

Foodscapes and Children's Bodies

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Abstract

This article addresses children, food and body, and introduces a Deleuzian and Childhood Studies-inspired use of the concept of foodscape. The data draws on a transdisciplinary project on children as co-researchers of foodscapes. In this article we do not discuss the method or the children's research results, which we have done elsewhere. Instead, our aim is to present a theoretically inspired analysis of our own fieldwork observations during this project in order to discuss the performance of children's bodies, food and eating. Departing from the concept of foodscape, we present an analysis of some food events that illustrate the complexity of children's foodscapes concerning the interaction between spaces, bodies, foodstuffs, values and rules.

In encountering food and eating at various places, different child becomings emerge. We distinguish three powerful performances of what Stuart Aitken (2008) calls "I-dos": First, the seemingly obedient pupil, who pretends to do what he or she is told, but who more or less imperceptibly escapes from adult supervision. Second, the child who makes use of the stereotyped and possibly cute "food monster" designation, and turns it into a threatening subject, who disturbs the order and challenges adults' power. Third, the knowledgeable scientist who, with the help of a research project, adult experts, nutritional calculation programs and ingredients, seizes the definition of the body as a site for growing stronger, healthier and more capable. The foodscapes we met held many "striated spaces" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987), where the children had few alternatives to adhering to the adults' designated "I-ams". But we also entered smooth spots where children had the opportunity to experiment with "I-dos" that would not have occurred to us had we not followed them, and there are certainly many more that appear in the children's everyday encounters with food.

Keywords: Children, food, foodscape, becoming, performance, I-am, I-do, striated spaces, smooth spaces.

Introduction

This article connects to the field of health and the body. It is also informed by the Nordic research project “Beauty comes from within: looking good as a challenge in health promotion”.¹ The project concerns the way women and men deal with the demands of “appearance management” in relation to patriarchal authority, subjectivizing gazes, agency and empowerment, and bodily practices as space for reflexion. In this article we approach this field from somewhat different angles, empirically as well as theoretically. Firstly it is about children, and the focus is not primarily on looking good, but on food, although, for this purpose, we highlight the relationship between food and the body. Secondly it tackles the power-agency issue by introducing a Deleuzian, and also Childhood Studies-inspired use of the concept of foodscape.

From a Foucauldian standpoint, different disciplinary practices in schools, for example, produce “docile bodies” governing themselves in regard to, for example, “proper” body size and diet (Rysst 2010). Other post structuralists, like Judith Butler, have argued that “body work” can be understood both as an illustration of gendered beauty ideals and as empowerment (Butler 1993; Petersson McIntyre 2010). From a phenomenological perspective “body work” is also seen as an ambivalent phenomenon: on the one hand very regulated - exercisers are for example expected to behave in certain ways – and on the other a space for reflection (Engelsrud 2006; see also Berggren Torell 2011). Inspired by Foucault, the feminist and media researcher Angela McRobbie argues that body regimes today are upheld not only by institutions, such as school or health care, but by the commercial domain’s entanglement with the fashion-beauty complex, which can be witnessed, for example, in magazines on beauty and health (McRobbie 2009). One of the starting points for the Beauty project was therefore depictions of ideal bodies in magazines and their resonance in how people described ideal bodies, and their own body in particular (Rysst 2010).

When, as part of the Beauty project, we browse through some issues of a magazine for parents (*Föräldrar & Barn (Parents and Children)* 2 May 2008), it is obvious that children’s bodies are the targets of adults’ concerns and worries at many different levels. There are advertisements for organic baby food, unscented washing powder and dietary supplements, including omega-3 and omega-6. There is an article about the unhealthy and unhygienic pick’n’mix, knitting instructions for “trendy baby shoes” and a suggestion to buy second-hand baby clothes. In the magazine we read criticism of “weight mania”, among mothers who have recently given birth, and a letter from a reader who is worried about her daughter being too fat. It is obvious that there are numerous examples in the media of attempts to govern children’s bodies with the aid of their parents, many of which are successful, as shown by the last example of the letter-to-the-editor. From our own research, as well as others, it is evident that children too are well aware of dis-

courses of right and wrong, healthy and unhealthy in regard to food, they know of the effects of overeating, such as obesity, and they relate fat bodies to junk food and slim bodies to a healthy diet (Johansson et. al. 2009; Ludvigsen & Scott 2009; Johansson & Ossiansson, forthcoming). This can be regarded as the successful production of “docile bodies”.

Judging from an ongoing project about children as co-researchers of foodscapes, however, it is hard to uphold a strict Foucauldian perspective that leaves little room for evading disciplining gazes, since the children we met often behaved in unexpected ways not prescribed by adults. The Children as Co-researchers of Foodscapes project (in Swedish *Barn som medforskare av matlandskap*, BAMM) was conducted at Centre for Consumer Science at the University of Gothenburg over the period 2008-2010, and was carried out with 45 ten-year-old students in two classes at a school in the west of Sweden during one school year. The overall purpose of this project was to see if, together with the children, we could highlight the healthy aspects of their food environments in a way that was attractive to them. In the BAMM project we used the concept of “foodscape” in a very concrete way, signifying all the places where one comes into contact with food and eating. (In Swedish we used the term “*matlandskap*”.) The concept thus served to direct the children’s attention to places of food and eating in their everyday lives. It was the door-opener that allowed the children to control the data collection as far as possible, and gave us a unique insight into the reasoning and behaviour of children. The nine researchers from four different disciplines took the role of tutors, endeavouring to refrain from an authoritative position, instead letting the children lead us in the research².

We have discussed the co-researching methodology and the results extensively in several reports and articles (Bergström et. al. 2009; Brembeck et. al. 2010 a, b; Johansson et. al. 2010; Johansson and Ossiansson forthcoming). Our ambition in this article is to contribute to the discussion of children’s agency and non-agency in relation to food and the body by the use of a meta-perspective on our own fieldwork observations as adult researchers. This article is thus concerned not with “children’s voices” but with the performances of bodies, food and eating in part-riated, part-smooth spaces. From our data we can see how different meal events are performed and how food as well as children’s bodies come into being in different contexts, in school, at the after-school club, in the shop etc. Here values concerning food and nutrition, childhood and adulthood are negotiated. Right and wrong, good and bad, healthy and unhealthy are obviously present, not necessarily as dichotomies, but as more of a continuum. To be able to study this assemblage of agency and structure in regard to food and eating in children’s lives, and subvert the agency structure dualism, we use the concept of foodscape in another and theoretically inspired way as defined by the Dutch philosopher Rick Dolphijn.

Foodscape

The concept “scape” has been found useful by a number of researchers in the social sciences and humanities for the study of phenomena that are unevenly distributed in space and appear in a variety of shapes and contexts, drawing on Arjun Appadurai’s definition of “scapes”, such as financescapes, technoscapes and mediascapes as fluid, irregular shapes of landscapes (Appadurai 1996: 33ff). Appadurai uses the concept to show how people, materiality, ideas, countries and economies are connected situationally at a global scale independent of distance. A Swedish example is ethnologist Tom O’Dell’s use of the term experiencescape to draw attention to the strategically designed spaces of pleasures, enjoyment and entertainment for example at museums, sporting arenas, shopping centres and tourist attractions (O’Dell 2005: 15-19). The term foodscape has also been used to distinguish the dispersed and fluid aspects of food and eating. The ethnologist Torbjörn Bildtgård uses the term “mental foodscape” to discuss his respondent’s answers to the question where they would go to eat well, and, to the same end, which places they would avoid. The results reveal an imaginary geography of food, where the Mediterranean region together with South-East Asia and Japan appear as favourite destinations, while the United States and Eastern Europe stand out as destinations that Swedes would avoid if they wanted to eat well (Bildtgård 2009). Sociologists have used foodscape from a perspective informed by political science to highlight the occupying of retail space by large international food companies (Winston 2003), and how a corporate-organic foodscape has interacted and evolved alongside competing counter-movements of food democracy (Johnston, Biro & MacKendrick 2009). Another use closer to our own is Jakob Wenzer’s work on the foodscape of eating out practices among Swedish youth (Wenzer 2010)

In our project we have used the term basically to pinpoint the local everyday spaces of food and eating in the lives of our co-researchers. From this perspective, foodscape is the sum of all the places where food and eating are actualised in one way or another: at home, in school, at restaurants and cafés, in shops, in advertising, on TV and the Internet etc. But more importantly, we use the concept of foodscape from a more cultural perspective to discuss different events where food, eating and bodies are generated. The inspiration is Rick Dolphijn (2004) and his definition of foodscapes as processes, where elements relate to each other and generate relationships and affect. A foodscape is not something that is lying out there, waiting to be discovered: it comes into being in events, and is always in a process of change (*ibid.*). A similar definition is used in Wenzer 2010.

We are, however, also inspired by our involvement with Childhood Studies, dating back some twenty years. We therefore find the concept of “becoming”, which is part of both Deleuzian and Childhood Studies theory, of particular interest, and especially so in regard to children, food and body. The concept has long been used in childhood research to point to the fact that, compared to adults, chil-

dren are more rarely regarded and appreciated as active subjects here and now. Instead, they are often interpreted and valued in relation to what they will some time become. Children as becomings are subjects of learning and upbringing, they are conceived as weak and in need of adults' protection, guidance and care. Directed by their predetermined developing process, they are also seen less as individuals and more as parts of a collective, on which it is possible to express general statements. The definition of children as becomings is part of a generational order where there is a hierarchy between different ages and where adults have greater physical, economic and structural power as well as interpretation priority in relation to children (James & Prout 1990; Alanen 1992; Qvortrup 1994; Brembeck, Johansson & Kampmann 2004).

In this article we combine this definition of becoming with the becoming concept used by Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Becoming in the Deleuzian sense does not imply a transition towards a future goal of completeness, which was criticized by researchers in Childhood Studies. Instead it deals with the "becoming"-character of individuals, constantly being constructed and reconstructed in different events. Deleuze distinguishes between becoming-the-same and becoming-other, which should be understood as re-establishing and escaping from the present respectively. On the part of children, becoming-the-same might be reproducing traditional ideas about "what children are like" and becoming-other might be finding "lines of flight" which lead away from stable categorizations.³ Territorialization, de- and reterritorialization are other Deleuzian concepts describing the same process, which is on the one hand to confirm the existing conditions and on the other to dissolve the existing conditions and instead create something new.

In the 1990s the sociology of childhood sited children as becomings against children as beings – active, competent subjects, whose lives are situated in time and place. We have engaged in this debate elsewhere (Brembeck, Johansson & Kampmann 2004; Johansson 2005). Here we confine ourselves to using the concept of becoming and instead depart from the two aspects contained in the concept: on the one hand incompleteness, vulnerability and dependence, and on the other hand the potential to become something other than what is immediately manifested, the movement and the trajectory out from the present (Deleuze 1998; Lee 2001; Prout 2005; Johansson 2005, 2010). In our material we embark on this task by studying how bodies and space relate to each other; which spaces are created; which power relations are generated; which different kinds of becomings appear.

To date only a few researchers have applied Deleuze's theories on Childhood studies. Nick Lee (2001) questions the idea that adults and children are different kinds of persons. He asserts that there are no complete, self-sufficient individuals, but that everybody, independent of age, depends on supplements and extensions for our agency, and that everybody is engaged in constant becoming. In another

interesting attempt at combining Deleuzian thinking and Childhood Studies, Stuart Aitken (2008) distinguishes between “I-am” and “I-do”. “I-am” is the very categorization that keeps children in certain identities, such as growing, immature, incomplete and in need of adult supervision and guidance. In accordance with that designation, children are expected to be socialized and to perform the childhood assigned to them by the generational order. However, change is possible within the doing, “I-do”, which opens the way to children’s way of knowing themselves through their activities, claiming identity through their material actions, Aitken argues (2008: 113-129). This is an empowering activity that opens up to children becoming-other.

In situations that occurred during our research at the school we could see that different events provided more or less space for children to “flee” from the given preconditions. The space could, in Deleuze’s words, be more or less “striated” or “smooth” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). “Striated” signifies the strict, structured space, “I-am”, which allows limited scope for people’s own initiatives, while the “smooth space” constitutes its opposite, the possibility of “I-do”. From a Childhood Studies perspective, Allison and Adrian L. James show how childhood experiences are shaped and controlled by adults across many key social arenas of their everyday life, and they see the mechanisms and processes by which this is happening as a politics of childhood (James & James 2004: 3-4). Of course, children often do what they wish, even if it goes against what they have been told or taught to do. In this case childhood appears less constrained and becomes a social space in which children learn to explore their environment and to experiment with their agency, they argue (*ibid.*). James and James regard childhood as a social space, whereas Aitken’s space is more physical. There are, however, clear resemblances between James and James’ less contained social spaces and Aitken’s smooth spaces: the designations are fewer and more diffuse, and leave more scope for children’s agency (see also Brembeck 2009).

Three Examples

As a start-up exercise, we invited the children to draw maps of their local foodscapes, which would later on be the starting point for their research. They solved the task in different ways. One girl pictured her breakfast, another included a nice cafe where she wanted to work when she grew up, some boys drew farms, poultry production units, spinach growing in the fields and fishing at the pier etc. In almost all scapes, however, home and school were included: kitchens and the school canteen appeared, as well as the local grocery store and the pizzeria. These were also the main spaces for the research.

In the following we present our analysis of some food events from our own observations during the fieldwork process that illustrate the complexity of the children’s foodscapes concerning the interaction between spaces, bodies, foodstuffs,

values and rules. The examples show that the possibility of “becoming-the-same” and “becoming-other” depends on many different matters and that the preconditions can differ not just between sites, but within the same situation and the same site. In the first example, we discuss children’s ways of handling adults’ attempts at creating docile, healthy bodies in striated spaces, with vegetables as the symbol of healthy food, and show how bodies, space, eatables and school organisation all play important roles in the dramas. In the second example we turn to the less striated commercial spaces, where children can perform “I-dos” in the shape of what we call the “food monster”. This is a categorization which takes its point of departure in the sensual pleasures of the body and which, at least in adults’ minds, tends to overshadow other ways of being a child food consumer. While the food monster could be characterized as a childish performance, the third example deals with a more adult performance, namely what we have chosen to call “the fuel ball body identity”. This is a children’s line of flight from authoritative discourses on body and food, by creating a space for a knowledgeable, responsible performance of becoming-other. Here the body stands out as a field of knowledge and as a space for possible improvement and transformation.

Vegetables + Body = Problematic

In the School Canteen

When the children in our study enter the school canteen they encounter a strictly structured and principally adult defined space, an obviously striated space, where there is little room for deterritorialization. They are let in by the teacher, they are organized into a queue up to the serving table, under the supervision of the canteen staff; they take plates which they fill with food, and glasses which they fill with water; they move on to the salad table where they take fresh vegetables and after that they go to their set places at the tables. There they have twenty minutes to eat before it is time for the next group of students to be let into the canteen. At the school meal the children’s bodies are directed in certain ways by the room, the objects and the adults, at the same time as the children and their bodies are agents who, in different ways, handle the situations that occur. In the queue up to the serving table they can talk, joke and lark about. When they load and carry their plates and glasses they risk spilling food and drink, which, in turn, might result in messy socks, since wearing shoes is not allowed in the canteen. At the table the children are expected to divide the time they have at their disposal between socializing with their friends, eating and possibly refilling their plates. Furthermore, as a non-present site, the playground and the activities in it provide an attraction.

The routines of the school canteen can be said to have both disciplining and democratic purposes (Johansson et. al. 2009). Arranging people in queues and within certain frames of behaviour where they are easy to supervise is a common

strategy when authorities want to handle groups of people, such as schoolchildren (Foucault 1991; Thorne 1993), and it is also an expression of a generational order, where adults dominate children. In the meal situation, whether it is in school or in the family, adults are constructed as rearing subjects and children are constructed as subjects who should be trained, disciplined and supervised (Coveney 2006). At the same time everybody, regardless of family background and personal economics, is offered the same food in the same amounts, and there can be no discussions or comparisons between the student's different lunch packs (Johansson et. al. 2006).

On our first visit to the school, the two of us had lunch with the pupils. We served ourselves food and sat down and chatted with them. A girl noticed that we had put a lot of vegetables on our plates, and concluded that we knew what is healthy. "My mother tells me that vegetables are healthy," she said. Although she said that she liked almost everything on the salad table, we understood that vegetables were defined as healthy and something that you should eat. From the plates of the other children we suspected that this was a common view among the children. There were no piles of vegetables on most of them. These observations directed our thoughts towards the meanings of vegetables in the interaction between adults and children. In this interaction, it seems that the main characteristic of a vegetable is being healthy, it is through its nutritious content that it obtains its value. In other parts of the project we noticed that "healthy" is quite often contrasted with "tasty"; things that are tasty are not healthy and vice-versa. In an exercise where our co-researchers were asked to judge different packs of cereals, the pack that achieved the lowest score received comments like "they look healthy" and "they look like adult's cereals". The vegetables on the salad table are thus by definition placed in a field where foodstuffs are classified as healthy or unhealthy, but do not perhaps even occur in a field where foodstuffs are arranged as tasty or untasty, something that is confirmed by other research on European children. Gun Roos (2002) writes from a Norwegian perspective that children tend to classify their food according to binary principles, such as healthy/junk food and like/dislike. Anna Ludvigsen and Sara Scott, in their study of British children, noted that each of these opposites had its own specific site. Healthy food was linked to the home and family meals and junk food was associated with friends and pleasure (Ludvigsen & Scott 2009: 421). The children in their study even went so far as to state that "Kids don't usually want to eat healthy food" (ibid: 427).

The salad table is one of the agents in the school canteen with which the child and its body interact. In the school there is a rule that you should take at least three different kinds of vegetables. We noticed that some children solved this by taking one piece of lettuce, one slice of cucumber and one pea. Following the same logic, many of them did not take any vegetables with their second portion of food; it was not necessary since they had already filled their quota.

Here, different definitions of vegetables are made in relation to children's bodies which give rise to certain distributions of responsibility and power relations. By providing children with vegetables, adults fulfil their adult responsibility for the children's development, but their responsibility reaches even further. Obviously, the children do not automatically choose to eat vegetables just because they are served, on the contrary, adults have experienced that children omit the vegetables when they are allowed to choose freely. Perhaps teachers, in their school education, have taught children about the benefit of eating vegetables, that is, have tried to motivate and persuade. Perhaps the canteen staff have laid the table nicely and tried to present the vegetables as attractively as possible in order to entice the children to eat them. But if the children still do not eat the vegetables, and since the adults think it is crucially important that they do so, the adults have to resort to more compelling methods, to use available means of coercion, that is to say inaugurate a *rule*.

The different situations the child faces are thus in the first case being exposed to (moral) pressure – being informed about the vegetables being nutritious, something that you “should” eat. One possibility here is that the child performs an “I-am”, a child who has been brought up and is being taken care of and who listens to and complies with what adults tell her or him to do. But it may also be that children eat vegetables because they like doing so or because they want to eat whatever is good. Furthermore, there is also the option of completely abstaining. All these ways of acting are examples of the child performing an “I-do” and finding his/her own trajectory which leads out of the adults' control area.

When the rule is introduced, a partly new situation arises. The children can still choose to eat vegetables for the above reasons, but they can no longer refrain, and may therefore develop new strategies, such as the strategy mentioned above, taking a shred of lettuce, a slice of cucumber and a pea. This can be understood as a deterritorialization process, where the adults' set of values is disconnected from the child's ethics and the rule can be treated as value-neutral and amenable to being taken literally. But there are many other values which are mediated during this process: that vegetables are not an obvious choice for children – they have to be forced to eat them; that you eat vegetables because they are nutritious and not because they taste good; and that adults and children have different interests when it comes to what children should eat. There are age-specific expectations that categorize children as a certain species positioning them as becomings and as fundamentally different from adults.

At the After-school Club

School is over for the day and the kids arrive at the after-school club, where a snack is served. The queue grows quickly, but the children wait patiently. When the after-school club leader allows them to, they start taking food. On the table there are two types of brown bread, cheese, two kinds of sausage, mackerel in tomato sauce, cucumber, tomato, carrot sticks and sweet pepper. There is also canned fruit salad, ice-

cream and two kinds of juice (yellow and red), as it is the leader's birthday. Most children take mackerel for their sandwiches and a boy cries out loud: "I love mackerel on a sandwich!"

The leader declares that everyone has to take at least a spoonful of the fruit salad to be allowed to have ice cream. It is a sweet stewed fruit in syrup. He serves a click of the fruit salad to each child on blue plastic plates. It goes very quickly and he somehow manages it all at the same time. One girl says that she is allergic to bread. The leader tells her that if she is allergic her parents need to give him a certificate. Then he tells her he thinks she says so because she does not like brown bread. The girl takes a piece of bread and gives the leader a distraught look, but accepts the situation. We note that there is no water as an alternative to juice. Maybe everybody wants a sweet drink and we do not hear anyone asking for water (Fieldnotes)

In the school there is yet another place where children are served food, and that is in the after-school club, which most children attend from the age of 10. Here the children eat a snack immediately after the end of the school-day and the children can engage in various activities until it is time to go home. The space in the after-school club is not less striated than in the school canteen, but it is striated in a different way. Unlike the school canteen staff, the after-school club leader has the opportunity to go to the market and buy fresh products, he can bake and make snacks by himself, and he is neither directed by the supply from central kitchens nor by policy rules as to what meals have to contain. "The kids come here because of the food," he says proudly. His trick to make the children eat vegetables, fruit and fibre is to test different models and ways of serving vegetables, to mix whole-grain into the bread, make semolina pudding mixed with graham grains, etc. Afterwards he is able to judge how well he has succeeded in his strategy, from the children's comments, how much of what he serves has been eaten and how much goes into the compost bin.

The character of the striated space of the after-school club makes certain performances of "I-am" and "I-do" possible. Broadly speaking, the same values apply to foodstuffs at the after-school club and in school meals, but the after-school club leader has a somewhat different strategy to make children eat nutritiously. He knows that the children like home-baked bread and semolina pudding and he uses trial and error to find out the amount of wholemeal flour or grain he can mix into the bread without them stopping eating it. He engages in empirical research to explore how the vegetables should be cut up for the children to eat them. Moreover, he has the opportunity to choose particularly good-quality fruit and vegetables from the market, to bake his own bread, which spreads its fragrance in the corridor outside and to serve tasty items such as semolina pudding, ice-cream and sweetened beverages. These can be understood as strategies to get the children to enjoy eating at the after-school club, and to feel that the food there is something different than school meals.

In this understanding the children's bodies are co-players in the after-school club leader's project. He explicitly presents the after-school club as a different kind of place than the classrooms and the school canteen, a more exclusive, personal space. The children's bodies answer to this appeal by being attracted by the

smell of freshly baked bread as they approach the after-school club, and by taking the various vegetable shapes and putting together a colourful food plate. But maybe, in the end, it is only the mackerel in tomato sauce and the sweet juice that ultimately appeal to them in taste and that they actually consume. The after-school club is not compulsory, the children attend it voluntarily and there are no activities which they are forced to do there. The after-school club arena offers different ways of “I-dos” than the school canteen, but it is still possible for the children to escape the adult agenda.

In these cases, children's eating takes place in arenas and on terms that are defined by adults. It is adults who buy the ingredients, compose menus, cook or act as supervisor if the children “help out”. But even if adults set the agenda, set the rules, serve meals and frame the food situations, this is not done independently of the children, either in the school canteen or in the after-school club. It is obvious that the children navigated in the situationally given space to find lines of flight, and that these lines of flight were made possible by both present and absent adults and adults’ rules. It should also be noted that, in the collective space of the school, the different solutions children find, concerning what to eat and how to behave in food contexts and what opinions to express, are closely related to what their peers do and say. Norms and practices are collectively constructed, which might result in quite different eating performance with peers, at home and in different sites at school (Christensen 2003; Sylow 2005; Johansson et. al. 2006, 2009; Rawlins 2009). The children position themselves in some way in the foodscapes that adults provide and they contribute in their own ways to reshaping and redefining them.

In the examples above we have met children who navigate quite smoothly in adult-defined striated spaces, subverting adult structures quietly rather than openly revolting, and thereby also being able to create an interspace of “I-do” which adults do not find it necessary to lock. In the next section we will discover children who are more difficult to ignore, namely the unruly, greedy “food monsters”.

The Unmanageable Food Monsters

In the fieldwork we sometimes encountered performances that were more difficult for us to relate to. We noted that when the children were let loose in the supermarket, or left in the classroom, without adults other than the researchers (who endeavoured to downplay their authority) smooth spaces appeared where children could create trajectories for different performances than those usually possible in the school's striated space. Often, in these performances the body and its appetite were accentuated, as the children suddenly revealed a seemingly non-negotiable appetite for bodily pleasures. When we went on visits to the supermarket or the local pizzeria there were always children who asked or even demanded to be given sweets, pizza, soft drinks or other tasty things. One boy threatened to opt out of the research unless the researcher bought something for him in the grocery

store. Another researcher in the grocery store had given the pupils the task of looking for healthy food that does not contain sugar, but saw all the children rush to the confectionery shelf as soon as they entered the store. The researcher who took a group of students to the pizzeria was kept busy dealing with their disappointment at not having a pizza, a soft drink or lollipop, as they were accustomed to. After the first tasting at the school, which consisted of an apple test, the children suggested what they should taste on other occasions, and the proposals were sweets, chocolate, crisps, bananas, chocolate pudding and pizza. When the first part of the project was completed the co-researchers organized a presentation for the children's parents in the form of various stations, where the parents could carry out tasks similar to the ones the children had done. One of the stations, on the initiative of the co-researchers responsible, included crisps and cheese tasting. After the final meeting one of the researchers told the children that there was cheese and crisps left over for those who wanted them, which led to a number of children rushing out to the room where the test was carried out.

These observations led us to associate to a childhood representation that frequently occurs in particular in advertising, that could be termed "the food monster". The food monster is characterized by being directed by its gluttony and its desires for pleasurable eating experiences. In advertising and other media, the child with ice-cream or chocolate all around its mouth is a popular image, conveying a view of children as natural, cute and joyfully helping themselves to pleasure-filled experiences. "The food monster" is thus a well-known child designation, which can be useful both for children and for adults. It is a stereotype, a common "I-am", and adults more or less expect children to become food monsters in certain situations. From children's point of view, the food monster offers a way of asserting specific "childish" interests, and of exercising some power in relation to adults, in a way that is acceptable, as long as the performance is done with a humorous twinkle. From adults' point of view, though, the food monster might also be a threatening designation since the possibly cute food monster might slip out of the adults' control and actually become an evil monster, jeopardizing the adult's authority. An example of that is the classic scene with the stressed, sweaty parent in the supermarket queue with a fully loaded trolley, and with one or two children yelling and wriggling on the floor, demanding sweets immediately. The children that appear here have an insatiable appetite for sweets, solely guided by their desire for pleasure and willing to put adults in embarrassing situations to get their way (Roos 2002; Johansson 2005; Stewart et. al. 2006). This performance is made possible by the labelling "food monster" together with the smooth spaces of shops and restaurants, that equip children with tools for performing an "I-do" that exercises power over adults. Children, by acting, can transform the cute food monster into a new dangerous performance, and they can do so through notions of children as being more physical, more impulse-driven and closer to nature than adults are. The strength of the food monster is thus that, by definition, it is based on differ-

ence – that children are a different type of people than adults, and therefore more difficult to understand and potentially more intractable. The food monster is a childish performance of “I-do”.

The “problem” with the “food monster”, and probably why it is so scary, is that it is not simply a designation: it *is* very much embodied. It is a well known fact that learning about food is a tactile, oral and gustatory experience for the small child (Haden 2006). Taste plays a vital role in this process of learning who you are and about the world, to the extent that we argue elsewhere that a “tastescape” can be discerned as a pivotal part of the foodscape (Bergström, Brembeck, Jons-son & Shanahan, forthcoming). When asked to rank different factors (friends, family, advertising, teachers, money and taste) in Ludvigsen and Scott’s British study of children aged 9-10, half of the group ranked “taste” as the single most important factor when choosing what to eat (Ludvigsen & Scott 2009). Taste is not a problem as such. It becomes an issue depending on what *type of food* children like and in *what amounts* they consume food.

Adults express concern when children choose sweet, fatty or salty food, food defined as “unhealthy”, and children themselves have to address the fact that much of what they regard as tasty is also unhealthy. In Ludvigsen and Scott’s study, only a few children saw the need to apply their dietary knowledge to their own food choices. Eating healthy food was simply not a priority for the children, partly because it was not seen as their responsibility (Ludvigsen & Scott 2009: 427). In a Nordic study (Johansson et. al. 2006, 2009) including children aged 10–11 from Copenhagen, Gothenburg, Helsinki and Oslo, the picture was more nuanced. The children were well aware of which eatables were deemed healthy and unhealthy, and most of them had favourites in the unhealthy category. But the same applied to food in the healthy category, where they listed a number of favourite dishes. A key finding of the Nordic study was that the children categorized food in yet another way, namely in everyday, healthy food and festive, unhealthy food, designating each kind of food in its own context (ibid.). In BMM, the issue of healthy and unhealthy was present during the whole research process, and resulted in children asking research questions such as “Why is there so much bad fat in the food?” “Which is more healthy, blueberries or broccoli?” “Why are things that taste good often unhealthy?”

Taste becomes even more problematic when those unhealthy things that children often prefer are consumed in large amounts. This is at the core of the threat of the “obesity epidemic”, a concept that has become part of our vocabulary and relates to people in the western world having adopted a diet and a lifestyle with such serious consequences that one can speak of a disease of an epidemic nature. The WHO “European Charter on Counteracting Obesity” from 2006 states that: “The epidemic of obesity poses one of the most serious public health challenges in the WHO European Region. The trend is particularly alarming in children and adolescents.” (<http://www.euro.who.int/document/E89567.pdf>) Turning to the

Nordic countries, the Nordic Council of Ministers specifically identifies the problem of children and food in the action plan for health, food and physical activity, and the same applies at local level in the Nordic countries. “The obesity epidemic” is thus a line of thought that is extremely distressing, and it has attracted medical and dietary efforts, debate, books, research grants and funds for local projects in order to tackle the problem. The greedy, insatiable food monster who requires immediate physical satisfaction takes concrete, physical shape here in a grotesquely swollen, monstrous body. This poses a problem for both adults and children in terms of failure, lack of control or deficient discipline. In BAMM, some of the children were overweight, and one of the boys expressed a problematic relationship towards food. When the children had taken photos of their foodscapes and were about to discuss them with each other, the boy said: “I think about food when I see the pictures; that’s why I don’t want to join BAMM”.

How, then, do adults respond to their fears of the food monster? One strategy, of course, is to limit the children’s space of agency by means of power, to force, discipline and regulate, thereby establishing a generational order with distinct and contrary roles for adults and children. Another strategy, which is perhaps more common, is to cooperate with the food monster, but on the adult’s terms. In the school where we conducted our research there was, as in most primary schools, a rule that says you are not allowed to bring confectionery to school, and the intake of sweets has been greatly restricted in Swedish schools and nursery schools after the “sugar debate” which began in Sweden in the early 2000s (Johansson 2005). When some coveted products are highly regulated, adults can use them to mark the festive exceptions or to create good relationships with children (*ibid.*). For instance, we saw that a class teacher created a cosy occasion by showing movies and offering chewing gum; that the leader offered the after-school children ice on his birthday, that parents gave the children sweetened yoghurt and chocolate milk to take with them on school excursions. In another study, dealing with parents and children’s attitudes and habits concerning food and eating (Johansson & Ossiansson forthcoming), both parents and children talked about how they organized “Cosy Friday” and “Saturday Sweets”, where they feasted on confectionery, soft drinks, crisps, popcorn etc. as a contrast to everyday healthy eating. In family rituals such as Cosy Friday parents and children cooperate in creating a free zone for pleasure and abundance, where children are allowed to indulge in unhealthy eatables, and where the important thing is togetherness and affinity in the family (*ibid.* Brembeck, forthcoming). It is conceived of as a “compensatory event”, a time of the week for the parents to relax from all their obligations of upbringing and instead have a good time, give each other love and affection and compensate for their hectic everyday lives (Brembeck, forthcoming).

Food and eating is a highly moral area. There are clear perceptions of right and wrong, good and bad, healthy and unhealthy, and adults have taken the responsibility for children’s eating. School staff and parents govern, control and judge

what children eat, how much, how often and in what way. A built-in ingredient in this drama, as both an implicit and an embodied figure, is “the food monster”. This food monster might be a recalcitrant and unruly “I-do”, which threatens to deterritorialize the generational order, or a monstrous body growing out of both adults’ and children’s control. But it can also co-operate with the adults by being a happy recipient of gifts (“I-am”) or by allowing itself to be limited, brought up and maybe even be regarded as a problem, and thus help maintain the generational order which defines adults as wise and trustworthy, and children as unrestrained and in need of control. The important thing, however, is that the food monster is not an inherent characteristic of every child, but just a possible performance that is actualised under certain conditions. In the next section we present another, quite contrary, performance.

“Build the Body” with Fuel Balls and Sports Drinks

At the beginning of the project we visited the Health Adventure, a regional activity centre where the children, in an enjoyable way, can learn about body and health. Our intention was that the visit would correspond to the study of facts at the beginning of a research process. We wanted our co-researchers to have some “background information”, in the same way as we adult researchers had and the relationship between us, therefore, to be more equal. At the Health Adventure we took part in the “Good Fuel” activity, which focused on breakfast. The aim was for the children to learn the importance of putting together a nutritious breakfast. However, the teacher at the centre did not use the words “wholesome” and “unwholesome”, “healthy” and “unhealthy” or “right” and “wrong”. Instead, she spoke about “fuel”. She said that when your body wakes up in the morning the fuel stores are empty and must be refilled with the correct type of fuel for you to be able to cope with the day. These were well-known facts to the children, who were well aware of the importance of having a good breakfast after a long night’s sleep. One boy talked of his grandmother, who did not bother about a nutritious breakfast, but “drinks coffee in the morning and several times every day”.

In the activities at the Health Adventure the children were also to learn about nutrients and vitamins and the food circle and they were to find huge fabric models of different eatables and carry them to the right place in the food circle. But it was the fuel balls that made the biggest impression. The fuel balls were on the back of the laminated pictures of the common breakfast ingredients, a slice of bread, a dollop of butter, a piece of cheese, a glass of juice, etc. The task was to put together one’s breakfast and count the fuel balls. You should have 15-20 balls to eat a good fuel breakfast and manage until lunch, we were told. You could also easily add more fuel to your breakfast, by picking some more eatables with fuel balls if you did not reach the desired limit.

The fuel balls were easy to relate to for the children. The children obviously had a great interest in the body and the need for the body to cope with everything they wanted to use it for: long hours in school, having fun and playing, hobbies and various sports activities. They apparently all had experience of the body not coping, of not working the way they wanted it to or achieving what they wanted. In the life of a ten-year-old, the body is naturally of great interest, the body which is now developing from that of a small child to that of a young person. Puberty is still a little further into the future, but it is an autonomous body, which is increasingly beginning to go somewhere in the world on its own and is getting to know its functions, capabilities and values of attractiveness. Instead of talking about calories, fats and sugar, obese and thin, the children could use fuel balls to add a positive value, together with their ability to experiment and to create bodies that cope.

The children's answers to the teacher's question "Why do we eat?" also showed their engagement with the growing body. "Because it's good" was as an obvious first answer, but then they listed a number of other reasons, which all concerned the growing body: "getting energy", "in order to cope", "the body needs it to be strong, to grow, to feel good". Growing, becoming big and strong, is obviously a central and essential value to the children in their "body-becoming", perhaps even what "body-becoming" mainly aims for at this age before puberty. It should be noted, however, that as the children grow older, they will enter into a discursive field where designations of beauty and body size are highly gendered. While young men will still be addressed by the call to become larger and more muscular, the ideal body of a young woman is lean and tight (Dworkin & Wachs 2009). We do not argue that the children were unaware of these differences, but in the same way that their knowledge of healthy and unhealthy had little bearing on their food choice, and something that was more for adults to take care of, the rights and wrongs of body size did not seem to matter very much to most of them. Both girls and boys alike were interested in energetic bodies that could achieve what they wanted, run fast, jump high, play for long hours and listen to the teacher the whole day without getting tired. Large or lean muscles were not an issue yet. Rather, the "fuel ball body" was a "free zone" for experimenting and pleasure, and the basis for the performance of "I-dos". Bodies were not yet trapped in male and female stereotypes, but led the way for becoming-others.

The Body as Knowledge Site

In many ways, the children expressed a strong physicality during the course of the project. But the achievements of the body were also manifested as an intellectual interest: they counted fuel balls, they were interested in energy content and nutrients, they studied the declarations of content and worried about additives and contaminants in food. This was thus in many ways a "mature" interest; mature in the sense of sensible, rational, dispassionate, analytical; all characteristics commonly

attributed to adults. It was about getting to know the growing body, mastering one's body in a certain environment with certain agents.

The fuel balls occurred as a central research question in a group of boys and girls interested in sport. Luckily we had a nutritionist in the project team who undertook to help the children learn more about fuel balls. The question of how and what to eat in order to cope with sports training after school was of particular interest. When our nutritionist on one occasion was unable to attend the school, and was replaced by a colleague, one of the boys became very upset about having to wait a whole week until he could get the website address where he could find out what to eat before training. For the next meeting our colleague had installed a nutritional calculation program on the classroom computers and the children got started quickly and understood easily how it worked. New research questions emerged: not only what to eat before the workout, but also during it; in addition what is good food for girls who play soccer and if you can make your own sports drink. On the next occasion the children mixed and tasted three sports drinks, equivalent in nutritional content: two versions, which they made themselves, based on fruit syrup and fruit juice and a purchased version, which according to the children had extra "cool" packaging. The drinks were given the anonymous designations A, B and C. The tasting was conducted individually according to a protocol and the result, which came as a surprise to the children, showed that the tastiest (and cheapest) drink was the one they had mixed themselves from fruit juice.

The children's interest in the fuel ball body is an example of the mistake of the division between body and soul, where children are supposed to be more physical than intellectual. These children were rational, literate, curious, and knowledgeable, thus subverting the dualistic categorization of the child eater as either in need of nutrients and fuel or desiring pleasure and satisfaction – notably, once the adults had provided the tools consisting of fuel balls, the nutritional calculation program on the computer and the ingredients for making a sports drink. The children's rational approach assumed an equal relationship between child and adult, with respect for children as becomings in their own right. Here one might say that the children deterritorialized the innocent, incomplete child, resulting in an active "becoming-other", challenging common definitions of children in need of adult guidance and care. On the other hand, they can also be said to reterritorialize another familiar view of children as competent learning subjects, which suits just as well in a traditional generational order, and which poses no threat to power relations between generations. The interest in the fuel-ball identity served as lines of flight in a concrete way, both as a fugitive from an adult world's attempt to capture children's bodies as problematic and as a way to fly, try your wings, to see how well your body carries you.

Of course the interest in the body and the fuel balls could easily have been made harmless by being interpreted in a traditional discourse, such as: "How ter-

rible that children are so affected by today's achievement and beauty ideals that they already want to be able to calculate their nutritional intake at this stage – Ban all nutrient calculation programs for children!" But we argue that the children's primary interest was about their way of getting to know their bodies and their bodies' functions, it was about children's "body-becoming" today.

Summing-up and Conclusion

With regard to the Beauty project, we see various discourses and possible ways of interpreting crop up in our material, such as Foucauldian practices of disciplining in the ways children's bodies are ordered in the school canteen and subjected to various rules. Closer to our perspective is Judith Butler's version of performance (Butler 1991). Like her, we see childhood and "childness" emerge performatively; not as an expression of inner essence, but constituted in various acts, postures and gestures. We also feel confident in the phenomenological standpoint, voiced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2000), that bodies are sensing and knowing entities, and that we "take in" the world and experience ourselves as subjects through our bodies. None of these theorists have, however, studied children, food or eating. Although Merleau-Ponty, for example, sees the body as neuro-muscular, it sees, hears, moves around and senses its bodily positions from within, it does not eat. An interesting approach, close to our own, is Elsbeth Probyn's suggestion of "alimentary identities" (2000). Inspired by Deleuze, she argues that we are "alimentary assemblages, mouth machines that ingest and regurgitate, articulate what we are, what we eat and what eats us", and in doing so, rework the categories that define us (Probyn 2000: 32) She, does not, however, discuss children.

In this article we have made an attempt to add to the work of Nick Lee and Stuart Aitken in bringing Childhood Studies and Deleuzian theory together. Our material uncovers the two aspects of the designation "becoming". On the one hand, we could see how a generational order positions children as certain kinds of "I-am", for example as learning subjects, growing and incomplete humans or greedy food monsters. On the other hand, the material reveals how assemblages, consisting of bodies, space, rules, information, fuel balls and foodstuffs of various taste, shape, texture and nutritional content, produce smooth spaces where children are able to de-territorialize the adult-defined "I-ams", and through their doings create powerful "I-dos".

We have distinguished three performances of "I-dos": First, there is the seemingly obedient pupil, who pretends to do what he or she is told, but who finds the loopholes in the set of rules and more or less imperceptibly escapes from adult supervision. Second, there is the child who makes use of the stereotyped and possibly cute "food monster" designation, and turns it into a threatening subject, who disturbs the order and challenges adults' power. Third, we have met the knowledgeable scientist who, with the help of a research project, adult experts, nutrition

calculation programs and ingredients for making sports drinks, seizes the definition of the body as a site for growing stronger, healthier and more capable.

We have found the concept of foodscape rewarding in studying children's bodily becoming through food and eating. In our study, the foodscape held many striated spaces, where the children had few alternatives to adhering to the adults' designated "I-ams", leading to them becoming-the-same. But following the children in their foodscapes, we also entered smooth spots where children had the opportunity to experiment with "I-dos", that would not have occurred to us had we not followed them, and there are certainly many more that appear in the children's everyday encounters with food. After all, foodscapes emerge as you move around to where food and eating is. Encountering food and eating at various places, different child performances emerged. Eaters do not observe from a distance, but are mixed up with their surroundings. Eating is a physical activity. Eaters get to know the world by tasting it, chewing on it, even partially absorbing it. As Elisabeth Grosz explains (1998: 42), "...bodies reinscribe and project themselves onto their socio-cultural environment so that this environment both produces and reflects the form and interest of the body". The body is what is acted on in foodscapes, but also what acts and acts back. Through the body, body movements and body work, the children find lines of flight, ways of becoming-other, with the children's interests in the fuel-ball identity as a prominent example. These lines of flight enable the children to flee from an adult world's attempt to capture them in pre-designated "I-ams", but also to fly and try their wings, both being possibilities for becoming-other. On a metaphorical level the interest in fuel balls implies a vision of the body as a machine in need of fuel (food) to perform well (for example Wilk 2004), a machine that the children can learn to control. Taking charge of the body can also be regarded as a refusal to submit to adultist moral discourses of children's bodies in relation to appearance (cuteness, beauty) or problematic size (too fat, too thin), discourses that adults to a larger degree are controlling.

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Notes

- 1 The project is interdisciplinary and in collaboration with the University of Oslo and Centre for Consumer Science, CFK at the University of Gothenburg, but led from National Institute of Consumer research in Oslo. The project is funded by the Norwegian Research Council and will be completed in December 2010. The aim of the Beauty project is to develop knowledge of how discourses on health, consumption and well-being use, interpret and attach importance to appearance and looking good.
- 2 The *Barn som medforskare av matlandskap* project (BAMM) was supported by the Swedish Research Council Formas 2008-2010. Our adult co-researchers were Helena Shanahan, Lena Jonsson and Kerstin Bergström from the Department of Food, Health and Environment, University of Gothenburg, Eva Ossiansson from the Department of Business Administration (Marketing), School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg, MariAnne Karlsson and Pontus Engelbrektsson, Division of Design and Human Factors at Chalmers University of Technology, and Sandra Hillén from Centre for Consumer Science. We are of course deeply indebted to our colleges and their many observations in writing this article.
- 3 Deleuze uses the term in its double meaning of "to fly" and "to flee" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987)

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