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INTERGENERATIONAL RECOGNITION AS POLITICAL PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the concept of intergenerational recognition in the context of childhood and youth, from a relational spatial political perspective. It is approached as a dynamic social practice and a force constitutive of political agency, as unfolding in children and young people's everyday lives. Drawing from an ethnographic analysis, intergenerational recognition is suggested as a useful concept for the analysis of political communities where living together forms the major challenge as well as the promise of change.

CONTEXTUAL RECOGNITION

'Recognition' is a philosophically grounded, open-ended social theoretical concept that has become established in interdisciplinary debates over the past couple of decades. On the whole, recognition refers to an on-going social process whereby people constitute their own and other people's identities by meeting each other and seeking 'intersubjective regard' (Fraser and Honneth 2003: 1). It works on different levels of awareness and intent, gets enacted though articulations, acts, attitudes and embodied expressions, and may take

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individual and collective forms. Another general ideal, involving a normative undertone, is that human life can be made more ethical through recognition, while there is also always the potential for damaging misrecognitions. This ethical note has come to imply that all practices supporting recognition or leading toward misrecognition are politically consequential (Deranty and Renault 2007).

The idea of recognition draws from the thought of both Hegel (1807/1977) and Mead (1934) which have been developed in various theoretical directions by Charles Taylor (1994), Axel Honneth (1995) and Nancy Fraser (2000). These ideas have been taken yet further by recent scholarship that has given rise to a massive body of work on political identities (e.g. Markell 2003; Deranty and Renault 2007; Warnke 2007; McNay 2008; Staeheli 2008; Noble 2009; Häkli and Kallio 2014). Although these ideas have had influence in new disciplinary areas like childhood studies (e.g. Houston and Dolan 2008; Thomas 2012), theories of recognition have also been subject to critique. In particular, critics have called attention to the limits and dangers of identity-based recognition. The scholars cited above, amongst others, have noticed the contradictions embedded in identity categories that mark people according to certain characteristics (racial, gendered, ethnic, socio-economic, etc.). Even if useful in some policy contexts, categorical identity markers rarely fully encompass people's experiences of the self - their subjective ways of relating to the lived world.

To move beyond traditional identity categories, some critics have called for theorisations that acknowledge *contextuality* as a starting point of recognition. One such attempt is by

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Patchen Markell (2003), who suggests 'acknowledgement' as an alternative to identity-based recognition, emphasising spatio-temporally situated sociability based on 'multiple and provisional subjectivities located in particular circuits of recognition which can only be captured in an ethnography of the encounter', as paraphrased by Noble (2009: 876, for contextual theorisations see also Deranty and Renault 2007; Warnke 2007; McNay 2008). These approaches are in line with the long tradition of feminist critique of universalism and the generalised other, with clear resonances with aspects of postcolonial and queer theories. They thus also suit well empirically grounded, critical spatial theoretical research that appreciates contextuality (e.g. Robson 2004; Evans 2011).

Yet relatively few examples of this kind of work exist. Some social and political geographers have made recent contributions to these debates over the concept of recognition. These include Staeheli's (2008) introduction to the dynamics of recognition that involve state agents and institutions; Walker's (2009) study that reveals how people and places are associated in processes that produce environmental injustice through misrecognition; Noble's (2009) analysis identifying legitimacy, respect and competence as important matters to some young Sydney men's everyday existence, as compared to masculinity and ethnicity; Barnett's (2012) consideration of Honneth's idea on the relationship between experiences and articulations as illuminative of the phenomenologies of political life; and Koefoed and Simonsen's (2012) use of recognition as a counterpart to estrangement and identification in the development of political belonging and spatial attachments. In my own work, I have engaged with theories of recognition in tracing the

idea of political subjectivity with a restored reading of Mead's though, together with Jouni Häkli (Häkli and Kallio 2014).

While recognition theory is not widely deployed in spatial-theoretical research, notions of intergenerationality have been largely absent from theoretical debates over recognition. Whereas various intergenerational forms of intersubjective recognition have gained attention in empirical analyses (e.g. Houston and Dolan 2008; Reiter 2010; Thomas 2012), and the present discussions on intergenerationality implicitly involve ideas parallel to recognition (e.g. Tarrant 2010; Hopkins *et al.* 2011; Binnie and Klesse 2013), the concept of intergenerational recognition has not been developed in a theoretical sense. One important exception is by Somogy Varga (2011) who sets it forth in the study of biotechnological interventions related to prenatal birth control. He suggests intergenerational recognition as instructive in thinking about the ethics and morality of such medical technologies and the related institutional practices. As Honneth's student, Varga has identified the analytic power of intergenerational recognition. He sees the individual actors as partisans in a political game that spreads far past their everyday activities, and notices the process as influential beyond the place and time where the very acts take place.

In a similar spirit, I approach intergenerational recognition as a social dynamic at play in the mundane politics where people from different generational positions meet. Joining the contextual recognition scholars, I deem it a *dynamic social practice* which people enter from different spatio-temporal positions and a *constitutive force* that is particularly influential in the generation of youthful political subjects. In this interpretation, I disengage

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from the normative stance emphasised by many recognition theorists. I agree that recognition can be *used* as a technique that helps make life more ethical in certain circumstances, but I think that it also *unfolds* in everyday life in ways that are not easily estimable on the ethical continuum. This approach stems from my theoretical orientation, stressing political multiplicity and subjective experience.

In this chapter, I examine the practice and effects of intergenerational recognition in some everyday environments where Finnish children and young people lead their lives. I place the analysis in the experiential – or phenomenal – world of politics (cf. Barnett 2012; Simonsen 2013), which I enter through the biographical place-based narratives constituted in an ethnographic study. Even if tempting I will not consider intergenerational recognition in the formal politics of states and institutions (cf. Staeheli 2008). This is a practical framing, and not analytical, as I disengage from the perception where 'politics' and 'Politics' divide into distinct spheres of life (Kallio 2009, 2012; Häkli and Kallio 2014). The next section provides a short overview on the political theoretical orientation that guides my thought, hopefully informative enough to those not familiar with 'the political' in phenomenological terms. This understanding is imperative to the following empirical analysis of intergenerational recognition.

THE WORLD OF PLURALITY AND ITS POLITICAL SUBJECTS

Recent engagements with the work of Hannah Arendt (1958, 2005) have stressed the phenomenological orientation of her political theory (e.g. Barnett 2012; Dikeç 2013; Häkli

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and Kallio 2014). These analysts emphasise that Arendt's project was not about building ontological grounds for political thought but rather developing durable ideas concerning human political life. As an active debater on pressing societal issues, she surely did place her ideas in particular empirical settings, thus giving them seemingly context-specific forms (e.g. Arendt 1959, cf. Nakata 2008). Yet, as a political philosopher whose work built on the long tradition of democratic theory, with specific affection for Socrateian thought (Arendt 2005: 5–39), the purpose of her topical arguments was hardly to fix theorisation to certain times or spatial organisation of the polity. Therefore, Arendt's work contains opportune potential for theoretical rethinking and contextualisation (Kallio 2009). What follows is a brief introduction to my reading of her political theory, informed by the current debates on relational space, politics and subjectivity (e.g. Cavarero 2002; Elden 2005; Marshall 2010; Vacchelli, 2011; Barnett 2012; Secor 2012; Dikeç 2013).

In the Arendtian political world, every human being owns the capacity for political agency through action led by thought, from the moment of birth till the final demise. In this conceptual pair 'thought' stands for thoughtful human existence in general, including implicit understanding and internalised awareness, as well as explicit conceptions and articulate knowledge. 'Action', instead, refers to making appearances in a polity in which the given performance is significant. Here polity should not be understood in any particular scalar dimension. It is the name of the people who find themselves as members of a shared world of plurality, namely the polis, which is a spatially finite yet not necessarily territorially bound political realm. In addition to national citizens belonging to the same nation state, the polity may therefore consist of, for instance, a transnational network of

people worried about the climate change, forming an 'issue public' (Kim 2012), or a fluid committed gaming community that comes together and recognises each other in various internet based role-playing platforms and game spaces (Ondrejka 2007). Instead of particular scalar or formal organisation, definitive to the polity and the polis is hence 'living together'.

The specific term that Arendt uses for political agency is 'public speech'. Also this concept consists of two relative parts. 'Public' marks the space of appearance that actualises as people meet and 'speak', and 'speech' refers to thoughtful action that may take any form and be presented by anyone as long as it is noticeable within the polity. The capacity and power of public speech, as compared to thinking devoid of action and action disengaged from thought, lies in the production of beginnings that keep the polity alive (Arendt 1958: 9). Should they cease to appear, the polis will become stagnant and the relations between people fixed, which denotes the end of freedom. This leads to an impoverished political life since to Arendt (2005: 108) 'the meaning of politics is freedom'.

Arendt states that 'Politics is based on the fact of human plurality, [and it] deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men […] with a view to their *relative* equality and in contradistinction to their *relative* differences' (2005: 93, 96, emphases in original). 'Relative equality' refers to the idea of unique subjectivity as a basis of political autonomy (*who* we are); 'relative difference', instead, points to mutually identified categories through which dissimilarity may be articulately identified (*what* we are) (Arendt 1958: 181). 'Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in

such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who lived, lives, or will live', Arendt (1958: 8) explains, thus conjoining subjectivity and plurality as the basis of living together.

These are the central concepts in Arendt's theory: thought and action, public speech, appearance and beginning, polity and polis, relative equality and difference, subject as who and what, plurality and living together, association and coexistence. To summarise, the polis is 1) a spatially finite yet scalarly open-ended experienced world; 2) formed by a polity consisting of people who are distinct both subjectively and categorically; 3) characterised by human plurality, which those longing to be a part of it must appreciate; 4) based on the principle of freedom that stands for fluid relations of equality and difference, prone to transformation and reorganisation; and 5) maintained and developed through thoughtful action that is capable of creating beginnings. This phenomenological political frame informs the following analysis where intergenerational recognition is identified as political practice.

INTERGENERATIONAL RECOGNITION IN THE WORLD OF RELATIVE EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCE

In what follows, I provide two excerpts from the analysis where I have examined the practices and effects of intergenerational recognition in familial, institutional and public everyday settings[1]. It draws upon my ongoing research where administrative conceptions of youthful agency (formal politics of states and institutions) are contrasted and paralleled

with children and young people's experiences and practices (mundane politics of everyday life) (see Kallio, Häkli & Bäcklund forthcoming). The ethnographic field work was carried out in 2012 in Tampere and Helsinki, Finland, following principles of critical documentary ethnography (Ortner 2002). We worked with four classes of fifth graders (n=74) and three classes of ninth graders (n=55) across three different schools.[2]

Our data - collected in the form of maps, interviews, written stories, and drawings – provide thick descriptions of experienced and practiced political realities of differently located and situated children and young people. I term these biographical place-based narratives. I have analysed them in an Arendtian spirit as portrayals of the 'life in polis', as conceived, experienced and practiced by our youthful participants. I present the results in the particular empirical settings of the study because, in line with Evans (2011: 344) and other critical ethnographers who have worked with families, I believe that both familial and extra-familial intergenerationality are extremely context specific (some details that will help non-Finnish readers to understand the context are provided in the endnotes). Rather than make general arguments, my aim is to demonstrate how the dynamics of intergenerational recognition may be observed in the ebb and flow of everyday life, reflecting on what these dynamics can tell us about the mundane politics at play.

Reciprocal recognition in familial relations

Age is a contextual concept. It has not only been categorised differently over time and space, but the meanings of age differences fluctuate also within the societies. As differently

aged people encounter one another, their generational relations arrange distinctly, depending on the site. For instance, encounters between six and sixty-year-old persons might be understood through child-adult relations in institutional settings (e.g. a doctor's office), grand-generational positions in familial environments (e.g. religious services), and non-adult status in public commercial space (e.g. a ticket office). Respectively, as a practice of living together, intergenerational recognition takes multiple forms and modes, with variable levels of awareness, intensity, intentionality, moral judgement, normativity and reciprocity.

Moreover, even in familial contexts intergenerationality is not restricted to child–adult relations. This became evident as our research participants located their 'ordinary complexity of kinship' (Mason and Tipper 2008: 443), involving relations and encounters between parents, older and younger siblings, cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbours and friend families, pets, and ex-spouses, step-children and other something-like-relatives. Whereas some only mentioned their family houses and cottages as a self-evident element of spatial belonging,[3] others used plenty of time and effort to express their specific familial relationships. There were labels like 'the best cousins', 'the dearest cottage', 'Sammy-granpa's ex-ladyfriends place', to pinpoint locations of particularly affective attachments. Interestingly, such could exist also devoid of any visible permanence. For instance a ski resort that the family had visited a couple of times with a 'friend family' during the winter holiday[4] was afforded a specific label, thus transforming any cottage where this important familial life takes place into 'the cottage'.

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Two affective ways of relating with differently aged people in familial life became strikingly visible: care and fun. Both belong to the sphere of socially based and organised everyday practice, underpinned by formal and informal institutions (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 21). Sometimes these two elements of intergenerationality interweave, like when taking care of younger family members by playing with them. Yet at other times caring is not fun and fun is not caring. A common case of 'unfun caring' relates to grandparents who need not be entertaining or even nice to be considered worthy of a visit or kind words. The following episode, presented by a fifth grader, makes a case in point.

> Interviewee: 'Cat-granny' [a nickname reflecting her ownership of a cat] has been a bit foolish and mum and dad can't bear visiting her anymore, and then she thought that they have abandoned her. Sometimes when me and my little sister go there she goes like 'now you are also abandoning me and your parents are running the show…' And then she trashes everyone for leaving her alone…
>
> Interviewer: When you have been there, and there are these things, do you tell about them to your dad or…?
>
> Interviewee: Sure, and to mum as well, and they say that 'now it's enough, she's getting so mad that soon we will not let you there'.
>
> Interviewer: Do you still want to go there?
>
> Interviewee: Yes I do sometimes [she continues by recounting an episode about how troubling these visits can be]
>
> Interviewer: Who decides that you go there, overall?
>
> Interviewee: We can decide for ourselves whether we go or not.

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This caring relation comes close to 'hidden care work' that has been identified as one form of intergenerationality where children's active agency plays a politically significant part (e.g. Robson 2004; Evans 2011). Yet ostensibly, visiting her grandmother is totally voluntary to this participant, to the extent that her parents are close to preventing it. She has the right to decide whether she goes to see her or not and, while visiting, may (and does) leave any moment she likes. The episode therefore hardly portrays a child obliged to caring work in her family but, rather, an attentive associate who wishes to acknowledge her grandmother's unconditional value as a family member, which is not dependent upon her characteristics or behaviour. Similar relations were brought up by many of our participants, involving differing levels of joy *about* their grandparents but great amounts of care *for* them. This subjectively grounded and socio-culturally embedded, responsible and altruistic practice is one form of youthful political agency. By caring for their grandparents, children and young people work to maintain, continue and repair their worlds (Tronto 1993: 61; Bartos 2013).

Taking quite a different shape, intergenerational recognition is practiced and political agency developed also by means of 'non-caring fun'. As one example, baking was mentioned by many of our participant as something they enjoyed doing with differently aged relatives and friends in familial settings. Baking was found rewarding for instance in terms of sociability, creativity, helping, learning, developing an appreciation for food and skill-performance. Other such seemingly ordinary activities that were brought up as 'special' in certain occasions include shopping, swimming, chatting, walking the dog,

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watching television, jogging and playing games. Without exception, these activities were related to clearly identifiable individuals. When talking about these relationships our participants could not often reason why a particular cousin, aunt, parent, friend family, or other important person or group of people, was so special. Instead, they simply stated that 'she is so fun to be with', 'I can be totally myself with her', 'I really like the way she is', and so on (see Bartos 2013 on friendship and environment; Marshall 2013 on beauty). In an Arendtian frame these expressions can be understood as proof of 'inarticulate humanity'—subjective uniqueness:

> The manifestation of who the speaker and doer unexchangeably is, though it is plainly visible, retains a curious intangibility that confounds all efforts toward unequivocal verbal expression. The moment we want to say *who* somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying *what* he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a 'character' in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us. (Arendt 1958: 181)

By emphasising uniqueness rather than certain generally identifiable characteristics, our participants came to state appreciation of *who* and not *what* these people are, finding them*selves* similarly recognised. Gender and age, for instance, ceased to hold the same structuring power that they have in less intimate relationships. These processes of recognition thus differ notably from the caring ones where familial status is defining.

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Relationships characterised by mutual enjoyment are prone to produce positive correct recognition because, to continue, they must be rewarding to the people involved . 'Having fun' does not just happen but needs to be *desired*, *accomplished* and *witnessed* by active agency each time. Simultaneously, these relationships are markedly sensitive to misrecognition, due to the high level of attentiveness, which became evident in narratives describing close relationships that had waned or come to an end. Also in these cases our participants found it hard to put the finger on 'what happened' – they just 'didn't get around to going there anymore', 'couldn't find the time to meet', 'didn't remember to call', or the like. Something that once was 'unique' had become 'common', rendering the *best* cousins *merely* cousins, among other relatives.

Therefore, contrary to what one might think, when enjoying themselves and having fun with each other people are engaged in the processes of contextual recognition in the most serious and demanding sense. It is these relationships, involving profound emotions of all kinds, that make the power of (mis)recognition most apparent. Whereas caring is about maintaining, continuing and repairing the world where one is embedded, mutual enjoyment entails creativity, sensitivity and courage by which to acknowledge the inarticulate uniqueness beyond the over-articulate identities.

Identifying plurality in the school polity

My second excerpt comes from children and young people's formal institutional lives. After the home, the most extensive framework for their daily living is the school. In

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Finland compulsory education incorporates basically all people between six to sixteen years of age, including non-citizens, asylum-seekers, and other non-permanent residents. In addition to the compulsory period, most kids participate in public kindergarten programmes from an early age and continue their studies in upper secondary and vocational schools for three to four years. Even if seemingly voluntary, the choice of further schooling is practically limited to the choice of the school and not participation per se, as the second degree certificate is assumed by all educational institutes and is necessary for most occupations. Rather than nine years, the common scope of basic schooling thus comes closer to 13–19 years.

Taking that in all levels of education (including the nursery), teachers are trained in national university programmes, and the units follow a national pedagogical and curricular frame in the organisation of their activities, the Finnish school system provides a somewhat consistent state-based growth environment for the first twenty years of life. As a national institution of socialisation it has two major objectives. First, the *educative* intention strives for the advancement of thought and skill in substantial matters, aiming at high-level know-how that affords good starting points for further education and on-the-job learning.[5] Second, following a *pedagogical* rationale, the school aims at creating proper citizens with a shared moral mindset and respect for basic values – internalisation of 'the Finnish way'. The associations between pupils and teachers[6] build respectively two-dimensionally, as student–educator and citizen–pedagogue relationships (cf. Pykett 2009a). Recognition by which the differently positioned actors identify and acknowledge each other forms an

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important element in the constitution and negotiation of these roles, through which individuals enter and enact the school polity.

The student–educator and citizen–pedagogue relationships are hard to distinguish in practice as the persons performing the roles are the same. Yet it is possible to separate them analytically from experience-based biographical narratives that echo the effects of (mis)recognition. I found the attitudes towards school presented by our participants' instructive on this account. They could be divided into four categories. The first group feels positively about the school: they like to study and learn, describe their teachers as good people and skilled educators, and enjoy the overall spirit of the school. The second group— nearly non-existent in our study—detests the school *tout court*, providing a contrary assessment to the previous. Also the third group basically 'hates the school' but when enquired what they hate about it, it is only the *schoolwork* they dislike. The fourth group, instead, respects the school as a workplace but identifies defects in school *life*. It is the last two categories that are particularly illuminating for my purposes.

When school is disliked with respect to schoolwork, students and educators do not meet satisfyingly. The process of mutual recognition does not work at the educative level, for one reason or another, which arouses feelings of frustration, failure and lack of interest on the students' side, often leading to long term lack of educational motivation, evasion of schoolwork and shirking classes[7]. When specifically asked during interviews, our participants would typically label one or two subjects as 'ok', but otherwise schoolwork was described as 'just too tiring' or 'boring'. Yet when asked about school life in general

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they had few complaints. They liked being at school together with their friends, even so much that they would sometimes stay at the yard after school, playing soccer or catch or just hanging around. The teachers were also portrayed as 'mostly ok', 'nice' and 'good people'. What these findings together imply is that this group of pupils is content with their position as *community members* in the school polity, and do not find themselves misrecognised in terms of morality, values or norms. Instead, they are uncomfortable about their position as *students* who are expected to fulfil certain curricular requirements that do not seem inviting or rewarding to them.

In contrast, the group of pupils who acknowledge the importance of studying but downgrade the school for other reasons are more conflicted about the realities of their 'lived citizenship' (Kallio *et al.* forthcoming, see also Lister 2007; Staeheli 2011). The negative attitude usually pertains to the staff 'who don't understand us', either as individuals or as a group, if not to bullying that also involves both the pupils and the teachers as members of the school community. One typical issue of misunderstanding concerned the 'spirit' of the school class, as portrayed by one of the ninth graders.

> Interviewee: In my opinion, in our class we have trust, and a good community spirit […] you can laugh about people and they don't take it like personally, but then you realise if something, *some thing* is like a sore spot with someone, then you stop talking about it.
> Interviewer: Okay. Like there's at play a kind of a mutual...?

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Interviewee: Yeah, right – and then all the teachers go like 'you can't laugh at each other and talk however you like, someone may have their feelings hurt'. But we do realise if someone gets hurt and then…

Interviewer: Have you talked about it in the class, with your classmates, that this is like 'our way'?

Interviewee: We have, we have, but the teachers then again don't understand it.

Interviewer: You mean they have not internalised your way of being?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Could you say that your class, as a whole, takes care of each other?

Interviewee: Yes. We are like such a, as there's only sixteen of us, we are like really close and such that… like pretty surely we'll have low feelings now that high school finishes, we need to leave and our class breaks up completely.

When talking about their teachers, this interviewee does not discuss them as educators, but as people of the school. In these cases, the (dis-)connection hence lies between the differently positioned members of the school community, the *youthful citizens* and their *pedagogical authorities*. Along with a number of other respondents who identified problems with the social life of the school, this respondent cites encounters where teachers overlook or contradict their conceptions about the state of affairs in school, and judge their agency on the 'wrong grounds'. Such misrecognition is conducive of school life where peer cultural features become emphasised at the cost of the school community as a whole, with negative implications for schoolwork as well.

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Together these findings confirm the well-known fact that, regardless of their acknowledged academic drive that has led to success in international comparisons (see IEA 2012, PISA 2012), negative attitudes towards school are common among youthful Finns. Yet my analysis suggests that the dislikes students articulate bear many connotations. When analysed in a phenomenological political frame, the message that these voices deliver does not appear merely negative. In fact, I interpret them as indications of a relatively lively mundane political life, allowing pupils active roles in the school polity. This interpretation fits with the recent development of the Finnish school where authoritarian forms of government have been substituted by deliberative ideals, leaving space also to agonistic forms of participation (Simola 2002). I will explain this interpretation using another brief example.

In cases where the school is a place where young people are happy as citizens but not as students, the pupils refuse to fill the role of 'entrepreneurial self': in other words, the student who drives for the best possible educational results in competition with one's mates, constantly pushing their own limits ever higher (Peters 2001; Bragg 2007)[8]. Rather, they navigate through their studies in ways that are merely 'satisfactory', investing in other things at school - for instance the peer life that involves different kinds of activities where skill, wit and sociability are needed. By thus rejecting the subject position proposed by the school institution and adopting one enabled by the school community, they complicate the *educators'* task to recognise them by the general label through which difference is articulately identified in school, as *students*.

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This agency is subjectively grounded, set against the institutional order on a fundamental level, and has both micro- and macro-scale effects. The pupils following this path will not internalise the current neoliberal regime similarly to those who seek to please the institutional order by fulfilling the proposed 'studentship' to the full, which has obvious corollaries to their political development. Moreover, this proportion of students also proposes a fair challenge to the Finnish Government's (2011) ambitious educative intention 'to make Finland the most competent nation in the world by 2020 [to] be ranked among the leading group of OECD countries in key comparisons of competencies of young people and adults, in lack of early school-leaving, and in the proportion of young people and other people of working age with a higher education degree.' In Rancière's terms, they are in active *dis-agreement* with this policy line, thus acting politically also in the present (Kallio 2012; Dikeç 2013).

In the latter case, the pupils find their own and their teachers' understandings of school life contradictory, which contests the citizen–pedagogue associations. In the current child and youth policy spirit, such expressions are typically interpreted as indicative of the lacking prospects for 'voice', calling for participatory interventions and structures.[9] Yet if understood as public speech in the school polity, the opposite seems the case. The struggle over the right to define 'good communal spirit' and the subsequent way of school life is an example *par excellence* of democratic practice where everyone may enter the space of appearance from their own stance. To be successful, these appearances need not lead to mutual consensus because, as agonistic and deliberative political theories have long

professed, disagreement and dissent are important elements in a functioning democracy (e.g. Bäcklund and Mäntysalo 2010).

Thus understood, the lack of enjoyment expressed by the latter group can be read as indication of a vivid school polity where they have found their place as active partisans. This interpretation gets support from the school's overall progressive attitude.[10] Young people's agency is enabled and constricted by the plurality of the school community where equality and difference are relative, in the Arendtian sense, between pupils and teachers, but also amongst differently positioned pupils (cf. Pykett 2009b). This last notion points to another empirical finding that I did not raise above. In contrast to those views discussed, other pupils from this class expressed discomfort towards the prevailing peer cultural order, which they found cliquey and fraught. From their perspective, the introduced struggle gets yet another tone.

To summarise, with this analysis I have sought to point out that there are various processes of recognition simultaneously at play, which reveals the plurality of mundane political life. In school, differently aged actors do not practice their agency merely as teachers and pupils with singular existences, but as students and educators *associated through schoolwork*, and as citizens and pedagogues *related in school life*. On the basis of their particular relations (which are socially constituted also through peer, collegial and parental recognition), all members have the potential to both individual and collective agency, through which to partake in the school polity. This web of intersecting, cross-cutting and diverging relations

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provides each actor a particular stance for creating beginnings that are influential in the 'life of the polis', as well as constitutive to their own and other people's political development.

LIVING TOGETHER BY INTERGENERATIONAL RECOGNITION

This chapter has introduced intergenerational recognition as a dynamic practice and force that holds a central place in mundane political life. Approaching politics phenomenologically from youthful agents' perspectives, I have shown that children and young people are both objects and subjects of recognition, with potential to action led by thought and public speech yet always constricted by their particular stances in their everyday environs. By acknowledging, moulding and challenging the relations of equality and difference, the processes of intergenerational recognition establish and refigure political communities on a fundamental level. Moreover, these relationships and practices are specifically influential to youthful political development, as childhood and youth are formative moments for political agency (Kallio and Häkli 2011).

Empirically, I have introduced familial agencies related to 'care' and 'fun', and pupil–teacher relationships taking place in school, thus portraying different sides of mundane political life. Whereas the school is discussed as a field of intergenerational struggles and strains between its differently positioned members, the family appears as a network of attentive relationships. This portrayal does not suggest that these spheres of youthful living differ along those lines - relations of care and fun are formed in school as well, and family life is often fraught with power games as their members are contextually situated and

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constricted. Rather, I have sought to display that intergenerational recognition works in multiple directions and is enacted in numerous ways by both younger and older people. When approached from varying positions, the effects of these processes are hard to assess normatively, as they have different meanings to different people. Therefore, contextual in-depth empirical analysis is imperative for evading categorical explanations concerning intergenerationality, making sense of the meanings of these relations to those involved, and their effects in the given political reality.

I wish to conclude by an allegory where the occasions of intergenerational recognition are framed as *agreements*. In making these agreements the contracting parties consent to certain *parameters*, from the stances where they are positioned. These again place them in *relation* to each other. These relations may be oppressive, enabling or anything in between because - in the phenomenal political world - no relationship is neutral or essentially good or bad. This fundamental openness creates the prospect for *beginning* something new, for maintaining important matters, repairing ruptured relations, promoting institutional change, acknowledging personal features or just trying out a new approach in getting along. As such, intergenerational recognition appears as a *political practice* of living together in the world of plurality where fixed relations denote the end of freedom, and the space of appearance is available for anyone capable of public speech.

NOTES

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[1] The study is based at the University of Tampere, Space and Political Agency Research Group (SPARG), and funded by the Academy of Finland (projects SA134949, SA133521, SA258341). The theoretical work results from cooperation with Jouni Häkli and the ethnographic fieldwork was carried out with Elina Stenvall.

[2] In Finland basic education takes nine years, beginning at the age of seven, and the actual school work is organised variably in units of different size and scope. Fifth graders are hence about 11–12 and ninth graders 15–16 years old.

[3] In Finland nearly every family has a cottage of some kind that they can use and, because these are often passed on in the family, it is not rare to acquire the right to use various 'family cottages', which can be visited occasionally by a number of people. Marking down many cottages is hence not necessarily an indication of wealth. In terms of belonging cottages are comparable, if not more significant, than homes, as they comprise permanence, family history, sharing and closeness.

[4] A national week-long school holiday in the middle of winter, traditionally 'the skiing holiday', when many families travel to ski resorts that sell and rent cottages and caravan parking space. These need not be luxurious holidays – there is a fitting price range for everyone.

[5] Studying is strongly state-promoted in Finland by free education, a broad network of public institutes and various subsidies. The level of educational attainment is thus high. Currently more than 70% of the adult population has a vocational or higher education degree and most people build up their competence through vocational adult education in

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working life. The national aim is to further elevate this level to 90%, in the next decade (see the Finnish Government Programme 2011)

[6] I only discuss the relationships between children, youth and their teachers, while I realise that other people working at schools, and the parents, also partake in this intergenerational web.

[7] Teachers are as well frustrated in these relationships, feeling themselves unsuccessful educators and failing in their work. This came up in informal discussion with them but, as our field work limited to the study of youthful experiences, the analysis does not involve teacher perspectives.

[8] The latest amendments to the school curricula emphasising such studentship can be found at the Finnish National Board of Education webpages.

[9] Following the international child's rights discourse and the related policy trends, Finnish policy strongly emphasises the role of participation and democratic practice in all institutional settings (see Finnish Government Child and Youth Policy Programme 2012–2015 2012)

[10] This is evident at all levels, beginning from the school building, pedagogical and educative objectives, collegial collaboration, and further.

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