normalised, it can facilitate the more or less permanent exclusion of some people from the sphere of rights. Steven DeCaroli (2007) draws upon Agamben’s biopolitical framework and discusses the banishment of unwanted people from a community. DeCaroli refers to a passage in Cicero’s “Oratio Pro Domo” regarding Roman law and explains it the following way:

Compelling an individual to find refuge in another state was therefore accomplished, not by depriving them of their civil standing within Rome, but by literally forbidding them access to the basic necessities of life. The “forbidding of fire and water” (aquae et ignis interdictio) thus served as an indirect means of inflicting a sentence of banishment. (DeCaroli, 2007, p. 61, my emphasis)

There is, of course, a lot of difference between ancient Roman law, explained by Cicero, and contemporary US border politics in the Sonoran Desert. However, the aquae interdictio (forbidding of water) as a way of banishing people from a specific place does bear a certain resemblance. Impeding access to water, and perhaps especially in a desert, makes it impossible for people to survive, no matter what “civil standing” they might have (in Rome) or not have (border crossers in the US), and hence the aquae interdictio becomes an effective tool in directing unwanted people away from a certain place.

DeCaroli writes, referring to Aristoteles, that the people who were banished from the polis were not “those who break rules, but [...] those who, through monetary or social influence, threaten to alter the political order itself” (2007, p. 57). Migrants in the desert probably have quite little monetary or social influence, but, they are nevertheless constituted as a threat that can “alter the political order itself,” in this case the order of nation-states, citizenship and the politics of belonging. As in the polis, the threat the migrants in the Sonoran Desert constitutes is not linked to action, to doing in the sense of rule-breaking, but it is rather a threat linked to being and embodying “difference.”
This is, however, inseparable from space; it is being in a certain space that constitutes the threat, or perhaps, moving one’s being into and across a certain space. The border crossers are banished from the US side of the Sonoran Desert, or made victims of *aquae interdictio*, not because they for example have stolen something or exercised violence. They are banished because their bodies are not recognised as belonging to that space. If they had been recognised, if all persons who appear in a certain space are considered to belong to that space – or at least to have the right to appear there – then the political order of nation-states that link certain people to certain territories would collapse. Or in the words of Agamben in an article that engages with Arendt and her writings about refugees:

> If in the system of the nation-state the refugee represents such a disquieting element, it is above all because by breaking up the identity between man citizen, between nativity and nationality, the refugee throws into crisis the original fiction of sovereignty. (Agamben, 1995, p. 117)

**Legal and political objects**

Maybe it should be noted that in the case with water and migrants in the Sonoran Desert, water is not forbidden as much as it is made non-apparent; it ceases to appear for migrants when for instance border patrols empty water bottles left by humanitarian activists in the desert. All humans (and saguaros) need water, but it can only be reached by some. Needing water to survive could describe an aspect of the shared precariousness that Butler writes about, while some people’s lack to access to water could describe precarity. Whereas this chapter has focused upon migrants’ limited access to water, water shortage in general is deemed to be a future reality in the American Southwest (including Arizona) due to current unsustainable water use, which will become more severe with climate change (Ackerman and Stanton, 2011). The last case of this chapter addresses this theme, and introduces another Butler.

In 2011, ten-year-old Jaime Lynn Butler filed a lawsuit against the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. She is one of several children that in different US states have filed lawsuits against the state for neglecting prevention of environmental damage. The case was dismissed but an appeal was made (Butler v. Brewer, Appeallant’s opening brief, 2012). In the appeal, one can read that Butler “is a member of the Navajo Tribe and born into the Bitter Water Clan” and that she is “active in and committed to conserving natural resources.” Part of her activism consists in participating in community activities to preserve water, and the lawsuit is focused on the preservation of water and climate change. In the Butler v. Arizona case, the public trust doctrine plays an important part (and Roman law makes another guest
The public trust doctrine emanates from Roman law: ‘By the law of nature these things are common to mankind – the air, running water, the sea and consequently the shores of the sea’” (Butler v. Brewer, Appellant's opening brief, 2012, p. 10).

The argument put forward in the appeal is that the Arizona government does not do enough to prevent climate change and increased temperatures, even though the public trust doctrine could be said to endorse prevention and mitigation as air is conceptualised as a public trust asset. In line with this, J. L. Butler asks the court “to apply the public trust doctrine to the atmosphere, determine if the State is fulfilling its duties under the doctrine, and if it is not fulfilling its duties, what requirements the State must meet in order to be in compliance with the doctrine as it relates to the atmosphere” (Butler v. Brewer, Appellant’s opening brief, 2012, p. 24).

The importance of the atmosphere to survival, or should we say to appearance, is emphasised. The atmosphere is described as “a resource so vital that if irreparably impaired, human and natural communities in Arizona as we know and enjoy them would cease to exist” (Butler v. Brewer, Appellant’s opening brief, 2012, p. 16, my emphasis). One of the effects that increased temperatures will have is a decrease in the Colorado River’s annual stream flow. The Colorado River supplies much of the water for communities and agriculture in Arizona. A 40% reduction in river basin water storage is predicted given current temperature trends, the appeal document states. In this case, it seems Merleau-Ponty’s river temporality meets Arendt’s (political) battleground temporality. Diminishing water resources form an important part of J. L. Butler’s allegations, including regarding her having individual standing in the case. Having standing is “often required to bring a civil action in Arizona” (Butler v. Brewer, Appellant’s opening brief, 2012, p. 25), and hence enhances one’s chances in comparison to a claim of general harm:

Although Butler alleges general harm in Arizona from greenhouse gas emissions, she also alleges distinct injuries to herself that establish standing. She alleges that, as a result of the State’s actions, she has suffered and will suffer from: (1) increased temperatures that have diminished and may in the future eliminate water that she relies on to live. (Butler v. Brewer, Appellant’s opening brief, 2012 p. 26, my emphasis)

With Zerilli and Arendt at the back of my mind, I suggest that what J. L. Butler does with water here is to make it appear as an object of judgment. Or more specifically, the intersection of water and the future is made into an object of political judgment, as it is mainly the future lack of water that is referred to. J. L. Butler argues that water, and the reachability of water, should be understood as a legal-political right. Were that right to be denied, one is
entitled to taking legal action. Nevertheless, she does so by posing something else as an object of judgment, namely, air (and by extension, climate change). The argument is based on the public trust doctrine, which addresses things that “are common to mankind.” I repeat a passage from Zerilli, first quoted in the Setting I:

Arendt’s turn to the third Critique advances a form of interpretive understanding focused on the creation and maintenance of the common world and how it is that new “objects” of judgment — or, more precisely, matters of common concern — can come into view for us. (Zerilli, 2016, p. 9, my emphasis)

Air can hardly be said to be a “new” object of judgment, given that the public trust doctrine references Roman law. But maybe we could say that air does not have a stable status as an object of political judgment, as J. L. Butler’s lawsuit and the school strikes for the climate prove by their mere existence. Something similar could be said of water, particularly regarding the case of J. L. Butler, but also in the case of water bottles left for migrants in the desert.

In this chapter, I have tried to show how space, nature, moving children and certain objects enter or do not enter the politically governed. Who or what can appear, or not appear, where, and with what access to life-sustaining conditions? The next part of the study continues on this theme but discusses it from the point of view of the school strikes for the climate.
BARN FÖR KLIJMATET
In the two previous settings, the sea and the desert, I discussed appearance from different angles, addressing how time, space, others and objects can appear (or fail to appear) to children. A majority of the examples have come from contexts where adults have been highly engaged in creating and regulating the situation. Even the desert poems are, after all, the outcomes of a poetry competition for children organised by adults. In this fourth setting, consisting of the school strikes for the climate, children and young people have themselves been very active in creating the context. And one could say that the children are not simply telling us about or reacting to what appear to them; they are involved in changing appearances in different ways.

In August 2018, 15-year-old Greta Thunberg started to school strike for the climate outside the Swedish parliament. It began as a daily strike a couple of weeks before the parliamentary elections, to raise the issue of climate change and environmental degradation ahead of the upcoming elections. However, after the elections had been held, Thunberg continued to school strike on a weekly basis on Fridays. Soon the school strikes for the climate – sometimes also called Fridays for Future – spread around the world. What started with one person grew to millions of strikers around the world a year later. The general demand of the school strikes is that politicians and adult generations should pay more attention to climate change and environmental degradation, and that action has to be taken now, otherwise it will be too late.

On March 15, 2019, a joint global strike was organised in over 100 countries, attracting hundreds of thousands of participants. I participated that day in Stockholm, and the signs and speeches I saw and heard that day form part of my material.27 I have also gathered material about the strikes through

27 See Wahlström et al., 2019 for statistics on the school strike for the climate in Stockholm on March 15, 2019. For example, 67% of the strike participants (enrolled in school) identified as female. This would support the thesis that women and girls are more engaged in environmental issues than men and boys. Regarding gender, it should also be noted that the strike leaders that co-authored the editorial in *The Guardian* related to the strike on March 15, 2019 – an editorial that I refer to throughout this setting – all have female-sounding names (although this does not necessarily mean that they self-identify as female or were assigned a female sex at birth).
newspaper reports and from videos from international meetings where Thunberg has been invited to speak.\textsuperscript{28} In addition to this, I have looked at websites linked to the strikes, such as School Strike 4 Climate Australia (www.schoolstrike4climate.com) and UK Student Climate Network (ukscn.org). An important piece that I include in my discussions is a guest editorial in \textit{The Guardian} written by some of the students leading the school strikes in a number of countries (all of which in the global North, however). I see the school strikes for the climate as a highly relevant phenomenon in relation to questions about children, generations and the environment. I also believe it is important to include the strikes in the thesis given the attention they have received in the media and political speeches (although not necessarily in policy or practice, at least not yet).

Setting IV comprises only one chapter. It considers themes that have been discussed earlier in the thesis – such as action and vulnerability – but this time from the point of view of the school strikes. It also addresses thinking to a larger extent than the previous settings.

\textsuperscript{28} The upcoming school strike quotations that do not have a reference in the text (and that do not come from my field visit to the strike in Stockholm 15 March 2019) are collected in a list at the end of the thesis, where I provide the website addresses where I found each of them.
4.1 Students in the streets

Stockholm, March 2019. I am at Mynttorget this March day, and even though I am not an anthropologist, I will add that it happens to be a rainy day. I am standing together with a lot of others, of whom the great majority are schoolchildren, outside the parliament in Stockholm. “Keep it in the ground,” they chant rhythmically. Fossil fuels in the ground, children in the streets. As sympathetic to the cause as I may be, I am not on strike, quite the opposite, I am working. The strike is my study object. I feel a bit like I am exploiting the situation, as I turn my head around in search of slogans that could fit neatly into my discussions, strengthen the points I would like to make and motivate the use of the Arendtian notions that I am particularly fond of. One such notion concerns conscience, which Arendt relates to her ideas about what thinking is (Arendt, 1978). However, the notion of conscience never made it into this thesis, apart from here in this paragraph. I think I left conscience unattended because it can so easily be related to guilt, and people keep telling me that guilt does not motivate people to act politically, but that it rather has the contrary effect. Maybe that is the case; I do not know. Regardless, conscience might take us in a too individualistic direction anyway. And it easily raises questions about throwing stones while living in a glass house, so I do not dare to open the conscience and guilt box myself. I will let the kids do it instead.

Welcome to the school strike for the climate!

On the 15th of March 2019, a day of a coordinated global school strike for climate, a couple of the students who were leading the strikes in their respective countries were invited as guest editors by The Guardian. In an editorial, they explained the strike as follows:

This movement had to happen, we didn’t have a choice. The vast majority of climate strikers taking action today aren’t allowed to vote. Imagine for a second what that feels like. Despite watching the climate crisis unfold, despite knowing the facts, we aren’t allowed to have a say in who makes the decisions about climate change. And then ask yourself this: wouldn’t you go on strike too, if you thought doing so could help protect your own future? So today we walk out of school, we quit our college lessons, and we take to the streets to say enough is enough. (Thunberg, Taylor, Neubauer, Gantois, De Wever, Charlier, Gillibrand, Villasenor, 2019)
As the passage points out, children’s influence on political institutions and procedures, such as elections, is very limited. The strikes are described as a response to their lack of access to formalised forms of political influence. The strikes are thus an alternative way to demand accountability: “These strikes are happening today – from Washington DC to Moscow, Tromsø to Invercargill, Beirut to Jerusalem, and Shanghai to Mumbai – because politicians have failed us” (Thunberg, Taylor, Neubauer, Gantois, De Wever, Charlier, Gillibrand, Villasenor, 2019).

School strike sign in Stockholm: “Wake up: Save our planet”

How can we understand the school strikes for the climate? What can we make of the fact that children are striking, that they are striking from school, and that they are striking for the climate? I discuss this by drawing upon Arendt and her concept of a space of appearance, including stretching it beyond Arendt’s approach. Further, I look to Arendt’s theorising regarding thinking, and the relation between thinking and acting.
Who or what

A banner at one of the schools strikes that took place in Berlin had the following message: “We’re here now because we want to be able to be here in 50 years’ time.” Appearing at the space where the strike is held is linked to the possibility of being able to appear in this space also in the future, 50 years from now. Another slogan, one of the most common ones around the world as far as I have seen, is “There is no Planet B.” In this case, it is Earth that is our space of appearance; there is no back-up planet. We could say that spaces of appearance – interpreted in a broad sense – play an important part in regard to the school strikes in several ways. We have the physical space of the strikes on the streets and in front of government buildings, where the striking children appear. We also have Earth as a space of appearance, and the strikers demand that Earth continues to be a space where (human) appearance can take place. The sign from the Berlin strike, “We’re here now because we want to be able to be here in 50 years’ time,” link these two dimensions together: the spatiality of the strike and the spatiality of future human appearance on Earth.

Arendt’s space of appearance is an intersubjective space that opens up when people appear to each other through speech and action, and by doing so people reveal who, and not just what, they are. The what can be interpreted as categories such as children or adults. Within space of appearance, (wo)man appears as someone unique, Arendt proposes, but that requires the presence of others – equally unique – whom (s)he can appear to and who can appear to her/him. A space of appearance is by necessity a relational space. Before moving on and discussing the school strikes for the climate as a space of appearance, a short comment is necessarily given. Given Arendt’s view on children, the private/public sphere and education (see e.g. Nakata, 2008 and Kallio, 2009 for a discussion of the topic), it is likely that she would have been quite hesitant to describe the school strikes for the climate in terms of a space of appearance. However, Arendt’s general understanding of politics is one that would seem to enable the inclusion of children as potential actors (even though Arendt herself placed children outside of politics). Cavarero explains the inclusion of subjects in relation to an Arendtian notion of politics in the following passage:

In Arendtian terms, politics does not consist of forms that put subjects in order by subjecting them to a norm and excluding those who do not belong – insofar as they constitute the figure of the other, the stranger, the alien – within this normalization. Politics is a relational space – from which no one is excluded because uniqueness is a substance without qualities – that opens when unique existents communicate themselves reciprocally to one another with words and deeds and closes when this reciprocal communication ceases. (Cavarero, 2004, p. 62)
This means that although children might be formally excluded from the sphere of politics today, as children “constitute the figure of the other,” this would not be the case with the Arendtian notion, as it, in Caverero’s words, does not “put subjects in order by subjecting them to a norm and excluding those who do not belong.” No one is excluded from politics because “uniqueness is a substance without qualities,” meaning that politics is about becoming a who (“uniqueness”), transgressing what one is (one’s “qualities,” characteristics that others also have). Cavarero again:

> It is useful to point out that the question of what-ness does not only regard and produce fictitious entities – Man, the subject, the individual, the person – but it also concerns the problem of the so-called cultural identities based on ethnicity, religion, sexuality, class, and so on. (2004, p. 68)

We could add age categories, and suggest that the category of “children” is a what, or that childness is a what-ness; childness is the quality of being a child. What-ness, and the specific whats of whatnesses such as e.g. childness, is irrelevant in politics, because politics is about uniqueness, that is, it is about revealing one’s who-ness.

However, there are some complications. First, to which extent, if at all, is it possible to separate one’s what-nesses (in plural, to capture intersectionality) from one’s who-ness? Another complication would be the unequally distributed access to who-ness for different subjects. A third complication would be whether or not it is always desirable to make a clear distinction between who or what. These issues are interlinked, and moreover, they can be seen in a different light depending on the what we are discussing (e.g. being a child or being good/bad at painting). It is beyond the scope of this chapter (and thesis) to sort out these very complex issues in any deeper way, but I here at least briefly address something they all relate to, namely the body, or embodiment.

Appearance is embodied and we appear to someone, we appear as something, as different what-nesses, such as a human, child, woman, etc. These mentioned categories may be far from stable, and they may not coincide with how one perceives oneself, but they do, as Lisa Käll argues, drawing upon Merleau-Ponty, affect who we are:

> The way my body is perceived, understood and assessed by others will undoubtedly have an impact on the way I experience and live my embodiment. Particular and generalized others have a hold on me and partly determine who I am. In fact, the lived body is not only the outside manifestation of my intentions, but also a site for the inscription of social and cultural norms and values that I incorporate into who I am. (Käll, 2009, p. 124)
The who and the what cannot be so easily separated, although they can be distinguished from each other, but they are distinguished within a necessary intertwinement (an intertwinement captured e.g. in the concept of the lived body, being both subject and object). We are our whats but we are also always something beyond them which is unique and cannot fully be known or grasped (a related discussion can be found in Bornemark, 2018). Butler (2015a) stresses that Arendt does not deny that the who who speaks and acts in a public sphere – in a space of appearance – is embodied, but, as Butler notes, it seems to be a different body than the body marked by whats that exist in the private sphere: “Arendt’s view clearly meets its limits here, for the body is itself divided into the one that appears publicly to speak and act and another one, sexual, laboring, feminine, foreign, and mute, that generally is relegated to the private and prepolitical sphere” (Butler, 2015a, p. 86).

Moreover, Butler criticises Arendt for placing bodily issues and the sustaining of biological life (through e.g. food, shelter and care) outside political concern, framing such issues as social or private and not political. Butler examines the relation between the body and politics in two regards: one, how the body (and what body) is at work within political action, and two, how political demands and mobilisations “take as their objects of political concern those requirements and supports that are indissociable from what we call the human body” (Butler, 2015a, p. 128). Below I tie this theoretical discussion back to the school strikes for the climate.

Starting from asymmetry

We know that children in general are hindered by a what-ness – their child-ness – when it comes to political influence and participation. As the quotation from the climate strike editorial above outlines, children are not allowed to vote, for example. The climate-related demands of the school strikes for the climate in the UK include the demand that the voting age should be lowered to 16 (UK Student Climate Network). One could say that the school strikes enable children to become political actors – to become whos through speech and action – despite their what, their childhoodness. Yet, their child-ness is a central component in regard to why the strikes were organised in the first place, making the what and the who difficult to separate. The precondition for someone to appear as a unique who is that this someone has, or is, a separable body, which can speak, act and relate to other embodied beings. This precondition is of course fulfilled by all humans, but children form a subgroup within this “all human” group in the sense that they share the premise of continuing to (have the possibility to) appear as unique existents also in the future, when the adults of today have ceased to (have the possibility to) appear because they are no longer alive. I touched upon this in the first Öresund
The issue of environmental sustainability links the what – being a child in the sense of having/being a young body – and the who, having/being a specific body that, due to it being young today, can appear speaking and acting also in the future.

The demand of children regarding environmental sustainability and their future is hence an onto-political claim in which the what and the who are mixed. Maybe it could be said that it is a claim made by a who-what, or perhaps that a who-what emerges around the claim. Now, we could see it as some kind of strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1990), or if we find that term to be problematic (as Spivak herself partly does), choose something else to describe political organisation that is linked to a marginalised group’s demand for justice. However, regardless of how we describe such political mobilisation, I would suggest that the children’s school strikes for the climate differs somewhat from other groups’ (such as certain gendered and/or racialised groups) political organisation and demands for justice. These latter groups tend to claim either recognition or redistribution, if we use Fraser’s terminology (2001), or, more often, both recognition and redistribution (not least since they tend to be interlinked). The do so because they experience lack of recognition and/or material resources. Before the school strikes for the climate went beyond the global North, the striking children were Western, mostly white and seemed to belong to the middle classes. Yes, they were children and in that sense Other, but on the other hand, part of being Other as a child (at least in a Western context) means receiving more resources and protection than adults do; as a child you are the beneficiary of redistributive action. Nevertheless, the striking children do draw upon ideas of (a lack of) redistribution, for instance through slogans that suggest that adults are “loaning” or “stealing” from children by using up natural resources, but when saying this, these children do not speak out of experienced lack, but anticipated lack. So I think there is some difference in regard to other groups that mobilise politically because they have already suffered due to a lack of material resources, and hence demand redistributive action.

As for recognition, although this is not unimportant within the school strikes, it is not at the centre of them either. As I have mentioned above, the children lament and to some extent protest against their lack of access to political influence and agency, but they also state that children should not have to engage politically for the climate. An example of this is the following sentence from the website of the school strikes in the UK: “We shouldn’t have to be the ones leading action to prevent ecological breakdown and yet we have been left with no choice.” (UK Student Climate Network). This echoes the earlier quotation from the Guardian editorial: children engage politically because they “have no choice,” and this “no choice” is because politicians and adults are not doing anything, despite being the ones who should be acting. So in a
sense, the children do not seek to change the idea of an apolitical child (even though in another sense, they do). Neither do they question the idea of children as beings that should be cared for, *specially* cared for. They do rather the opposite, as they question politicians’ and adults’ lack of caring for children when it comes to the issue of environmental degradation. In a speech at a UN climate meeting, Thunberg said: “You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes.” At the strike in Stockholm I saw a sign with a similar message: “Do you love your children? Act now.” Another asked “Do you even care?”

*School strike sign in Stockholm: “Do you even care?”*
So, the strikes do not necessarily challenge the conceptualisation or position of the child, as other groups’ political mobilisation often try to do in regard to the what, for example gender or race, which they organise around. The children neither claim nor seek horizontal equality, but rather highlight vulnerability. The strikes are not about overcoming vulnerability, but attending and adjusting to it. Such an approach to vulnerability within a political movement is not necessarily exclusive to the school strikes for the climate. Butler argues that several “new social movements” take vulnerability as a starting point rather than as something to be overcome:

I have tried to suggest that precarity is the condition against which several new social movements struggle; such movements do not seek to overcome interdependency or even vulnerability as they struggle against precarity; rather, they seek to produce the conditions under which vulnerability and interdependency become livable. (Butler, 2015a, p. 218, my emphasis)

Butler exemplifies by mentioning protests at Tahrir Square in Egypt during the Arab spring, and the Occupy movement(s).

Nevertheless, I would argue that the school strikes differ, because these do not necessarily call for an equal distribution of the vulnerability we all share, but rather remain with the idea that children are more vulnerable. They make the point that we humans are all vulnerable in relation to the environment and climate, at the same time that they point out that children are especially so because environmental degradation is deemed to get worse in the future. This emphasis on asymmetry evokes Cavarero’s question, quoted also in Setting I:

What might happen to the horizontal relation of reciprocity, which defines politics as the scene of appearance, if it is the unbalanced relationship between the newborn and the mother that serves as a premise for securing the ontological root for action? (Cavarero, 2016, p. 120)

When Thunberg in a text about the school strikes for the climate writes “our lives are in your hands,” this condition of having one’s life in the hand of an Other is, in my reading of the text, not questioned, just stated. It is not a denunciation – a call for things to be different – but a call for a response to this matter of fact. Our lives are in your hands, what will you do with this power? 29 I agree with Cavarero that it would be worth reflecting upon how “[m]aternal inclination could work as a module for a different, more disruptive, and revolutionary geometry whose aim is to rethink the very core of community” (2016, p. 131). The “disruptive and revolutionary geometry” that Cavarero requests, would preferably include not just inclined (m)others,

29 A terminology of ethics, asymmetry and response does of course echo Emmanuel Levinas (2002), and both Cavarero and Butler engage with him, although not totally uncritically.
but also sitpoints, and positions of lying down. I read the school strikes for the climate as engaging with such a geometry, as they emphasise vulnerability, asymmetry and relations of care. I also believe they contribute to rethinking “the very core of community” in a sense that they expand it to include future humans and non-human species.

Talking about postural geometry and (re)thinking, one school strike sign from London can be mentioned. It is a drawing of Big Ben, standing very erect as always, but now surrounded by water that reaches high up the tower. We are in a flooded London. The fact that Big Ben has a clock adds a touch of temporality to this symbolic image. Alongside the picture says “think or swim.” The chapter continues with a discussion regarding thinking.

Stop-and-think
What the swimming Big Ben sign suggests is that if we do not start to think, there will be severe consequences. One would believe that thinking is something that surely is done in schools. So why are students out in the streets instead, with signs that ask us to think? Arendt distinguishes between thinking and science, suggesting that thinking refers to wider reflections about meaning that both precede and exceed science, and the “answerable questions” that science focuses on:30

It is more than likely that men, if they were ever to lose the appetite for meaning we call thinking and cease to ask unanswerable questions, would lose […] the capacity to ask all the answerable questions upon which every civilization is founded. (Arendt, 1978, pp. 61-62)

Striking students in Australia state that going to school – engaging in asking what I with Arendt would call “answerable questions” – is not something that will bring about a change in regard to environmental degradation: “In Australia, education is viewed as immensely important, and a key way to make a difference in the world. But simply going to school isn’t doing anything about climate change” (School Strike 4 Climate Australia). A strike sign in Stockholm presents a related message: “why should we study when there is no future.” It is suggested not only that studying will not bring about the future (going to school will not create sufficient political change), but also that knowledge in and of itself is not meaningful in a situation of existential threat.

Science and answerable questions doubtlessly play an important role for the striking students, as scientific facts about climate change are at the core of the

30 This has some similarities with Bornmark’s (2018) discussion of intellectus and ratio.
strike. However, taking action to stop climate change is linked to more complex questions about meaning and politics rather than scientific questions. The children’s *Guardian* editorial proposes what could be meaningful activities in relation to environmental degradation, and the writers highlight organising and making children’s voices heard:

So today we walk out of school, we quit our college lessons, and we take to the streets to say enough is enough. Some adults say we shouldn’t be walking out of classes – that we should be “getting an education”. We think organising against an existential threat – and figuring out how to make our voices heard – is teaching us some important lessons. (Thunberg, Taylor, Neubauer, Gantois, De Wever, Charlier, Gillibrand, Villasenor, 2019)

Striking is to *stop* doing what one normally does: “today we walk out of school, we quit our college lessons.” The schoolchildren interrupt their everyday routines. Arendt posits thinking as an interruption of ordinary activities. Thinking, she writes, “interrupts any doing, any ordinary activities, no matter what they happen to be. All thinking demands a stop-and-think” (Arendt, 1978, p. 78). We could see the strikes as a stop-and-think, as an interruption of ordinary activities. Through such a stopping, one takes a step back and reflects, for example upon right and wrong. I wrote about the act of stopping in the previous chapter as well, but this is a different kind of stopping. The stopping here seeks to endorse rather than hinder life and lives.

The children say that the strikes are not a matter of choice on their part (“we didn’t have a choice”), but are an inevitable reaction to a political and societal lack of stopping-and-thinking, a lack of reflection upon what we are doing, and whether it is right or wrong. So the striking children “walk out of school” out on the streets; they leave a space inside (schools buildings) to appear outside in the heart of the public space, on squares and next to parliament buildings. Arendt writes:

> When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join in is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action. In such emergencies, it turns out that the purging component of thinking [...] is political by implication. (Arendt, 1978, p. 192)

Now, adding this quotation from Arendt here might be to romanticise the school strikes a little too much; we would probably do better by not seeing the striking children as involuntary saviours, “drawn out of hiding” to rescue the world. And I do not think that they ask for that either. The point they make, I believe, is rather that *we all* need to stop-and-think in regard to a current system that creates environmental damage (“change the system not the
climate” is a common strike slogan), although they make clear that not all are equally responsible.

The withdrawal or pausing that thinking entails (stop-and-think), be it just for the slightest of moments, helps one to make a judgment about what would be the desired way to act in a situation. Thinking is therefore for Arendt a step in making a judgement about the situation and about how one should act in it. Action is, after all, the desired outcome for both Arendt and the striking students, whose demands centre precisely on action. In relation to thinking and judging, Arendt proposed the idea of the “banality of evil” (1963). Evil, she suggests, does not have to come in the shape of well thought-out devilish intentions; evil acts can be the result of not thinking about what one does, and not judging for oneself what is right or wrong, but just following the legal framework and societal norms that happen to surround one. Instead of doing that, one should perform one’s own analysis, and attend to the particularity of every context.

There is a fundamental difference between Arendt’s original reference regarding the banality of evil – the Eichmann trial – and environmental destruction, but I think that difference is precisely what makes the banality of evil a concept that is perhaps more applicable to the latter than to the former. No one wants the environment to degrade (rather the opposite); there certainly is a lack of explicit intention here. Evil might be too strong a word, but there is a banality in this lack of intentions, which makes the contrasts with the enormous negative impact climate change has so much sharper. So, when a newspaper article reports that striking schoolchildren in Paris chanted “one, two, three degrees – a crime against humanity,” how are we to understand the crime, and the potential criminals behind it, when there are no explicit intentions?

The crime, or the problem, can be seen as a lack of thinking and judging, a commitment to “the show must go on” – with the show here being constituted by current legislation and ideas about for example (unlimited) economic growth – rather than a commitment to “the snow must go on,” as a strike sign proposes. In a somewhat similar vein, the striking students in the UK demand that “[t]he Government declare a climate emergency” (UK Student Climate Network). Declaring an emergency means that the situation cannot be ignored and that extraordinary measurements need to be taken. One of the main messages of the strike seems to be that all citizens have the responsibility to stop-and-think and make a judgement independently of what laws allow or not. As one strike signs in Stockholm said, “Just because it’s legal doesn’t make it right.” In a speech at a UN meeting, Thunberg suggested that “[w]e can’t save the world by playing by the rules. Because the rules have to be changed.” Furthermore, the school strikes in themselves (and not just some of
their messages) can be seen as confronting laws: being in school is after all compulsory in many countries if you are a child.

Although we all might have a responsibility to stop-and-think, the striking children suggest that some people might be more responsible than others for the situation we are in. Besides adults and people in the global North in general, politicians bear most responsibility, according to the opinions in the children’s editorial. Politicians are responsible not (only) for what they have done themselves, but for what they have let other, non-political actors, do:

We’ve seen years of negotiations, pathetic deals on climate change, fossil fuel companies being given free rein to carve open our lands, drill beneath our soils and burn away our futures for their profit. We’ve seen fracking, deep sea drilling and coalmining continue. Politicians have known the truth about climate change and they’ve willingly handed over our future to profiteers whose search for quick cash threatens our very existence. (Thunberg, Taylor, Neubauer, Gantois, De Wever, Charlier, Gillibrand, Villasenor, 2019)

This statement echoes propositions that the Anthropocene should be called Capitalocene instead, and suggestions that capitalism has played a vital part in creating our current situation (see e.g. Malm, 2016; Moore, 2016). Andreas Malm (2016) writes about “fossil capital” and how capitalist social relations, such as a controllable workforce and the way that labour was organised in relation to space, played a part in the turn to fossil fuels from the earlier water-based energy in 19th-century Britain. In relation to fossil fuels, the striking students propose, or demand, that we should “keep it in the ground”, that is, to not make it appear to us. Although this surely is a message to politicians, as the passage from the editorial quoted above indicates, I think the striking children also present this message to all of us. If we know that the solution is to keep it in the ground, why, one can ask, is this so hard to do? This is discussed below.

Fossil fools

We can say that the Anthropocene – or at least the climate change part of it – is strongly linked to fossil fuels appearing and becoming reachable by humans. The reaching for fossil fuels have been going on for some time and is now taken for granted; it is an integrated part not just of our societies but of who we are. We could say that we have become, as a strike sign suggests, “fossil fools.” The strike sign advise us, nevertheless, not to be fossil fools: “Don’t be a fossil fool,” is the message.
Yet suddenly ceasing to be fossil fools might be difficult. Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty, I would suggest that fossil fuels have become a way for us to expand our reach beyond also the fossil fuels themselves. Who does not want an expanded reach? Merleau-Ponty provides the example of a blind person’s cane: “When the cane becomes a familiar instrument, the world of tactile objects expands, it no longer begins at the skin of the hand, but at the tip of the cane” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 153). The cane, and in this case fossil fuels, is not something we completely merge with, rather, fossil fuels are an extension of our reach. The fuel is other than I, but it extends my reach and my capacity. In Ahmed’s words:

What is other than me is also what allows me to extend the reach of my body. [...] it can also be described as a form of extension. The body extends its reach by taking in that which is ‘not’ it, where the ‘not’ involves the acquisition of new capacities and directions – becoming, in other words, ‘not’ simply what I am ‘not’ but what I can ‘have’ and ‘do’. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 115)

The “not I,” in this case the fossil fuels, becomes an extension of what the body-subject can have and do. Reaching for fossil fuels enables us to reach for and do other things, such as consuming goods or travelling. Yet this extension of our selves through fossil fuel is threatening these very selves. That is the ontology of the fossil fool: it is foolish to reach for things that in the end will destroy us. In relation to this, the striking children are asking that we stop reaching, that we stop extending, that we keep it – fossil fuels – in the ground. Or in other words, that we do not make it appear to us.

Humanity has expanded and extended its reach in the Anthropocene, and this goes beyond fossil fuels; environmental degradation and changes in the Earth system are not limited to climate change. We could perhaps even say that one of the defining things about humans in comparison to other species is our capacity to make things reachable for ourselves, or our far extending reach-ability. Ahmed writes that “whiteness is an orientation that puts certain things within reach” (2006, p. 126). Without losing sight of Ahmed’s point that reaching is a racialised and differentiating practice within the human, I would suggest that we could also see humanness as “an orientation that puts certain things within reach,” especially in the time of the Anthropocene. We do not just reach for fossil fuels but for other natural resources, and earth others, such as cacti or fishes, which are at risk of becoming extinct because of our reaching.

Ahmed continues by writing that what is within reach for the white subject – the human subject in my extension of her discussion – includes “not just physical objects but also styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, even worlds” (2006, p. 126). We, some of us more than others, have taken
advantage of our human condition, of our capacity to act, reach and make worlds, in ways that destroy the very conditions that enable us to exist as humans in the first place. Being human today means inhabiting a world created out of unsustainable use of the Earth’s resources (although we have not benefitted equally from this unsustainable use). We have reached for things but now we are also the ones being reached; our actions hit back at us, for instance through extreme weather events. However, some of us are hit more than others, and unfairly enough, it tends to be those of us who have reached for least things.

Knowing the severe consequences, why do we not just stop reaching, then? When we have reached for something a number of times, this reaching becomes habitual. And habits can be hard to break. If we stay with the example of fossil fuels, we could say that reaching for it has become a habit of humanity. Merleau-Ponty writes that habits are not just “an extension of existence,” they are also “an acquisition of a world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 154). So, when we undo a habit, we have to acquire the world anew. This is of course hard work. Acquiring a new habit, another way of doing things, requires “a renewal of the body schema” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 143), a reworking of the way we live our bodies and the way we live the world. To change a habit, we must first take notice of it, and of the object(s) it involves. Ahmed writes that “[w]hen something becomes part of the habitual, it ceases to be an object of perception: it is simply put to work” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 131). In order to change a habit, one needs to stop to put certain objects to work; one needs to stop the hand that automatically reaches out for them and interacts with them, and instead start perceiving them at a distance, if at all.

We could here go to Arendt’s idea of what it means to think, including her notion of thinking as a withdrawal from appearances: “Thinking always deals with absences and removes itself from what is present and close at hand” (Arendt, 1978, p. 199). When one thinks about an object rather than interacts with it, it is a process of de-sensing the thing. This absence of interaction with what is “present and close at hand” opens up for possible reflection about it, and changed ways of approaching it when one stops thinking and returns to the appearing world. This goes for individuals, but applies perhaps even more to reaching patterns a system level; individuals can only do so much without systems being changed. Maybe we need to stop-and-think to be able to reflect upon fossil fuels and to cease being fossil fools, making sure we “keep it in the ground.”

As noted earlier, we have not used fossil fuels equally; some us have had (or taken upon ourselves) the privilege to extend our reach more than others. Likewise, the negative impacts are disproportionally distributed. This is highlighted in the children’s Guardian editorial. The authors conclude that
“the worst effects of climate change are disproportionately felt by our most vulnerable communities. [. . .] The luxury so few of us enjoy in the global north is based on the suffering of people in the global south” (Thunberg, Taylor, Neubauer, Gantois, De Wever, Charlier, Gillibrand, Villasenor, 2019). Similarly, Malm and Alf Hornborg suggest that “[i]ntra-species inequalities are part and parcel of the current ecological crisis and cannot be ignored in attempts to understand it” (2014, p. 62). These mentioned intraspecies inequalities that cannot be ignored when we address “the current ecological crisis” are related to the distribution of wealth and precarity. However, differences in age are also crucial in regard to intrahuman inequalities in a context of environmental degradation, and such differences are at the core of the school strikes for the climate and the demand for a liveable future.

*  

In this chapter, I have approached the school strikes for the climate through appearance, linking it to thinking and acting in relation to – and from – the point where one appears. Whereas scientific facts about climate change are central to the strikes, the strikes are strikes from school, or in another words, from a knowledge institution. I interpret this as a strategy through which the striking students highlight the difference between knowing and acknowledging (see further Zerilli, 2005, p. 64). Knowing that the climate is getting warmer is not the same as acknowledging this fact as something problematic and something that we should do something about. This acknowledgement is where questions about meaning and Arendtian thinking and judging enter the picture, and by extension, also acting. As for acting, the strikes can be seen as both being (political) action in themselves and demanding (political) action from others, from adults and politicians. The strikes come to enact a bifurcation of the child category: children are political actors because they are on strike in the streets, at the same time, children are not political actors, because that part belongs to adults, who are the ones who should do something. What can one make of this?

I address this question by returning to Bornemark’s discussion of ratio and intellectus. I suggest that the striking children treat their own category (childhood) in an intellectus rather than ratio manner. That is, rather than taking childhood as a pre-established and fixed category, they assemble and reassemble it in different ways, including making visible the radical potential of addressing but not seeking to overcome certain asymmetrical relations. In this way, childhood is approached as a complex (and possibly contradictory) category, which can be taken in different directions depending on what is at stake, and depending on the ways in which the stakes are most strategically phrased and framed. I suggest that this is linked to the school strikes constituting a context in which childhood is used as a political rather than epistemic category (although all categories are of course, to their nature,
epistemic). By this I mean that the aim of the strikes is not to sort out what a child is (nor to deny that this can be done, for that matter) but rather to present the category as a meaningful one in relation to political action regarding climate change.

Zerilli discusses treating subject categories like “women” primarily as epistemic or political categories, suggesting that we focus on politics rather than epistemology. I quote her, expanding the quotation to encompass the child category:

Terms of political discourse like women [children] are not fixed by something that transcends their use in actual contexts, as the gender realist would have it, but neither are they intrinsically uncertain by virtue of the ever-present possibility of failure that supposedly inheres in language itself, as Butler suggests. Rather, they are created as meaningful – or not – in and through political action. (Zerilli, 2005, p. 65)

In her Wittgenstein-inspired approach, Zerilli points to the contexts in which we use words like “women”, and how these (political) contexts render certain subject categories meaningful or not. Moreover, she suggests that feminist politics should focus less on subject categories as such and more on what the political claims concern – the focus should be on what is (not) shared, and by whom, in regard to the object(ive) of the claims.

I propose that the school strikes for the climate form a political community (albeit a loose one) with joint claims not because children share some inner qualities (that is, whether they do so or not is not on the table here) but because the participants appear at points that are near each other (e.g. points located outside of formal political influence, and points located in a future with a warmer climate) and they turn what they see from these points into political judgment and action. They share an object of perception, and they make it into an object of judgment, the object in question here being the effects of climate change regarding the conditions of life on Earth in the future.

The striking children invite adults to think representatively and imagine the world from their point of appearance, and thus to see what the children see; what figures that appear (or fail to appear). These figures might be objects, other species or even the striking students themselves in the future, as the slogan from the Berlin strike at the beginning of the chapter points out: “We’re here now because we want to be able to be here in 50 years’ time.” Not only (willing) adults but also the striking children themselves engage in representative thinking, as they make political claims not only on behalf of themselves, but also on behalf of non-striking children, and generations yet to be born. Even the striking children themselves appear at different points in
relation to each other, given that they are individual body-subjects, and hence they have to think representatively also in relation to each other.

What binds the striking community together is not what the striking children are, but what they politically agree upon and claim. In the words of Zerilli:

Political claims rely on the ability to exercise imagination, to think from the standpoints of others, and in this way to posit universality and thus community. The universality of such claims depends on their being [...] taken up by others, in ways that we can neither predict nor control, in a public space. (2005, p. 30)

The school strikes for the climate certainly have been “taken up by others” in ways that were hard to predict. It grew from one person to over seven million people (children and adults) in a year, and it has been supported by high-profile politicians and world-famous actors and performers. However, the action demanded by the striking – immediate changes in policy, law and practice – has yet to be realised. Despite this absent effect (at a large scale), the way that the school strikes for the climate has projected the category of childhood and that of adulthood into the context of environmental degradation, has contributed to discussions about what is shared, but also what is not shared, when it comes to appearing on Earth now and in the future.
BEGINNING ANEW

What can theorising regarding appearance achieve in regard to the field of childhood studies and the problems of environmental degradation and climate change? In the introductory chapter of the thesis, I suggested that my study relates to four themes that have been addressed by childhood scholars in different ways: temporality; nature and animals; environmental and sustainability education; and space and politics. My approach to these themes has been to examine the points at which children appear, and that which surrounds these points. When and where do children appear, and what appears (or not) to them from these points? This question involves aspects of temporality and spatiality as well as relations to humans, non-human species and objects.

We can also recall the questions Wall suggests that childhood raises: “What does it mean to be human? What should relations and societies strive for? What is ultimately owed to one another?” I would say that these are questions that can be derived from or linked to not only childhood, but also to environmental degradation and climate change. What does it mean to be human in the Anthropocene? What might be owed to other species and nature as such, and where do we go from here? I see intergenerational and interspecies relations as connected within the context of environmental degradation, since both types of relation are about the category of the human (including human future) and are linked to aspects of justice and responsibility. What possibilities do today’s children, future generations and non-human species (especially the ones facing extinction, that is, disappearance) have to appear and flourish in the future? In this regard, I have posed appearance as something that is at stake, suggesting that we look into which subjects and objects (can) appear, and the conditions for and implications of those appearances. I have proposed appearance to be a concept that can enable discussions regarding existence as such, as well as discussions regarding intersubjectivity and subject-object relations. I have taken advantage of the doubleness of appearance – one appears to others, and others and objects appear to one.

A central question connected to the appearance of a subject or an object, is when and where this appearance takes place. Linking appearance to existence,
I have posited Earth as a space of appearance (tweaking Arendt’s notion) that we enter when we are born, and leave when we die. And between these events of birth and death, we appear in many different places and contexts. I have discussed how children appear and what (possibly) appears to them in contexts of different sustainability initiatives. In one of the desert chapters, I juxtaposed nature leisure time activities with irregular migration to show how there can be quite different conditions for appearance for different children, in the very same space. In the other desert chapter, I performed an opposite move, and described conditions for appearance that seem to be shared, drawing upon examples involving children and cacti. In the first sea chapter, I discussed the implications of (having) children appearing as the ones who should act and save the environment. In the second sea chapter, I presented reflections regarding enforcing appearance in the form of capturing and keeping aquatic others in aquariums, having them appear to children. In the chapter about the school strikes for the climate, I discussed appearance in relation to the category of childhood itself.

I consider the capacity to harbour both the general and abstract and the particular and concrete fundamental when it comes to using appearance as a theoretical-methodological tool and linking it to ethico-political discussions. Through a generalised discussion about appearance – and through linking this to categories of children, generations and other species – I have related particular appearances to each other, such as an appearing crab at the Öresund aquarium, and the way a cactus appears in a poem (and hence to the child writing the poem), and a school strike sign held by an appearing child, presenting how the world appears to this child. I agree with Zerilli that

> [t]he theory appropriate to politics [...] would turn on the ability to form critical judgments from within the ordinary, that is, on the reflective ability to relate particulars to each other in unexpected (not necessary or logical) ways by creating new forms for organizing our experience. (Zerilli, 2005, p. 63, my emphasis)

What Zerilli calls “reflective ability,” I call thinking, and more specifically, certain modes of thinking. However, before one can relate things to each other, these things need to appear to one in the first place. What I refer to as “directed thinking” concerns this: things appearing to the mind, and also the situatedness of thinking. In this thesis, I have thought from my position, toward generic categories and particular others – children, crabs and cacti, to mention a few. When I have directed my thinking toward subjects, I have not sought to capture their essence, but rather to let the gaze of my mind go out toward the world from the positions of these others. The thinking-toward in my study involves a directedness not only toward subjects, but toward objects, phenomena and situations, such as the future and climate change. In a similar
vein, thinking-from designates a “from” that is marked not just by an embodied position, but also a wider context, constituted by the Anthropocene and the problem of environmental degradation.

I have presented thinking-from and thinking-toward not only as descriptions of my research methodology, but also as something political. What appears and to whom, not just when we think, but when we live our full lives as body-subjects, perceiving and interacting with others and things in the world? What and how do we see, know and judge from the point where we appear – the point where we stand, sit or lie down? I have suggested seeing, knowing and (politically) judging objects as practices that come into being through discerning figures on a ground, and focusing on this figure against what in the process becomes the background. Although I have proposed that seeing, knowing and judging are related practices, they do not stand in a deterministic relation to each other. Certain kinds of seeing or knowing do not necessarily lead to a certain way of judging – and by extension a certain way of acting. This is evident in our relation to for example fossil fuels: we know they create climate change, yet we do not ban them. While I have linked seeing, knowing and judging to one’s own position – framing them as practices that occur from the point of one’s appearance – one is not locked into one’s own perspective; it is not a matter of solipsism. Different perspectives on an object are connected through that very object; we might see it differently, but it is the same object that we relate to, and hence our perspectives intersect. Further, through “representative thinking,” that is, thinking from the standpoint of others, we can come to see, know and judge objects that we initially did not discern ourselves, or that we discerned but did not engage with (politically).

We do not stand (or sit or lie down) equally on our shared planet. We do not depend equally on the same things – or the opposite – are threatened equally by the same things. There is a temporal dimension to this: depending on our age, we are more or less affected by what occurs in the future. Discussing what should come into view for us as political objects and how we should approach these objects (for example fossil fuels, water in different forms and plastic) therefore becomes a matter of justice. In relation to such objects, and in relation to even perceiving them (as political) in the first place, categories such as children and generations are crystallised. Who sees what, and what is important for whom? Extending this, it is crucial to look into who is or is not acknowledged to be a (potential) judging subject. This question is important in relation to children and non-human species, as these two groups of subjects are often placed in the position of being the object of judgment, or are at least not counted as judging subjects. Perceiving non-human species as judging subjects would probably require some thinking regarding how we conceptualise the faculty and process of judgment – and this might be desirable – but at the very least, non-human species could be included when
we think representatively. We can always imagine how the world appears to them, and use empathy when we do so.

Representative thinking is for Arendt political thinking, and I have expanded on this, proposing not only representative thinking but also “transformative thinking.” By this I refer to thinking that seeks to create political change, and in this case, change regarding (the conditions of) appearance(s) in relation to environmental degradation and climate change, especially in the light of intergenerational and interspecies aspects of justice and responsibility. In this sense, I place thinking close to acting – close to how we act, and how we ought to act. I have approached acting in two ways, drawing upon differences between Arendt and Merleau-Ponty. In line with Arendt, I have linked appearance to acting through her ideas on acting as something through which we appear to each other as unique existents, creating a space of appearance. Through action we build a common world together, that is, do politics. As far as Merleau-Ponty is concerned, I have used his notion of a body-subject that is active and engages with objects and tasks that appear to the body-subject in question. I have politicised this by asking questions about which subjects are in relation to which objects, and to what effect. Applying this dual take on acting, I suggest that creating change in regard to environmental degradation is a matter of both collective political action and individual body-subjects’ ways of interacting with the world and the objects and others in it.

In regard to Arendt’s outline of action, the concept of birth is important. Reading birth not only with but also beyond Arendt, birth can be conceived as a concept that perhaps more than many others captures the intertwining of the active and passive dimensions of action. The one who can act is also someone who can be acted on, and who was acted on to begin with. It is worth recalling Butler’s suggestion that the events of “acted on, animated, and acting” are not only chiasmic but also sequential. Our first appearance in the world, that is, being born, is dependent on a mother giving birth, and after that, on (m)others sustaining and protecting us so that we survive. This we humans share with many other species. That appearance is relational in the sense that two subjects appear to each other, does not (always) mean that this relation is symmetrical. As Cavarero points out, the (m)other’s possibility to choose to care for or neglect the infant will have a fundamental impact on the latter, and the roles are not reversible in this case. That does not mean, however, that the one sustaining is not also in need of being sustained; no one can escape the fundamental precariousness that comes with being alive – with appearing on Earth – and hence not avoid needing to be sustained in different ways. On a larger scale, this echoes in the human-nature relationship, where the effects of environmental degradation make clear how dependent humanity is on ecosystems and other species for survival.
In this sense, the link between acting and being acted on applies not just to individuals, but also to humanity as such. Human capacity is reaching its peak in terms of acting when we act in ways that can change the Earth system itself, however, we are utterly vulnerable and in a position of being acted on when for example extreme weather events occur that have an impact on our bodies, homes and infrastructures. Our capacity to act is hitting back at us, threatening our safety and livelihoods, threatening our appearance in specific places on Earth, and sometimes even our appearance on Earth at all, given that people die in relation to extreme weather events. The messages of the school strikes for the climate highlight human and ecological vulnerability, and the intergenerational asymmetry that comes with the temporality of escalating problems and potentially irreversible processes. The school strikes emphasise that we are being, and will be, acted on in several ways. However, the strikes also embody acting, as they not only consist of political speech and acts in themselves, but also to their very core are about beginning anew, about demanding a system change. And the Anthropocene certainly seems to be a time when it would be a good idea to begin anew.

When positing action as birth and humans as beginners (or beginners anew), Arendt writes that “[t]he fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him” (1998, p. 178). Or as a sign from the school strikes put it: “The climate is changing, why aren’t we??,” indicating that we can if we try. Merleau-Ponty proposes that even though we often repeat already privileged modes of being and acting – retaining the status quo – “our situation is open” and it is so for “as long as we are alive” (2012, p. 467). This openness makes change possible. Given this approach, there are reasons to be hopeful in regard to creating environmental sustainability. However, the school strike leaders point out that they do not want adults’ hope, but their action: “[A]dults keep saying: ‘We owe it to the young people to give them hope.’ But we don’t want your hope. [. . .] We want you to panic and we want you to take action” (Thunberg, Taylor, Neubauer, Gantois, De Wever, Charlier, Gillibrand, Villasenor, 2019). I believe this is an important point: hope cannot, and should not, be a substitute for action. Furthermore, we need to discuss what happens if, as often seems to be the case, hope is projected (only) on children: where does that leave adults in relation to responsibility and accountability?

My focus in this thesis has not been on sorting out what a child is, nor how a child is, even though both these questions have been implicitly addressed to some extent. The child subject and the categories of childhood and generation have been departure points for reflection rather than objects of investigation. As mentioned earlier, my approach has been investigating the where and when of children in terms of their points of appearance, and to look at how the world appears from these points. How the world appears to a child is of course partly
inaccessible to me, and that is important to say, otherwise alterity would be lost. Yet, that appearing world of a child – or the appearing world of any Other – is at the same time a part of one and the same Earth that we all appear on, and hence a world we share. And I propose that we place this shared world, where we have objects in common and our perspectives intersect, at the centre of our attention. Zerilli remarks that “Arendt’s account of action is something less about the subject [. . .] than about the world [. . .] into which the subject is arbitrarily thrown and into which it acts” (2005, p. 14). This might be specifically applicable to environmental thinking and acting in the Anthropocene. Such thinking and acting relate to the world, to keeping and making Earth a place where humans and other species can appear and live well, now and in the future.

School strike sign in Stockholm, attached to a globe: “Our only home!”

When it comes to researching the Anthropocene and environmental degradation, I believe that the humanities and social sciences can raise important questions about meaning, power and relationality. Although such research already exists to some extent, more needs to be done, not least given the gravity and urgency of climate change and species extinction, to mention two things. I consider childhood studies to be an important field when it comes to addressing these questions, as its main characters – the Child and children – are very much at the centre of environmental sustainability, in different ways, and these ways need to be reflected upon. For example, I believe that more studies on the school strikes for the climate are welcome, as the strikes began quite recently and have become a very large movement. I also think studies on the growing phenomenon of children suing governments for environmental degradation and climate change neglect are needed.
Furthermore, I believe more and extended research regarding the category of generation (not least in regard to future, unborn generations) in a context of the Anthropocene would be merited.

As for my study and the examples I discuss within it, other aspects than the ones I investigate could have been addressed, and other methods and types of material could have been used. My approach has been rather theoretical. Had I interviewed for example children at edutainment centres, children doing Junior Ranger activities or school striking children, I would have had access to important and interesting material that is now lacking in my discussions. However, doing that would probably have made it difficult to cover as many situations and phenomena as I do, and hence the aspect of relating these phenomena, and in that way developing theory, would have been lost. I hope that my theoretical framing of appearance, including how I connect the concept to thinking, acting and standpoint, can serve research that engages with methods such as interviews and hence includes a kind of material my study lacks. I further hope that my “appearance framework” can contribute to the wider field of childhood studies as such, that is, also beyond the topic of environmental issues.

There is urgency to think and act as I write this in September 2019. The last couples of months have provided news on a number of records, related to fires in the Amazon rainforest, ice melting in the Arctic, and a large number of insects species going extinct, to mention a few. The Icelandic glacier that disappeared due to climate change, which I briefly mentioned in the Introduction, is only the first of many glaciers expected to be lost in the country. Glaciers will disappear all over the world, which will negatively affect human and non-human life in several ways. The lost Icelandic glacier Okjökull was commemorated in August 2019, with international researchers and an Icelandic author unveiling a memorial plaque. The plaque has the title “A letter to the future” and reads as follows: “This monument is to acknowledge that we know what is happening and what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it” (quoted in Henley, 2019).

The last words of this thesis about appearance – framing appearance as something that is at stake, and to be increasingly so in the future, given the course of events – will be these: the clock is certainly ticking, urging us to “think what we are doing,” to speak with Arendt, and to act (quickly) in regard to environmental degradation and climate change.


Avhandlingen har som delsyfte att konceptualisera och rama in begreppet *appearance* på ett sådant sätt att etisk-politiska diskussioner möjliggörs, i synnerhet sådana som kan kopplas till barn, generationer, arter och miljöförstöring. En viktig aspekt av *appearance* är att det har en dubbel dimension i förhållande till subjektet: ett subjekt kan själv framträda, samtidigt som andra och annat framträder för subjektet. På detta sätt kan
appearance användas till att diskutera såväl subjektets framträdande och intersubjektivitet som relationer mellan subjekt och objekt (i bemärkelsen ting). Detta öppnar upp för en både politisk och metodologisk fråga kring vem och vad som framträder – och kan eller kan inte framträda – och när, var och hur sker detta. Att appearance kräver vissa förutsättningar och att det också har (potentiella) effekter lyfts. Appearance kopplas inte bara till subjektets framträdande på en specifik plats och vid en specifik tidpunkt, utan också till subjektets existens som sådan, i bemärkelsen att framträda på planeten Jorden genom att födas (och sedermera försvinna, eller disappear, när en dör).

Appearance ringas alltså in på ett sätt som knyter an till tre sammanlänkande fenomen: existens, intersubjektivitet och relationer mellan subjekt och objekt. Vidare länkas appearance till handlande och tänkande. Vad framträder för oss i vårt sinne när vi tänker, och hur påverkar vårt handlande vad som framträder och inte, för oss själva och för andra? Dessa frågor kopplas till subjektets förkroppsligade, spatiala och temporala position, en subjektets framträdelsepunkt, och därmed även den punkt utifrån vilken andra och annat framträder för subjektet, och utifrån vilken subjektets tänkande och handlande sker. Tänkande framställs även som avhandlingens metodologiska angreppssätt och då i form av ett riktat tänkande; mer specifikt beskrivs det som tänkande från och tänkande mot, där både "från" och "mot" kopplas till subjektpositioner, situationer och problem. I linje med detta beskrivs även tänkande som en politisk praktik, i bemärkelsen att det får politiska effekter vilja subjekt, objekt och problem som framträder och prioriteras när vi tänker (och att vårt tänkande föregås och präglas av en viss typ av politiserings av verkligheten).

strejkar, att det är skolan de strejkar från samt vad det är som förmedlas genom strejkerna.

Avslutningsvis förs en sammanfattande diskussion kring vad avhandlingens inramande och utvecklande av begreppet *appearance* kan bidra med till barndomsstudiefältet och samhällsvetenskaplig forskning kring miljöfrågor. Frågor lyfts kring vem och vad som framträder (för vem), och de spatiala och temporala dimensionerna av detta, såsom framtiden som ett framträdalserum som främst kommer att bebos av de som är barn idag. Detta skapar frågor om hur vi tänker kring och förhåller oss till intergenerationell rättvisa och dito ansvar i relation till klimatförändringar och andra miljöproblem. Avhandlingen skriver också fram behovet av ett handlande som innefattar både politiskt kollektivt agerande och det enskilda kroppssubjektets sätt att interagera med objekt (såsom bränsle, mat och plast) i sin närhet.
References


School strike 4 Climate Australia. Information retrieved 6 November 2019 from www.schoolstrike4climate.com


UK Student Climate Network. Information retrieved 6 November 2019 from https://ukscn.org/


Quotations from signs, slogans and speeches linked to the school strikes for the climate. Retrieved from the following websites:

“We’ll stop acting like adults if you stop acting like children”

“The oceans are rising and so are we”

“We’re here now because we want to be able to be here in 50 years’ time.”
“Think or swim”
“One, two, three degrees – a crime against humanity”

“Change the system not the climate”

“There is no planet B”
“The snow must go on”

“Don’t be a fossil fool”
“The climate is changing, why aren’t we??”

Thunberg: “You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes.”

Thunberg: “Our lives are in your hands” (In Swedish: “Våra liv ligger i era händer”)
https://www.etc.se/ledare/greta-thunberg-vara-liv-ligger-i-era-hander

Thunberg: “We can’t save the world by playing by the rules. Because the rules have to be changed.”
This thesis brings together childhood studies and the problem of environmental degradation. It focuses on intergenerational and interspecies relations and aspects connected to sustainability issues. The discussions centre on three contexts: a sea (the Öresund region), a desert (the Sonoran Desert), and the school strikes for the climate (global). Taking an approach inspired by phenomenology, these contexts are examined using the notion of appearance. Questions are asked about which subjects and objects (can) appear – where, when and to whom – and about the conditions for and implications of those appearances. The purpose of the thesis is twofold. One, to develop an appearance-oriented framework that can serve ethico-political theorising, with specific regard to children, generations and non-human species in times of environmental degradation. Two, to discuss appearance(s) in relation to specific sustainability activities, linked to the three mentioned contexts. Central scholars drawn upon are Hannah Arendt and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as feminist scholars’ development of their theorising.