

Becoming-with dust and other materials

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Today's global crisis, exacerbated by the arrival of the COVID-19 virus, presents an unprecedented imperative for transformation demanding new knowledges and urgent actions. Not only to mitigate the environmental catastrophe and respond to the devastating consequences that anthropogenic activities are causing to water, land, air and multispecies ecologies, but also, to adopt alternative perspectives and approaches beyond anthropocentric and humanist thought and practice.

My project investigates how the materiality and agency of dust is reciprocally affecting-with child-earth relations. Through the lens of posthuman theory and the new materialist concept of 'intra-action' (Barad 2007), this study is situated in a Victorian kindergarten and uses multispecies ethnography to research with different bodies as participants and co-researchers. These include the materials, the equipment, the atmospheric forces, twelve four-to-six-year-old child bodies and multiple others that co-inhabit this educational space. The data collection comprises emergent experimental methods, artistic tactics, portable recording technologies, and biological laboratory equipment.

By examining intra-actions with dust and other materials, this project aims to activate conversations amongst children, early childhood professionals and environmental activists to reconsider the agency of humans in the world, their priorities and perspectives in relation to climate change, pollution and extinction as well as to ecological justice. Additionally, it challenges current child-centred and individualist educational frameworks as they promote a separation between children and the rest of the world, and they fail to acknowledge the agency and the relations with non-human partners.

For the AARE symposium, a visual ethnographer, a cross-species-scales-shores speculator and I as a multispecies ethnographer, inspired by Berlant and Stewart (2019) in *The Hundreds*, share our (always) becomings of researching-with materials in our projects. My project reimagines early childhood education by exploring the possibilities of learning-with and researching-with materials. Seeing-with a lens of a microscope exposes different events, experiences and knowledges which are invisible to the human eye. Recognizing the agency of materials has become imperative in times in which humans view the world exclusively through an anthropocentric lens, omitting the ability to see minuscule bodies such as viruses, fungi and bacteria.

Focusing on materials such as dust allows opportunities to examine how the human and other-than-human are becoming-with ecological injustices to reimagine early childhood education and research. In this collaborative experiment, I share my encounters with materials as participants and researchers in hundred-word units, while I co-research with materials on more ethical ways of living in common worlds.