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## Editorial

The journal *Barn – Forskning om barn og barndom i Norden* has provided an important forum for research on children and childhood in a Nordic context since 1983. From the very beginning, the focus of the journal has been Nordic childhood. Nordic countries are often seen as a ‘family’ tied together not only by regional proximity, but also by their shared history, culture, and values. Particularly when viewed in a wider international comparison, the Nordic countries do have much in common. One of the most common denominators is the Nordic welfare state model, discussed in our previous special issue (Barn 2–3/2021) and defined historically by relative gender equality, egalitarian income distribution, political stability, and free education (e. g. Pedersen and Kuhnle, 2017).

A shared conception of childhood could also be added to the list. Similar understandings concerning for example children’s rights and participation, as well as similar development of education, child welfare, and other institutions aimed at children and young people characterizes the Nordic countries. Moreover, as several historical studies have shown, Nordic collaboration in policies concerning children has been significant in the construction of what is today perceived as a Nordic childhood; new ideas, theories, experts, as well as ‘best practices’ have travelled across borders. Comparison to neighbouring Nordic countries has also been a driving force for many national reforms (e. g. Andersen *et al.*, 2011; Aasgard *et al.*, 2018).

Nordic collaboration has been vitally important for the multidisciplinary field of childhood studies. In this development *Barn – Forskning om barn og barndom i Norden* has played an important role. When the journal was launched, issues related to children and childhood were marginal throughout the fields of humanities and social sciences. The very idea that children are worthy of study in their own right, regardless of adult perspectives and concerns about children as future citizens, was still very much

in progress. The prevailing scholarly understanding of children was based primarily on biology and developmental psychology, with an emphasis on socialization theories. These theories did not seem to leave room for children’s active social participation, their agency in social life, as was increasingly criticized by pioneers of childhood studies. Moreover, many of the key pioneers in the emerging field came from the Nordic academia, including Jens Qvortrup in Norway and Leena Alanen in Finland (for the early development of childhood studies see e. g. Qvortrup, 1987; Alanen, 1988; Prout and James, 1990; 2009; Sandin, 2020). By offering a forum for research about Nordic issues written in national languages *Barn* has played an important role both in promoting childhood studies within the Nordic region, and in introducing generations of new researchers to the multidisciplinary field.

This issue marks the first editorial published in *Barn* in English. Although language has traditionally been one of the cultural structures that creates a sense of togetherness within the Nordic region, it is important to note that there are also significant language barriers within the region. While Scandinavian languages include Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish speak-

ing audiences, many Finnish and Icelandic authors and readers are excluded from this lingual community. Furthermore, through the last decades the Nordic academia has become increasingly international and multilingual, as the research carried out in Nordic universities and research institutes has become more and more transnational. Likewise, the topics, dilemmas, and challenges relevant in contemporary childhood studies – such as climate change, Covid-19, or migration – are increasingly transnational, stretching beyond national and linguistic borders. This has been reflected in the pages of *Barn* in recent years, as the number of articles published in English has increased.

In the future, *Barn* wishes to continue to encourage and promote Nordic childhood studies across linguistic barriers. We wish to create space for discussions in Scandinavian languages, but we also welcome contributions in English. It is important to note the significance of discussion carried out in national languages. It is essential for the development of the research field in many ways with regard to theoretical and methodological advancement, teaching, but also with regard to topical issues in different Nordic societies.

To enhance our readership throughout the Nordic region and to ensure the Nordic character of *Barn*, our Editorial Board of *Barn* has invited members from all Nordic countries in the fall of 2021. We welcome our new board members and thank the continuing members for your support. The Editorial board includes the following members: Denmark: Anette Boy Koch (VIA University College), Eva Gulløv (Aarhus University), Karen Fog Olwig (University of Copenhagen), and Firouz Gaini (University of the Faroe Islands). Finland: Noora Heiskanen (University of Eastern Finland), Jaana Juutinen (University of Oulu), and Antti Malinen (University of Tampere). Iceland: Guðný Björk Eydal (University of Iceland). Norway: Ellen Ersfjord, (University of Agder), Espen Helgesen (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences), and Randi Wærdahl (OsloMet).

Sweden: Thom Axelsson (Malmö University), Anette Hellman (University of Gothenburg), Anne-Li Lindgren (Stockholm University), and Bengt Sandin (Linköping University).

The articles included in this issue of *Barn* open diverse insights into Nordic childhoods, both contemporary and historical. The issue opens with **Johanna Sjöberg's** intriguing article "*När mor och far ska ha ledigt*". *De kommersiella barnpensionatens annonser under åren 1915–1972* (The ads of Swedish commercial 'barnpensionat', 1915–1972), which elaborates on changes that have taken place in Nordic ideas concerning childhood and children's best interests. Sjöberg focuses on a phenomenon relatively unfamiliar for parents of today. During the early part of the 20th century parents in Sweden were offered full-board accommodation childcare at private commercial enterprises, known as "barnpensionat". Sjöberg analyses how children and parents were addressed and constructed as consumers in and through the advertisements of these enterprises. The analysis shows that well-to-do parents were a central target group and that children could be cared for longer or shorter periods of time while their parents did other things, travel for example. Early on there was a child-oriented rhetoric in the advertisements, supported by emphasis on educational activities, health, and professionalism. Yet, the advertisements positioned children not as consumers but rather as commodities, Sjöberg argues.

**Tina Hansen's** article *Sosial kontroll begrenser minoritetsungdommers identitetsutvikling i majoritetsfosterhjem* (Social control limits the identity development of minority youth in majority foster homes) raises important questions about who are included, and who are excluded from 'Nordic childhood'. Hansen discusses identity development among Norwegian minority youth living in majority foster homes by focusing on the challenges that minority youth from Muslim backgrounds experience as they develop their identity in non-Muslim majority

foster homes. Hansen's analysis suggests that the youth are exposed to social control from multiple sources, such as foster parents, biological families, Muslim friends, and members of religious community. The control means that the young people's room for developing their identity is limited. However, Hansen also notes young people's responses to the control by identifying three strategies that may alter their room for maneuvering: Information control, where they limit what information they provide to whom, withdrawal from people who subject them to social control, and seeking support from actors who do not exercise social control.

Children's agency and right to be heard is also on the focus of **Dina Helene Sunde, Linda Larsen, and Maren Sand Helland's** article *Barns stemme ved samlivsbrudd: En kvantitativ studie av barns meninger om egen livssituasjon etter samlivsbrudd* (Children's voices when parents break up: A quantitative study of children's opinions about their living situation after parental break-up). This article aims to identify emerging patterns in children's opinions about different aspects of their living situation after parental break-up. Sunde *et al.* show that children generally had clear opinions on many aspects of their living situation after parental break-up. Topics like stability and openness stood out as most important in the analysis of responses by 503 children (aged 7–15 years). The children found it especially important that they could continue to meet their friends, go to the same activities, and continue at the same school even if the parents moved apart. Further, the study shows that children find it important to be able to show their emotions at home, and that these emotions are accepted, regardless of the parents' level of conflict. The analysis indicated that the nature of parental conflict had less to do with whether children had clear opinions about the parental break-up. Instead, age and other characteristics of the children and their families had a greater significance.

*Høytlesning av personaliserte bøker for førskolebarn: Foreldres barneperspektiver og opplevelser* (Pre-schoolers' reading of personalized books at home: Parents' child perspectives and experiences) by **Ida Bruheim Jensen, Ingunn Studsrød, and Natalia Kucirkova** focuses on a relatively new phenomenon in the Nordic countries, personalized books, which are books uniquely designed for individual children. The article discusses parents' and children's experiences of shared reading of personalized books. Thematic analysis showed that the books engaged and interested parents and that they generated joy during the reading session. The parents pointed at children's identification with the story characters, and the experience of, through the story, being at the centre of a social community. The parents also commented on the educational features of the personalized books.

The issue closes with **Annette Kristoffersen Winje and Sissel Jeanette Aastvedt Halland's** essay *Mulighetsrom for de yngste barna til deltagelse, lekende dynamikk og samspill i et fellesskap* (Opportunities for the youngest children to participate, play dynamics and interaction in a community). The essay contributes to discussions concerning children's participation by drawing on the concept of secondary intersubjective communities. Focus on the relationships in the kindergarten can help to create greater awareness of reciprocity, community and a willingness to help and learn from each other. The authors conclude that when secondary intersubjective communities are present in a pedagogical relationship, the relationship is characterized by reciprocity and equality to a greater extent than in contexts that are characterized by an absence of secondary intersubjective communities.

*Kaisa Vehkalahti, editor*

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## Author presentation

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