Dialectics of Negotiagency
Micro Mechanisms in Children’s Negotiation in Play Activity

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Abstract
This study is about the children in a fourth and fifth grade Swedish primary school class and their play during breaktimes. The study takes the theoretical point of departure in seeing children’s breaktime play as a cultural historical activity. The overarching research problem concerns breaktime play emphasising the phenomena of children’s negotiation, participation and agency. It concerns how breaktime play takes shape and which capacities children possess, who are breaktime play literate, to participate and to uphold play. What is the significance of children’s capacity to negotiate rules and roles? How do they use culturally, historically developed objects and motives to transform and expand established versions of play and games? The research problem foregrounds how the play activity emerges, is carried out and how participation is enabled through negotiation. The aim of the study is to explore the phenomena of children’s negotiation and agency in dialectical change processes in breaktime play activity. The questions explored are:

RQ: What are the mechanisms in dialectical processes of collectividual action and collective object transformation in children’s play activity?

• How does the play activity emerge?
• How does the object of the play activity transform?

The data consists of field notes from participant observations and of audio memos. Audio memos, short smartphone recordings of the children’s verbal reflections on aspects of their actions and experiences, were continuously produced to get the children’s verbal reflections in the immediacy of acting. Various documents and interviews form additional data. The findings show how the children negotiate involvement, rules, role set-up and the hierarchy of demands as a continuous elaboration of the conditions to establish and maintain boundaries of playfully accomplished activity. The notion of negotiagency is introduced, uncovering that breaktime play literacy does not occur in the children’s minds apart from social interaction but develops in and through negotiation. Negotiagency emerges and is realised when the children are engaged in a playfully accomplished activity. The dialectical processes of collectividual action and collective object transformation in playfully accomplished activity are enabled through negotiation. This whole mechanism is referred to as Dialectics of Negotiagency.

Keywords: activity theory, agency, breaktime, children, collectividual, cultural historical activity theory, demands, development, double stimulation, enculturation, motives, negotiagency, negotiation, play, transformation.

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Dialektics of Negotiagency
Micro Mechanisms in Children’s Negotiation in Play Activity
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Micro Mechanisms in Children’s Negotiation in Play Activity

Mimmi Waermö
To Saga, Alvin, Bertil
and Sally
List of articles

The dissertation is based on the following articles:


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Abstract

This study is about the children in a fourth and fifth grade Swedish primary school class and their play during breaktimes. The study takes the theoretical point of departure in seeing children’s breaktime play as a cultural historical activity. The overarching research problem concerns breaktime play emphasising the phenomena of children’s negotiation, participation and agency. It concerns how breaktime play takes shape and which capacities children possess, who are breaktime play literate, to participate and to uphold play. What is the significance of children’s capacity to negotiate rules and roles? How do they use culturally, historically developed objects and motives to transform and expand established versions of play and games? The research problem foregrounds how the play activity emerges, is carried out and how participation is enabled through negotiation. The aim of the study is to explore the phenomena of children’s negotiation and agency in dialectical change processes in breaktime play activity. The questions explored are:

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The data consists of field notes from participant observations and of audio memos. Audio memos, short smartphone recordings of the children’s verbal reflections on aspects of their actions and experiences, were continuously produced to get the children’s verbal reflections in the immediacy of acting. Various documents and interviews form additional data. The findings show how the children negotiate involvement, rules, role set-up and the hierarchy of demands as a continuous elaboration of the conditions to establish and maintain boundaries of playfully accomplished activity. The notion of negotiagency is introduced, uncovering that breaktime play literacy does not occur in the children’s minds apart from social interaction but develops in and through negotiation. Negotiagency emerges and is realised when the children are engaged in a playfully accomplished activity. The dialectical processes of collectividual action and collective object transformation in playfully accomplished activity are enabled through negotiation. This whole mechanism is referred to as Dialectics of Negotiagency.
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Nacka in March 2017
Foreword

When I was a child my dad often made up ingenious games and play activities in our big garden. He is a master of combining elements from various games and play activities to create new versions, which has attracted me and my siblings as well as our friends. I remember how a boy in the neighbourhood rang the door one afternoon and asked my mum if my dad could come out and play. Creativity in play fascinates me. Memories come back to me when I recall the schoolyard where I used to spend the primary school breaktimes playing with my classmates. Some memories are distinct and some are more diffuse. I enjoyed jumping with skipping ropes and playing rounders on the big asphalt area in front of the yellow school building. Moreover, I remember how I won over a boy in a fight in the backyard of the school building while a bunch of peers were watching. I was very proud. One cold and icy winter day we gladly took turns, ran as fast as we could, and then slid on the ice that covered the schoolyard asphalt. I suddenly fell and unluckily lost my new front teeth.

Many years later, with my teeth fortunately fixed by dentists, I experienced from a primary school teacher’s point of view how play, games and social interaction engage the children during the breaktimes. After breaktime, the children returned to the classroom cheerful, quite relaxed, quiet or all sweaty and exhausted. Now and then someone returned sad, upset or angry due to unsolved conflicts, which made me change my plans for the upcoming lesson to support the children in dealing with their problems. There were also occasions when I could feel that something was not right among the children without being able to detect a conflict. Children’s interactions fascinate me.

As a teacher, I did not know in-depth what happened and what was going on during the breaktimes. The importance of having breaktime supervisors, to stay with the children to guard and support them, was undisputed at the schools where I worked. Although, it could sometimes be a bit tricky to organise the supervision, since the teachers also have a right to have their own regular breaktimes during the day. However, teachers usually took turns supervising. As a supervisor, I experienced more closely the children’s interaction and what they were doing during breaktimes, which enhanced my understanding of children’s daily life in school.

When I had children of my own, I began to reflect on school breaktimes from a parent’s point of view. When my children started school, and came home in the afternoon, they were usually keener on reporting on breaktime issues and peers than about other school issues. Children’s play, games and
interaction in school seem to be important aspects of their everyday life. Based on a fascination for creativity, play and children's interaction, this book is a result of delving more deeply, within a dissertation project, into children's play activities in primary school breaktime settings.
1 Prelude

This study is about school children in fourth and fifth grade and their play during breaktimes, at a certain Swedish primary school. Breaktimes\(^1\) are interspaces in between organised scheduled lessons during the school day. The study takes the theoretical point of departure in seeing primary schoolchildren’s breaktime play as a cultural historical activity. The research problem briefly concerns breaktime play emphasising the phenomena of children’s negotiation, participation and agency. However, the research problem does not primarily foreground the matter of inclusion or exclusion, but rather how the play activity emerges, is carried out and how participation is enabled through negotiation. This is a compilation thesis, which is based on three articles.

1.1 Outline

After this first introductory chapter, which concerns introducing the research problem, the book is divided into five more chapters. Chapter 2 concerns qualifying the research question. Qualify here means make explicit a theoretical reasoning in relation to which a more specified, main research question can be formulated. Accordingly, the aim and the main research question will be presented at the end of Chapter 2. Chapter 3 is concerned with the methods in data production and analysis and ethics. It presents the analytical tools and how they are put into use. I also reflect upon how my own understanding of the analytical tools has developed during the development of the study, and on the consequences. The end of the chapter addresses ethics. Chapter 4 presents summaries of the three articles—which form the backbone of the study—and the article-wise findings. Chapter 5 concerns a discussion of the findings of the articles to answer the main research question of the study. Chapter 6, the postlude of the book, discusses the main implications of the

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\(^1\) I use the term breaktime as interchangeable with the term recess. The first is usually preferred in UK, and the second is usually preferred in the United States and some other countries. A morning breaktime of around twenty minutes long is common in Swedish primary schools, following one or two lessons in the morning. In addition to short pauses of about five minutes between lessons, for transfer between classrooms and so on, there is also a long breaktime—around 40 minutes—at lunchtime. Sometimes there is an afternoon break as well, around twenty minutes.
study. It also concerns reflecting on the quality of the study and on openings for future research.

Throughout the chapters, I will continuously return to the three articles from various angles. At the beginning of Chapter 3, which concerns the methods, I briefly introduce the scope of each article to make it easier for the reader to follow the sections later in the chapter where I return to each article respectively focusing on the analytical procedures carried out. I also return to the articles in Chapter 5, specifically focusing the findings. For full-length versions of the articles, see thumbnails I-III.

1.2 Breaktime play as social interaction and as physical activity

Children’s breaktimes and breaktime play are highlighted in research from several perspectives; for an example from a social interactional perspective, a gender perspective, a health perspective, a developmental psychological perspective, and a perspective foregrounding the value of exploring children’s own perspectives on various breaktime issues (for an overview of research on play, see Brooker, Blaise, & Edwards, 2014). Children are claimed to develop social skills through their play experiences, which is undisputed in several areas of research (see for example Blatchford & Baines, 2010; Eder & Corsaro, 1999; Gustafson, 2006; Hakkarainen, 2006; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013; Mulryan-Kyne, 2014). Sociological research by Corsaro (2011, 2012) foregrounds in specific the social interaction in for example play and games in children’s peer cultures in understanding children’s development of social skills. Corsaro (2012) points out that a peer culture is “a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that kids produce and share in interaction with each other” (Corsaro, 2012, p. 2). He points out that children create and participate in their peer cultures by appropriating information from the adult world to address their unique peer concerns. Children interpret and reproduce the norms and values in their surroundings and are “actively contributing to cultural production and change” (Corsaro, 2012, p. 232). Karoff (2013) refers to play as relation between play practices and play moods, suggesting that play mood is a state of being. Kane (2015) explores how staff in school-age child care settings talk about play and how concepts of play contribute to different play practices. Bateson (1976) emphasized meta communication in play and identified play cues that frame play.

2 The areas of research referred to in the following are the main areas traced by using EBSCO-host, ERIC, Libris and Google Scholar combining in various ways the words school day, breaktime, break, recess, play, and children.
School breaktimes are highlighted as settings for bullying and negative behaviour as well, since children are usually not under adult supervision to the same extent during breaktimes as they are during lessons (Blatchford & Sharp, 1994; Evaldsson, 1993; Kelly, 1994; Olweus, 1993). Thus, this area of research highlights the necessity for adults to tirelessly counteract negative behaviour and bullying among children in school, and suggests that schools work with bullying prevention programmes.

School breaktimes are also highlighted in gender studies (see for example Clark & Paechters, 2007). It is argued that the children construct and establish their gender identities in relation to peers and to school playgrounds seen as spaces they inhabit. This area of research highlights the importance of considering how school playgrounds are laid out, equipped and staffed, and how the children use those spaces and what the implications of this use are for their self-constructions as masculine and feminine (Clark & Paechters, 2007).

Research from a health perspective highlights schoolyards as important environments for stimulating children’s physical wellbeing. The physical setting can support children’s physical activity during breaktimes since breaktimes are regular opportunities for children to be active (see for example Harrison, van Sluijs, Corder, & Jones, 2016; Mårtensson, 2004; Ridgers, Stratton, & Fairclough, 2006; Sandal, Torsheim, & Haug, 2008). This area of research highlights the importance of considering the possibilities for children’s physical activity when designing school ground environments.

Children’s own perspectives are elucidated in research on children’s experiences of breaktime activities in schoolyards and the meaning of school breaktimes (Alerby, 2003; Backman, Alerby, Bergmark, Gardelli, Hertting, Kostenius, & Öhrling, 2012; Villanen & Alerby, 2013). Positive experiences of breaktimes and other school environments for building and maintaining friendships are important for children’s overall well-being in school (Backman et al., 2012).

The research mentioned above represents several perspectives of children’s breaktimes, break time play and breaktime settings and surely contributes with valuable knowledge. However, the cultural and historical anchoring of breaktime play is not theoretically foregrounded. When foregrounded, other research problems may be defined and other questions asked, for instance: In what ways are culture, history and materiality reflected in children’s breaktime play? What is possible to achieve in breaktime play seen as cultural historical activity?
2 Qualifying the research question

The intention of section 2.1 is to present the core ideas in the theoretical framework of the study and to guide the reader through this passage by continuously relating to the research problem—children’s breaktime play activity—to qualify the research question. Accordingly, the aim and the research question are presented at the end of the chapter, in section 2.2, since the question takes shape and is motivated in relation to the theoretical reasoning.

2.1 Breaktime play as cultural historical activity

In exploring children’s breaktime play as cultural historical activity embedded in a social and material world, I draw on cultural historical activity theory. Cultural historical activity theory is hereafter referred to as CHAT. What is human action in the CHAT framework and what does cultural historical activity mean? How are the notions of play, dialectics, culture, history, future, and agency referred to in CHAT? Thus, the following section presents how these questions are addressed in the CHAT tradition, and in recent CHAT research, to qualify the research question.

2.1.1 Action and activity

What is human action in the CHAT framework? CHAT explains how human action is dialectically interrelated with history, culture, and social as well as material context. The CHAT tradition originates from Russian psychology and the early works of L. S. Vygotsky, A. N. Leontiev and A. R. Luria in the 1920s and 1930s. The human being is profoundly social and, at the same time, lives in a material world. However, CHAT focuses on activity and how actions are mediated (Vygotsky, 1930/1978, Miettinen, 2001), which tools are used and in what ways—not solely on separate things or separate human beings. Concerning children’s breaktime play, a child is an active subject interacting

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3 The sources referred to in this chapter were traced by combining in various ways the words CHAT, cultural historical activity, play, dialectics, agency, children, and adults in EBSCOhost, ERIC, Libris and Google Scholar. Moreover, I searched through the CHAT-related journals Mind, Culture and Activity (Taylor & Francis Inc.) and Learning, Culture and Social Interaction (Elsevier Ltd.) and checked the reference lists in the articles that related to the theme.
with others and the material world in activity. This connectedness is referred to as mediation, which is a core concept in CHAT. Actions are referred to as tool-mediated, by material and psychological tools, which are culturally and historically developed (Vygotsky, 1930/1978; Leontiev, 1978). In children’s hiding actions—for example when playing hide-and-seek—buildings, bushes and trees function as mediating to-hide-behind-tools. Children’s interaction is mediated also by non-material tools, for example language and various rules of the play, both tacit and explicit.

CHAT is based on understanding activity as three interrelated levels: collective activity, individual actions and operations (Leontiev, 1978, 1979). The activity is oriented to a collective object and a collective motive. Actions are oriented to realise conscious goals, and thus, actions constitute the collective activity. Activity does not exist except in the form of action or a chain of actions:

When a concrete process is taking place before us, external or internal, then from the point of view of its relation to motive, it appears as human activity, but when it is subordinated to purpose, then it appears as an action or accumulation of a chain of actions. (Leontiev, 1978, p. 100)

The object initiates individual actions directed toward different goals: “The actions that realize activity are aroused by its motive but appear to be directed toward a goal” (Leontiev, 1978, p. 99). However, “goals are formed, and actions initiated only because there is already a motive and activity” (Roth & Radford, 2011, p. 7). Moreover, operations are the “concrete basic constituents that make it possible to carry out the actions” (Roth & Radford, 2011, p. 6). Operations are often automatic and unconscious. Children’s breaktime activity—hide-and-seek for example—is constituted through actions, or chain of actions, directed towards several goals such as hiding or seeking. The goals can be different but related to the same object. Operations such as walking, counting, sneaking around, watching, shouting, and so on make it possible to hide and to seek. Thus, a child’s hiding action is conscious, directed towards a goal, which is collectively motivated in activity. The object—here the hide-and-seek play—is what initiates actions oriented to the various goals. Analysis of goals and individual action only, is neither sufficient nor meaningful in exploring what is going on, since actions realise a collective activity. Accordingly, one and the same action “may accomplish various activities” (Leontiev, 1978, p. 100). Thus, to make sense of actions, the collective activity is to be the unit of analysis: “The cultural meaning and personal sense of an individual action can only be deciphered by seeing it in the context of the activity it realizes” (Engeström, 2016, p. 107). In understanding children’s play activity, the object is emphasised. The objects of activities
are dynamically constructed on the basis of various types of constraints. These constraints include the needs that the activity at hand is striving to satisfy, available means, other potentially related activities, and other actors involved, each with their own motives and objects. When some of these components change, for instance, the importance of a certain need is increasing, or new means become available, the whole configuration of constraints may require a redefinition of the object of activity to meet the new constraints. (Kaptelinin, 2005, p. 17)

Accordingly, the object of activity is dynamic and continuously evolving. Concerning children’s play activity, one could ask: What are the dynamics in the children’s play activity that make the object evolve and develop?

Moreover, children—as human beings in general—continuously shift between activities due to change in dominant motives, whereby the earlier dominant motive “gets another position in the child’s motive hierarchy” (Hedegaard, 2008, p. 307).

**Play as activity in a certain format**

What is **cultural historical activity** and what is **play** in the CHAT tradition? Based on the reasoning in the section above, children’s playing actions are goal-directed and realise a temporary collectively motivated activity. The collective motive gives rise to the forming of goals and the playing actions. Regarding pretend play and role play, Vygotsky (1933/1967) argues that the creation of an imaginary situation is what distinguishes play activity from other forms of activity: “I think that in finding criteria for distinguishing a child’s play activity from his other general forms of activity it must be accepted that in play a child creates an imaginary situation” (Vygotsky, 1933/1967, p. 4). He suggests that imagination and creativity is the outcome of play activity. Leontiev (1978) points out that activity includes both external and internal processes. Concerning children’s play activity, this understanding of imagination implies that a child’s mental image of the object of the play activity—in terms of an idea of how the play activity or game might be carried out differently and what the outcome then might be—is not isolated from the activity, but generated due to contradictions in the activity. Thus, imagination is generated in activity:

The profound nature of mental sensuous images lies in their objectivity, in the fact that they are generated in processes of activity forming the practical connection between the subject and the external objective world. No matter how complex these relations and the forms of activity that realize them become, the sensuous images retain their initial objective reference. (Leontiev, 1978, p. 15)

This understanding is also emphasised by Wartofsky (1973) who points out that perception and imagination are “historically variable” (Wartofsky, 1973, p. 194), since perceptual activity is “now mediated not only by the species-
specific biologically evolved mechanisms of perception, but by the historically changing ‘world’ created by human practical and theoretical activity” (Wartofsky, 1973, p. 196). Concerning children’s play activity, one could say that a culturally and historically anchored, conscious mental image of the product (the outcome of collective activity) exists for the child as a goal and the child acts within this image. It directs the actions of the child, in activity:

The product to which activity is now directed does not yet actually exist. So it can regulate activity only if it is presented to the subject in such a form that enables him to compare it with the original material (object of labour) and with its intermediate transformations. What is more, the mental image of the product as a goal must exist for the subject in such a way that he can act with this image – modify it according to the conditions at hand. Such images are conscious images, conscious notions or, in other words, the phenomena of consciousness. (Leontiev, 1978, p. 9)

Thus, the object of children’s play activity refers to what is collectively achieved, and it is continuously negotiated by the children. Vygotsky (1930/2004) points out that the “imagination, by virtue of the strength of the impulses it contains, tends to become creative, that is, to actively transform whatever it has been directed at” (Vygotsky, 1930/2004, p. 41). As already mentioned by Leontiev (1978) children’s imagination and creativity is the inevitable outcome of the activity, rather than a driving force within it.

Van Oers (2012, 2013, 2014) defines play as a cultural historical activity:

From this activity point of view, play can be defined as an activity that is accomplished by highly involved actors, who follow some rules (either implicitly or explicitly), and who have some freedom with regard to the interpretation of the rules, and to the choice of other constituents of an activity (like tools, goals, etc.). (van Oers, 2013, p. 191)

He points out that play is activity in a certain activity format where actors are highly involved in the production and accomplishment of a rule-governed activity that allows the participants a significant degree of freedom in the choice of goals, actions, objects, tools, and rules, and make personalised versions of them as well. Since all activity is not theoretically construed as play, the character of the format is what distinguishes play from non-play. Van Oers (2014) argues that play is a quality of activities in the same sense as colour is a quality of things and whether “an activity will manifest itself as play depends on the intentions, values and interests of the participants in an activity” (van Oers, 2014, p. 60). All activities can be qualified based on the three parameters that constitute its format; the rules, the degree of freedom and the level of personal involvement:

First, the nature of any activity depends on the rules that define the activity and how the object should be treated, as well as the rules that prescribe how a role
within that activity is to be accomplished. Secondly, the character of a cultural activity depends on the degrees of freedom that an actor is allowed in choosing or changing actions, tools, rules, goals. It is obvious that the process aspect of an activity is to a great extent dependent on this quality of the activity format. The extent to which the community (responsible adults) allows the participants to make their personal versions of actions, rules, tool use, etc. determines the course of the activity. Thirdly, the level of personal involvement of the actor in an activity also determines the quality of an activity, particularly its personal value for the actor, and his engagement to abide by the rules, or creatively adjust them, his willingness to endure and to spend efforts. (van Oers, 2012, p. 8)

Regarding the notion of choice and freedom, van Oers (2013) clarifies that freedom is relative to the cultural context: “The relative freedom within playfully accomplished cultural activities basically refers to a positive conception of freedom: freedom to make sense, to imagine and carry out new ways of acting within cultural context” (van Oers, 2013, p. 196).

Moreover, van Oers (2014) argues that the definition of play that he suggests, challenges an understanding of play that distinguishes play from learning and that it also expands on the theories of play in the cultural historical tradition, introduced by Vygotsky (1933/1967, 1930/1971, 1926/1997a, 1931/1997b) and Elkonin (2005). Van Oers (2014) points out that current CHAT reasoning of play gives no clear account of the position of adults in children’s play, is not clear on the issue of learning in the context of play, and, is not clear on the issue of play when children grow older. He argues that there is no play outside activity, play is activity. In play activity, the participants have a high level of involvement and some degree of freedom to negotiate rules, roles and tools. Play activity is carried out in a certain activity format, in which negotiation is discerned as a core aspect. Concerning children’s play activity one could ask: What tools, rules and new ways of acting are possible and how does the play transform? How are tools, rules, new ways of acting, the degree of freedom and personal involvement negotiated?

Activities in general can be characterised based on the activity format, and activities can be playfully accomplished or not playfully accomplished. In van Oers definition of play, play and learning are not seen as opposites. Van Oers (2013) explains that the definition of play that he suggests is an explanatory definition, distinguished from nominal definitions of play, based on an understanding of the phenomenon itself. Play and learning do not appear as opposites, since play concerns the format of activity and learning refers to the outcome of activity.

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4 Lonergan (1957), as cited in van Oers (2013), distinguishes nominal definitions from explanatory definitions of concepts: “So basically, a nominal definition is a name for an object, event or phenomenon, but not an explanation of it, based on understanding of the object (event, phenomenon) itself. Lonergan distinguishes nominal definitions from explanatory definitions” (van Oers, 2013, p. 187).
Based on this definition of play, children’s breaktime play can be viewed as playfully formatted activity (van Oers, 2013). When foregrounding this specific character of the activity format, I will hereafter use the notion of play activity in the same sense as the unnecessary long playfully formatted activity. Thus, play activity is an overall notion of various playfully formatted, or accomplished, activities. I will use breaktime when referring to the particular setting for play activity in this study, which reflects aspects of the cultural historical embedding of the play. When emphasizing both this specific character of the activity format and breaktimes as the setting for the activity, I will use breaktime play activity. Concerning children’s breaktime play activity, one could ask: Which capacities do the children develop and use when they play? What does it mean to be play literate?

2.1.2 Dialectics, culture, history and future

What does culture and history mean in the CHAT tradition, and what does it mean that children’s breaktime play is a cultural historical activity? CHAT draws on dialectical thinking, where the individual and the structure are referred to as mutually co-evolving over time. Actions constitute activities and activities are culturally and historically developed. Given that break time play activity is culturally historically developed possibilities within the school as an institution and that the activity reflects cultural historical representations of play (in for example rules and values), one could ask: What kinds of play activities are possible?

Dialectical change processes are at the core of the CHAT framework (Leontiev, 1978; Engeström & Sannino, 2010; van Oers, 1998) and an “approach on human activity as simply determined by a surrounding context is misleading and fundamentally flawed” (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuck, 2011, p. 67). Thus, concerning children’s play, dialectical thinking implies understanding individual’s change in acting as interplaying with transformation of the play as a collective activity. The roots of dialectical thinking in CHAT can be found in Hegel’s (1812/1969) philosophical works on dialectical logic, and in Marx’s (1973) social science work on dialectical materialism. Both Hegel and Marx draw on the idea that man and society are not separate entities but integral systems. Following the dialectical materialism-thinking developed by

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5 An important difference between Hegel’s and Marxian dialectics is that Hegel’s dialectical logic “is a study of the ways in which concepts can interrelate and interact to produce others” (Rescher, 2013, p. 155), whereas Marxian dialectic “is not a cognitive resource of inquiry but a characterization of the material (physical and socio-physical) processes through which (and, as he sees it, through which alone) nature’s occurrences eventuate. Marx, in sum, effectively offers Hegel without Geist” (Rescher, 2013, p. 158–159). Rescher (2013) further writes: “Where Hegel envisioned an historical course of dialectical development of a process through which nature’s changes can be expressed at the level of ideas, Marxist dialectical materialism sought to put physical processes themselves at the center of things” (Rescher, 2013, p. 159).
Marx, Vygotsky (1930/1978) introduced the idea of adding mediational means between subject and object, Leontiev (1978) introduced the idea of distinguishing between action and activity by division of labour, and Ilyenkov (1960/1982) introduced the idea of understanding contradictions as the driving force of dialectical transformation according to the principle of ascending from the abstract to the concrete, which is a principle that originally stems from Marx (1973).

These ideas form the basis of dialectical materialism (Engeström, 1987; Ilyenkov, 1960/1982, 1974/1977; Leontiev, 1944/2009; Rescher, 2013), on which this study is based. Sannino (2011) emphasises that due to dialectical materialism human beings, besides acquiring knowledge “also produce and transform culture” (Sannino, 2011, p. 573). Dialectics can be described as a course of sequential development:

> Viewed in its most general form, dialectic is a course of sequential development through a progressive succession of challenge-and-response cycles, with earlier problems and difficulties met by the successive elimination of obstacles and shortcomings. (Rescher, 2013, p. 4)

Sannino (2011) argues that dialectics “is a process of ascending from the abstract to the concrete” (Sannino, 2011, p. 588) and Rainio (2010) points out that the basic principle of dialectics is that things in the world are “in the process of becoming” (Rainio, 2010, p. 92). In CHAT, the notion of abstract refers to “partial, separated from the concrete whole” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 5). Moreover, contradictions are referred to as the driving force of transformation—processes of becoming—and contradictions “manifest themselves in disturbances and innovative solutions” (Engeström, 2016, p. 222). In CHAT, the concept of contradiction is used as a theoretical concept, not as an everyday concept:

> There is a substantial difference between conflict experiences and developmentally significant contradictions. The first are situated at the level of short-time action, the second are situated at the level of activity and inter-activity, and have a much longer life cycle. They are located at two different levels of analysis. The roots of conflicts can be explored by shifting from the action level of conflict to the activity level of contradiction. (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 7)

One could say that children’s goal-directed playing actions and the collective play activity are mutually constitutive in the processes of becoming. Processes of becoming here refers to the children’s development of certain competencies needed in the play activity, but also to the continuous becoming of the object of the play activity. Mutuality here means that the children’s actions that concern solving tensions, conflicts, dilemmas, disturbances—seen as practical manifestations of contradictions—simultaneously concerns their collective elaboration of the object of the activity. In turn, this elaboration gives rise to
new actions. What is fundamental is the interplay between the child’s external relations and the internal tensions, conflicts or dilemmas that the child faces and which he or she tries to solve in practical activity. External relations here refer to relations between children and between the child and material objects. Internal tensions, conflicts, dilemmas or disturbances may for example be conflicting motives or clashing demands that a child senses in a situation.

According to Davydov (1990) the essence of the concrete object is “expressed in the form of a concept of its ‘cell,’” (Davydov, 1990, p. 137). He points out that “this ‘cell’ has the property of being a universal abstract form, determining the emergence and development of other particular, special and individual phenomena within a certain whole” (Davydov, 1990, p. 133). A cell refers to “an abstract, simple explanatory relationship” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 5). This abstract, simple relationship can be viewed as a “germ cell” (Davydov, 1990; Engeström, Nummijoki, & Sannino, 2012; Ilyenkov, 1960/1982). The germ cell is the essence of the concrete object and it is “step-by-step enriched and transformed into a concrete system of multiple, constantly developing manifestations” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 5).

Concerning for instance children’s hide-and-seek play activity, one could say that the germ cell is the functional initial relationship between ‘hide’, ‘seek’, and ‘find’. There are many versions of hide-and-seek, with the same germ cell—the same essence of a concrete object. When children solve a practical manifestation of a contradiction it might for instance lead to a modelling of the germ cell in the actual hide-and-seek play activity into another version of hide-and-seek play activity, still with the same essence, i.e. the same germ cell ‘hide—seek—find’. The modelling of the germ cell is what “generates its diverse concrete manifestations” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 7).

The modelling of the germ cell follows the logic of ascending from the abstract collectividual action to the collective activity. The modelling is a dialectical interplay of processes of collectividual change in acting and collective transformation of the object of the play activity. Moreover, concerning children’s hide-and-seek, the germ cell ‘hide—seek—find’ can be used as an analytical tool in identifying this certain specific essence in play, which at first glance does not appear as traditional hide-and-seek. Concerning children’s play activity, one could ask: What manifestations of contradictions, seen as the driving forces for elaboration of the object, can be identified in children’s play activity? What can be identified as the germ cell in children’s play activity? Is the germ cell modelled into new versions of a certain play activity?

The present as embedded in culture and history

In a broad sense, culture may be referred to as shared common ground—such as institutional systems, values and routines among people—manifested on different levels in society (Leontiev, 1978). However, culture is continuously constructed and negotiated in activity, culture “is both the product of human
interaction and the producer of certain forms of human interaction. Culture is both constraining and enabling” (Hays, 1994, p. 65). Understanding activity as cultural historical means that the activity is referred to as culturally embedded which constrains and enables it, but also that the activity concerns the production of shared common ground. However, an activity system that is organised around an activity is not the same thing as culture (Nardi, 1996). Nardi points out that “activity entails a practice in which members of different cultures might participate” (Nardi, 1996, p. 253).

Concerning children’s play, one could say that a child is never acting in a social vacuum, even if he or she in the actual moment might be alone (Kaptelinin, 2005; Stetsenko, 2005, 2008, 2013). One could say that culture, in practice, is realised in every unique situation. Culture is produced in practice as well, through the action of individuals who realise action possibilities:

Culture consists of more than a collection of (cultural) artifacts and observable (cultural) practices; it in fact consists of possibilities for acting, some of which are realized at any given point in time, others are realized for a first time. But because concrete action possibilities exist at the collective level, any person may concretely realize them. That is, collective culture comes about through the actions of individuals, but individuals realize collectively available possibilities—individual and collective mutually presuppose each other. (Roth, 2009, p. 248)

Understanding children’s play activity as cultural historical, does not imply that children are viewed as surrounded by somewhat static structures and culture and that their actions are all determined by culture and history. It rather means that the children’s actions concern their accomplishment of current activity in practice—constrained as well as enabled by structure, culture and history—but also their accomplishment of activity of continuously producing structure and culture, from their unique position. These processes are entangled and mutually constitutive.

Culture is manifested in the particular, local, social and material “activity setting” (Hedegaard, 2012, 2014), for example by means of shared common local rules and regulations and the particular participants’ social representations of play and breaktimes. Here, I refer to activity settings as defined by Hedegaard (2012):

Activity settings are recurrent events located in practices based on traditions in a society’s different institutions in daily life. A person can participate in several different activity settings within the different institutional practices that a person participates in. An activity setting can be compared to a scene in a theatre where both the materiality and the way of interaction reflect tradition in an institutional practice. (Hedegaard, 2012, p. 131)
One could say that children’s transformation of the object of the play activity simultaneously concerns a continuous development of the local culture manifested in the activity setting. Moreover, culture is an artefact, since it is produced through practice (Daniels, 2015, 2016). As an artefact, the culture mediates the children’s perception (Wartofsky, 1973), thought and action, i.e. it shapes what is possible for the children to think, to do and to achieve. Thus, perception is historically developed:

Insofar as our seeing, hearing, etc. are themselves modes of action, the dominant forms of representation are the filters of the purely biological perceptual mechanisms; and more than this, actually transform the function (and speculatively, also the structure) of these mechanisms. (Wartofsky, 1973, p. 205)

Based on understanding children’s breaktime play activity as cultural historical, one could ask: What is possible for the children to do and to achieve in the activity setting? What are the action possibilities? How is the local culture transformed in the play activity?

History is what was, i.e. it is the preceding of what now is. However, history is also present in what now is (Bang & Winther-Lindqvist, 2016) and thus, one could say that what now is, is historically embedded. Exploring children’s breaktime play activity concerns reflecting on collectividually expressed motives but also on the historical embedding of values, demands, rules, regulations, choice of tools and ideas of how to use them, what to think, perceive and achieve.

Concerning children’s breaktime play activity, history is present in local rules and regulations concerning the breaktimes activities (for example how one is supposed to carry out certain games and play at this school and in local groups of children), the school yard (for example what it looks like and what are allowed and forbidden areas and why), and relates to how to behave as a pupil at the school and in the class. These rules and regulations, ideas and values are locally and historically embedded at the school and embedded in a wider societal and institutional cultural and historical perspective as well. Thus, local physical surroundings, artefacts, rules, routines, and employees’ and pupils’ opinions are viewed as bearers of culture and history (Berthén, 2007). Secondly, history is present in terms of the cultural and historical embedding of the traditional children’s games that the children carry out—table-tennis, hide-and-seek, follow-the-leader and tag-games for example. These games are viewed as culturally and historically developed activities. Thirdly, history is present in terms of children’s personal history. Each child has a personal history, and accordingly, acts from a unique position (Stetsenko, 2005) in the activity setting. Personal history is reflected in the choices the child makes and in how the child addresses certain roles in games or play, for instance.
The collectividual as oriented to the future

What moreover is emphasised in a striving to understand children’s play activity is the direction forward—into the future—by means of the collectively motivated activity, manifested in individually expressed motives and personal goals. In recent CHAT research by Stetsenko (2005, 2013), the notion of the individual within a dialectical understanding of individual and structure is challenged. Stetsenko (2005, 2013) suggests that the notion of the collectividual highlights the activity anchoring of subjectivity. Stetsenko (2013) points out that the individual is always deeply social and, at the same time acts from a unique position in the world, in activity, for transformation. She points out that the understanding of agency as a forward-looking stance has been under-theorised in CHAT so far and the concept of the collectividual aims at emphasising this dimension. The notion of the collectividual emphasises individual subjectivity in social practice, highlighting “what objective and what kind of the [sic] future a person contributes to” (Stetsenko, 2013, p. 18). Thus, drawing on Stetsenko (2005, 2013), I hereafter—in this commentary text—use the term collectividual instead of the term individual, when referring to one child.

Enculturation

Collectividual development might be referred to as transformation in terms of enculturation. Rajala (2016) points out that Vygotsky and Leontiev—whom Rajala refers to as the pioneers in sociocultural research on learning and development—tended “to emphasize the enculturation of individuals into existing culture while leaving the transformative potential of individual actions under theorized” (Rajala, 2016, p. 31). Concerning children’s play activity, the notion of enculturation is referred to as the collectividual development of cultural competence (van Oers, 2010) needed in the play activity. Van Oers (2010) argues that “play—as a specific format of accomplishing cultural practices and activities—is a powerful and rich context for enculturation, i.e. for meaningfully learning cultural competences” (van Oers, 2010, p. 207). To clarify, in this study the processes of enculturation and processes of collective transformation of the object of activity are referred to as dialectically emerging. These processes are interwoven in activity and distinguished only analytically. Collective transformations of objects of activities might over time be reflected as being the transformation of structure and culture on an institutional and societal level. However, in exploring children’s play activity on a micro level, the future is reflected in short-time terms.

Concerning children’s breaktime play, one could say that enculturation is a continuous process of the collectindividual development of competencies needed in a continuously changing play activity. Hence, in understanding children’s enculturation in play the unit of analysis is to be play activity—otherwise enculturation tends to concern the collectividual development of a fixed set of competencies needed in a somewhat static setting and culture. However,
foregrounding the continuously evolving character of the object in play activity highlights not solely the collective embedding of collectivudial development of competencies but also the understanding of enculturation as an ongoing process. Thus, the competencies that the children need in play activity might shift over time.

**Change**

Concerning children’s play one could say that contradictions in the collective activity are the driving force of change. Modelling of the germ cell—as the initial simple relationship—enables a new direction of action which expands the action possibilities. The new concrete takes shape through the transition from collectivudial action to collective activity. The previous concrete and the new concrete differ qualitatively, because of the elaboration of the object due to the transition from collectivudial action to collective activity. Since the object of activity is continuously evolving, the action possibilities are not stable but expand correspondingly. Concerning children’s play, one could ask: How does the children’s acting change? How does the object of the play activity transform? What are the micro mechanisms in these dialectical processes?

2.1.3 Agency

What does agency refer to in a CHAT framework? In CHAT, the notion of activity bridges the theoretically debated gap between the individual on the one hand, and structure and culture on the other hand, without giving either of them primacy in understanding the notions of agency, freedom and change. However, the notion of agency is debated in other areas of research as well and many attempts are made to define it (see for example Burkitt, 2016; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Ratner, 2000). I will use a definition of agency established by Rajala (2016) who defines it as “the realized capacity of people to act upon and transform their activities and social circumstances” (Rajala, 2016, p. 31). As I interpret it, this definition denies an ontological distinction between individual and structure and refers to agency as concerning human capacity embedded in activity. Concerning children’s play, one can say that agency is manifested in children’s actions—seen as realised capacity—and collective transformation of the object of activity. Moreover, one could say that collectivudial action is realized, co-authored, capacity: “One’s action is rarely one’s own and rarely for one’s own sake only, for it is pulled, pushed, harmonized, agitated, coaxed, pleaded . . . by multiple bonds. In this sense, one could say it is always already co-authored” (Pham, 2013, p. 37).

Concerning children’s agency in play activity, I choose not to foreground the fact that the players are children and not adults. I primarily see the children

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6 Rainio (2010) outlines several contradictory ways of using the concept of agency in referring to various areas of research on children and agency.
as agents in their own rights, in cultural historical activities. From that point of view, CHAT studies on agency—regardless of whether the empirical focus is children or adults—are of interest in understanding children’s play activity. Recent CHAT research on agency concerning adults and agency foregrounds various aspects of agency; for instance relational aspects of agency (Edwards, 2005; Edwards & D’Arcy, 2004), transformative aspects of agency (Haapasaaari, Engeström, & Kerosuo, 2016), the mechanisms in the emergence of agency (Barma, Lacasse, & Massé-Morneau, 2015; Engeström, Kajamaa, & Nummijoki, 2015; Haapasaaari & Kerosuo, 2015; Sannino, 2015; Sannino & Laitinen, 2015; van Oers, 2015), the meaning of social and collective in agency as individual subjectivity (Stetsenko, 2005), and the embedding of agency in terms of practice discourse (Daniels, 2015, 2016).

Edwards (2005) argues that individuals can learn a capacity to act together collaboratively. She defines relational agency as “a capacity to align one’s thought and actions with those of others in order to interpret problems of practice and to respond to those interpretations” (Edwards, 2005, p. 169–170). Transformative agency refers to collective agency for transformation, innovation and change (Engeström, Sannino, & Virkkunen, 2014), and it stems from disturbances and conflicts, as manifestations of contradictions in the collective activity, that the child senses. Transformative agency goes beyond the individual and the situational actions and is produced in collective change (Haapasaaari, Engeström, & Kerosuo, 2016). Agency, realised as individual volitional action, emerges due to a critical conflict, disturbance or tension (manifestations of contradictions in the collective activity) where the individual mobilises second stimulus—referring to the Vygotskian (1997b) principle of double stimulation—to solve the tension (Sannino, 2015). Recent CHAT research concerning children and agency foregrounds children’s sense of agency (Hilppö, Lipponen, Kumpulainen, & Virlander, 2015), the “dynamic of demands and motives” in understanding children’s agency (Hedegaard, 2014), and pre-school children’s development of agency through interaction with adults in a collectively imagined, dramatised playworld (Rainio, 2008, 2010). Most recently, the development of children’s agency is conceptualised as a “dialectical movement” (Rainio & Hilppö, 2017, p. 78) and various contradictions underlying children’s development of agency are highlighted (Rainio & Hilppö, 2017).

As mentioned, the dialectical processes of collectivial and collective transformation stem from contradictions in the complex system. Concerning children’s play activity, one could say that the children’s agency emerges due

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7 The research on agency referred to in this section was initially traced by going through the CHAT-related journals *Mind, Culture and Activity* (Taylor & Francis Inc.) and *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* (Elsevier Ltd.) and checking the reference lists in articles that related to agency. Furthermore, I searched in EBSCOhost, ERIC, Libris and Google Scholar, combining the words agency and children, and agency and adults.
to tensions seen as manifestations of contradictions in the collective activity. In hide-and-seek for instance, a tension a child senses might be between on the one hand his/her same right as other pupils at the school to participate in games during breaktimes and, on the other hand the rule that says that no one can join the game during an ongoing game round. This tension may be a manifestation of a contradiction between the hide-and-seek play activity and demands stemming from an activity concerning all children’s right to join breaktime play activity. Moreover, based on dialectical thinking one could say that agency is manifested in changed acting but also in transformation of the collective object of the play activity. In the same way as culture is continuously constructed and negotiated in activity, the object of activity is continuously constructed and negotiated. Thus, agency is transformative per se. However, using the label transformative does not imply that there is agency which is not transformative in character. However, sometimes the transformative potential might be more striking, and thus that is emphasised conceptually as well. Although an activity is ongoing—with the same rules, the same role set-up and same participants—the object of activity is referred to as transforming because it is re-negotiated through each human act.

One’s sense of agency is embedded in a certain cultural and historical context, which also situates the agency to a given time and place (Hilppö et al., 2015). Thus, concerning children’s play, one can say that the way the activity is carried out reflects the children’s agency and freedom that is possible and based on the culture in the actual activity setting. The children’s actions and collective elaboration of the object of the play activity simultaneously concern the becoming of the local culture. The local culture is reflected in the children’s play and games in rules of various kind and in the children’s goals and intentions, for example. Hedegaard (2014) emphasises the dialectical processes of individual and structural transformation and argues that these processes form a dynamic of demands and motives, which is reflected on different levels in society and in which agency is manifested. Concerning play, van Oers (2014) points out that there is no absolute freedom in play, but a degree of freedom which is defined in terms of freedom to make sense, to imagine and carry out new ways of acting. In play, there is freedom to change, to resist, to produce extravagant ideas and so on. This innovative freedom is the basis for the process character of play that manifests itself in changes of the rules, new applications of tools and redefinition of goals in play. (van Oers, 2014, p. 61–62)

In a way, the CHAT framework acknowledges three collectives in activity; a historical collective that is present because the activity is culturally and historically developed, a here and now collective that is present in the situation,
and a future collective that is imaginarily present through the direction forward. Accordingly, the notion of the collectividual emphasises both the history and the future as dimensions of the collective embedding of agency.

2.1.4 Negotiation

Drawing on the definition of play by van Oers (2012, 2013), negotiation is a core dimension of playfully formatted activity. Accordingly, negotiation is a key concept when exploring children’s play activity. However, research in which negotiation itself is viewed as a specific activity, is carried out from a wide array of perspectives; anthropological, political, economic, game theoretical, social psychological and sociological (for an overview, see for example Kramer & Messick, 1995). Negotiation is then described in terms of bargaining and conflict resolution. Nevertheless, when foregrounding playfully formatted activity (van Oers, 2012, 2013), the notion of negotiation is not in the same sense emphasised in terms of activity itself. In play activity, negotiation rather concerns the participants’ operations and actions in their interaction, as a realisation of the specific activity format. In breaktime play activity, negotiation concerns the children’s dealing with the degree of freedom to make personalised versions of rules, roles and so on. The negotiation concerns the children’s dealing with the complexity of their various ideas, wishes and collectivially expressed motives. However, based on dialectical thinking, the children’s negotiation in play activity simultaneously concerns their collective elaboration of the object—transformation within the boundaries of play. Thus, one could ask; how are negotiation and object elaboration carried out on a micro level in children’s play activity?

2.2 Aim and research question

As mentioned at the beginning of the first chapter, the research problem briefly concerns breaktime play emphasising the phenomena of children’s negotiation and agency. The reasoning and the questions presented thus far show how the research problem specifically draws on understanding the child as a collectividual whose actions are uniquely culturally and historically developed and oriented to the future. Moreover, the reasoning and the questions show how the research problem draws on seeing play as playfully accomplished activity, on understanding negotiation as a fundamental dimension of participating in a playfully accomplished activity, and on dialectical thinking understanding collectividual action and collective activity as mutually co-evolving due to contradictions.

In summary, these are the questions emphasised in the previous sections of this chapter: Which capacities do the children develop and use when they
play? What does it mean to be play literate? What kind of play activity is possible? What are the dynamics in the children’s play activity that make the object evolve and develop? What tools, rules and new ways of acting are possible and how does the play transform? How are tools, rules, new ways of acting, the degree of freedom and personal involvement negotiated? What manifestations of contradictions, seen as the driving forces for the elaboration of the object, can be identified in children’s play activity? What can be identified as the germ cell in children’s play activity? Is the germ cell modelled into new versions of a certain play activity? How are negotiation and object elaboration carried out on a micro level in children’s play activity? How does the children’s acting change? How does the object of the play activity transform? What are the micro mechanisms in these dialectical processes?

When brought together, the questions frame the research problem to concern how breaktime play takes shape and which capacities those who are breaktime play literate possess in order to participate in and uphold play. What is the significance of children’s capacity to negotiate rules and roles? How do they use culturally, historically developed objects and motives to transform and expand established versions of play and games?

The overarching aim of the study is to explore the phenomena of children’s negotiation and agency in dialectical change processes in breaktime play activity. I pose for the inquiry the following research question and two sub questions:

RQ: What are the mechanisms in dialectical processes of collectividual action and collective object transformation in children’s play activity?

- How does the play activity emerge?
- How does the object of the play activity transform?

Moreover, by using the word *mechanisms* in the question, the dialectic processes underlying negotiation—seen as moment-by-moment social interaction—are addressed. According to Hernes (1998) “mechanisms do not merely address what happened but also how it happened” (Hernes, 1998, p. 74). The findings may contribute to a discussion on the meaning of breaktimes and play activity and to a discussion on the concept of agency within the community of cultural-historical activity theoretical research.
3 Methods

This chapter presents the data production methods as well as the analysis methods. Section 3.1 concerns how CHAT analysis motivates an ethnographical method. Section 3.2 presents the abductive process in data production and analysis. Sections 3.3–3.5 report on the process of accessing the school and participants, on the six field periods, and on the various kinds of data. Section 3.6 is on ethics and 3.7 presents the analytical tools. This thesis is a compilation thesis based on three articles. Section 3.8 reports on the settings, participants and analytical procedures independently in each of the three articles. The intention is to deepen the relatively short sections on methods in the articles. However, to facilitate for the reader, I will first very briefly introduce the scope of each article (for extended article-wise summaries see Chapter 4, and for full-length versions see thumbnails I-III).

Article I (thumbnail I) foregrounds the co-evolving character of collectivudal enculturation and collective object transformation. It explores a play activity—outdoor table tennis—seen as a complex process of enculturation where children become breaktime play literate through elaborating the object of activity. The title of the corresponding article is “Enculturation into inclusion, protecting what ‘is’, and changed acting: Exploring children’s break time table tennis playing”.

Article II (thumbnail II) foregrounds how collectivudal capacity manifested in children’s negotiation on rules is to be understood in the light of collective object transformation. It explores how the children transform a play activity—hide-and-seek—and how the notion of agency is to be understood in relation to this process. The title of the corresponding article is “Broadening rules and aligning actions: Children’s negotiation while playing hide-and-seek during break time”.

Article III (thumbnail III) foregrounds collective object formation manifested in children’s actions when negotiating involvement. It explores the emergence of a play activity—shadow breaktime play—and how the notion of agency is to be understood in relation to this process. Shadow here means that the play discerned successively as inconspicuously ongoing alongside more apparent games and play and that it was not easily noticed and not obvious. The title of the corresponding article is “Negotiating involvement: The emergence of a shadow break time play activity”.

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3.1 CHAT analysis and ethnographical method

What does a CHAT analysis concern in general? According to CHAT and the research question, children’s breaktime play activities were the general focus in this study. The CHAT framework implies that the analysis of children’s actions concerns identifying evolving objects (Engeström, 1987; Foot, 2002; Kaptelinin, 2005) of activities. The concept of the object of activity can be defined as the sense-maker, which gives meaning to and determines values of various entities and phenomena. Identifying the object of activity and its development over time can serve as a basis for reaching a deeper and more structured understanding of otherwise fragmented pieces of evidence. (Kaptelinin, 2005, p. 5)

As I see it, a CHAT analysis motivates an ethnographical method in data production and analysis. The research problem and the research question emphasize collective activity as the unit of analysis, and accordingly the data needs to correspond to this unit of analysis. In ethnographic research, there is an “emphasis on direct personal involvement in the community” (Agar, 1980, p. 119), and ethnography is about “development of frames that explains rich points” (Agar, 1980, p. 35). Rich points refer to the researcher’s “problems in understanding” (Agar, 1980, p. 31) what was observed, which in this study concerned the tracing of objects of activities. Since this study draws on CHAT, I see the ethnographical method of dealing with rich points as a matter of tracing objects of activities and manifestations of contradictions. Agar (1980) argues: “There is, you assume, a point of view, a way of thinking and acting, a context for the action, in terms of which the rich point makes sense” (Agar, 1980, p. 31–32). To trace the objects and manifestations of contradictions, I accessed the children’s school days to establish relationships with the children and to observe what was going on (Agar, 1980) during breaktimes and lessons.


3.2 The abductive process

Peirce (Peirce Edition Project & Peirce, 1998) argues that nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses. Already during the observations, the abductive process intuitively influenced what was foregrounded. The interpretation and the data production are intertwined in the abductive process of successively developing explanatory hypotheses (Paavola, Hakkarainen, & Sintonen, 2006). In this study, the abductive process of developing an explanatory hypothesis concerns making activity-level sense of what on the level of action
appears as partial, also intuitively guided by various clues. Drawing on Peirce (1990), Eriksson (1999) emphasises that abduction concerns creating a hypothesis based on our perception to make sense of different clues. Abduction can be compared “to the work of a detective searching for a solution by making sense of different clues” (Eriksson, 1999, p. 129). Clues emerge—also intuitively—based on previous experiences of my own play and my experiences of other children’s play, my preconceptions and theoretical interest, and due to the experiences the participants and I share during the field periods. Based on my experiences of own play, I can for instance identify play and games among the children in the school yard. The choice of theoretical perspective\(^8\) enables me to conceptually identify different versions of play based on clues of similarity/similarities. The abductive process is also about striving for coherence through considering most other clues and information concerning the subject matter (Paavola, 2004), which in this study were found in various documents and interviews with children and employees at the school:

The force of abductive inference is much strengthened if one takes into account that the hypotheses are to be searched for in relationship to various phenomena and background information and not just in order to explain one, surprising phenomenon. So if I am a researcher looking for a good explanatory hypothesis for some anomalous phenomenon, I can (and must) try to constrain and guide my search by taking into account that my explanation must explain or at least be consistent with, most other clues and information that I have available concerning the subject matter. (Paavola, 2004, p. 270–271)

Eriksson (1999) points out that Peirce (1990) distinguishes between perception and abduction. The abductive process “presupposes experience in order to make perception possible and through this method we are able to create a hypothesis” (Eriksson, 1999, p. 129). Eriksson (1999) argues that logical conclusions build on what was earlier perceived as insignificant but successively emerges as meaningful, and that explanatory hypotheses, i.e. logical conclusions, gradually emerge. In this study, the clues emerge gradually and also intuitively by my conscious and unconscious preconceptions and understandings, my and the participants’ shared experiences, as a fusion of my own and the participants’ horizons (Gadamer, 2007; Gadamer, Weinsheimer, & Marshall, 2013). Thus, my own previous experiences and preconceptions, the experiences I share with the participants during field work, and the choice of theoretical perspective, mutually contribute to constitute the result.

\(^8\) In contrast to induction, the theoretical framework is fundamental in abduction. Saldaña (2014) points out the differences between deduction, induction and abduction: Deduction “is what we generally draw and conclude from established facts and evidence. Induction is what we experientially explore and infer to be transferable from the particular to the general, based on an examination of the evidence and an accumulation of knowledge. Abduction is surmising from the evidence that which is most likely, those explanatory hunches based on clues” (Saldaña, 2014, p. 588).
Moreover, what to focus in detail in each article was not decided before the field work started. Guided by hints, clues and ideas during the observations, I decided on the detailed focus of Article I first. At the time of writing the first article, it was not all clear what to foreground in the next even if I had some ideas already during observations. When Article I was written, I decided on the detailed focus of Article II. When Article II was written, I decided on the detailed focus of Article III. Thus, the detailed focus of the previous article/s—and the findings—contributed to the framing of the following article/s. Accordingly, ethnography and abduction interplay in data production and analysis as an activity in itself—a research activity.

3.3 Access to the school and the participants

I contacted by e-mail around 10 primary schools in Stockholm County, in which I had no previous connection with the staff and pupils. Brief information about the study was sent to the principals, who—as a first instance—were invited to participate in the study. I had a meeting with the first principal who responded positively. The principal consented and permitted me to contact a teacher who was responsible for the two classes in fourth grade. This teacher consented as well and gave me permission to further contact the additional staff of the two classes, the parents and the children, to give them information and to invite them to participate in the study. The school is a municipal primary school in a smaller municipality in Stockholm County.

I visited the two classes during one school day each. Before leaving, the teacher and I discussed the arrangement further and decided to proceed with only one of the classes. Most children in both classes indicated that they were interested in participating and thus, one class would be enough for the study. We decided that the teacher was going to tell the class about the study in her own words before I returned the second time. Her information to the class was based on an information sheet that I gave her. Since the teacher knew the children she had a chance to respond to their reactions to the information and to receive questions from those who might not want to ask me questions themselves. About two weeks later I had the second meeting with the children to inform them about the study, the design, and participation. They seemed well prepared and many of them were very interested and had a lot of questions. I handed out the information sheet, on which I based my information (Appendix 1), together with a consent form (Appendix 2) to share with their parents for the considered participation. The teacher also sent the two documents by e-mail to the parents. After a week, the teacher reminded the children and parents, both in school and by e-mail, to decide on participation. To participate they had to sign the consent form and bring it back to the teacher. The teacher

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9 There are both municipal and private independent primary schools in Sweden.
also shared the information sheet and consent forms with all the teaching staff of the class in question (Appendix 3). Twenty-two children in the class and 11 employees at the school agreed to participate\textsuperscript{10}.

### 3.4 Fieldwork periods

The fieldwork started in May 2014 and continued during six periods until April, 2015. Each period lasted for two–nine consecutive school days, with the exception of days when the class had their lessons located at the neighbouring school, and days dedicated to school day trips. The children were in fourth grade when the fieldwork started and in fifth grade when it finished. The first fieldwork period was a pilot period. The intention was to see if it was possible to observe a certain game or play among a group of children until it came to some sort of an end or changed into something else, and to get a sense of what kind of data came out of it. This was an opportunity to reflect on issues of relevance and crucial meaning for how to plan for the rest of the fieldwork. In the pilot fieldwork period of eight school days, I followed the routines of the class and made participatory observations. I took field notes, mainly during the breaktimes but also during lessons. I developed the idea to use a smartphone to produce short audio memo recordings with the children asking them to reflect on aspects of what just happened. I also made some pilot interviews with children and employees at the school.

Five more periods were carried out after the pilot fieldwork period. Each period started after regular school holidays; period 2 started on the first day after the summer holidays, period 3 started on the first day after the autumn holidays, period 4 started on the first day after the Christmas holidays, period 5 started on the first day after the sports holidays and finally, period 6 started on the first day after the Easter holidays. The rationale behind starting a fieldwork period on the first day after a holiday was based on the idea that the children at such start ups might begin new games, play and activities during the breaktimes since they might not have been sharing their breaktimes for a while. To begin by observing after holidays possibly gave me the opportunity to observe the initial phases of the children’s games and play instead of starting to observe activities that might have been ongoing for a while during breaktimes. The six fieldwork periods comprised a total period of approximately one year and were spread over three school terms (Table 1).

\textsuperscript{10} Seven of the 11 employees who agreed to participate were interviewed (see section 3.5.3). However, all of them gave me their permission to participate in the classroom during their lessons with the class (teachers) and to observe them (teachers and school caretaker).
Table 1: Overview of the six fieldwork periods, dates, number of breaktimes observed and audio memos produced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fieldwork period</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Number of breaktimes observed</th>
<th>Number of audio memos produced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: May–June 2014</td>
<td>May 22, 23, 26, May 28, June 2, 3, 4, 9, 11</td>
<td>2, 2, 4, 4, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2, 1, 4, 2, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: August 2014</td>
<td>Aug 20, 21, 25, 27, 28</td>
<td>2, 3, 2, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 6, 3, 3, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: November 2014</td>
<td>Nov 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11</td>
<td>2, 2, 1, 2</td>
<td>3, 3, 2, 2, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: January 2015</td>
<td>Jan 7, 8, 12, 19, 20, 21, 22</td>
<td>1, 2, 2, 1, 2</td>
<td>4, 7, 21, 6, 34, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: March 2015</td>
<td>March 2, 3, 4, 9</td>
<td>2, 3, 2, 1</td>
<td>18, 26, 8, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: April 2015</td>
<td>April 13, 14, 22</td>
<td>2, 1</td>
<td>13, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 6</td>
<td>34, 61</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exact length of a fieldwork period was not decided in advance. The idea was to end a period when the breaktime activity in focus ended or turned into
something else. Two or three breaktimes a day were observed, morning breaktimes which lasted for about twenty minutes and lunch breaktimes which lasted around forty minutes to an hour. To enable reflection on break times as a dimension of the children’s everyday school life, I stayed with the class during lessons as well. I observed transitions from lesson to break, and vice versa. Two of the days I only made interviews. One day during the third period, the two girls in focus for observations were not in school. Thus, that day I did not observe during breaktimes, only during lessons.

3.5 Data

Field notes and audio memos were the main data, while interviews and documents were additional. I did not carry out video observations and there are some reasons for that. Firstly, the children sometimes move around quite a wide area in the school yard during breaktimes and I thought that it would be difficult to handle a camera when following them. Secondly, a video camera might have limited my capacity to see out of the corner of my eye during observations and to be flexible in shifting observational focus. Thirdly, I did not want other children in the schoolyard to pay attention to the observations more than necessary. If I had made video observations, we—the children that were observed and me myself as well—would probably have stood out from the crowd, which I preferred to avoid.

3.5.1 Observations and field notes

The fieldwork concerned observing the children and taking field notes mainly during the breaktimes, but also now and then during lessons. However, I did not always take field notes when I was observing in the classroom. When a lesson started and the children were busy, I usually took the opportunity to reflect and write some supplementary jottings about events that occurred during the previous breaktimes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Since I did not always write field notes during lessons, parts of the lessons were moments of valuable time-out—without leaving the classroom—after half an hour to an hour of intense observation and taking of field notes during breaktimes.

I observed the children as a participant observer (Agar, 1986; Emerson et al., 1995; Scott & Usher, 2011). There are epistemological assumptions underlying participation as a method. Participation allows possibilities both for access to the meanings of participants and for a personal experience of the activities under investigation (Scott & Usher, 2011) and an abductive process (see section 3.2) of tracing objects of activities through developing explanatory hypothesis (Paavola, Hakkarainen, & Sintonen, 2006) of what appears as partial on the level of action. Seeing different views and meanings as data is based on an understanding of interpretation as a fusion of the researcher’s and
participants’ horizons (Gadamer, Weinsheimer, & Marshall, 2013). I was writing down what I saw, what was said, and what I felt and thought from a third person’s perspective. I continuously asked the children for their verbal reflections on their acting, in the setting. On some occasions, I engaged in a game or a play to get a sense of the ongoing activity through turning into a certain role of the game. It is never possible to fully become an insider in the children’s activities since I am in an adult position, in a researcher’s position and participate temporarily (Scott & Usher, 2011). Engaging in the game was a matter of accessing the children’s point of view in terms of “more fully sense an individual member’s outlook and to pursue questions and issues of interest to that person” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 98). Sometimes I stayed closely involved in a child’s play to describe what he or she paid attention to, was doing, and saying, to get a sense of his or her perspective (Emerson et al., 1995). “Moreover, by taking up different observational positions and participating empathically with different people, the field researcher can effectively write from different focused third-person perspectives and document the multiple voices in the setting” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 99–100). On some occasions, my active engagement in a game or play was justified as a means of observing smoothly, since the children were moving around over a wide area and I intended to follow. I preferred to engage in the play activity rather than run after them while trying to write in my notebook.

The work of taking field notes was guided by the idea of accessing the participants’ motive orientations through exploring how these were expressed through the participants’ actions via different modalities (Zittoun, 2014):

> [M]otive orientations are deduced or rather inferred from children’s verbal statements, from actions they engage in, but also, from non-verbal, embodied modalities of expression. In that sense, all these acts are seen as communicative, or minimally, as externalizing part of the participant’s experience—admitting that externalizing can take a wide variety of semiotic modalities (verbal, gestural, postural, etc.). (Zittoun, 2014, p. 233)

Accordingly, a variety of semiotic modalities were emphasised during the observations. My focus was guided by the overarching idea of tracing demands and motives operating in the breaktime activity settings. The field notes provided distance to the experiences, enabling me “to look for possibilities of meanings” (Melhuus, 2002, p. 160). Thus, the field notes reflect the children’s activities as verbal talk, gestures and body movements in a certain setting. Field notes portray the breaktimes through my own eyes. As a participant observer I was mostly quiet but I sometimes asked questions and commented. I participated closely enough to track the children’s movements and to perceive both verbal and some non-verbal communication but I still stayed somewhat in the background and usually did not initiate interaction with the children.
The participant observations were documented in a field notes diary where detailed descriptive field notes were produced to capture what I experienced. From a third person point of view (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 97), I described what was said and done, and how. I attempted to accurately capture ongoing verbal dialogue. I used direct quotation as often as possible (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 63):

While Linnea walks away I can hear her shout:
-Now, we are going to take a walk, if you don’t know how to do that!
Linus asks:
-Can I join in?
Linnea:
-No!
(Field notes 140820:2381)

However, during intense dialogue, I used paraphrasing, which here means summarising the participants’ speech (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 64). I made jottings, which here means “brief written record of events and impressions captured in key words and phrases” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 29). Moreover, I continuously wrote reflections and commentaries on possible patterns and themes, and questions to ask the children later. I also continuously described my personal feelings and interpretations from a first person point of view (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 95) and reflected on my arguments for the selective tendencies in choosing perspective by foregrounding some situations and some children:

I decide very quickly to join the hiders during this game round. I know from previous observations of this play that if you don’t join from the start you must wait until a new round begins, to participate. I will try and see what I can observe by joining the play as a hider myself. I did not tell Filippa that I had joined, since she has started to count. I ask Putte to tell her, Putte has not joined the round. I hide behind the bushes and I see between twigs how Putte talks to Filippa. I hide in the bushes together with other hiders. They seem to hide in clusters. Only a few children hide alone.

Possible theme to follow up later: How does one hide, together in groups or alone?

Refl: It seems to be some sort of hiding together-togetherness. Now I feel that I am part of this togetherness as I squeeze into the bushes together with other hiders. They look at each other without talking and help each other to keep track of Filippa, to see if she is close or not. When someone hears her count again, everyone runs forward to touch her back. What do they try to achieve by hiding together? By hiding alone? (Field notes 140825:2990)

These in-process memos provided insights and guidance for the ongoing fieldwork (Agar, 1986; Delamont, 2008; Emerson et al., 1995). I also wrote down
reflections on my role as researcher in the field to bring this matter explicitly into the research process (Agar, 1986). The following excerpt is an example, from a situation in the classroom during a lesson when I reflect on my acting in relation to how the children might relate to me:

I write a lot when I sit here, and I probably look quite busy. I do not talk much with the teacher either. It is by meaning. I think it affects how the children relate to me. The more I talk to the teacher, the more the children might relate to me in terms of a teacher’s friend or a teacher. Nor do I pay attention to the children’s work in the classroom, I just ask them briefly about what they are doing and how it is going. It is a conscious choice, I think it probably helps me to not turn into the role of a teacher, in the eyes of the children. (Field notes 140523:35)

In summary, the field notes vary between a first person’s perspective and a third person’s perspective. When it was rainy or too cold for handwriting, I preferred to use a smartphone to audio record my verbal field notes instead.

3.5.2 Audio memos

The audio memo method was developed during the first period of fieldwork. Audio memos are short, 30 seconds to five minutes, smartphone audio recordings of the children’s verbal reflections on aspects of their actions and experiences. The audio memos were continuously produced during the breaktimes, the intention being to get the children’s verbal reflections that made sense for them in the immediacy of acting. A memo was not prepared or planned for in advance but asked for in the situation, and the children had the opportunity to agree or disagree to doing it. A memo usually began with a question from me. The question concerned what had just happened or what was just said or done. I tried to choose occasions when I asked for memos that did not disrupt the very event I was observing (Agar, 1980). The children sometimes answered with one sentence and then continued what they were up to, and then I did not stop them. Thus, I usually produced audio memos on the way back into the classroom hallway at the end of breaktimes.

The use of audio memos enables the children’s points of view, as third persons (Emerson et al., 1995), to be continuously reflected in the data. Thus, audio memos contribute to a richer understanding of the children’s viewpoints and they complement the clues in identifying objects of activities, goals and motives. In a traditional interview conducted one or two days after a shared experience, there are possibilities for extended reasoning, but the child may not accurately remember the situations upon which he or she is supposed to reflect. Hence, audio memos and interviews are complementary and of value in addition to field notes in the analyses aimed at identifying goals and motives that seem to make sense of actions. Since the children’s reflections are audio recorded, and not briefly summarised as in the regular field notes, one may
transcribe them verbatim and use them for citations, which is of great value in analysis.

3.5.3 Additional data
Interviews with adults and children were carried out and several documents collected. In this study this data is additional data. Interviews and documents contribute to the overall understanding of the culture at the particular school in relation to which clues emerge in the abductive process of tracing the objects of activities.

Interviews
Nine informal interviews (Agar, 1980) with children were conducted during the first fieldwork period. The children were asked to choose the setting for the interview. Most of the interviews were carried out in the school yard after the final lesson of the day. The interviews were five to 20 minutes each and were audio recorded. I did not prepare a detailed interview guide since the idea was to ask questions in relation to what had been observed during the previous breaktimes. The audio memo method was developed during this first period, and audio memos worked out better than interviews to get the children’s reflections on events that I had observed. Thus, I did not continue to do interviews with the children during the periods that followed. Thus, the nine interviews complement the observational data and the audio memos. The initial idea was to interview all participant children repeatedly during the field work but since I changed my mind and developed the audio memo method instead, I did not continue interviewing. That is the reason why there are only nine interviews with the children (Table 2).

Seven semi-structured interviews (Scott & Usher, 2011), 25 to 45 minutes each, were carried out with six of the 11 employees who agreed to participate in the study; the school caretaker, the teacher who was the head of the student council and the school safety team, and four teachers from the class in question. One of the teachers was interviewed twice. The interviews with the employees were carried out during the first and the sixth fieldwork period. The interviews with the employees complement the observational data and the audio memos by contributing to an overall understanding of the local history at this particular school and in this class. From these interviews, I gained information about rules and regulations concerning the schoolyard, the breaktimes and the lessons. The interviewees decided on the setting for the interview. The interviews were audio recorded. An interview guide (Appendix 4) for teacher interviews was prepared, outlining topics to be covered and suggesting questions. It was my intention to be open to changes in the sequence and forms of questions. I also attempted to follow up the specific answers given (Kvale, 2007). The interviews with the school caretaker and the head of the student
council/the school safety team covered some of the themes in the interview guide for the teachers.

Table 2: Overview of additional data—interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Child B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Child C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Child D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Child E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Child F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Child G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Child H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Child I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employee A, school caretaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Employee B, head of the student council and of the school safety team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Employee C, teacher in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Employee D, teacher in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Employee E, teacher in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Employee F, teacher in the class (First interview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Employee F, teacher in the class (Second interview)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Documents

Digital photos of physical settings were used as a complement to the written descriptions of settings in the field notes. When transcribing the field notes, the photos were a tool for remembering and adding details. Several documents were also continuously collected (Table 3). There are documents regarding rules for games and play at the school in question, guidelines for how to behave as classmates at the school and in this class.
Table 3: Overview of additional data—documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Minutes from the school safety team’s meeting, the document is dated 4th August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Minutes from the class council’s meeting in fourth grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Minutes from the class council’s meeting in fourth grade, the week after the Easter holidays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Minutes from the student council’s meeting (younger children), the document is dated 5th December 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Minutes from the student council’s meeting (older children), the document is dated 3rd December 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Schedule of a regular school week in fourth grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Schedule of a regular school week in fifth grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Class rules, fifth grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rules for the table tennis play activity at the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rules and regulations at the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Rules at the school lunch restaurant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.4 Transcriptions

The field notes, audio memos and interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcribing process was primarily a matter of structuring the handwritten notes of the day to make them reader-friendly, but also to make descriptions more clear by adding details that I had no time to write during observations. Only those phrases quoted verbatim in the written field notes are put in quotation marks in the transcriptions (Emerson et al., 1995). I translated the transcripts and quotes used in the article texts into English.

Field notes from a first person’s perspective, in terms of analytic commentaries and aside reflections (Emerson et al., 1995), are marked Refl in the transcripts to distinguish them from the third person’s perspective-descriptions of what children are doing and saying. Each audio transcription was pasted into the field notes transcript to facilitate the reading of the memo in relation to the episode within which it initially was produced.

With a few exceptions, I transcribed the data from a day’s field work in the same afternoon or evening to produce as fresh recollections as possible of the events (Emerson et al., 1995). During the transcribing process, the abductive reflection also continued and affected what was foregrounded in the observations that followed.
3.6 Ethics

This sections concerns ethics in relation to the study. The first part, section 3.6.1, is a reflection on the philosophical resonance in the way of doing this research and specifically on how I understand the relationship between myself and the participant. The reflection is based up three different ways of understanding ethics in relation to the role of the researcher. The three ways of understanding are found in texts by A. A. Leontiev (2006), Emmanuel Lévinas (1969/1994) and Martin Buber (1923/1962), which all imply humility and respect for the other. In that sense, they harmonise even though their basic arguments differ somewhat. My intention is not to compare the arguments, but rather to make explicit how these ways of understanding influence how I interpret and deal with the issues of consent, privacy and anonymity, my personal ethical tactics (Christensen & Prout, 2002) and the methodological design of the study. I attempt to “take seriously the idea that the contribution of philosophy to research ethics should be methodological” (McNamee & Bridges, 2002, p. 90). The second part, section 3.6.2, presents two main ethical considerations during the fieldwork, where the personal ethical tactics guided me.

3.6.1 The philosophical resonance in ethical methodology

Leontiev (2006) emphasises that we are all part of the same world, a world that we share. Thus, I have a certain position in the world and it is from this position I act as a researcher. There is no view from nowhere, “no Arche- median point from which to approach people’s practices” (McNamee & Bridges, 2002, p. 62). Leontiev’s assumption of the dialogic essence of human personality means that I, as a researcher, and the child are in a relationship in which both are changing and developing our personality. I am part of this process of the child, and vice versa (Leontiev, 2006, p. 50). As I see it, this assumption is fundamental when foregrounding ethical symmetry. Ethical symmetry occurs when “the ethical relationship between researcher and informant is the same whether he or she conducts research with adults or children” (Christensen & Prout, 2002, p. 482). Ethical symmetry implies that children have the capacity to make their own choices. I see this approach as a universalistic approach to ethics in research where there is an imperative for researchers that “your research must promote those human capabilities, including agency and choice, that are necessary for the quality of life of those who have participated in research” (McNamee & Bridges, 2002, p. 68). This imperative also relates to a Leontievian reasoning that we all share the same world and some universal rights, irrespective of our different positions and ways of acting in this world. As I see it, the idea of ethical symmetry in research with children and a universalistic approach to ethics overlap with Leontievian reasoning.
Lévinas (1969/1994) points out that the relationship between *I* and *The Other* is an asymmetric relationship. As a participant observer, I refer to my role as that of a kind of a listener’s, and the child is *The Other*. In this study, to listen does not mean to be quiet but to respond by attending to *The Other*, as one that is different from me. Lévinas does not refer to dialogue as an issue of taking turns. For Lévinas, the empathic dialogue is not based on our same-ness—as for Leontiev—but on the asymmetry in terms of a consequence of *I* as curious about the otherness of *The Other*. This is a challenging assumption in general and for me specifically in relation to a child where the issue of power is present. In this study, my intention to attend to the otherness of *The Other* is a matter of foregrounding respect.

Buber (1923/1962) points out the fundamental difference in meaning between a relation as *I–It/She/He* and as *I–You*. The one who says *You*, does not have something as an object. According to Buber, a relationship is mutuality, and he writes about a shifting between *You* and *It*. According to Buber, humans are different and do not have equal conditions in life, equality is about accepting each other as equal in dialogue—not seeing the other as an object. Every specific *You*, needs to turn to an *It* when the course of the relationship is over. My intention to avoid seeing the participant primarily as an object for the sake of research is a Buberian resonance.

**Informed consent as initially given**

Traditionally, children might be referred to as less capable of understanding the information about a study and therefore less able to consent (McNamee & Bridges, 2002). Leontievian reasoning and the assumption of ethical symmetry has implications for the design of initially acquiring informed consent. Referring to the reasoning on ethical symmetry, I see this study as research with children and not on children (McNamee & Bridges, 2002). Children and adults have the same rights to relevant information. Even if a parent consents, the child is capable making his/her own judgment and decision. Thus, I tried to give the children information possible for them to understand, and furthermore, I tried to make sure they *did* understand (Gregory, 2003; Hermerén, 2011). My intention was to enable the children’s own reflection, judgement and decision. (Hermerén, 2011; McNamee & Bridges, 2002). Before I asked children and parents for what I call *informed consent initially given*, the following methodological steps were taken:

- I prepared an information document as a basis for a discussion with the children (Appendix 1)
- I had a meeting with the teacher to discuss the information document
- The teacher presented the information document to the children when I was not present. I asked the teacher to be attentive to the children’s signals of not understanding, to clarify
I had a meeting with the class to further discuss the content and give the children the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

It was important for me to pay attention to the ethical issue of unwarranted pressure on the child arriving at a decision (Gregory, 2003). A quest for an attitude of respect for the capacities of the other was also a guiding light here, considering the tension of asking a child to participate on the one hand, and promoting participation, on the other hand. It challenged my own attitude and formulations. I found it important to inform the teacher, as a gatekeeper, of my opinion on this, and that I wanted her to act primarily in empathy with the children (McNamee & Bridges, 2002).

**Consent as a continuously negotiated agreement**

Since I refer to the Leontievian reasoning on shared rights, and the assumption of children’s agency and choice as important during the whole research process, the initial consent needs to be complemented with a continuously negotiated agreement of consent throughout the process (Gregory, 2003). A methodological consequence was that the children and I discussed their rights to communicate willingness or unwillingness to be observed or interviewed and how to communicate this in a specific situation. My ethical radar (Skânfors, 2009) alerted me to these facts.

**Privacy and anonymity as continuously reflected**

Even if names are changed in the text, there is a risk that internal privacy may be compromised by detailed descriptions and citations. Thus, what should be handled as private was a matter of continuous reflection together with the child, referring to ethical symmetry and the reasoning of Leontiev. My intention to involve the children in reflecting on privacy during the data production had methodological consequences. On a few occasions, I came back to the children with queries as to whether something that I had observed was sensitive or not, to get their views. The children decided whether I could write about it or not.

**My approach to the children**

The children gave me information within trusting relationships (McNamee & Bridges, 2002). Lévinas points to the relationship as asymmetrical, which implies that I am the listener and, accordingly, humble before the child as The Other. Drawing on this reasoning, I attempted to be attentive to the child and his or her acting, talking and playing, since that was important for the sense of trust. Todd points out: "What matters for a sustained trust and hope in communication does not occur through the content of what one speaks (what Levinas refers to as the said), but through the nearness, closeness, and orientation we bring to the other" (Todd, 2002, p. 410). Buber’s reasoning problematises this approach for instance when it comes to the situation of data
production during an interview. The overall intention of producing data is to use it in analysis and in that sense, I use the participant as a *He* or *She*, in the purpose of research. However, even if I was somewhat trapped in this overall research purpose, Buber’s reasoning points out the importance of never forgetting that it is also a *You* in front of me in the situation. I see the participant primarily as *The Other*, and secondary as a *He* or a *She*. Moreover, this reasoning has consequences for how I write—and not write—about the participants in the text.

My approach to the children is based not solely on general ethical guidelines and collegial dialogue, but also on my personal ethical tactics, which in turn are influenced by the Lévinasian and Buberian reasoning referred to here.

**Third parties**

The participant is a gatekeeper of the private space and decides what to reveal and what to withhold in terms of information about third parties, in this study for example the children’s teachers, friends, parents or a teacher’s colleague. Based on Lévinasian reasoning, third parties are *The Others*, which makes me dependent on them. We are in an asymmetric relationship where I am the listener. This implies the importance of sensibility in my protection of participants’ privacy but also of third parties’ privacy. The assumption that third parties share the same world as the participant and I do, as Leontiev points out, implies that they have the same rights to protection as the participant. The Buberian reasoning implies an approach to *You* as my equal, in having an own agenda and when I respect *You* as a subject, I do not use *You* as an object to achieve my own goals. I attempted to uphold this approach in my ethical considerations. Third parties are the non-participating children and employees at the school, and the participating children’s parents and friends, which the children talk about and refer to during observations and in audio memos and interviews.

**3.6.2 Two ethical considerations**

In the field notes, there are reflections concerning ethical issues and my role as a researcher. The field notes helped me to remember these issues and to continue to reflect on ethical issues even after the fieldwork. In the following, I highlight two main ethical considerations during the fieldwork. My personal ethical tactics or radar (Skånfors, 2009) guided me in dealing with the situations.

The first ethical consideration concerns a situation during the observations of a group of boys and girls drifting around in the school yard (reported on in Article III). When I observed, I got a sense of this drifting as reflecting tensions between boys and girls. Two girls were hiding from the boys in the girls’ dressing room in the sports hall when I came up to the door from the outside to check if the girls were in there. I had observed them a moment earlier and
they ran away out of my sight. Suddenly I was standing right in the doorway in front of them and they were sort of trapped in there. They smiled and I smiled too. I asked if they wanted me to leave, but they told me it was okay to stay with them when they hid from the boys. I asked for an audio memo right away and they consented. After just half a minute or so, the boys came up to the door and found the girls. In this messy situation, I decided quickly to leave since I felt that I was too close to the group of boys and girls to uphold the role as a participant observer. If I had stayed, I would probably have shifted into higher degree of participation since it otherwise would have been strange for the children to have me standing there all quiet observing them in a very small space. The decision was also based on a sense that there was some love in the air and thus, I respectfully left. This issue emphasises how my ethical radar guided me in deciding not to continue observing. It emphasises as well that to decide what is a decent distance for observation is contingent to the situation.

The second ethical consideration concerns a situation with two girls who used to be very good friends and usually stayed together in the school yard most of the breaktimes. During one of the fieldwork periods the girls became enemies for some reason. I did not actually see what happened but they did not stay together in the school yard during breaktimes like before. I asked each of them for an individual audio memo and both told me about the situation and what had happened. I thought that this data might be sensitive and I was not sure if I could use it without asking them for special permission, since both were very sad and troubled about what had happened. After a week or so, the girls became friends again and after a couple of days I asked each of them again about what happened. I also asked for permission to write about it, and both consented. However, in relation to the research issues this event was not necessary to analyse, but it is an example of how my ethical tactics made me sensitive during the observations to what could have turned into an ethical dilemma later in the process. This emphasises the importance of inviting the children to be involved in reflecting on privacy during the data production.

3.7 Analytical tools

This section presents the conceptual tools used in unpacking mechanisms in dialectical processes of collectividual action and collective object transformation in children’s play activity. The analytical tools are used in identifying the object of the play activity, how the object emerges and how the object transforms. The tools unpack how children’s actions change in relation to each other, in negotiation on a micro level, as well as in relation to the evolving, developing, collective object of the play activity.

My understanding of the implications of drawing on the notion of the collectividual (Stetsenko, 2005, 2013) has developed during the process of working with this study. At the times of writing the articles, I was not consistent in
the use of the term. Thus, the term individual appears more frequently in the articles than in this commentary text. The decision to consequently use the term collectivial was made late in the process.

3.7.1 Dynamic of demands and motives

The conceptualisation “dynamic of demands and motives” (Hedegaard, 2014; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013) is used in analysis to explore the collective embedding of collectivial action in the processes of negotiation. Agency, choice and action are referred to as culturally, historically and socially embedded and oriented to the future. The conceptualisation dynamic of demands and motives (Hedegaard, 2014) refers to this complexity. Collectivurally expressed motives\(^\text{11}\) and the various demands reflected on several levels—the societal, practice and activity-setting levels (Hedegaard, 2014)—form a dynamic.

Demands, which contribute to the specific practice, are expressed in “ideal practice (practice in theory), formal practice (practice that is formulated in laws and regulations), and actual practice (shared activities of the participants in a specific institution)” (Hedegaard, 2008, p. 303). Concerning the children’s play activity, rules and regulations are manifested at the school as demands on the children regarding preferred attitude and behaviour. There are rules that prescribe how a role within a game or play is to be accomplished (van Oers, 2012). Moreover, children’s ideas of what to achieve orient their actions accordingly, and they put demands on their surroundings dependent on the dominant motives. Hedegaard (2014) argues that it is

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\text{To clarify, the motive reflects the orientation of the collective activity, the goal reflects the direction of collectivial action—initiated by the object of the activity—and demands refer to cultural historical constraints and possibilities that operate in practice on different levels.}
\]

\[
\text{Human beings continuously change their courses of actions. After a change in the course of actions, the course is directed towards a different goal than before. Children who play together are not necessarily driven by the same motives for playing. Accordingly, a change in the course of actions refers either to a shift within the play activity, maybe as a matter of division of labour.}
\]

\(^{11}\) I understand the notion of motive in “dynamic of demands and motives” as concerning the level of activity (Leontiev, 1978). At the times of writing the articles I was not consistent in the use of the term, and thus, it can be understood as interchangeable with “goal” at some places in the text. To clarify, when I refer to the “dynamic of demands and motives” in a certain activity setting, I refer to children’s goals in terms of collectivial manifestations of collective motives.
(Engeström, 2000), or to a change of object due to a change in the motive hierarchy (Hedegaard, 2008), which is further elaborated in section 3.7.2. To determine which, the change needs to be viewed at the level of activity (Engeström, 2000) through tracing how the germ cell seen as the essence of the concrete object is enriched into a concrete activity—the new concrete (see section 2.1.2). Understanding the collective embedding of collectivudal action in the processes of children’s negotiation concerns exploring the fluctuating dynamic of demands and motives as a unity, where changes “occur in a person’s motives and their recognition of demands connects with changes in motives and demands of practice” (Hedegaard, 2014, p. 189)12. Tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives may give rise to motive reorientations. Motive reorientations are reflected in changed action that possibly contributes to solving the tension. Changed acting may reflect changes in the dynamic of demands and motives and in the dynamic of the basic parameters of the activity format as well. Accordingly, understanding changed acting seen as reflecting the mechanisms in dialectical processes of collectividually action and collective object transformation concerns detecting and making visible the dynamic of operating demands and various collectividually expressed motives.

3.7.2 Transition and micro-adjustment

A conflict of collectividually expressed motives—a manifestation of a contradiction—is a tension in the dynamic of demands and motives, which may give rise to a process in which the child deals with the tension. In exploring a child’s dealing with tensions in processes of negotiation, the notions of transition and micro-adjustment (Zittoun, 2009; Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Ivinson, & Psaltis, 2003) are used in conceptualising and analysing the changed acting of the child13. Both concepts refer to changed action—transition highlights change due to a rupturing event, and micro-adjustment highlights change due to a shift of goal.

12 Based on understanding motive as concerning the level of activity, the formulation a person’s motive might be misleading. Based on my understanding, I prefer to use goal or collectividually expressed motive before the formulation a person’s motive. Consequently, in some places in this commentary text I emphasise this understanding by writing collectividually expressed motives or goal instead of only motives.

13 The notions of transition and rupture are both used in Article I, and the notion of micro-adjustment is used in Articles II and III. My own understanding of the notion of contradiction, and how it is referred to in the CHAT tradition as the driving force to change, developed during the work. When I write this commentary text, I have changed from seeing rupture as the reason for change to seeing it as a manifestation of a systemic contradiction. At the times of writing the first and second article I referred to the notion of rupture as the reason for change to occur, which I now see as incoherent with CHAT. However, regardless of my change of understanding I still see rupture as a possible label of a change in course of actions. It is important to note that in that sense the notion of rupture is not coherent with how it is referred to by Zittoun (2009).
It is of importance to clarify that I distinguish *chain of actions* (Leontiev, 1978) from *course of actions* (Zittoun, 2014) when discussing the changed acting of children. A chain of actions here refers to actions of a collectivial, actions in a chronological order—as a chain possible to observe and to depict and describe in field notes for instance when a child plays—without emphasising what is the personal goal or collective motive. Human activity “exists as action or a chain of actions” (Leontiev, 1978, p. 7, 100). A course of actions here refers to a collectivial’s particular state of acting, with significant and distinctive traits (Zittoun, 2014). The course reflects the goal direction of a certain chain of actions. Describing the characteristics of a person’s course of actions is possible through observation. Thus, a chain of actions reflects a certain course.

The notion of transition is used in analysis to explore changed acting that solves a dynamic tension. Transitions are changes that occur due to ruptures, and a rupture is defined as “a disruption of a previous state of acting, feeling or being” (Zittoun, 2014, p. 234). A rupture is an event that is perceived as a rupture by the person being studied (Zittoun, 2009, 2014). Moreover, the rupture is the reason for change to occur. Zittoun (2009) argues that transitions can be defined as “processes of catalysed change due to a rupture, and aiming at a new sustainable fit between the person and her current environment” (Zittoun, 2009, p. 410).

The notion of micro-adjustment (Zittoun, 2009, 2014) is used in analysis to explore changed acting in children’s dealing with a dynamic tension without emphasising a preceding rupture or claiming that the change is persistent and sustainable. “Perceived ruptures are not the only reasons for change and development to occur. Development can also occur through micro-adjustments between the person and her environment, as life unfolds” (Zittoun, 2009, p. 414). The notion of micro-adjustment emphasises a change in the direction forward, in the goal direction, but does not imply that the change is preceded by a rupturing event perceived by the person being studied. A micro-adjustment is an adjustment of the course of actions\(^\text{14}\). After a micro-adjustment, the course of actions is directed towards another goal than before. A deviance from a collectivial’s course of actions may reflect or indicate a temporary micro-adjustment. A deviance may well discern through analysis and it is not the perceiving of it as a rupture, by the person being studied, that defines it.

A micro-adjustment—a change in the goal direction/the course of actions—is either a change within an activity or a change to another activity due to motive reorientation. To determine which, the change in course of actions

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\(^{14}\) In this study, *micro* in micro-adjustment, highlights that it is on the action level where transitions, ruptures and adjustments appear as changes in the courses of actions.
needs to be reflected on the level of activity. Thus, the analysis concerns relating the actions to a possible object. For example, one may engage in actions of hiding—a hiding course of actions—to hide from a seeker—and the object concerns playing hide-and-seek. Otherwise some children may engage in actions of hiding because they want to be for themselves, and the object then concerns something else. Conversely, different courses may be oriented towards the same motive, which refers to a certain activity, as a matter of division of labour (Leontiev, 1978). For instance, one may either engage in actions of seeking (a seeking course of actions) or in actions of hiding (a hiding course of actions) and in both cases the object concerns playing hide-and-seek. Accordingly, to identify possible object transformation, changed acting of the children was reflected on the level of activity. However, regardless the micro-adjustment is a change within an activity or a change to another activity, it does reflect a micro level change in a collectividual’s course of actions on the level of action.

Nevertheless, my own understanding of the distinction between a transition and a micro-adjustment developed during the process of writing the three articles due to ongoing reflection on how to refer conceptually to change in course of actions. Thus, in Article I, the notion of transition is used as an analytical tool in exploring how children changed acting preceded by rupturing conflicts due to dynamic tensions. In Articles II and III, the notion of micro-adjustment is used as an analytical tool in exploring change in course of actions in terms of children’s shifting between goals, in negotiation. Accordingly, the articles differ regarding how changed acting is referred to. Article I was written first and changed acting is here discussed in terms of transition and rupture. In Articles II and III, changed acting is discussed in terms of micro-adjustment.

3.7.3 Relational agency

The notion of relational agency as suggested by Edwards (2005) and Edwards & D’Arcy (2004) is used in analysis in Article II and III to explore the interactional aspect in children’s negotiation. Edwards outlines “a shift in analytic focus from individual action to action with others as a step towards recognising and being able to examine a capacity for working with others” (Edwards, 2005, p. 169). Edwards brings forward an understanding of collaboration in terms of individual’s capacity to align their thoughts and actions to the intentions of others. Relational agency refers to “a capacity to align one’s thought and actions with those of others in order to interpret problems of practice and to respond to those interpretations” (Edwards, 2005, pp. 169–170). Relational agency affects the object of activity by expanding it (Edwards & D’Arcy, 2004) and is “found in a capacity for engaging in the micro-negotiations which elicit understandings, reveal one’s own interpretations and allow for alignments to accomplish the transformation of the object that is being worked on”
(Edwards, 2005, p. 171). In this study, relational agency refers to children’s co-authored, realised, capacity to engage in negotiation.

In emphasising the collectival in a collective in analysis, I base my reasoning on relational agency in two ways. First, to explore how micro-adjustments might concern alignments of collectival action to the actions of others. Secondly, to explore how micro-adjustments as the aligning of actions co-evolve with collective object transformation.

3.7.4 Double stimulation and transformative agency

In Article II, the Vygotskian (1931/1997b) principle of double stimulation is used in analysis to explore the mechanisms in the emergence of transformative agency for negotiation and transformation of the play activity. Double stimulation is a core function in transformative agency (Vygotsky, 1931/1997b; Sannino, 2015). The principle of double stimulation refers to how people form wilful actions, in this study the children’s negotiation aimed at solving conflictual situations. It refers to “the mechanism with which human beings can intentionally break out of a conflictual situation and change their circumstances or solve problems” (Sannino, 2015, p. 2). The principle shows how an individual can gain the power to use outside resources to determine his or her own behavior” (Sannino, 2011, p. 585). Engeström, Sannino, & Virkkunen (2014) describe the first stimulus in double stimulation as the initial problem itself. Artefacts, material or non-material, are used as the second stimuli “with the help of which the subject gains control of his or her action and constructs a new understanding of the initial problem” (Engeström, Sannino, & Virkkunen, 2014, p. 121). Sannino (2015) points out that transformative agency refers to clusters of volitional actions which contribute to the changing of circumstances.

Conflicts of motives refer to the notion of duality, which is “at the very foundation of the volitional act, and this duality becomes especially prominent and vivid whenever several motives, several opposing strivings, clash in our consciousness” (Vygotsky, 1926/1997a, p. 167).

15 My understanding of the relation between contradictions reflected on the level of activity (Engeström, 1987) and manifestations of contradictions reflected on the level of action, has developed during the process of working with this study. At the time of writing the articles I was not all clear about the use of the terms conflict, tension and contradiction. However, in this commentary text conflict of motives concerns the level of activity, although this conflict might be manifested or expressed as a conflict, tension or disturbance on the level of the collectival as well as a consequence of the clashing motives on the level of activity. The notion of contradiction (Engeström, 1987) is an overall concept for various systemic conflicts on the level of activity. Thus, based on my understanding, the relation between a contradiction reflected on the level of activity—in a dynamic of demands and collective motives—might be manifested as conflicts/tensions/disturbances on the level of action—reflected in a dynamic of demands and collectival goals/i.e. collectivaly expressed motives.
activity one can say that the children’s negotiation is running from contradictions in the dynamic of demands and collective motives. A conflict of motives—a contradiction on the level of activity—is manifested on the level of the collectividual in terms of opposing strivings and clashing goals. Thus, the principle of double stimulation is used in analysis to explore how transformative agency emerges through processes of negotiation in children’s play activity.

Transformative agency refers to a collective form of agency (Engeström, Sannino, & Virkkunen, 2014). Concerning children’s play activity, transformative agency is realised in collectividual capacity to motive re-orient and to micro-adjust the course of actions, and on the level of activity as collective agency for object transformation. The principle of double stimulation emphasises the mechanisms that give rise to a child’s willful dealing with collectivially expressed conflicts of motives—i.e. clashing/conflicting goals. The mechanisms in the emergence of transformative agency, realised in collectividual capacity and collective agency in children’s play activity, is shown schematically in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: The mechanisms in the emergence of transformative agency realised in collectividual capacity to micro-adjust the course of actions and collective agency for object transformation](image)

A child senses a conflict of collectivially expressed motives (in the figure illustrated by the red flash), is the initial problem and serves as first stimulus. For instance, a child might sense a conflict of collectivially expressed motives when he or she wants to join a game round when the peers have already begun. One of the rules of the game says that no one can join when a game round has started. There is a demand on the child to not interrupt the ongoing round. The child might sense a conflict between the collectivially expressed motive to join immediately and the collectivially expressed motive to wait for the next round to join in. The two collectivially expressed motives clash. The clash serves as first stimulus in the emergence of transformative agency.
Auxiliary second stimulus (in the figure illustrated by the blue arrow) supports micro-adjustments of the child’s course of actions. In this example the auxiliary second stimulus might be a rule of the game that the child uses in a new way. By using the rule in a new way, the child can join without waiting for the next game round. The auxiliary second stimulus supports a micro-adjustment of the child’s course of actions—from waiting to playing. Moreover, the other children align their actions to the actions of their peer, to include him or her in the game. Furthermore, transformative agency is realised in the collective elaboration on the object of activity, which in turn leads to changes in the dynamic of demands and motives. The children collectively elaborate the object of the play activity into one that comprises the new rule. By tracing the first and the second stimulus reflected in this process, the children’s negotiation and the emergence of transformative agency for object transformation becomes apparent.

3.8 Analytical procedures

The three studies on which the articles are based were carried out differently and this section presents in detail the analytical procedures to complement the quite short sections on analytical procedures in the full-length articles. The data selected for micro level analysis in the three studies are short sequences from the broader data material. However, solely describing what is seen and heard in these sequences is insufficient. The analysis concerns making activity-level sense of the sequences of action. It concerns going “beyond the microscopic examination of actions to their contextualisation in a more holistic sense” (Eder & Corsaro, 1999, p. 523).

3.8.1 The first study: Breaktime table tennis play

The first study explores outdoor table tennis play, seen as a complex process of enculturation through which children become play literate, as well as elaborating the object of activity. The title of the corresponding article is “Enculturation into inclusion, protecting what ‘is’, and changed acting: Exploring children’s break time table tennis playing”. The study is based on the following questions:

- Which aspects of breaktime enculturation processes are discernible in this certain activity setting for table tennis play?
- What are the children enculturated into?

Participants, setting and data production

Sixteen children from the school class participated. At the time of the observations, the children were 10-11 years of age and were in fourth grade. The
physical setting for the observations was the outdoor table tennis area, which was chosen at the beginning of the first breaktime that was observed. It was not decided in advance what play activity or game to focus on, but it became obvious that many of the children in the class stayed in the table tennis area during this breaktime and subsequent breaktimes as well.

The two tables intended for table tennis were placed under a roof belonging to a split-level school building. There were walls on the two inner sides and open access to the schoolyard from the other two sides, allowing anyone to freely walk in and out of the area and easily see what was happening there from a distance. I decided to observe from the area under the roof. Some children were playing table tennis all the time and some shifted between playing table tennis and doing other things at a slight distance from the tables. To enable observation of not only the children who were playing table tennis for the moment, the area beyond the columns holding up the roof and about 15 meters farther out from this point was also included in the physical setting for observations.

The data was produced during the first fieldwork period, in May and June 2014 (see section 3.4, Table 1). Participant observations were carried out during eight consecutive school days including 18 breaktimes. In addition to field notes, the data consists of documents regarding rules for table tennis at this particular school, minutes from the student council meetings regarding discussions of rules, photos of the school yard, nine interviews (five to 20 minutes) with children, four interviews (25 to 45 minutes) with employees at the school, and 21 audio memos (30 seconds to five minutes) with the children.

Organising field notes in a chronological length

Transcripts of field notes and audio memos reflect collectindividual action in relation to other collectindividuals. Collectindividual action reflected in the transcripts were initially descriptively organised in what I call a chronological length. Each collectindividual’s actions were briefly summarised chronologically and put into a timeline reflecting the 18 breaktimes without being based on an exact timetable. This was a descriptive organisation of the field notes in what might be referred to as a score emphasising all the children’s actions in relation to each other—like a musical score presents several different voices. The chronological length was a tool for navigating more easily in the field notes between days, breaktimes, events, and collectindividuals to facilitate the identification of the object of activity.

Tracing children’s courses of action and deviant events

The first phase of analysis concerned getting an idea of the children’s collectindividual courses of action. It further concerned identifying deviations from the courses of action. Each deviation was considered to perhaps indicate a rupture,
and thus was highlighted for further exploration in the second phase. Deviations here refer to what in ethnographical terms are called rich points (see section 3.1).

The table tennis area around the two tables was divided descriptively into four layers (Figure 2). The division into layers was a tool in describing the children’s movements in the table tennis area. In the figure, the area is seen from above. The two tables intended for table tennis were situated in the first—inner—layer which refers to the immediate area around the tables. The area outside this layer, but still under the roof, was regarded as the second layer. The area immediately outside the columns holding up the roof, constituted the third layer. It extended from this border and a few metres out into the surrounding schoolyard.

![Figure 2: The table tennis area divided descriptively into four layers](image_url)

The fourth layer refers to the area about ten metres fartherout from this point and which was visible from the inner layer. The remaining part of the schoolyard is not referred to as the table tennis area. Based on Figure 2, I read the fieldnotes and the chronological length focusing on which layer/s the child stayed during the 18 breaktimes. Movements between layers were noted as well. Graphs (Figure 3) were constructed for each child. The horizontal axis in the graph refers to the continuum of 18 breaktimes and the vertical axis refers to the four layers. The graphs were not based on an exact timetable, but highlight in which layer the child stayed during each breaktime and the shifts between the layers.
Figure 3: The structure of a movement graph

A movement between layers is represented by a line. When the child stayed in a layer, not moving to another, this is marked by a dot. When reflecting upon the time the children spent in each layer during the whole period of 18 breaktimes, some patterns are discerned. Some children mainly used the inner and second layers during the 18 breaktimes. These children usually played table tennis when they were in the inner layer and waited in the second layer for a new round of the game to start. Some children usually moved between the second, third and fourth layers. These children either never played table tennis or did it only once or twice; they either remained in the second layer or moved in and out, doing other things.

The patterns were explored further to understand the children’s courses of actions and what might appear as a deviance from a certain course of actions for a certain child. What pattern was discerned for a certain child? The children represent three main groups with respect to approximately how much of the time during the 18 breaktimes they stayed in the table tennis area: full time, greater part of the time or lesser part of the time: A full timer stayed in the area (layers 1-4) most of the time during the period of 18 breaktimes. A high part timer stayed in the area (layers 1-4) more than half of the time during the period of 18 breaktimes. A low part timer stayed in the area (layers 1-4) less than half of the time of the period of 18 breaktimes. Moreover, the children represent four groups regarding approximately how often they engaged in playing table tennis during a certain breaktime: An alwayser (always a player) usually engaged in table tennis play the whole breaktime. When the child lost his/her place in the current game round, he/she stayed nearby and always re-engaged in the next round. A quite oftener (quite often a player) usually engaged in table tennis play for more than half the breaktime. A seldom er (seldom a player) usually engaged in table tennis play for less than half the breaktime. A neverer (never a player) did not engage in table tennis play at all when he/she...
was in the inner layer. He/she was always engaged in doing other things when present.

The three frequencies regarding presence in layers 1-4 were combined with the four frequencies regarding table tennis play in the first layer. The children represent six of 12 theoretically possible combinations, see the matrix (Table 4). The sections were labelled according to the specifics of the combinations. Each of the six combinations reflects a certain course of actions.

Table 4: Combinations of presence frequency and table tennis play frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When the child was present he/she played table tennis:</th>
<th>The child was present full time</th>
<th>The child was present high part time</th>
<th>The child was present low part time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1. Full-time alwayser (5 children)</td>
<td>2. High part-time alwayser (1 child)</td>
<td>3. Low part-time alwayser (1 child)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite often</td>
<td></td>
<td>4. High part-time quite oftener (1 child)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Low part-time seldomer (3 children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Low part-time neverer (5 children)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each combination (1–6) is briefly described below:

1. A full-time alwayser (5 children) was almost always present in the table tennis area and almost always engaged in playing table tennis during whole the breaktimes. When he/she lost his/her place in the game round, he/she stayed nearby waiting, and always re-engaged in the next round.
2. A high part-time alwayser (1 child) was often present in the table tennis area and when present he/she was almost always engaged in playing table tennis.
3. A low part-time alwayser (1 child) was seldom present in the table tennis area, but when present he/she almost always engaged in playing table tennis. He/she spent most of the time in other parts of the schoolyard.
4. A high part-time quite oftener (1 child) was often present in the table tennis area and when present, he/she quite often engaged in playing table tennis.
5. A low part-time seldomer (3 children) was seldom present in the table tennis area and when present he/she seldom engaged in playing table tennis. He/she spent most of the time in other parts of the schoolyard.

6. A low part-time neverer (5 children) was seldom present in the table tennis area and when present he/she never engaged in playing table tennis. He/she made very short visits to the table tennis area to do things other than play table tennis. He/she spent most of the time in other parts of the schoolyard.

When reflecting on each child’s course of actions, some deviations from the distinctive courses were discerned. Two deviations/rupturing events, here referred to as rich points (see section 3.1), were chosen for further analysis. They were also rich in data and provided clear narratives that enabled the exploration of the micro-adjustments of children’s courses of action in their dealing with tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives.

**Tracing changes in the dynamic of demands and motives that give rise to the micro-adjustments reflected in the two deviant events**

The study was based on the questions: *Which aspects of break-time enculturation processes are discernible in this particular activity setting for table tennis play?* and *What are the children enculturated into?* The second phase of analysis concerned reflecting on the two deviant events regarding tensions and changes in the dynamics of demands and motives through the lens of these two questions. This phase was a process of developing an explanatory hypothesis through repeated shifting between the excerpts reflecting the specific events and the data in total, and a shifting between focus on collectivities and the collective. Demands reflected in rules and regulations were traced as well as clues indicating collectivities’ goals and collective motives. Tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives were highlighted and explored to trace ruptures that preceded the transitions between courses of actions reflected in the two deviant events, and how the dynamic transformed accordingly.

3.8.2 The second study: Breaktime hide-and-seek

The second study explores how the children transform a version of hide-and-seek, called *The jar*, and how the concept of agency is to be understood in relation to this process. The title of the corresponding article is “Broadening rules and aligning actions: Children’s negotiation while playing hide-and-seek during break time”. The study is based on the following questions:

- How are the rules negotiated in the jar play?
- How is the jar play transformed through negotiation of rules?
- How does the children’s agency for negotiation of rules emerge?
**Participants, setting and data production**

In total, 20 children in the school class participated now and then during the observations. At the times for observations they were in fifth grade, and 11-12 years of age. The setting for the observations was the whole schoolyard.

The jar play was observed during 11 breaktimes distributed over six school days and three fieldwork periods, periods 4, 5 and 6 (see section 3.4, Table 1), during one school term in 2015. The three fieldwork periods comprise 13 school days in total. The children engaged in jar play during 11 breaktimes distributed over six of these 13 school days. In addition to field notes from the 11 breaktimes, the data includes 164 audio memos (30 seconds to five minutes) with the children. The audio memos were produced during all three periods. There are also several local school documents regarding rules and regulations at the school, and photos of the schoolyard.

**Organising field notes in a chronological length**

Initially, the data was structured descriptively to enable navigating more easy navigation between days, breaks, events and children in a collective. Collectives’ actions were organised in a chronological length. The construction of a chronological length is described earlier in detail in section 3.8.1.

**Identifying rules and tracing events that reflect the children’s negotiation of rules**

Rules concerning the jar play were identified to enable exploration of rule negotiation. Rules are referred to as demands placed on the children. Three kinds of rules were identified. First, there were formal, basic rules of the jar play. Secondly, the children also made up their own rules and added them to the formal, basic rules. These rules are referred to as group rules. Thirdly, in local documents there were guidelines regarding preferred attitudes. These guidelines are referred to as local school rules. The three kinds of rules, as demands, form the basis of the jar play. There are also other demands reflected in the jar play. Each child makes demands on the others based on his/her personal motive for engaging in the jar play but also based on the particular role in the jar play that he/she has.

Events that reflect the children’s negotiation of the rules are of analytical interest. Then, how to trace events that reflect the negotiation of the rules? If the children had discussed a certain rule explicitly, or maybe argued loudly, events of negotiation would have been easy to identify. However, this was not the case. Rule negotiation was not apparent and not very easy to find in the data. Thus, tracing events of negotiation took place in a process of descriptively structuring the data. Since negotiation here refers to children’s dealing with tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives, the methods of tracing events draw on this argumentation. Negotiation that was not apparent was identified by tracing dynamic tensions. Dynamic tensions were identified by
tracing dynamic change seen as reflecting the children’s dealing with the tensions. Then, which events in the data reflect dynamic change? As I see it, all situations when a child either joins or leaves the jar play affect the dynamic in one way or another. However, it is too time-consuming to analyse all occasions when the children enter and leave the jar play to trace possible tensions and negotiations. Nevertheless, on some occasions the children changed into the deviant roles of watcher and helper, which are temporary roles in the role set-up. The appearance of a deviant role here refers to what in ethnographical terms is called a rich point (see section 3.1). Occasions where deviant roles appear were highlighted for further analysis since the jar play is transformed due to the new demands that are added to the dynamic each time a deviant role appears. The demands were put on others not solely because a particular child entered, but also because the child entered in this particular deviant role and added the role to the role set-up. Thus, light was added to events in the data where the role set-up was changed, since these events reflect an obvious deviation from the regular jar play and transformations of the jar play.

A roles flowchart (Figure 4) was constructed to systematically list each event when a deviant role appears. The chart shows the appearances of the deviant roles helper and watcher in a continuum of the 11 breaktimes and is based on the chronological length, the pathways graphs and the field notes. An appearance of a deviant role was marked with a coloured line and was coded. The length of the line refers to the approximate time the child was in the role. “H” refers to helper and “W” refers to watcher. Thus, the code H:4 refers to the fourth time the role helper appears in the data, and the position of the line in the chart reflects which breaktime the role appeared. Forty-one events were identified.

![Figure 4: The structure of the roles flowchart](image)

The events were organised regarding whether the deviant role seemed to be perceived as primary or secondary by the holder him/herself. This was done through exploring how the holder’s present course of actions relates to the
collectively expressed motive to engage in the jar play. To do that, collectively pathway graphs (Figure 5) were constructed to get a sense of the collectivindual’s courses of action during the 11 breaktimes. The graph briefly reflects what the child was doing during the 11 breaktimes, and how he/she shifted between the roles, in what could be likened to a pathway through the breaktimes. The horizontal axis represents the sequential line of breaktimes and the vertical axis represents the different roles. “Does other things”, on the vertical axis, concerns for example runs to the classroom hallway to get a jacket and then returns or stops playing the jar to play another game. Three different nuances of the role helper were discerned; seeker’s helper, hide’s helper and hide’s and seeker’s helper. Constructing the graphs was a process of repeatedly shifting between field notes and chronological length and shifting between focus on collectivinduals and collective to get a sense of what was going on. The field notes reflect the flow in the children’s actions without being very exact in specifying time. All breaktimes did not last for the same amount of time, but they are presented in the graphs as if they did. The shifting between roles in a continuum is highlighted in the graph without claiming to be based on an exact timetable.

Figure 5: The structure of a pathway graph reflecting a child’s shift between actions during the 11 breaktimes

After constructing the pathway graphs, the events were organised with respect to whether the deviant role seemed to be perceived as primary or secondary by the holder him/herself. This was done through exploring how the holder’s present course of actions relates to the collectivindually expressed motive to engage in the jar play. Roles reflecting a correspondence between the holder’s present course of actions and the collectivindually expressed motive for engaging in the jar play, were labelled as primary. Roles reflecting a non-
correspondence between the holder’s present course of actions and the collectiv-  
indually expressed motive for engaging in the jar play were labelled as second-  
ary. Thus, a primary role corresponds to the holder’s dominant motive  
while a secondary role does not. A secondary role refers to a role that the child  
adopts while he/she waits for a possibility to change role into the primary role  
based on his/her dominant motive. Changing to a secondary role is a matter of  
acting in response to demands of the situation. A matrix (Table 5) was devel-  
oped and each event was positioned in the matrix. The 41 events represent  
seven of eight theoretically possible nuances of the deviant roles. The number  
of events of a certain combination is also presented in the matrix.

Table 5: Nuances of the deviant roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deviant role</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watcher</td>
<td>1. Primary watcher</td>
<td>2. Secondary watcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9 events)</td>
<td>(10 events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hider's helper</td>
<td>3. Primary hider's helper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6 events)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeker's helper</td>
<td>4. Primary seeker's helper</td>
<td>5. Secondary seeker's helper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 event)</td>
<td>(9 events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hider's &amp; seeker's helper</td>
<td>6. Primary hider's &amp; seeker's helper</td>
<td>7. Secondary hider's &amp; seeker's helper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4 events)</td>
<td>(2 events)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each combination (1-7) is briefly described below:

1. A primary watcher (9 events) preferred this role even if there was the pos-  
sibility to choose another role, for example the role hider in the beginning  
of a new game round. He/she usually stayed close to the lamppost watching  
the game while joining the hiders who were jared by the seeker or who  
jared themselves.

2. A secondary watcher (10 events) preferred another role and waited for a  
possibility to change roles. In all cases representing the group the child was  
either jared by the seeker or jared him/herself and waited for a new round  
to start at the lamppost, or followed the seeker to see what happened next  
in the game.
3. A primary hider’s helper (6 events) preferred this role even if there was the possibility to choose another role. He/she moved in the area and communicated quietly, verbally and/or by signs, to help hiders by indicating the seeker’s location and how the seeker was moving in the area.

4. A primary seeker’s helper (1 event) preferred this role even if there was the possibility to choose another role. He/she ran to tell hiders that they were located if they were not aware of it, he/she gave advice to the seeker on how to seek more effectively and, ran to check if the seeker was right or wrong when he/she was not sure of who was located.

5. A secondary seeker’s helper (9 events) preferred another role and waited for the possibility to change roles. In all cases representing this group, the child was either jared by the seeker or jared him/herself and waited for a new game round to start. He/she ran to tell hiders that they were located if they were not aware of it, he/she gave advice to the seeker on how to seek more effectively and, ran to check if the seeker was right or wrong when he/she was not sure of who was located.

6. A primary hider’s & seeker’s helper (4 events) preferred this role even if there was the possibility to choose another role. The help was directed to the seeker as well as the hiders, choosing not to take sides.

7. A secondary hider’s & seeker’s helper (2 events) preferred another role and waited for the possibility to change roles. The help was directed to the seeker as well as the hiders, choosing not to take sides.

Each of the 41 events is unique in role constellations and, without doubt, complex.

Two of the 41 identified events when a child adopts a temporary role were chosen for an in-depth analysis of the emergence of agency for negotiation of rules, how the rules were negotiated and how the jar play was transformed. The events were chosen since they were thick in data and had a clear narrative.

**Exploring the emergence of agency, rule negotiation and object transformation**

The second phase concerned analysing the two events on a micro level, moment-by-moment, regarding the emergence of agency for negotiation of rules, how the rules are negotiated and how the jar play is transformed. This phase was a process of developing an explanatory hypothesis through repeatedly shifting between the excerpts reflecting the specific events, the matrix of nuances of the deviant roles and data in total, and between collectividuals and the collective.

The Vygotskian principle of double stimulation was used as a tool in analysing the process of emergence of children’s agency for negotiation, seen as their dealing with tensions and transformation of the jar play. First and second stimulus were traced in each event. Transformative agency is reflected in
changes in courses of actions through negotiation as dealing with the initial problem. What the negotiations concern and how the jar play is transformed through the negotiation is highlighted.

3.8.3 The third study: Shadow breaktime play

The third study explores the emergence of a shadow breaktime play activity, and how the notion of agency is to be understood in relation to this process. The title of the corresponding article is “Negotiating involvement: The emergence of a shadow break time play activity”. The study is based on the following questions:

- What are the constituents and boundaries of the non-regular shadow break-time play activity?
- How does the non-regular shadow breaktime play activity emerge on a micro level?

Participants, setting and data production

The participants in the study are two girls, Linnea and Sandra, and a group of boys in the class. The study focuses on what these children were doing during eight breaktimes during the five consecutive school days of the third fieldwork period (see section 3.4, Table 1). Linnea and Sandra were not in observational focus until this period of field work as their acting by then appeared as recurrent and possibly reflected some sort of ongoing play. Thus, the field notes from this period are particularly thick regarding Linnea and Sandra, while in the field notes from the other field periods the two girls are seldom mentioned. Accordingly, the data from the third period is referred to as the main data for the study. Data produced during the other periods is not referred to as the main data but complements the data in contributing to the overall understanding of the children’s non-regular drifting. In addition to field notes from the five consecutive school days, including the eight breaktimes, the data consists of 14 audio memos (30 seconds to five minutes) with the children.

The setting for observations during the breaktimes was the whole school area, both indoors and outdoors in the schoolyard since the children usually moved extensively during the breaktimes. I attempted to follow the children closely enough to track their movements and to perceive both verbal and non-verbal communication but still remaining somewhat in the background and not disturbing them.

Organising field notes in a chronological length

Firstly, field notes were descriptively organised in a chronological length to enable more easy navigation between days, breaks, events and the children in a collective. The construction of a chronological length is described earlier in detail in section 3.8.1.
Tracing the constituents and boundaries of the non-regular shadow breaktime play activity

Already during the first and the second fieldwork period, Sandra and Linnea frequently walked around extensively throughout the school area. On some occasions the girls repeatedly showed up near the boys, so the boys could see them, and then left the area like a yo-yo. This way of moving was already during the observations defined as yo-yo walk. When the field work was finished, the clue regarding the yo-yo walk was followed and eight movement maps were constructed. The movement maps refer to each of the eight breaktimes of the third fieldwork period. In these field notes, the girls’ movements are well described and the movements of other children with whom they interacted are also described, which made possible the construction of break-wise movement maps as a descriptive examination of the patterns. The children’s movements were marked with lines on a map of the schoolyard and the buildings. Each child’s line was given a child-specific colour. The line had a starting point and an endpoint. The starting point referred to the spot where the child was when mentioned for the first time in the field notes from the particular break. The line was not time-graded as the field notes reflect the flow in the children’s playing without claiming to be based on an exact time table. When there was no data on a child’s movements between two spots in the school area, the path was drawn as a straight, dotted, line. This indicates that the child did move between the two spots, but that there are no details regarding the movements in the data.

In the analytical work of identifying objects of activities, the recurring elements of traditional, culturally and historically anchored children’s games mentioned in the field notes were referred to as clues. The clues lead to the idea of describing the various sets (González, 2006) of actions. Clues “may be discovered in the goal-directed actions, especially if it is possible to identify the goals of major sets of actions” (Eriksson, 2006, p. 7). The children in the group seemed to collaborate and do something together, even if their actions changed in character over time. Thus, identifying the clues further led to the description of various sets of actions, i.e. delimited sequences of the chains of actions of the children in the group. Each set of actions had distinctive traits and a set-specific character. Thus, each sequence of actions that reflected sameness regarding division of labour within the group of children, was highlighted as a certain set. When the division of labour changed in some way, this was described in terms of a new set of actions with another set-specific character than the previous.

This phase of analysis was a process of a repeatedly shifting between reading the field notes and reflecting on the chronological length and the movement maps to facilitate the tracing of possible goals for sets of actions. Five different sets of actions were identified. The children shifted between these five sets during the eight breaktimes. Three of the five sets shared the common
features of reflecting elements of culturally and historically anchored children’s games, but still had a unique character and distinctive traits. The three children’s games were follow-the-leader, hide-and-seek and tag game. The common features of the three sets—the elements of culturally and historically anchored children’s games—indicated the constituents of what were then described as a non-regular play activity, which was not all visible at the beginning of the field work. Each version of the play refers to a version-specific elaboration on the object of the play activity, like hues of a certain colour—metaphorically speaking. Thus, the boundaries of the play activity and the constituents of the three versions were mutually defined and, consequently, tracing the object of the play activity and identifying version-specific elaborations on the object were made concomitantly. The boundaries of the non-regular play activity highlighted the border between the sets of action that refer to the versions of the non-regular shadow breaktime play, and sets of action which do not. Actions beyond the border referred to other objects, other activities.

**Exploring on a micro level the process of the emergence of the non-regular shadow breaktime play activity**

The second phase of analysis concerned making visible micro level interaction in the emergence of the non-regular shadow play activity. The order in which the sets of actions occurred during each breaktime was identified. Sets chronologically prior to the sets that reflect the versions of the non-regular shadow breaktime play might reflect the preceding of transitions into the non-regular shadow breaktime play. One of the identified transitions during the fourth breaktime was selected for closer scrutiny. The selection was prompted by the fact that the data concerning this certain event and this breaktime included thick descriptions of the social interaction at play, required to analyse micro level change. Also, the selected transition is preceded by the girls’ continuous yoyo walk, a clue noticed in the first phase of analysis, justifying a deeper examination of the social interaction at play prior to this particular transition.

The analysis was a process of developing an explanatory hypothesis and consisted of reading and reflecting on the chronological length, movement maps, field notes, and audio memos concerning the third fieldwork period in total—and specifically the fourth breaktime. The selected transition was analysed moment by moment and the girls’ repeated yoyo walks highlighted. The analysis concerned detecting and making visible possible tensions, operating demands, motives and tools the children use when they micro-adjust their courses of action in this event. Tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives may give rise to motive reorientations, which further lead to micro-adjustments to solve the tension. Changes in courses of action may reflect a transition between sets of actions. Such a transition possibly indicates changes in the dynamic of demands and motives and as well as in the dynamic of the basic parameters of the activity format.
4 Article summaries

This chapter presents article-wise summaries of the three articles, which form the backbone of the thesis. Further details are available in the original full-text publications (Thumbnails I-III).

4.1 Article I

The title of the article is “Enculturation into inclusion, protecting what ‘is’, and changed acting: Exploring children’s break-time table tennis playing”. This article analysed a group of children in an outdoor table tennis area in the schoolyard during breaktimes. The aim of the article is to offer a richer understanding of breaktime practice as a complex issue of enculturation—as changes in action as well as in practice—to contribute to the wider discussion on the meaning of breaktimes and on the arguments for the organising of breaktimes. The two questions are:

- Which aspects of breaktime enculturation processes are discernible in this particular activity setting for table tennis play?
- What are the children enculturated into?

When three or more children engaged in table tennis play, they played a game called King. One of the players was the King and stayed alone on one side of the table. The others lined up on the opposite side. The King was the server and started the game round by striking the ball with the racket. The first player in the line on the opposite side was the receiver. The receiver made a return and then ran to the King’s side behind the King and back again to where he or she started, as the last one in the line to make another return. If a player failed, he/she got one mark. After accumulating a certain number of marks—usually two or three—the player lost his/her place in the game round. The King stayed on the King’s side of the table until he/she failed and got one mark, and then he/she lined up with the others on the opposite side. The one who won the rally became the new King, and got rid of the marks he/she maybe had. The final round was played when only two players remained, and the winner became the new King when the next game started.

The local rule documents for table tennis and the minutes reporting on the discussions concerning the rules reflected the ideal principle of inclusion by
formulations concerning every child’s right to join in the play. These conditions were demands in formal practice. There were informal group rules as well, which were set up by the children. These rules were demands in actual practice. Two events were analysed, the first one mainly concerns Kalle and Bert and the second one mainly concerns Ludvig and Jonas.

4.1.1 Kalle and Bert

Kalle and Bert were often present in the table tennis area and often engaged in table tennis play. They were skilled players. According to the group rule “No new player may join a game round once the initial serve is struck” a player must wait for the next game round to join if he/she arrives after the play has already started. This rule places a demand on the children, who must act in a manner that corresponds to this demand to be able to play. Bert’s actions seemed to be directed towards the goal “win as often as possible”. Kalle’s actions seemed to be directed towards the goal “play as much as possible”. On one occasion, a deviation in Kalle’s course of actions occurred. He did not arrive on time for the first game round; the play had already started. The players, who had come to the table before Kalle, already had a ball and thus did not need to wait for Kalle and his ball. Furthermore, the high skill level of the players in conjunction with the rule “A player participates in the ongoing round until he/she fails a third time and gets his/her third mark” made waiting for the next game round rather time consuming. The ongoing game round lasted for the whole break, and thus, Kalle could not play at all during this break. Kalle stayed in the table tennis area and was upset. A conflict between him and the other children arose.

The findings point to a tension in the dynamic of demands and motives. Some players were directed to the goal “play as much as possible” and other were directed to the goal “win as often as possible”. This tension gave rise to a conflict, a rupture in the courses of playing actions of the children who usually played a lot. It led to a discussion whereby the rules for the play were negotiated, so that new players could join even if they came too late for the start. Thus, when the children re-engaged in table tennis play during the next breaktime, other demands were expressed in the new and revised rules, which led to a change in the demands placed on the players. These demands encouraged the players to change their acting to continue to join in the play. The dynamic of demands and motives was transformed due to the transition from playing actions, with a certain dynamic of demands and motives, to subsequent actions of negotiating the rules for play and then through the transition to the playing actions—now with a transformed dynamic of demands and motives. The analysis offers glimpses of a process of the children changing their actions and their practice towards a higher degree of inclusion in the spirit of tolerance. It shows the development of a transformed practice. Through this transformation the ideas of inclusion, tolerance and respect—as demands in
ideal practice—became demands placed on the players both in formal practice and in actual practice.

4.1.2 Ludvig and Jonas

Ludvig sometimes played table tennis and was not a very skilled player. When he failed he often approached his friend Jonas who was seldom present in the table tennis area. Ludvig’s table tennis playing actions, as well as his interaction with Jonas, seemed to be directed towards the goal “join friends”. Although Ludvig regularly interacted with Jonas, this seemed to be subordinate to the table tennis play. On one occasion, there was a deviation in Ludvig’s course of actions. The game round had been going on for a while. Ludvig chose to not join the game from the start. He was sitting on a box next to the table and he started to poke, with a stick, some of the boys who were in line. Ludvig usually left the area when he did not play, but not this time. The other players got irritated and told Ludvig to stop but he did not. Some of the players got even more irritated. Ludvig left the area but stayed in the schoolyard, at a distance, used his stick as a sword fencing with another friend.

The conflict caused by a tension in the dynamic of demands and motives between the players’ table tennis playing actions and Ludvig’s poking actions, gave rise to a rupture whereby Ludvig made a transition between chains of actions and by which the dynamic of demands and motives was transformed. Two aspects of transformation are emphasised. Firstly, the table tennis playing children’s turning of the idea of respect for them—as classmates and for their ongoing play—as a demand in ideal and formal practice into a demand on Ludvig in actual practice. Secondly, Ludvig’s motive reorientation due to the demand placed on him. This case reflects Ludvig’s ability to engage in motive reorientation by recognising a particular order—in the spirit of respecting this order, the classmates and their ongoing actions. The motive reorientation reflects a quitting of certain actions, since Ludvig stops disturbing. Regards the table tennis players, this case reflects the players’ ability to maintain a particular order by stressing a demand, in the spirit of non-tolerance, to protect what ‘is’ since they did not want interruption or change. The identified demand, “stop it or leave”, reflects a sort of righteous exclusion as a norm, in terms of the table tennis players’ right to play without being disturbed and thereby their right to reject the person who disturbs. A certain demand is used as tool in exercising resistance, i.e. to not change action.

4.1.3 Negotiating the hierarchy of demands

The findings contribute with an enhanced understanding of the processes of human actors becoming enculturated in activity settings. The analysis shows how human actors, human action and human activity are a unified system in
The glimpses of the enculturation processes emphasised in the two cases contribute content to what is referred to as learning cultural competence (van Oers, 2010). These enculturation processes are here referred to as processes of children becoming breaktime play literate, or competent. The children in this activity setting are enculturated into inclusion, tolerance and respect. These values are collectivindividually produced. In the analysis of the two cases, three aspects of breaktime enculturation processes are discerned:

- The children’s changing practice towards a higher degree of inclusion and tolerance
- The children’s protecting what ‘is’, maintaining a particular order, by stressing a demand when they preferred no change
- The children’s quitting certain actions, by motive reorientation after a rupture caused by tensions between the dominant motive and the particular demands on them

The children’s enculturation processes concerned their coping with the mismatch between demands and motives, using the ability to change practices, the ability to protect what ‘is’ and the ability to quit certain actions by motive reorientation, as tools for change as well as non-change. Accordingly, these abilities may be referred to as reflecting aspects of the children’s breaktime play literacy. In the first case, inclusion emerged in the spirit of tolerance. The identified demands reflect inclusion and tolerance as norms. A conflict between the players led to a negotiation of the rules and some of the rules were revised. This gave rise to new demands and accordingly, to continue joining the play, the players had to change their acting towards a higher degree of inclusion. In the second case, protecting what ‘is’ emerged in the spirit of non-tolerance, and changed acting further emerged in the spirit of respect. The identified demands reflect a sort of righteous exclusion as a norm. The tension reflected was caused by conflicting goals. Ludvig, who was not engaged in playing table tennis, disturbed the ongoing play. The children who were engaged in the table tennis play stressed a demand to protect the ongoing play, to protect what ‘is’. Ludvig who was disturbing quit by engaging in motive reorientation.

The findings show that breaktime table tennis play as an apparently distinct practice was used in various ways by the children. Participation and inclusion emerged in a dynamic practice. To learn cultural competence is a process of becoming, which involves micro genetic movements. This way of conceptualising learning cultural competence enables us to adopt a more nuanced view of collectivindividuall enculturation processes in a certain activity setting. In dealing with issues concerning children’s participation in play it is of importance to understand inclusion as emerging in and through relations with others in the pursuit of collectively motivated activity. Such an understanding enriches the
discussion on how to support even more inclusive, even more tolerant, and even more respectful breaktime play activity.

4.2 Article II

The title of the article is “Broadening rules and aligning actions: Children’s negotiation while playing hide-and-seek during break time”. This article analysed children’s breaktime hide-and-seek regarding the emergence of rule negotiation, how rules are negotiated, and how the play seen as a cultural historical activity (van Oers, 2014) transformed. The aim of the article is to enhance the understanding of agency and negotiation within cultural historical research on the collectividual. The article provides a micro level insight into children’s negotiation process regarding rules to be followed in a version of hide-and-seek which in Sweden is called The jar. The three questions are:

- How are the rules negotiated in the jar play?
- How is the jar play transformed through negotiation of rules?
- How does the children’s agency for negotiation of rules emerge?

In the jar play, one player is the seeker and turns towards the lamppost, the homebase, closes his/her eyes and counts while the other players hide in different places in the schoolyard. When the seeker reaches thirty, he/she tries to locate all the hiders and to jar them. When a hider is located, the seeker runs to the lamppost and shouts when touching it: “The jar for (the name of the located one), one-two-three!”. The first to be jared, or found, will be the seeker during the next round. If the hider, when located, is faster than the seeker to touch the lamppost and to shout: “The jar for me, one-two-three!”, he/she will not be the seeker during the next round and does not hide again until the next round begins.

Some children did not hide at all from the start but stayed in the area to watch. Sometimes the children seemed to help the seeker or the hiders during the play and were a kind of helpers. The regular roles were one seeker and one or more hiders. The roles seeker’s helper, hider’s helper, seeker’s & hider’s helper and watcher were not always represented in the play and thus, they are referred to here as temporary or deviant. The situations in which the deviant roles appeared in the jar play, were traced. When the deviant role reflects a correspondence between the holder’s present course of actions and the collectividually expressed motive for engaging in the jar play it was referred to as primary. When the role reflects a non-correspondence between the holder’s present course of actions and the collectividually expressed motive for engaging in the jar play it was referred to as secondary. A secondary role occurred when the child waited for a possibility to change roles into a primary role due
to what seemed to be the dominant motive for engaging. Turning into a secondary role may be a matter of the child acting correspondingly to what was perceived as demands in the situation. Two events were analysed, the first concerns Alice and Alex and the second concerns Jonas and Edvin.

4.2.1 Alice and Alex

The jar play had already started when Alice showed up. She was not present from start. The seeker had finished counting and the hiders had already gone hiding. The ones who were playing did not restart to involve Alice. They seemed oriented towards “continuing to play the jar”. Referring to the basic rule “No new hider can join the round after the seeker has started to count”, she was obviously too late to join as a hider. Alice was required to wait until the next round to join. This was a demand put on all the children to be nice and respectful, which in this situation was maybe reflected in Alice’s decision to not interrupt the ongoing play. Alice’s motive orientation “join the jar play immediately” clashed with the motive reflected in the demand on her to not interrupt. This conflict of motives served as first stimulus in the emergence of transformative agency. Alice touched the lamppost and said: “The jar for me, one-two-three!”, which refers to another of the basic rules of the play “Hiders can choose to reveal themselves before they are located”. Without being there from the start, she engaged in the ongoing play by saying this phrase. She turned into the role of a hider but with a fundamental difference from the traditional: she did not hide. She turned into a primary watcher now standing at the lamppost. The rule: “Hiders can choose to reveal themselves before they are located” was the artefact, which here served as second stimulus in the emergence of transformative agency, whereupon the conditions for participation were transformed through a collective broadening of the interpretation of this particular rule. Alice jared herself and accordingly, she was not the seeker in the next round. This refers to the second part of a basic rule concerning hiders who reveal themselves: “The hider is then safe from being located, safe from being the seeker of next round, still participates but has no right to hide the rest of that particular round”. A moment later, Alice turned from primary watcher into a primary seeker’s helper since the seeker needed help to inform hiders far away that they were located, and that they needed to return to the lamppost.

A conflict of motives for Alice, functioning as first stimulus, triggered the emergence of transformative agency and negotiation. Transformative agency was manifested in her use of a certain rule, which normally regulates the hiders’ acting during an ongoing round. Although Alice was not a hider, she acted based on the rule, as if she was one. Her use of the rule in this situation can be considered a negotiation of the conditions for participation and as a broadening of the interpretation of this particular rule. Alice succeeded and joined in.
The transformation concerns a broadening of the collective interpretation of the particular basic rule of the play. The negotiation concerns Alice and Alex broadening the interpretation, and to Alice’s adopting a temporary role by using the rule without being a hider from the beginning—and Alex accepting it. Alice’s actions are initially oriented to the motive “join the play”. Once she joined—first as a hider, then as a primary watcher and finally as a primary seeker’s helper—her actions seem to have shifted orientation, into “avoid as long as possible turning into the role of a seeker”. The actions now reflect another activity. Each time Alice adopted a temporary role (hider into primary watcher, primary watcher into primary seeker’s helper), she added a new role to the role constellation whereby the dynamic of demands and motives was somewhat modified. Thus, these modifications reflect micro-adjustments of Alice’s course of actions when she changed from newly arrived, not participating from the beginning of the round, into joining during an ongoing round, when she changed from a hider into a primary watcher, and when she changed from a primary watcher into a primary seeker’s helper. Alex was micro-adjusting his course of actions as well, as he realigned in reaction to Alice the hider, to Alice the primary watcher, and to Alice the primary seeker’s helper. His realignments modified the dynamic of demands and motives as well. Once Alice joined the jar-play-activity, another motive seemed to become dominant for her.

The children’s micro-adjustments of their courses of action stemmed from the new interpretation of the particular basic rule and the use of the rule as a tool for including Alice in the play. The object was still the jar play but somewhat elaborated: the rule “Hiders can choose to reveal themselves before they are located” gained a broader meaning: “Hiders can choose to reveal themselves before they are located and latecomers can reveal themselves in order to join an ongoing round”. As the object was elaborated into a play, of which the character reflects possibilities to include one more player, the dynamic of demands and motives was transformed to respond to the needs of this player.

Alice’s actions reflect a capacity to join, and Alex’s actions reflect a capacity to affiliate Alice in the ongoing play. The interdependence of these capacities in the negotiation of rules made possible for the children to collectividually change acting and collectividually change the circumstances in play. Through relating, in analysis, collectividual action to the actions of others and to the transformation of the play it is argued that collective transformation of the play does not merely refer to the children using collectividual capacities at the same time, but to their collectividual ability to enable negotiation to transform the object of the play activity.

4.2.2 Jonas and Edvin

Jonas was the seeker and was busy locating the hiders. Edvin arrived, he did not join the play from the start. Due to the rule “No new hider can join the
round after the seeker has started to count”, Edvin obviously arrived too late to join the ongoing round as a hider. Nevertheless, Jonas asked Edvin: “Do you want to join?” It turned out that this question was not simply an invitation, but reflected a conflict of motives. The children used to shift the seeker when a new round was about to start and the new seeker was usually the child who was the first one located in the previous round. There is a rule that says “If, for some reason, it is still unclear who the seeker will be in a new round there is a competition to determine who it is. Everybody runs to a spot close to the homebase, a tree for example. The last one to reach the spot will be the seeker”. Here, in the ongoing round, Jonas asked Edvin if he wanted to join in. Jonas then ran to the lamppost, whereby Edvin ran as well. This competition opened the possibility to shift the seeker during the ongoing round.

Jonas’ actions oriented to “play the jar-play as the seeker” clashed with his wish to act oriented to “play the jar-play as a hider”. This conflict of motives served as first stimulus in the emergence of transformative agency for engaging in negotiation. Jonas used the competition rule in a new way as a tool, a second stimulus, in dealing with his conflict of motives. The transformative agency reflected in asking the question, which indirectly refers to an idea to compete on the roles, gave rise to a negotiation of who will be the hider and who will be the seeker. Even if both preferred to be hiders, one needed to be the seeker. If Jonas was the winner, Jonas had the chance to motive re-orientation by turning into a hider. By running to the lamppost Edvin agreed to the negotiation. Edvin lost the competition. He was going to be the new seeker and Jonas was going to hide—Jonas solved his conflict of motives. Edvin lost but still did not agree to being the new seeker. He stayed at the lamppost without starting to seek. Jonas did not comment on it and continued to seek. Edvin’s actions shifted from being oriented to the motive “join the round preferable as a hider” into “join the round as a watcher”. This motive reorientation gave rise to a micro-adjustment of his course of actions from trying to join as a hider into a joining the round as a secondary watcher. This micro-adjustment concerned aligning his actions to the actions of the others by refusing to be the seeker, so that he could join as a watcher instead. He put a demand on Jonas to continue as the seeker. The dynamic of demands and motives was changed. Jonas’ motive to “join the play preferably as a hider” shifted to “join the play” whereby he made a micro-adjustment of his course of actions to continue as seeker. He aligned his actions to the actions of Edvin correspondingly to the changes in the dynamic of demands and motives. Jonas reacted respectively to the demand to let everyone join, which reflects the expectations in local school rules, though he failed to solve his conflict of motives. His actions reflect his capacity to affiliate Edvin in the ongoing play. This may indicate that the right for everyone to join was the dominant motive, whereby solving his conflict of motives became secondary.
4.2.3 Negotiating the role set-up and rules

In both events, rules of the jar play served as second stimuli and transformative agency was manifested, since both Alice and Jonas used the rules in new ways through a process of negotiation. Six specific findings enrich our understanding of rule negotiation in the jar play activity setting:

- Transformation refers to a broadening of the collective interpretation of the basic rules of the play.
- Transformation refers to an elaboration on the object of activity, as transforming “the shape of the collective”.
- Micro-adjustments refer to children’s change in their courses of action, due to motive reorientation, either to change their situation in the ongoing play or to affiliate someone else with the ongoing play.
- Micro-adjustments are reflected as changes in dynamic of demands and motives.
- Negotiation refers to the suggestion of using a rule in a new way and actually using it.
- Negotiation refers to children micro-adjusting their courses of action as a matter of aligning them.

The findings emphasise capacity to join and capacity affiliate as mutually constituting. Capacity to join is not solely a matter of one having the right courage to step into ongoing play, and capacity to affiliate is not simply a matter of one having sufficient empathy to let someone else in. These capacities are manifested in the children’s actions, based on the children’s situational position as not yet joining or as already joining, in a collectividual endeavour changing the circumstances of the play. The fact that these capacities are mutually constituting in negotiating rules, makes it possible for children to act collectividually. Negotiation so to say nourishes the processes of transformation in this breaktime play.

The findings constitute an empirical basis for the introduction of the notion of negotiagency, which refers to collectividual ability for collectivials and collective groups to mutually engage in negotiation as transformation. Thus, negotiagency does not refer to a set of collectividual capacities for negotiation. The emergence of negotiagency is made analytically visible through grasping collectividual action related to the actions of others and to the transformation of the object of activity. The micro level negotiations are realisations of collectivials producing and using negotiagency as a tool in transforming the circumstances of play. Accordingly, the collective elaboration of the object of activity—and what becomes—should be the unit of analysis to reach an enhanced understanding of collectividually expressed capacities manifested in negotiation. The children co-produced a new form of jar play that reflected
multiple motives. They did so, due to dynamic tensions, by developing negotiagency and using it to negotiate the circumstances collectividually. Negotiagency is to be understood as a tool from the perspective of the collectidual, not from the perspective of the individual. The notion of negotiagency highlights the collective embedding of collectividually expressed capacity as fundamental in understanding the emergence of agency. The notion of negotiagency draws attention to the importance of emphasising the emergence of relational agency—seen as collectividually expressed capacities in negotiation—as a collective object elaboration in terms of collectividuals’ aligning of actions. The object of activity was elaborated by the children broadening the collective interpretation of the rules, negotiating their courses of action and aligning them, in producing and using negotiagency.

4.3 Article III
The title of the article is “Negotiating involvement: The emergence of a shadow break time play activity”. This article analysed two girls, Sandra and Linnea, and a group of boys drifting around in the schoolyard during breaktimes. How can we understand the acting of children who seem to be drifting aimlessly? Within a cultural historical framework, it is assumed that no action is aimless. The drifters’ actions are assumed to be oriented towards a motive. During observations, the children’s drifting was identified as reflecting qualities of play (van Oers, 2010, 2012, 2014). There was a pattern concerning their movement that could not be fully explicable in terms of moving around chatting with each other, as activity. Which tools did the children use in creating what appeared to be a non-regular shadow breaktime play? Which were the rules and the roles? Non-regular means the play did not seem to stick to rules and pattern of a certain culturally and historically anchored game. Shadow means that the play was not discerned as immediately clearly delineated with explicit rules, but rather successively as inconspicuously ongoing alongside more apparent games and play in the schoolyard. The play was neither easily apparent nor obvious.

The aim of the article is to provide a micro level analysis of the emergence of this non-regular breaktime play to enhance our knowledge of how decisions and evaluations of rules, allowed degrees of freedom, and involvement are negotiated (van Oers, 2013), and enhance our knowledge of the micro level negotiations that form the evolving shape of the collective (Edwards, 2005). The “collective” refers to the non-regular shadow breaktime play activity and “the evolving shape of” emphasises that there is a process by which the play activity emerges and develops. Two questions are explored:

- What are the constituents and boundaries of the non-regular shadow breaktime play activity?
• How does the non-regular shadow breaktime play activity emerge on a micro level?

4.3.1 Linnea, Sandra and the four boys

Sandra and Linnea frequently walked around extensively in the school area and the movements successively indicated on patterns. On some occasions the two girls repeatedly showed up near a group of boys, so the boys could see them, and then left the area like a yoyo that comes and goes. This way of moving is here called yoyo walk. The children’s drifting around also seemed to change in character in other ways. Five different sets of actions were identified and three of them shared the common features of reflecting elements of culturally and historically anchored children’s games, but still had a unique character and distinctive traits. The common features of these three sets indicated the constituents of what are described as a non-regular shadow breaktime play activity, which was not at all apparent visible from the beginning of the field work. Each version of the game refers to a version-specific elaboration on the object of the play activity, like hues of a certain colour. The boundaries of the play activity are here seen as highlighting the border between the sets of action that refer to the versions of the play activity, and the sets of action which do not. Actions beyond the border refer to other objects, other activities. The order in which the sets of actions occurred during the breaktimes was highlighted. Sets chronologically prior to the sets reflecting the versions of the non-regular breaktime play activity might in turn reflect the preceding of transitions into this certain play. One particular transition was selected for closer scrutiny, and it is reflected in the following description:

Linus, Ludvig, Putte and a fourth boy from the class walk in the schoolyard. Linnea and Sandra enter the schoolyard through the entrance. They walk up to a member in the school staff who stands in an open area, between two buildings, and talk to him for a short while. The four boys follow the girls but stop and stay at a distance, when the girls start to talk to the adult, until the girls leave. The girls then walk towards the back of a building. The boys follow the girls, walking at a distance. (Field notes 141104:4937)

When the boys started to follow the girls, the children’s actions reflect a set C: Non-regular follow-the-leader game, in which Linnea and Sandra are the leaders and the four boys are the followers. The emergence of this version of the play activity is explored through viewing the certain transition in its broader breaktime context—the micro level interaction that precedes it and what it leads to. The transition was preceded by the girls’ continuous yoyo walk, a clue noticed earlier. From the beginning of the particular breaktime until the moment for the transition, five yoyo walks were identified.

The analysis shows that after the fifth yoyo walk by the girls, the boys started to follow. The boys micro-adjusted their courses of actions from not
following into following, which refers to the particular transition between two sets of action. Referring to this transition and the clues regarding the continuously recurrent yoyo walks preceding it, it is argued that the two girls’ actions from the beginning of the break until this moment were oriented towards the motive “get the boys into following”. Sandra and Linnea also declared that they appreciated that the boys followed them. At the beginning of the break Linnea and Sandra maybe experienced a tension between their wish to get Linus and Ludvig to follow them on the one hand, and the fact that Linus and Ludvig were busy doing other things, on the other hand. The personally expressed motive “get the boys into following”, in a way gave rise to a self-imposed demand put on the girls, to do something about it. Acting within the dynamic of demands and motives, the girls then repeatedly engaged in yoyo walk. The girls repeatedly brought forward affordances possible for the boys to act on. Both leaders and followers need to play follow-the-leader, and each yoyo walk was an invitation to the boys, an affordance possible for them to act on by turning into the role of followers.

The findings show that the girls used the yoyo walk as a tool for inviting the boys to follow. The boys acted on the fifth yoyo walk and began to follow, and at that point they micro-adjusted their courses of action into being directed to the goal “be followers of the girls at a distance”, and the object seemed to be “production of a non-regular follow-the-leader game”. The girls simultaneously became the leaders. Since the girls’ motive from the beginning of the breaktime appeared to be “get the boys into following”, it is argued that the boys’ acting on the affordance was a tool, which the girls used to make possible a micro-adjustment of their own courses of action where they changed into the role of the leaders in an activity oriented to the motive “production of a non-regular follow-the-leader game”. When the holders of the roles were appointed, the game begun. The boys’ and the girls’ courses of action were aligned due to the boys’ motive reorientation. The initial tension between the girls’ personally expressed motive “get the boys into following” and the fact that the boys did not follow, was solved. The dynamic of demands and motives changed.

A process of negotiation on involvement between the girls and the boys preceded the particular transition. The negotiation concerned the girls bringing forward affordances to get the boys to motive reorient and align their actions to the actions of the girls—to be oriented towards a shared object. The girls and the boys negotiated involvement to co-produce the object, here in terms of a non-regular follow-the-leader game.

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16 According to Gibson (1979), affordance refers to an action possibility available in the environment to an individual, independent of the individual’s ability to perceive this possibility. See also Fajen, Riley, & Turvey (2009).
4.3.2 Negotiating involvement

Four specific findings enrich our understanding of micro level interaction in the emergence of the non-regular follow-the-leader game in this breaktime activity setting:

- The transition refers to the children leaving one set of actions and entering another.
- The preceding of the transition refers to a process in which the boys and girls negotiate involvement.
- The process of negotiation refers to the girls repeatedly bringing forward affordances.
- The motive reorientation appears in the boys aligning their actions to the actions of the girls.

Micro level interaction in the emergence of the non-regular follow-the-leader game was a process of negotiating involvement. The children engaged in micro-adjustments, on the level of action, as aligning their motive orientations. The girls’ micro-adjustments into the roles as leaders were made possible through the boys’ micro-adjustments into the roles as followers, i.e. the children were co-producing the game. Firstly, the yoyo walk was the first tool used by the girls to get the boys to change acting. Secondly, the boys’ micro-adjustment was used by the girls as a tool to take on the roles of leaders. The boys and the girls mutually enabled each other’s involvement and co-produced the game, seen as a collective object. Negotiating involvement concerned the girls bringing forward affordances, here repeatedly producing invitations, and the boys finally responding by acting on an affordance. The girls brought forward the foundations for what in turn became the second tool brought forward by the boys. Thus, the analysis emphasises that the collective creation of the second tool, needed in the co-production of the game, was inherent in the process of negotiation. The tool was collectively created by the girls and the boys. Neither of the groups would be able to create it alone.

The girls’ affordance and the boys’ acting on the affordance are collectividual manifestations of negotiagency—a collectividual ability for negotiation as transformation. The non-regular follow-the-leader game is to be understood not solely as based on one party’s agency to bring forward affordances and another party’s agency to act on the affordances, i.e. relational agency in terms of collectividual capacity to align actions, but on collectividual ability for negotiation as transformation—negotiagency. As I understand it, bringing forward affordances and acting on affordances are action-level manifestations of negotiagency, in terms of collectividually expressed capacities to align actions to the actions of others in the co-production of a non-regular follow-the-leader game. Negotiagency runs from the collectividuals’ profound sociality and is to be understood as a collectividual form of agency. Negotiagency appears on
the level of activity. The framework used in this study—and the notion of negotiagency specifically—is of value when trying to understand children’s growing sense of belonging, sharing, and capacity to cooperate. The notion of negotiagency uncovers that these sorts of abilities do not occur in the individual minds, apart from social interaction, but instead develop in and through negotiation. Negotiagency arises when the children are highly involved in the production and accomplishment of a rule-governed activity where they have a significant degree of freedom in the choice of goals, actions, objects, tools, and rules, and make personalised versions of them as well—i.e. within playfully formatted activity. The notion of negotiagency emphasises the complexity as well as potency of playfully formatted activities.
5 Findings

As presented in the Chapter 1, the overarching aim of the study is to explore the phenomena of children’s negotiation and agency in dialectical change processes in breaktime play activity. The main research question is: What are the mechanisms in dialectical processes of collectivindual action and collective object transformation in children’s play activity? In section 5.1, I summarise how the articles together answer the two sub questions: How does the play activity emerge? How does the object of the play activity transform? In section 5.2, I discuss how the notion of negotiagency answers the main research question.

5.1 Negotiating involvement, roles, rules and demands

The findings show that the children are highly involved in the production and accomplishment of rule-governed activities that allows the participants a significant degree of freedom in the choice of goals, actions, objects, tools, and rules, and make personalised versions of them as well, through negotiation. What is discerned, when bringing together the findings of the three articles is that the children’s negotiation in play activities here concerns specifically three areas, namely

- **negotiating involvement to start producing a play activity.** The actions reflect the children’s willingness to make efforts in the formation of the play activity and that engagement in the play is of value to them (Article III).
- **negotiating the hierarchy of demands to maintain and uphold the ongoing play activity** when demands clash and the activity is threatened. This concerns negotiating who has the freedom to continue and who has not, i.e. who needs to change acting, which reflects willingness to make efforts to maintain a play activity of importance for the children (Article I).
- **negotiating the role set-up and rules during ongoing play activity,** i.e. making personalised versions, which concerns transforming the object of the play activity. The actions reflect the fact that a significant degree of freedom is allowed for the children to choose actions and goals (Article II).
In play, there seems to be a delicate balance between the force of maintaining a certain order, structure and control, and the force of change, suspension of control, and restructuring (Karpatschhof, 2013). The analyses indicate that these forces underlie the three areas of negotiation explored in this study.

The tensions, conflicts, disturbances and ruptures identified in the analyses, are discerned as manifestations of a culturally historically developed contradiction between structure on the one hand and freedom on the other. The contradiction is expressed in the demands on the children to adapt to expectations of various kinds (for instance as primary school pupils in general as well as in this particular school, and as participants in culturally historically developed games with locally developed rules) on the one hand, and demands rooted in the ideas of every child’s right to participate in breaktime play, to be heard, to tell when you think something is wrong and to be involved in the group’s decisions.

The negotiation explored in the three articles seems to have its foundation in this contradiction, which is manifested in dilemmas and conflicting personally expressed motives. The children negotiate rules, roles, hierarchy of demands and involvement to solve the dilemmas.

The object of an activity is continuously under elaboration and thus, agency realised in human activity is transformative per se. The label transformative does not imply that there is agency that is not transformative in character. However, in my view, the transformative potential is sometimes more explicit. Agency is realised on the level of action in collectividual capacity to micro-adjust the course of actions and align actions to others. On the level of activity, agency is realised as collective agency to elaborate the object of the play activity. Thus, the findings show that on the micro level of action, the dialectical co-evolving processes are realised in and made possible through collectividual micro-adjustments and aligning of courses of action.

On the level of activity, the dialectical co-evolving processes are realised in object formation (Article III), in object maintenance (Article I), and in object transformation (Article II). However, in Article I, the transformative potential of agency is also realised in resistance to change, to transformation. When a child disturbs the ongoing table tennis play, he puts a demand on the table tennis-playing peers to stop playing. The playing children do not want to stop. Instead, the children negotiate the hierarchy of demands. The play continues. The findings show how play activity emerges, how the children uphold and transform play activity through realising the capacity to negotiate involvement, hierarchy of demands, role set-up and rules—through micro-adjustments and aligning of actions and to use cultural historical motives to transform already established games. One could say that the children are breaktime play literate. This literacy is precisely what here makes the children’s activity playfully accomplished: the children are highly involved in the production and accomplishment of the rule-governed activity that allows them a significant
degree of freedom in the choice of goals, actions, objects, tools, and rules, and allows them to make versions of them (van Oers, 2013) through negotiation. Thus, the findings show that negotiation is a core dimension in playfully formatted activity, i.e. one can say that negotiation is a fundamental element in producing play.

5.2 The notion of Negotiagency in making sense of negotiation in play activity

Two main points can be discerned when reflecting on how the findings together might answer the main research question: What are the mechanisms in dialectical processes of collectividual action and collective object transformation in children’s play activity? These points are:

- Negotiation enables dialectical interplay between collectividual realisation of breaktime play literacy and collective transformation of the object of the play activity, and,
- dialectical interplay—in turn—is a core mechanism in the emergence of agency.

In the next two sections I will develop the two points a bit further.

5.2.1 Negotiation as enabling and realising dialectical interplay

In the analyses, negotiation is discerned as being a fundamental element in play activity. What is also shown is that in negotiation the process of ascending from the abstract to the concrete—the dialectical interplay between collectividual action and collective object transformation—is enabled and realised. Thus, one could say that negotiation can be viewed as the modelling of the germ cell. In the table tennis play activity, the relation ‘serve—return’ might be the germ cell (Article I). In hide-and-seek, the relation ‘hide—seek—find’ might be the germ cell (Article II). In the shadow breaktime play activity, the germ cell is not that apparent (Article III). However, one could say that the relation ‘hide—seek—find’ is the germ cell of what could be the dominant motive. One could say that the children use the follow-the-leader, with the germ cell ‘lead—follow’, as a tool to uphold some sort of hide-and-seek play activity.

The negotiation is sometimes very quick and as an observer one might not perceive very distinct steps in the children’s modelling of the germ cell. In the analyses of the children’s actions in the play activities being studied, the process of ascending from the abstract to the concrete is realised as a micro level process of negotiation, mostly physically signalled. In this negotiation, agency
occurs both in terms of collectividual micro-adjustments (changes of courses of actions) and aligning of courses of actions, and in terms of collective elaboration of the object. The collective elaboration of the objects is enabled through the modelling of the germ cell into new versions of the play activities.

The findings show that the modelling of the germ cell is a dialectical interplay of collectividual change in acting and collective transformation of the object of the play activity. Thus, the children’s negotiation in the play activity is not to be seen merely as an interaction of importance for two isolated processes—negotiation can rather be seen as enabling the processes through dialectical interplay. Forming and upholding the object of the play activity, and elaborating it, is enabled through the children’s negotiation.

5.2.2 Dialectical interplay is a core mechanism in the emergence of agency

The analyses show that agency is collectividually realised as a capacity for micro-adjustments and aligning of courses of action, and collectively realised as a collective agency for object transformation. Moreover, what is perceived in the analysis is not solely the collectividual and collective realisations of agency, but also how the children’s negotiation is fundamental in the emergence of this agency. Rainio & Hilppö (2017) point out that for an ethnographer who tries to understand and depict the development of children’s agency in educational settings, “dialectics should not be overlooked” (Rainio & Hilppö, 2017, p. 85). Acknowledging this, the present study contributes to CHAT research on agency through emphasising the role of negotiation in the emergence of agency.

The children’s collectividual agency realised in the negotiation, in terms of changes of courses of action and aligning of actions, emerges based on the dialectical interplay with the collective process of object transformation. Moreover, the analyses show that collectividual agency realised in negotiation enables collective object transformation. One might say that this dialectical interplay is a core mechanism in the emergence of agency—both collectividually and collectively realised. Based on this, how do the findings answer the main research question?

5.2.3 Negotiagency as a collectividual form of agency

The findings form an empirical basis for advocating the notion of negotiagency. Introducing this notion is an attempt to conceptualise how agency and negotiation emerge dialectically. Accordingly, negotiagency is defined as a collectividual agency for negotiation as transformation. The word is a combination of negotiation and agency.
Negotiagency is not an individual form of agency or capacity for negotiation, nor is it a collective form of agency for collaboration in object transformation. Negotiagency runs from the collectividuals’ profound sociality and is therefore referred to as a collectividual form of agency. The notion of negotiagency acknowledges negotiation as social interaction enabling and realising dialectical interplay between collectividual change in action and collective object transformation.

Negotiagency is perceived analytically through exploring collectividual action in relation to the actions of others and to the collective transformation of the object of activity, and then turning back to collectindividual action again. Collectively motivated collectividual acting is culturally and historically embedded in what was, and at the same time directed forward to the future, to that which is not yet. Thus, in this study the collectividually and collectively realised agency emerges due to tensions and dilemmas—manifestations of contradictions—in the continuously changing dynamic of what was, what is, and that which is not yet. The findings show that agency emerges (is produced) in dialectical interplay—a cyclic mechanism in which it is also realised (used), which makes the cycle continue. In this study, the notion of negotiagency captures the essence of being part of a playfully accomplished activity, i.e. the essence of being play literate.

**Negotiagency—transformative agency—relational agency**

In relation to the notion of negotiagency, the conceptualisation dynamic of demands and motives (Hedegaard, 2014), and the notions of relational agency (Edwards, 2005) and micro-adjustment (Zittoun, 2009, 2014), appear as tools for unpacking the dialectical interplay between realisations of agency on the level of action and on the level of activity. Accordingly, the notion of negotiagency does not replace the notions of transformative agency (Haapasaari, Engeström, & Kerouso, 2016) and relational agency (Edwards, 2005). Negotiagency is, as are these concepts, based on a dialectical understanding of collectividual and structure. Transformative agency refers to collective agency—the activity level realisation of agency—and relational agency refers to individuals’ capacity as the realisation of collaboration. Since negotiation is realised in micro-adjustments and alignment of courses of action (i.e. relational agency), relational agency per se, reflects dialectical interplay.

Micro-adjustments and alignment of courses of action, seen as collectividual agency realised in negotiation, give rise to collective object transformation. In this respect, negotiagency is the same as transformative agency. However, collective object transformation gives rise to new tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives, which in turn give rise to the emergence of collectividual agency for negotiation, and so it continues. Accordingly, agency emerges in a cyclic dialectical interplay in which it is also realised. The notion of negotiagency in a way conceptually connects the notions of transformative agency and relational agency.
The notion of negotiagency in understanding the development of breaktime play literacy

The notion of negotiagency uncovers the understanding that collectividual agency, realised in micro-adjustments and alignment of courses of actions, does not occur in the individual minds apart from social interaction but instead develops in and through negotiation. Negotiagency emerges when the children are highly involved in the production and accomplishment of a rule-governed activity where they have a significant degree of freedom in the choice of goals, actions, objects, tools, and rules, and make versions of them as well—i.e. within playfully accomplished activity (van Oers, 2012, 2014). The micro level negotiations in focus in this study are manifestations of the children collectividually producing and using negotiagency in transforming the object of play activities.

In the definition of negotiagency, the formulation “collectividual agency for negotiation” refers to collectividual micro-adjustments and alignment of courses of action, and the formulation “as transformation” refers to collective object transformation. The definition of negotiagency is based on understanding negotiation as dialectical interplay.

The process of ascending from the abstract to the concrete concerns the elaboration of the germ cell into a new concrete, a process in which the actual concrete successively turns into a previous concrete. The way the children’s play activity is carried out reflects the agency and freedom possible in this particular play activity. The play activity is a concrete manifestation—version—made possible through the children’s modelling of the germ cell. One could say that through this modelling, possibilities are negotiated.

Negotiagentively, the children elaborate on the object of activity and develop collectividual cultural competence—breaktime play literacy. This process concerns analogously the transformation of the local culture, which is reflected in changed rules, goals and intentions, for instance. The notion of negotiagency conceptualises that collectivindual breaktime play literacy is collectively embedded and developed. The play is elaborated or transformed in accordance with what negotiagency makes possible on the level of activity. Collectivinduals micro-adjust and align their courses of action in accordance with what negotiagency makes possible on the level of the collectivindual. In other words, what is collectividually possible co-evolves dialectically with what is collectively possible, through negotiation in playfully accomplished activity.

To understand a collectivindual process of enculturation—here children developing cultural competence becoming breaktime play literate—we need to reflect on the collectividual development of certain capacities in relation to how the collective expands the object of the play activity. Negotiagency comes into the picture as a notion, which uncovers negotiation between hu-
mans as a core mechanism in dialectical interplay between collectivial development and collective elaboration of the object. Arguably, not only collective activity but also collectivial actions—negotiation in terms of micro-adjustments and aligning of courses of actions—are deeply co-authored (Pham, 2013).

Innovation and change are here reflected in the children’s continuous transformation of the play activity. The findings show that transformation—as innovation—happens in the space of possible agency and freedom. Innovation and change concern expanding the boundaries of what is possible.

The study shows the general relevance of the CHAT approach in understanding the dynamics in playfully accomplished activity. The notion of negotiagency emphasises how breaktime play literacy is realised in children’s dealing with tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives in playfully accomplished activity and emerges through dialectical interplay between collectivial actions and collective transformation of the object of activity. An example of this could be that the children’s competence for changing a dynamic of ethical values in school concerning social inclusion and children’s equal rights, develops and is realised in the collective work of transforming the object and expanding what is possible. Negotiation in playfully accomplished activity appears to be a core mechanism enabling dialectical interplay between collectivial action and collective object transformation.

The notion of negotiagency emphasises that the CHAT framework is well motivated in explorations of collectivial efforts for change and of collaborations for change. The notion of negotiagency might be fruitful in explorations of processes of change in playfully accomplished activities, no matter whether the participants are adults or children.

5.2.4 Dialectics of Negotiagency

Rainio & Hilppö (2017) point out “the children’s struggles towards agency and adults’ efforts and failures to support children in their struggles can be conceptualised as a dialectical movement that has a potential to develop the educational practice itself” (Rainio & Hilppö, 2017, p. 78). Acknowledging this, negotiation in present study is emphasised as a fundamental dimension of playfully accomplished activity. I have attempted to show—on a micro level—how the dialectical processes of collectivial change in action and collective object transformation in playfully accomplished activity is enabled through negotiation. Drawing on the findings, I argue that the dialectical interplay enabled through negotiation is a core mechanism in the emergence and realisation of agency. The title of this book—Dialectics of negotiagency—refers to this mechanism.
5.3 Practical contribution

The study shows that children’s learning cultural competence (van Oers, 2010) in play activity during breaktimes is a process of becoming play literate, which involves active engagement in the micro genetic movements in collective activity—i.e. negotiagency—expanding the object of play and creating new. This way of understanding learning cultural competence enables us to adopt a more nuanced view of collectivindual development in a certain activity setting. Such understandings enrich the discussion on how to support even more inclusive breaktime play, that is even more tolerant, and even more respectful. The findings indicate that the children co-produce new forms of play that reflects multiple motives. The negotiations explored are manifestations of children collectividually producing and using negotiagency in transforming the object of the play.

The findings show how the children in the study negotiate involvement, rules, role set-up and the hierarchy of demands as a continuous elaboration of the conditions to establish and maintain boundaries of a playfully accomplished activity. The study sheds light on participation and inclusion as emerging in collective activity. Capacity to join and capacity to affiliate are collectivindual realisations of negotiagency, and these capacities are reflected in the children’s actions. The notion of negotiagency uncovers that breaktime play literacy does not occur in the children’s minds apart from social interaction but develops in and through negotiation. Negotiagency emerges and is realised when the children are highly involved in the production and accomplishment of a rule-governed activity where they have a significant degree of freedom in the choice of goals, actions, objects, tools, and rules, and make versions through negotiation—i.e. when they are engaged in a playfully accomplished activity.

School staff and parents may encourage and support children’s emerging capacity to negotiate. By supporting and supervising such activities—and by engaging in such activities together with the children—adults can support the preferred development and changes in directions, and counteract a negative manner and the development of negative patterns of behaviour.
6 Postlude

In this final chapter, I reflect on the quality in this study and suggest some openings for future research.

6.1 Reflections on quality and generalisation

This section addresses the quality of the report and the findings. It also concerns the generalisation of the findings. There are three different sorts of criteria for evaluating quality in qualitative research, namely: qualities in the presentation, qualities in the results, and criteria of validity (Larsson, 2005).

Qualities in the presentation refer, firstly, to awareness of the theoretic perspective on the research problem. I have attempted to make explicit the CHAT perspective on children, play and agency—fundamental assumptions as well as recent CHAT research—since CHAT is the basis for interpretations and thus, the main preunderstanding besides my previous experiences as teacher. Larsson (2005) points out: “By making this preunderstanding explicit the basis for interpretation becomes clear, since this preunderstanding is the foundation for the kind of interpretation that will be developed” (Larsson, 2005, p. 4). Moreover, I have tried to make explicit how the abductive process of developing explanatory hypotheses draws on this theoretical perspective, to make possible for the reader to judge whether the interpretations make sense from the perspective that was outlined.

Secondly, qualities in the presentation refer to internal consistency in the study, which concerns internal logic between the research question, the theoretical framework and methods. I have attempted to clarify how the research question draws on the theoretical framework and recent CHAT research and accordingly, Chapter 2 is given the heading “Qualifying the research question”. To emphasise the internal consistency in the study, I have also tried to make explicit how I see abduction as a process, which draws on ethnographical experiences as well as on the theoretical preunderstandings, and involves analysis as well as data production.

Thirdly, qualities in the presentation refer to ethical values. I see ethical values as reflected and realised in ethical methodology, and thus, ethical methodology is given its own section in the chapter concerning the methods (Chapter 3, section 3.6).
Qualities concerning the results here refer, firstly, to richness of meanings. My interpretations are based on multiple meanings, which is reflected through using various data sources. Thus, the analyses are based not solely on my own experiences as participant observer but also influenced by the children’s reflections on our shared experiences as well as by additional data (such as interviews with employees and several documents). Accordingly, the audio memo-method (section 3.5.2) was developed. This method corresponds to the intention to continuously consider the children’s reflections on shared experiences in the analytical process of developing explanatory hypotheses. In the analyses of the events—on which the articles are based—the whole ethnographical data was involved. Due to the strict word limit in the scientific articles it was not possible to make explicit all the ethnographical richness of meanings which influenced the analyses. However, my intention was to make the richness as explicit as possible in each article, by including thick descriptions on each event as well as direct examples from the field notes and audio memos in the analytical sections.

Secondly, qualities concerning the results refer to theoretical contribution. In this study, the notion of negotiagency is a main theoretical contribution. It is in a sense an interpretation of the findings. In the findings (Chapter 5), I have tried to relate this notion to the existing CHAT discourse on which the study draws, to make explicit the theoretical contribution (Larsson, 2005).

In this study, criteria of validity of the results concerns evaluating where and when the findings are useful (Larsson, 2009). Regarding the findings of this study, I see generalisation meaningful through “recognition of patterns” (Larsson, 2009, p. 28). Referring to generalisation in terms of recognition of patterns, this implicates seeing the readers of the study as the ones who judge whether the findings are applicable to other cases:

Qualitative research often produces such interpretations – theoretical constructions, concepts or descriptions, i.e. patterns or configurations, which can be recognized in the empirical world. The reader is invited to notice something they did not see before. We can view this as a variant of generalization, the communicated pattern is recognized in new cases. (Larsson, 2009, p. 32)

Thus, based on this understanding of generalisation, I argue that the findings can be generalised. However, I cannot “predict in which cases the interpretation is useful, only suspect in which contexts one might look for it” (Larsson, 2009, p. 34). The cases analysed in this study may be referred to as examples of something more general (Nordenstam, 2009). This line of reasoning is also coherent with material dialectical thinking on which this study is based and on which an example or a single case can be understood as a realisation of a concrete whole. This line of thinking of generalisation is pointed out by Roth (2009):
the study of individual cases gives us access to knowledge that goes beyond the partial and particular often associated with case studies, ethnography, and other types of interpretive research. Both forms of research, the phenomenological and materialist dialectical, seek to identify that which is general in the particular. (Roth, 2009, p. 259)

Accordingly, my reflections on possible openings for future research in the section that follows, draw on this line of reasoning on generalisation.

6.2 Openings for future research

The notion of negotiagency emphasises the complexity as well as potency of playfully accomplished activities. The notion of negotiagency might be fruitful in explorations of processes of change in playfully accomplished activities, whether the participants are adults or children. Future research could usefully draw on the notion of negotiagency in understanding learning in various activity settings, non-school settings as well as classroom settings. Such research may contribute to discussions on for instance how school staff might support and encourage children’s negotiation in playfully accomplished activities for preferable outcomes and to prevent negative outcomes. Such research may enlighten the dynamics of team-building, anti-bullying efforts and collectividual development and learning. The notion of negotiagency emphasises the importance of reflecting on the dynamics of collective and collectividual processes to better understand for example how to provide support. Thus, research based on the notion of negotiagency may contribute to discussions on the roles of the teacher and the peers in collectividual learning and development in classroom settings. It might contribute to discussions on how collectividuals—teachers as well as students—form the collective local culture enabling for collectividual learning and development through playfully accomplished activities.

My wish is that the study inspires conversations among school staff on their most important work with children during school days, and among CHAT researchers about dialectics of negotiagency and the implications for research on human interaction, learning and development in various kinds of settings.
References


Svensk sammanfattning


Barnen spelade en variant av bordtennis som de kallar för King. En spelare är King och står ensam på ena sidan av bordet och de andra står i ett led på motstående sida. Den som är King servar och den som står först i ledet på andra sidan returnerar serven tillbaka till denne. När den som tagit emot serven


I Artikel III utforskas kollektiv objektstransformering manifesterad i barns handlingar när de förhandlar deltagande. I artikel utforskas hur en lekverksamhet växer fram i skuggan av andra lekar på skolgården om hur begreppet agens kan förstås i relation till denna process. Titeln på artikeln är: Negotiating involvement: The emergence of a shadow break time play activity. Med shadow menas här att leken inte var särskilt framträdande utan kunde skönjas successivt, som pågående vid sidan av andra mer framträdande lekar och spel. Två flickor och en grupp pojkar driver runt på skolgården till synes planlöst under rasterna. Under observationer registrerades successivt vissa mönster och inslag av lek i barnens sätt att driva runt vilket inte kunde förklaras enbart i termer av att de gick runt och pratade. Två frågor utforskas: Vilka beståndsdelar och gränser har denna lek? Hur växer leken fram på en mikronivå?


förhandling av den hierarkiska ordningen gällande krav och förväntningar för att upprätthålla den pågående lekverksamheten när krav och förväntningar krockar och leken är hotad. Barnen förhandlar om vem som har och vem som inte har frihet att fortsätta, vilket speglar en vilja att göra ansträngningar för att upprätthålla en lek av värde för dem (Artikel I).