The Cosmopolitanization of Childhood: Eco-Knowledge in Children's Eco-Edutainment Books

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The cosmopolitanization of childhood—eco-knowledge in children's eco-edutainment books

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Abstract

This article discusses one particular aspect of the cosmopolitanization of childhood by analysing children's "eco-edutainment" books, giving advice on how to save the world from environmental catastrophe. Its purpose is to analyse how such books articulate and spread "eco-knowledge", encouraging children to become environmentally aware world citizens. The analysis shows that these books urge children and preteens not only to become self-disciplined and caring, ethical "ecological selves", but also to partake in producing local eco-knowledge and monitoring eco-discipline in their families, schools, and local communities. The interconnection of problems, blame, possibilities, responsibilities, commitment, and tactics and techniques made in these books articulates a persuasive and potentially mobilizing discourse. By simultaneously empowering the children, stimulating their cosmopolitical commitment, and suggesting certain techniques and tactics for improving their families' and schools' environmental performances, these books encourage children to identify with a duty of becoming cosmopolitical problem solvers.

Key Words: environmental education, sustainable development, governmentality, discipline, children's edutainment books

INTRODUCTION

There has been a strong revitalization of cosmopolitanism during recent decades. Cosmopolitan ideals have not only come to the forefront in philosophy, but they have also become a central element of contemporary debates on education, against the background of a renewed interest in Kant's writings (e.g. Harvey, 2009; Kemp, 2005; Popkewitz et al., 2006; Robertson, 2010; Todd, 2009). From a sociological perspective, the interest in cosmopolitanism is not so much on its normative ideals as on the actual development of a new "cosmopolitical condition", which brings a "forced cosmopolitanization" of societies and life-worlds (Beck & Sznaider, 2006; Delanty, 2006; Fine, 2003; Szerszynski & Urry, 2002; Popkewitz, 2008: 74ff.).

Undoubtedly, children today are living in an increasingly globalized world. This is particularly true in affluent societies. However, does this lead to a cosmopolitanization of their life-worlds and, if so, what are the consequences for what it means to be young in late modern societies? What are the consequences of this for childhood as a social structural form (cf. Hengst, 2001; Qvortrup, 2001): what expectations are being formed in children, and what kind of "subjects" are children thereby being constituted as? These are issues of such scope that they cannot be answered either directly or by individual studies. Nevertheless, they are starting points from which research should take its bearings, and we can contribute by producing research that may be used in shaping at least the contours of an answer.

This article discusses one particular aspect of the cosmopolitanization of childhood by analysing children's books giving advice on how to save the world from environmental

catastrophe.[1] The purpose is to analyse the articulation of a committing, mobilizing, and responsibilizing discourse that encourages children to become environmentally aware world citizens. These types of books constitute a small, but selective, source for studying the production of a responsibilizing kind of eco-knowledge that exists widely in children's lives, although not always concisely and systematically articulated. To study eco-edutainment books is thus one way to analyse cosmopolitanization, in order to understand the production of eco-knowledge as a discourse that articulates children as responsible environmental subjects. It is also a way of approaching the process of cosmopolitanization "from within"; that is, to understand the ways in which children are used as mobilizers of cosmopolitan engagement within their families, local communities, and schools (Beck, 2002).

THE COSMOPOLITANIZATION OF SOCIETIES AND LIFE-WORLDS

The current "cosmopolitical condition" is shaped by global risks that are at once ecological, economic, and social. The threats of global warming, terror and wars; the tragedies of poverty, famine, and natural disasters; and issues of human rights are no longer happening "out there". They are reflected in a nascent global public sphere that penetrates national and local contexts, and is mediated to the homes and everyday lives of many people (Beck & Sznaider, 2006; Silverstone, 2007; Robertson, 2010). This creates a process of unintended or even forced cosmopolitanization of societies and life-worlds (Beck, 2006; Beck & Sznaider,

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[1] For an elaborated definition of "children's literature" see Nodelman (2008). According to him, children's literature is "not so much what children read as what producers hope children will read", and "what adult teachers, librarians, and parents will be willing to purchase." (ibid 4f.) In fact, one of its main defining characteristics is that it "is literature that claims to be devoid of adult content that nevertheless lurks within it" (ibid 341).

2006). As shown by Furia (2008), we should thus be cautious in supposing that cosmopolitanism is merely an ideal, upheld only by an affluent and educated Western elite.

Obviously, cosmopolitanism is not unrelated to globalization (Delanty, 2006). Rather, the concept emphasizes that globalization is more than a question of economy or politics: it has emotional and ethical consequences, too. The influx of global concerns urges people to act from the concept of a common destiny, shared both with inhabitants of other continents and countries and with future generations. Cosmopolitanization, thus, is said to be a "globalization from *within* the national societies", or even a "globalization in the head" (Beck, 2002:17, Szerszynski & Urry, 2002:464). The point is that human empathic capacities, as well as responsibilities and duties, are extended globally as local life-worlds are penetrated by the nexus of forces Beck characterizes as the "world risk society" (Beck, 2006; cf. Urry, 1999).

The cosmopolitanization of childhood

Today, children's life-worlds are being globalized to an increasing extent, particularly in affluent societies. The most evident channel is through children's use of media (Drotner, 2005; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Livingstone & Bovill, 2001). Another strong influence is the globalization of children's consumer culture, which is spread in the form of toys, clothing, and sports (Cross & Smits, 2005; Hengst, 2005). In addition, children's physical mobility is increasing through travel and migration (Nette & Hayden, 2007; Szerszynski & Urry, 2006).[2]

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[2] All these aspects of the globalization of children's life-worlds are particularly strong in affluent consumer societies. There is, however, a much darker side of globalization, not discussed further here, which leaves its deepest marks in poor countries: the exploitation of children as workers and as sexual commodities (e.g. Castells, 2000:153ff.).

These are all aspects of globalization intimately related to the indirect globalization of the home, through a family's media consumption and travels (Andersson, 2006). However, the opening up of young people's life-worlds is also related to the globalization of the school environment through increasing emphasis on global issues, and through the spread of educational material between countries, as well as the integration of e-learning in school (Rickinson, 2001; Maeroff, 2003).

All these aspects of the globalization of children's life-worlds are significant when discussing the cosmopolitanization of childhood. Nonetheless, school is often ascribed a particular importance, and it is in fact becoming increasingly shaped by an active ambition to stimulate children's cosmopolitanism, as illustrated by the UN resolution "Decade of education for sustainable development" (2005–2014). The Danish philosopher Peter Kemp gives a strong version of such political and pedagogic ambitions in his "Pedagogical philosophy for the 21st century", which is based on Kant's writings (cf. Harvey, 2009:17ff.; Todd, 2009; Strand, 2010). According to this perspective the goal of education should be to create responsible world citizens. Therefore, the pedagogic task is to make children embrace the "humanization of globalization", as well as "the inclusion of the national within the international" and "a sustainable development for all descendants" (Kemp, 2005:93). This joint effort by politicians and educators, as illustrated by these examples, is particularly visible in the environmental agenda, and the political and pedagogic projects of creating the ethical and self-disciplined "ecological selves" needed for the future (cf. Bonnett, 2006; Sandell et al., 2003:213ff.).

It is hard to generalize about the extent of the cosmopolitanization of children and childhood. Empirical research shows that national media and American fiction dominate young Westerners' mediatized life-worlds (Livingstone & Bovill, 2001). What is more, the media

effects are quite obscure. On the one hand, new media are not shown to have the effect often assumed in making children into global citizens (Valentine & Holloway, 2001). On the other hand, there are tendencies in Europe for children to imagine a community stretching beyond the nation, although primarily encompassing other affluent consumer-oriented nations (Drotner, 2005; Hengst, 2005). We know, for example, of some strains of environmental cosmopolitanism among Swedish youths. Most Swedish adolescents (aged 15–16) not only are knowledgeable about globalization, but also combine a strong national or local identity with a sense of being world citizens (Skolverket, 2004:70–88). However, this is not the case in children under 13, who generally place global concerns second to their own family's health and well-being (Johansson, 2005:208–213).

THE PRODUCTION OF ECOLOGICAL SELVES

In the spirit of Durkheim (1961), Kemp speaks of school as the moral voice of society (Kemp, 2005:24). Today, however, the blurring of leisure and education has reversed the "modern" development through which school has replaced family as the principal agent of socialization (Hengst, 2001; cf. Vanderstraeten, 2004). Socialization is now spoken of as "bidirectional" (Kuczynski et al., 1999), and learning has become not only "informal" and "intergenerational", but also "lifelong" (Popkewitz et al., 2006). On these grounds, Kemp is more accurate when stating that children's reality cannot be compartmentalized. Instead of focusing only on education in school, we need a broader approach to understanding the production of cosmopolitical "ecological selves"—that is, to "tease out the ways in which children are being constituted as modern economic subjects whose freedoms and responsibilities lie beyond the nation" (Mitchell, 2007:4).

In agreement with Mitchell (2007), I find it helpful to understand the attempts to shape children into cosmopolitical learners with the help of the notion of "advanced liberal" ways of governing "at a distance" (Rose, 1996). This approach, related to the Foucauldian concept of "governmentality", has been used primarily in critical studies of neoliberal policies, aimed at shaping *economically* rational subjects, for example through formal education at school (e.g. Ailwood, 2004:29). However, with its emphasis on the production of knowledge and expertise, and the usage and conduct of individuals' capacity to govern themselves, it is possible to use these concepts for analyses of a broader scope, such as the shaping of *ecologically* and *cosmopolitically* responsible subjects.

Important aspects of such governing at a distance are processes of responsibilization, in which individuals are given not only freedom to choose, but also the knowledge, techniques, and responsibility to "exercise their citizenship responsibly" (Rose, 1996:45). This is manifested in educational contexts by the way in which children are given new degrees of respect and freedom, as well as the responsibility of contributing to their own socialization (e.g. Kampman, 2004). Such pedagogies, embracing active and autonomous children and lifelong learning, have become a central part of contemporary childhoods in advanced liberal democracies (Vandenbroeck & Bouverne-De Bie, 2006). According to Popkewitz et al. (2006), the strong wave of cosmopolitanism is intimately related to these forms of governing, which are shaped through pedagogic and political programs encouraging lifelong learning. This cosmopolitanization is articulated as an empowered subject "having a voice", but also having the responsibility for adjusting to expertise and creating change through the practices of everyday life. In that way, cosmopolitanism fabricates children as "problem solvers", liable for solving problems that transcend national and cultural borders.

It would be wrong to view such education of ecological selves as an expression of pure state power or formal education, even though it is manifest in environmental education policies and pedagogies. An important point is that such learning not only places individuals in a greater space of responsibility, morally and geographically, but also extends the pedagogic principles and practices of learning throughout society. Globally related environmental problems serve as a good illustration: the production of an activating and self-disciplining eco-knowledge with accompanying techniques and tactics for pro-environmental behaviour is developed and spread both by governmental agencies and by NGOs (Luke, 1999).[3]

The implication is that the learning of environmental cosmopolitanism is ongoing throughout children's everyday lives. Research has shown that influences not only from school, but also from the media, the family, and NGOs are of significance for children's environmentalism (Rickinson, 2001:243–245). Environmental education at school can affect children's attitudes, and may be a basis for influencing family behaviour (Ballantyne et al., 2001).[4] Parents also influence their children's behaviour (Grønhøj, 2007), as do television, children's magazines,

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[3] The concepts of "technique" and "tactic" are used in a loosely Foucauldian sense. The former is for governing practices based on knowledge, and the latter for resistance acts taken against some authority (e.g. the parents), or in the words of de Certeau (1984: xvii) "the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong". For a more elaborated discussion, see Thompson (2003).

[4] Research in Sweden shows, for instance, that education on sustainability has had quite some impact at school. Teachers give children deep insights into sustainability, and thereby stimulate them to take an ethical responsibility for the world (Axelsson, 1997; Björneloo, 2007). Other work shows that schoolchildren have a complex understanding of environmental problems, and feel responsible for the environment (Alerby, 1998; Carlsson, 1999). Research in other countries shows that some children even raise the level of environmental consciousness in their families, voicing such concerns as the use of water, electricity, chemicals, travel, and sorting waste (Ballantyne et al., 2001; Grodzinska-Jurczak et al., 2003; cf. Larsson et al., 2010).

and associations such as Greenkids, Fair Trade, and the like (Johansson, 2004:236; cf. Johansson, 2005).[5]

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Printed books and newspapers, as well as radio and public-service television, have been important for the creation of national "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983). These media, and newer ones, are also central to the creation of a cosmopolitical consciousness, and are thus important sources for understanding the cosmopolitanization of childhood (cf. Szerszynski & Urry, 2002; Silverstone, 2007; Robertson, 2010). In this article, I have chosen to study an "old" media, which is nonetheless of enduring interest. Nine children's books that explicitly discuss how children can save the world were selected for qualitative analysis. Their common characteristic is the presentation of environmental issues for children, with a particular emphasis on practical advice on how to contribute to saving the world. Thus, they are part of the field of "eco-edutainment" for children (cf. Martin, 2004).

These books are non-fiction, and intended for learning, but they are not textbooks. Instead, they share the empowering and activating approach of self-help and advice books. This kind of edutainment addressed to parents and their children is not new, even if some features seem novel. Buckingham (2007:33) describes, for example, how "the modern invention of childhood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was accompanied by a whole range of

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[5] The existence of other agents taking an interest in cosmopolitical education is nothing new. Ever since the breakthrough for national education and public schooling during the 18th and 19th centuries (Vanderstraeten, 2004), there have been actors such as the church, the scout movement, and socialistic youth movements trying to supplement or compete with public schools (e.g. Sidebäck, 1992).

pedagogic commodities aimed at parents and children, including primers, advice manuals and instruction books and playthings". Even so, prominent sociologists maintain that advice and self-help books and manuals for adults are of growing importance in societies where traditional authorities have been undermined (Giddens, 1992; Hochschild, 1994; cf. Rose, 1996:58). It seems reasonable to hold that this is true also for children's books and other edutainment because of the ongoing blurring of leisure and education, and the tendency in education to give parents and children greater responsibility for their own learning (Buckingham, 2007).

The books analysed were selected with the help of a search in the Swedish library database LIBRIS for books on the environment and environmental protection written for children and other young people. Forty-three books were found, and a strategic selection of nine books was made, based on the premise that they should give detailed advice on how to save the world. To obtain both actuality and a historical dimension, six books from 2005–2008, two from 1991, and one from 1971, were selected. Only three of these books were originally written for the Swedish market; the rest were first published in England, Australia, and Italy. Thus, the material in itself illustrates how the borders of "methodological nationalism" are being dissolved, and that the analytic generalizations have validity beyond the national arena (cf. Beck & Sznaider, 2006).[6]

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[6] The following books were included in the analysis (country of origin, original year of publication and original title or English translation or original Swedish title are given in brackets): Mansini, G. & Pacini, A. 1971. *Hjälp! Rädda vår planet!* (Italy 1971, *SOS per il pianeta terra*); Elkington, J. Hales, J. & Hill, D. 1991. *Gröna konsumentguiden för juniorer* (England 1990, *The young green consumer guide*); Holm, F. & Lindström, E. 1991. *Miljöräddare. Idebok för gröna kämpar* (Sweden, *Environmental Savers. Idea Book for Green Warriors)*; Bowden, R. 2005. *Hållbar utveckling: Hotet mot miljön.* (UK 2003, *Sustainable World – Environments*); Brownjohn, E. 2007. *Så kan jag ta hand om jorden* (UK 2007, *Yes I can! Help save our planet: A lift-the-flap book*); Murphy, G. 2008. *Global uppvärmning* (Australia 2008, *Global warming*), Rottböll, G. & Sheppard, S.

The analysis does not focus on the literary or narrative aspects of these books, as is the case in most research focusing on environmental critique in children's books (e.g. Bradford, 2003; Dobron & Kidd, 2004; Druker, 2010; McCallum, 2009; Op de Beeck, 2005). As noted above, I am not discussing fiction or even the specificity of the genre studied. My focus is rather closer to the analysis of textbooks on environmental education. Such research often focuses on what is problematic or biased in them, such as prejudiced representations of race or gender (Clark & Fink, 2004, Pescosolido et al., 1997), nationalistic ideologies of geography (Morgan 2003), or inadequate accounts of environmental problems (Sanera, 1996). The focus of this study, however, is rather on the "productive" aspects of the books studied. The aim is not to uncover bias or debunk ideologies, but to understand what activating and responsibilizing representations they contain.

Questions grouped under three general themes were used to guide the analysis. First, how are the environmental problems presented: what thematic areas are discussed and how, what causes and consequences are presented, and who is held responsible? Second, how do the books encourage or stimulate children to be cosmopolitically responsible: what representations of global responsibility and commitment are presented, and what agency and responsibility are children ascribed? Third, how do the authors propose that children go about saving the world: what tactics and techniques are suggested in order to make a difference?

2008. *Vad händer med jorden?* (Sweden, *What is happening to earth?*); Spolander, J. 2008. *Cykla, panta och rädda en isbjörn* (Sweden, *Cycle, recycle and save a polar bear*); Wines, J. 2008 *Rädda planeten!* (UK 2007, *You can save the planet*). All quotations from these books are translations from Swedish.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND THEIR CAUSES

These eco-edutainment books are addressing children of different ages. A few are picture books with flaps to lift, suitable for children from 4 to 5 years old. Others contain more advanced popular science presentations that seem fit for preteens. Consequently, the ways in which environmental problems are presented vary, from short and playful metaphors to longer, detailed explanations. Not surprisingly, the more recent books put great emphasis on global warming and the greenhouse effect, whereas the older works focus on ozone holes, acidification, and local pollution. Still, all these problems, and others such as deforestation, littering, and depletion of fish numbers, are discussed to some degree in all of the books. The presentations are generally elaborated through a discussion of the wider consequences of the problems—climate change and extreme weather, such as melting of ice, rising sea levels, rainfall and flooding, drought and starvation. Nevertheless, some books use a playful and humorous tone in approaching the problem: "Did you pick mushrooms at Christmas Eve … did you wait all summer for the sun … did you go to your skiing resort this winter looking for snow?" (Rottböll & Sheppard, 2008).

The books all start by presenting major environmental problems and their causes and consequences. A subsequent argument, however, is central for the production of children as problem solvers. The obliging and activating aspect of this eco-knowledge is articulated through the emphasis that although these problems are of great impact and urgency, it is possible to deal with them. The books all stress that humanity and nature are in danger, and define the situation as pressingly urgent. The outermost and immediate consequence—that "the earth will die"—is stated already in the first of these books, from 1971:

> For the first time in history all humankind stands before a choice. It is a terrible choice concerning us all. Salvation or death. The faith of the individual will be the same as the faith of the world. (Mansini & Pacini, 1971:46)

The question that follows is: who is responsible for causing this situation? When the child lifts the flap, he or she is looking at a faceless man in overcoat, hat, suit, and tie. This imagery, marked by the "post-68 zeitgeist" in its implicit critique of capitalism is, however, an exception. The other books do not confirm the tendency found by Sanera (1996:4), when analysing American textbooks, that they were "influenced by an ideological view that presents human beings as evil and blames the United States in particular and Western industrial societies in general for every environmental ill".[7] On the contrary, when discussing who is to blame, these eco-edutainment books generally state that *we* have caused the environmental problems, without specifying who "we" are.

> The weather and life on earth are changing. Both humans and animals fare badly. The dumb thing is that we have made this mess ourselves. And the fantastic thing is that if only we do something, we can make it well again. (Rottböll & Sheppard, 2008)

What "we", as individuals, have done is often specified by enumerations of environmentally damaging behaviour, such as taking the car too often, using too much electricity for heating and lighting, purchasing unnecessary things, eating too much meat, or throwing out too much

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[7] Other examples of this displacement of the zeitgeist may be found in Johansson's (2004) analysis of the Swedish children's magazine *Kamratposten* and Druker's (2010) analysis of Swedish ecocritical picture books. In *Kamratposten* at the end of the 1970s, the texts were influenced by a politically radical anti-commercialism that by 2000 had been superseded by a focus on the individual responsibility to make informed choices in the

garbage. "We are simply too greedy and wasteful. We buy lots of stuff that we do not need or even want" (Wines, 2008). Consistent with this explanation, and emphasizing our common responsibility for causing the problem, it is also "we" who have the responsibility and capacity to do something. For the youngest children this articulation of our common responsibility is expressed through analogies:

> You could say that we have a finger on a heating button that we probably shouldn't have touched. But now we at least know how this button works—and so we can use it in a better way. It isn't really that difficult—the hard thing is that everyone must decide to join hands. (Spolander, 2008:5)

This general emphasis on our mutual responsibility, both for causing and for attending to the problems, is the primary but not the only description of the causes and the remedy. Some of the books present a more complicated picture, discussing political responsibility at local, national, and transnational levels. Others talk about the need for the environmental movement, organizations, corporations, and science to contribute and cooperate to find solutions (e.g. Bowden, 2005; Mansini & Pacini, 1971; Murphy, 2008; Spolander, 2008).

CHILDREN'S AGENCY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Despite this emphasis on joint responsibility and on multi-party cooperation in the passages discussing the need for political and scientific measures, there is an all-pervading emphasis in these books that children can make a difference. This might seem like a contradiction, but the solution lies in the claim that, just as "we" are all responsible, "we" can all do something.

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market. In a similar way, the 1970s picture books were influenced by a revolt against egoistic industrialists, and

This articulation of agency and responsibility is central for the mobilization of this eco-knowledge. A recurrent claim is that even though no one can do everything, everyone can do something—and together we can achieve much. The important thing for children to know is that they are not alone: "the world is swarming with people who want the same thing as you" (Holm & Lindström, 1991:76).

> YOU MIGHT PERCEIVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS as so big that persons like you and me cannot affect them. But we actually can. Every decision, every act can have great positive consequences for the environment. One such decision for instance can be to choose environmentally friendly products. You can also support a specific campaign or organization. Furthermore, you can influence others by spreading information, so that they might think before they act. And the more that everyone thinks and acts in the same way, the greater is the effect. (Bowden, 2005:40)

Not only are all contributions important, but it is also emphasized that it is *now*, at exactly this moment in history, that it has to be done—and that is irrespective of whether the book was written in 1971, 1991, or 2008. What's more, just about *everything* we do is of importance, as it is that *everyone* helps out (Mansini & Pacini, 1971; Holm & Lindström, 1991:6; Bowden, 2005; Wines, 2008). There is, thus, a delicate balance in these accounts, between emphasizing the urgency and crisis—that soon it will be too late—and simultaneously ensuring the reader that it is not yet too late to act:

> Some scientists state that unless we start taking measures against climate change now, it will already be too late to save the world in ten years. Now it is up to you. *You* must take responsibility for the future of this planet. (Wines, 2008:10)

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the recent books are more engaged in giving advice to the "competent child".

Paradoxically, some books stress that one should be careful not to begin too ambitiously. Even small efforts are said to be of value. The important thing is to begin "at home" (Bowden, 2005:60). Just like a high jumper, one can begin low, and heighten the bar little by little (Holm & Lindström, 1991:5). Such assurances are combined with the attempt to empower and encourage children to use their agency:

> Remember. You don't have to change your entire life at once, and do the right thing all of the time in order to let out as little greenhouse gases as possible. The most important thing is that you now know more about how everything we do actually makes a difference for the health of the earth. Everyone cannot do everything, as the phrase goes. But everyone can do something. And, together we can perform miracles. (Spolander, 2008)

The reader is also informed about the power that children have as a source of inspiration for their family and school, as well as for decision makers and politicians: "Who said that the government does not listen to ten year olds?" ask Holm & Lindström (1991:12) rhetorically, after describing a Greenkids project in which a school class succeeded in stopping an industrial construction project. Children's voices will form an irresistible choir that will not leave adults or those in power indifferent, according to Mansini & Pacini (1971:49). Children are also said to make a difference through direct consumer choices:

> You will be surprised by how much influence you have as a green consumer. Once you start choosing between stuff that harms the environment and stuff that is less injurious, you will be able to influence the producers of harmful products to change their methods. If they do not change, and you keep refusing to buy their products, they will risk winding up their companies. (Elkington et al., 1991:7)

The possibility for children to make a difference is pointed out already on the cover of Spolander (2008), which says: "You don't have to wait until you are an adult and own a

driver's licence and the right to vote, to save the world—it might even be better to be a child."

This particular book does not tell why that is. In other books, though, there is a strong

emphasis on influence through intergenerational learning, for example in images of a

classroom where a child teaches adults. The point made is that children today often are more

knowledgeable and conscious than their elders (Elkington et al., 1991:6; cf. Bowden,

2005:45).

This capacity to influence is accompanied by a personal responsibility: "Everyone can take

responsibility", according to Holm & Lindström (1991:66), and everyone *has* responsibility

and must contribute, according to other books. Murphy explains that "the fight against climate

change begins in your home. Everyone must contribute by saving energy, retrieving waste,

and being aware of their ecological footprint" (Murphy, 2008:47; cf. Spolander, 2008:41).

Wines ascribes an even greater responsibility to the reader:

> Now it is up to you. *You* must take responsibility for the future of this planet … the earth's future—your
> future—rests in your hands. You just have to get going. (Wines, 2008:10)

Globalism and cosmopolitan commitment

These books are not only occupied with presenting eco-knowledge and making children

aware of their responsibilities and potential influence. An additional element is the

mobilization of emotional commitment and identification. This is most obvious in

representations of cosmopolitan commitment in pictures of the globe. In their analysis of

(adult) cultures of cosmopolitanism, Szerszynski and Urry (2002; cf. Urry, 1999) interpret

such imagery as a banal form of globalism, not particularly morally binding. My

understanding of these children's books, however, is that the animations and photographs of the globe give a strong sense of a shared problem, and a need for joint action. This impression is reinforced by animations of wild animals from different continents, and of children of different ethnic backgrounds holding hands, placed on the globe (Rottböll & Sheppard, 2008; Wines, 2008). A similar effect is obtained by pictures of people of different skin colours picking up garbage, cycling, and recycling bottles (Elkington et al., 1991), and in animations of the globe with a plaster on (Mansini & Pacini, 1971), or having a cold and wearing a scarf (Spolander, 2008).

The globe is present in all of the books. Other cosmopolitical representations are also presented, such as world maps and depictions of countries or cities from around the world. They all signal the relationship between global problems and local engagement. They also display a marked difference from the kind of geography books from Great Britain studied by Morgan, which "treat environmental issues as essentially 'local' issues unrelated to wider structural forces in the world economy" (Morgan, 2003:453).

The cosmopolitical gaze is also stimulated by pictures of children and adults of different ethnic backgrounds, clothes, and hairstyles, signalling the coexistence of different cultures. These are often combined with another frequent feature: animals from different parts of the world in different environments. These images of children, animals, and the world are combined to indicate the many innocent victims of environmental destruction. Thus, the cosmopolitical responsibility not only transcends national and cultural borders but also extends to the natural world and future generations. However, there is a reciprocal aspect of this responsibility too, at least in books where the cosmopolitical mobilization is said to be global in itself:

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Of course you can feel small and alone from time to time. Of course, the world may be big and "the others" are many. But more and more people are beginning to think that environmental destruction and misery have gone too far. Many people—not the least children and youths—are starting to take the matter into their own hands … You are not alone! The world is swarming with people who want the same thing as you! (Holm & Lindström, 1991:76)

This cosmopolitical commitment is also represented by images of children performing pro-environmental activities, such as planting and watering flowers, sorting waste, protesting with banners and posters, and lecturing adults. However, adult commitment is also represented, for instance in pictures of protesters and volunteers, and of decision makers in the signing of the Kyoto protocol (Bowden, 2005; Murphy, 2008).

TECHNIQUES AND TACTICS OF ECO-DISCIPLINE

A third element in the articulation of an activating eco-knowledge is advice on more definite techniques and tactics to use to move from responsibility to activity. All of the books contain lists of things to do at home. The greatest importance and most space is generally given to measures one may take to save electricity and water, such as switching off lights, choosing low energy bulbs, turning down the heating or air conditioning, unplugging the cell phone charger and switching off stand-by power on other devices, defrosting the freezer and avoiding opening the refrigerator too often, and economizing with water when showering and flushing the toilet. Another central area of advice is transportation, with recommendations to walk, cycle and use public transportation, and avoid using the car or travelling by air, and suggestions that the family buy an environmentally friendly car. Daily consumer choices are

discussed too, with suggestions to avoid chemical-based products and choose ecologically and locally produced foodstuff and buying in bulk, and to go to a local store so that the car can be left at home. Still other areas for advice are sorting waste and recycling when attending to the garbage, and recycling or using fewer materials (for example, painting on both sides of the paper), cultivating vegetables, and eating less meat.

As is evident, this advice concerns a lot of measures that children cannot take by themselves. Even so, the books do not generally differentiate between things that children can do and things adults or the whole family must do. The suggestions are made in the passive voice. The books talk generally about things to be done, or that "you" can do. This does not imply that the authors are suggesting that children do all these things by themselves. There are several ways of influencing events. An implicit way is through the parent that might be reading the book to their child. More explicit are the suggestions that children should persuade their parents to choose environmentally friendly products, transportation, and ways of holidaying (Bowden, 2005:41f.; Elkington et al., 1991:52; Spolander, 2008). The child is encouraged to give suggestions to, argue with, and even nag their parents and siblings. Occasionally, this tactic is extended to everyone around them:

> One of the best ways to use this power is to talk to people. Parents listen much more to their children than you might think. You may also help out by making your teachers, schoolmates and other people as green as you are! ... and don't care if they think you are tiresome." (Elkington et al., 1991:7)

Other books sharpen the tone further: "Nag your parents until they fix broken taps … Stop people who flush when they just throw a bit of paper into the toilet … Don't let anyone in your family buy something just because they've seen a cool commercial or because stuff has nice packaging" (Wines, 2008:26, 53). Shopping lists are suggested as a way of planning

purchases more rationally. Even more arbitrary tactics are suggested, when arguments run short or no one listens:

> Many use the car without cause, just because the car keys are lying there. Hide the car keys when you know that you can just as well walk, cycle or take the bus. (Spolander, 2008:34)

Still, the family is seen not only as a target to influence, but also as a resource or instrument for gaining influence. With the child at the head, the family can be made into a unit that exerts influence:

> Don't get surprised if your family doesn't choose alternatively cultivated [food]. But if your family did choose such foodstuff now and then or if you explained to the shopkeeper that you would if the prices were lower, then your family would help increase natural cultivation and reduce the amount of chemicals in farming. (Elkington et al., 1991:36)

For those who wish to take family commitment a step further, Wines (2008:57) suggests that one should draw up a "shopping contract". The contract should settle where, how often, and what kind of products the family should purchase. For one's own part, one may draw up a similar "clothes contract", to avoid purchases of clothes that one doesn't really need, and keep from becoming a "fashion victim".

Producing eco-knowledge, monitoring eco-discipline

In addition to these to-do lists, some more advanced techniques for collecting information and for measuring and evaluating the home are presented—not in the books for the youngest, but

in those addressed to children approximately ten years old or older. A first variant is the checklist. Wines' (2008:69) "refrigerator-form" is an example of such a checklist, for controlling the settings and usage of the refrigerator. A similar form is designed to audit the parents' car usage and driving style, including idling, emptying the boot, and garage visits. Children are advised to persuade their parents to go to a "driving school for parents", if adverse comment is required (Wines, 2008:107f.; cf. Spolander 2008:36).

Other checklists are more detailed, and are intended to be used for a thorough overhaul of the home. By setting up a grading system, some lists make it possible to measure how "green" the home is (Elkington et al., 1991:58f.). Even more advanced measuring instruments are introduced with reference to Internet pages where children can estimate their family's "ecological footprint", in order to acquire knowledge and reduce their family's effect on global warming (Murphy, 2008; Wines, 2008).

Other techniques are also presented for collecting information on practices and mapping future possibilities for improvement. The "garbage diary" is one example. It is a technique to survey how much waste is thrown away during a week, to assess how much of it could be recycled or composted, and how much should not have been brought home in the first place (Wines, 2008:76). Similar techniques are the "energy diary", and "the green day" time line. The latter is a technique for mapping temporally what different environments one finds oneself in, and what activities one is involved in during a day, with the purpose of analysing the possibilities for making one's day "greener" (Murphy, 2008:58f.).

Other techniques are more playful and less formal, with the intention of stimulating children's fantasies. "The green game" that is enclosed with Brownjohn (2007) is an example aimed at

the youngest. This is an ordinary board game, taking the players past squares describing things one can to do to save the environment. Slightly older children are encouraged to gather as a group of "climate warriors", and fight at school or on the Internet by telling others what to do for the environment (Wines, 2008:136). A similar suggestion is that the reader should start a "gang" and challenge other school classes in pro-environmental action:

> It is probably a bad idea to go around on your own accord, turning down the heating in the teacher's staff room or changing to low energy bulbs in the canteen. People will only get angry. Instead, you should start a gang and make a plan for things that have to be done. The class is a good start. Pick a teacher that you like. Tell that teacher you want to talk about the school's emission of greenhouse gases during some lessons. Ask the teacher to invite someone in charge of energy usage at school. (Spolander, 2008:42)

As is evident from the above analysis, the primary focus is on children's potential to influence their family. Their ability to change things at school is secondary, as is their possibility of exercising political influence. Typically, it seems that the importance of political influence is most evident in the older books. Mansini and Pacini's suggestion to children from 1971 is that they should post the four pre-printed postcards to local or national politicians. The cards have images of a bottle of poison containing the globe, and the message: "Nature is dying! We must unite and save the world! Or it will end like this!" In Holm and Lindström's book from 1991, there is even a thorough presentation of different ways of influencing local politicians and public authorities, based on an account of the division of tasks and responsibilities in Swedish municipalities. The aim of the book is to describe projects carried out by Swedish school classes within the scope of Greenpeace's subdivision, Greenkids. Not surprisingly, this book also diverges from the others by strongly emphasizing the importance of joining an environmental organization.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study of children's eco-edutainment books describes contemporary attempts to encourage children to become environmentally responsible world citizens. The analysis shows how such books articulate environmental knowledge, responsibilities, commitment, and techniques and tactics to mobilize children as cosmopolitan problem solvers (cf. Popkewitz, 2008: 75f.). I want to emphasize that the aim of this paper has not been to debunk or criticize such attempts at cosmopolitanization, but to understand their prerequisites for being productive.

These books generally begin with a definition of the causes, consequences, and urgent character of environmental problems. Even if more complex explanations can be found, the general theme is that because "we" have caused the problems, it is "our" responsibility to do something. This problematization is followed by an articulation of children's responsibility and potential influence. There is a strong emphasis that children do make a difference, and that they must act now. This leads to more practical advice on what to do at home to put this responsibility into practice. Thereby, these books urge children not only to become self-disciplined and caring, ethical "ecological selves", but also to partake in producing local eco-knowledge and monitoring eco-discipline in their families, schools, and local communities.

This interconnection of problems, blame, possibilities, responsibilities, commitment, and tactics and techniques articulates a very persuasive and potentially activating eco-knowledge. By simultaneously empowering children, stimulating their cosmopolitical commitment, and suggesting certain techniques and tactics for improving their families' and schools'

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environmental performances, the books encourage children to identify with a mission as cosmopolitical problem solvers. There is little discussion, however, about difficulties, or differences in responsibility and the possibility to influence between rich and poor, or between adults and children. Likewise, not much is said about conflicts of interest or contrasting political goals, or the fact that some of these and other glossy picture books are "fabricated using long-lasting archival papers made from virgin timber, and printed using chemical inks, toxic adhesives, and millions of gallons of potable water" (Op de Beeck, 2005: 273).

Thus, the books studied in this article illustrate a kind of "governing at a distance", typical in advanced liberal democracies. It operates through the dispersion of knowledge and practices that increases the "subjects'" capacities and objectives to govern themselves and exercise their citizenship reasonably. These books directly target children, although with an implicit purpose to influence family behaviour, "from the inside" and "from below". It seems less relevant to discuss the identity of the sender of such messages, as such discourses are dispersed throughout children's experiences in everyday contexts.

There are naturally weaknesses as well as questions left unanswered in a study like this. The empirical material is small, and it is uncertain how these books are read, and by whom. In spite of that, I believe that this material illustrates a tendency of growing significance also in other educational material for children. It can be found not only in environmental education in school, as discussed above, but also in other eco-edutainment in children's literature, music, television, on the Internet, and in magazines (e.g. Bradford, 2003; Dobrin & Kidd, 2004; McCallum, 2009). The empirical material is, of course, too small to draw conclusions about historical displacements. Even so, it is tempting to discuss the tendency that the older books

emphasize the importance of trying to influence through formal political institutions, whereas the more recent books focus on what individuals and families can accomplish by themselves, at home (cf. Druker, 2010). The advanced liberal way of governing at a distance seems to be dominant in the recent books.

This study's greatest weakness is that it is a study of representations that say nothing about the reception, interpretation, and actual behaviour of children. To answer those questions is out of the reach of this study. Having said that, would it still be possible to conclude that the cosmopolitically responsibilizing eco-knowledge spread through these books affects contemporary childhood? Yes, I believe it would, if we approach childhood not as a biological stage of a phase in the individual's life history, but rather as a distinct social "structural form", which remains even though individuals are growing up (Qvortrup, 2001). The fact that children are ascribed a capacity and responsibility to "save the world", and that they are called upon to save our global environment, is an increasingly manifest feature of late modern societies—although it is not always as strongly articulated as in these eco-edutainment books.

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