Children's cultural heritage: The micro-politics of the archive

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Abstract

In this text, we explore the concept of children's cultural heritage. We do so by investigating and reflecting upon the digitizing, categorizing and registering of children's digital and analogue pictures in the *Swedish Archive of Children's Art*. Children themselves do not agitate for the preservation of their own cultural heritage. As most archive taxonomies are based on adult categorizations, we ask what consequences this has for the preservation of children's cultural heritage. From our theoretical location in Child and Heritage Studies and Science and Technology Studies, we see archived documents as infused with subjectivity by the way in which they are systematized and classified at the time of archiving. Thus, we approach the process of digitizing children's pictures as a political practice. The micro-politics of the archive intertwines with broader politics of children and childhood as well as adult cultural heritage policies and theories. The analyses show which procedures are involved in creating a children's cultural heritage, while also reflecting upon what notions of children become relevant for children's cultural heritage.

Keywords
Children's cultural heritage, archive, SBBA, digitizing cultural heritage, children's pictures

Introduction

At its best, cultural heritage should encourage respect for cultural and social diversity and challenge taken-for-granted ideas about society. This also means that subaltern groups' expressions should be part of a nation's cultural heritage. Provocatively, we argue that heritage studies tends to treat children[1] as either cultural heritage themselves, or as invited interpreters of heritage through educational projects organized by heritage institutions.

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1. We follow the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by defining children as people within the age span 0–18 years.

When the cultural heritage of childhood is intentionally collected, then preserved objects like toys, old school classrooms, or old people's memories of childhood are the usual targets (Darian-Smith and Pascoe 2013), and less commonly children's own productions. However, there are ways of preserving contemporary children's productions, such as the *Swedish Archive of Children's Art* (SBBA),[2] which we will discuss in this text.

Children and cultural heritage have a well-established relation. At a policy level, children's right to culture has grown stronger over the last 30 years, both nationally and internationally. The Swedish national cultural policy pays particular attention to this by emphasizing children's cultural rights as one of the five national political goals. In particular, it states that these political goals should: "pay attention to children's and young people's right to culture".[3] In 2020, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was incorporated into Swedish law. This further strengthens children's right to culture through Article 13: "The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; /…/", and Article 31:

> 1. /…/ recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, /…/ participate freely in cultural life and the arts. 2. /…/ respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.[4]

Children's right to cultural heritage is also included in policies and projects launched by UNESCO; for example: "Culture – Protecting our heritage and fostering creativity".[5] Based on this, it is reasonable to assume that children have a strong position within both the heritage field and heritage studies. Children do have a strong position, as already mentioned, when it comes to taking part in and being educated through heritage institutions. However, their position is not as strong when it comes to collecting, preserving, and archiving children's own cultural expressions for the future (cf. Harrison 2013). That is, it is far less common to see children as cultural heritage *producers* and as being in a position to generate cultural heritage (cf. Sparrman 2019). Given this, we ask: How does digital archival registering contribute to the concept of children's cultural heritage? How is the child, and the child–adult relation, positioned within this process? By studying the micro-political procedures involved in the practice of digitizing and registering children's pictures, we aim to explore how the notion of children's cultural heritage is enacted through the archive.

Children's cultural heritage

Research on children and cultural heritage is sparse. The only accessible book collection attempting to establish such a research area was published in 2013 (Darian-Smith & Pascoe 2013). This book presents and establishes an important distinction between a *cultural heritage of childhood* and a *cultural heritage of children* (Darian-Smith & Pascoe 2013. See also Sánchez-Eppler 2013; Aggleton 2018). The cultural heritage of childhood focuses mainly on data produced by adults on notions of childhood, such as preserved government and state records, to investigate the history of childhood during different historical periods (Sánchez-Eppler 2013). The cultural heritage of children, on the other hand, has mainly sprung out of folklore studies such as Iona Opie and Peter Opie's (1969) classic work on

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2. In Swedish: Svenskt barnbildarkiv.
3. Särskilt uppmärksamma barns och ungas rätt till kultur. https://www.kulturradet.se/en/about-us/swedish-cultural-policy/ Retrieved 24 May 2022.
4. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child 24 May 2022.
5. https://www.unesco.org/en/culture Retrieved 24 April 2022.

children's own games, rhymes, and chases (see also Burns & Richards 2013). However, this research has a history of being apolitical and romantic, and it positions children's activities as separate and isolated from mainstream culture, as opposed to situating them within broader cultural, social, and political discourses. Opie and Opie's research is important for understanding what we call *children's cultural heritage*. Yet another area of research on children and cultural heritage is situated within audience research. Here, children are approached either as imagined audiences (cf. Cardell & Sparrman 2012; Pettersson 2013), or as receivers of cultural heritage that has been produced specifically for them (Patterson & Friends 2021; Sparrman et al. 2016).

To obtain archived material of children's everyday lives is both rare and exceptional. Archive material is typically preserved when a child dies young and is usually found by chance because it is hidden among adult archived materials (Sánchez-Eppler 2013). Childhood humanities research is the most prominent area to critically debate the idea of specifically archiving children's own cultural expressions (Sánchez-Eppler 2013). They show that the cataloguing principles employed when archiving children's documents often rest upon adult childhood nostalgia, desires relating to childhood and children, and adult fantasies of their own childhood (Darian-Smith & Pascoe 2013; Jenks 1996; Sánchez-Eppler 2013). Approaching an archive is therefore not an ethically neutral performance (Cifor 2016). Documents are always affected by the way in which they are systematized and classified at the time of archiving (Tesar & Arndt 2018; Duff & Harris 2002). This is why it matters which notions and ethics of the child have shaped the archiving principles (Tesar & Arndt 2018; Sparrman 2014).

The concept of children's cultural heritage puts the child somewhat at risk. Every time children are singled out, they also become marginalized and consequently are not seen as contributing to broader theoretical or societal issues. Our take is that children's heritage actions are always to be seen as part of broader notions of heritage and social questions concerning the collection and preservation of heritage for the future. Children's cultural heritage 'is' something more than material saturated with nostalgia and cuteness, it is part of the politics and policies of cultural heritage. It consists of children's productions that take place as an integrated part of society and not at its margins.

Children's heritage, for example drawings and paintings made by children, are social, cultural, and political expressions enacted in and through situated practices (Sparrman 2014). The unique position in which children are placed, of being simultaneously social and cultural actors and yet dependent on the adult world for having a children's cultural heritage, provides an opportunity to reflect upon the archiving of any subordinated group (cf. Smith 2021), and even more so on the archiving of what we usually take for granted when the cultural heritage of subordinate groups is preserved for the future. Children highlight the complexity of constituting the past while simultaneously also being the present and the future (Deleuze 1989).

From this, it follows that both cultural establishments and heritage establishments, like archives, are epistemic communities within which archivists, registering staff, researchers, and other users access, create, form, and give meaning to the collections (Caswell 2021). This multiple site production of the content of the archive, and of the notion of cultural heritage, raises questions about the *(ontological) politics* (Mol 1999) of the archive. It is political in the sense that it makes us aware of the processes that create the archive. It underlines the fact that cultural heritage is a struggle over meaning. Multiple professions, technologies, and materialities are involved in enacting what cultural heritage 'is', or what children's cultural heritage 'is'. While the politics underlines the process of shaping, the 'is' of cultural

heritage highlights the conditions of possibility under which archives such as the *Swedish Archive of Children's Art* must work and live (Mol 1999). More straightforwardly put, it refers to the realities to which the archive must adapt in its everyday practices. At first glance, four main categories of participants can be seen to be involved in the creation of children's cultural heritage: politicians, children, archivists, and researchers.

Politicians are closely related to financial power, deciding on the budget for the coming years and indirectly on the archive's possible activity level. Accordingly, the micro-politics of what goes on in the archive always intertwines with the broader politics of children, and – not least – adulthood and adult cultural heritage policies. To enable us to explore the micro-politics and ontologies of children's cultural heritage, we take theoretical and methodological help from Mol's (1999) questions: "*What* is at stake? *Where* are the options? *Are* there really options? *How* should we choose?" (Mol 1999: 79). When these questions are situated in practice, they help us to explore the micro-politics of how children's cultural heritage is made in and through the digitization practices of registering and categorising children's pictures in the archive.

Categorization as micro-political practices

The main purpose of categorizing children's pictures in the SBBA is to make them searchable and findable, both in the database and physically within the archive. The multitude of micro-actions that need to be carried out to make it searchable enacts different notions of both children and adults, as well as what is meant by a child's picture.

Categorization and registration are tasks mainly undertaken by archivists, in which their goal is to remain objective and not "to participate in the construction of meaning" (Duff & Harris 2002: 264). The idea of the objective archivist is supported by descriptive architectures at the institution, which are shaped through guidelines, technological infrastructures, and registration systems (e.g. Duff & Harris 2002). The categories used in cultural heritage institutions, such as the SBBA, could be described as tools to fix and settle certain outcomes in order to create homogeneity across different practices (Ruppert 2012). The purpose of categorization is to standardize the description of an object to make it searchable within and across archives. The idea is that each category should be as neutral and non-subjective as possible.

Categorization is sometimes called the "quiet politics of voices and values" (Bowker, Timmermans & Star 1996: 345). It highlights that values, worldviews, and descriptions, although the objective goals of standardization, become embedded in the categorization practices of, for example, archives. These, often quiet, subjective values could be described as that which is implicit and taken for granted, that which is not made explicit by the archivists, during the categorization process. Quietness of voices, on the other hand, indicates groups of people, such as children, who are not heard or considered when it comes to how objects and collections are organized, displayed, and interpreted (e.g. Patterson & Friends 2021). Thus, categorization practices are always politicized – it is a struggle over who has the right to interpretation and the outcomes of choices and actions. The increased attention to the human rights of subordinated groups within Heritage Studies is an example of how that which was previously 'quiet' has become politically difficult when brought into the light as questions have been raised, for example, about how objects have been stored, categorized, and displayed (e.g. Caswell 2020). This also includes the collection and use of metadata.

Metadata could be described here as "data about data" (Dahlgren et al. 2020: 6). This is the data that describes, identifies, finds, and administers, in this case, pictures. Gartner

(2016) differentiates between three types of metadata: 1) "administrative metadata", which is used for managing and administrating information about the collections in the archive, 2) "structural metadata", which is information that "builds links between small pieces of data to assemble them into a more complex object, digital or otherwise" (Gartner 2016: 8), and 3) "descriptive metadata", which is a description of the information resources; for instance, where the picture comes from, how it was made, and what it depicts. Among these various types of metadata, the descriptive metadata is most relevant to scholars, students, journalists, publishers, and the public when searching for information in archives (Dahlgren et al. 2020). However, it is important to keep in mind that metadata is inherently and entirely political because it "controls the classifications and categorisation of the lives of the individuals connected to the objects" (Kahn 2021: 68–69; see also Dahlgren et al. 2020).

The multiplicity of practices involved in archiving are "not accidental nor incidental" (Bowker & Star 1999: 291). For the archive, balancing both practices and politics is part of its professionality because it designates the need to handle the multiple circumstances of what makes up, in this case, children's pictures. The influence of the SBBA's categorizations of children's pictures is partly about how those pictures will be seen across time and practices in Sweden, and partly about how the pictures contribute to the ways in which children are valued or voiced. This reveals the politicization of the micro-processes of categorization (e.g. Caswell 2013). By bringing the micro-politics of categorization to the centre of our attention (Mol 1999), it becomes possible to explore and dwell upon the details of what, from an archival perspective, makes up the notion of children's cultural heritage.

Research setting and methodology

This article builds on data from a larger research project entitled: *Children's cultural heritage: the visual voices of the archive* (VR dnr 2020-03095), which is part of the Swedish Government's Research Bill DIGARV initiated in 2016 (https://www.digarv.se/en/). This research project collaborates with the *Swedish Archive of Children's Art* (SBBA), and one of the aims is to create a searchable digital "archive within the archive" of children's pictures. This work includes already existing registered archive collections on the topic of the UNCRC, and newly produced collections on the same topic generated as part of the research project. The central work involved in creating this searchable archive includes digitizing and registering pictures by tagging them with categories.

The Swedish Archive of Children's Art

The *SBBA* is a nationally and internationally unique research archive solely concentrating on collecting, archiving, and preserving *children's* cultural expressions, and in particular drawings and paintings. The archive was established in 1977 and comprises 700 000 pictures in different formats and techniques, of which approximately 120 000 have so far been digitized. The archived material stretches from the 1700s to the present (Martola 2014). It comprises picture collections from art-based school collections, drawing competitions launched by corporations like the Swedish phone company *Telia* (Eriksson 2014), and organizations like *Save the Children* (Lindström et al. 1978; Låby 2018). There are also individual picture collections donated by private individuals (Lind 2014; Sparrman 2014). With only a few exceptions, most of the pictures in the archive were created by Swedish children aged 0–20 years (Lindström et al. 1978; Sandberg 2014). The archive is an independent organization hosted by the local art museum, Eskilstuna Konstmuseum, and is jointly financed by the Swedish state and the municipality of Eskilstuna. On a regular basis, one

fully employed archivist and one project coordinator working 75 percent are responsible for the entire process of collecting, categorizing, and preserving children's pictures, contributing to exhibitions at the local museum, and creating exhibitions for their own webpage. The research project has made it possible to also employ a full-time registering assistant and an archivist, adding up to a total of 110 percent spread over a 3.5-year period. This makes it possible to both meet and discuss registering strategies for children's cultural heritage with the archive as it has increased the capacity of the digitization of its holdings. This is an extraordinary situation, unique to the archive.

When a collection of pictures from a school, a project, or an individual is donated to the archive, the strategy is to never remove any of the donated pictures. Hence, the archive includes a broad range of pictures, from stick figures to elaborate watercolour paintings, pastels, and digital pictures. This process of never selecting what might be perceived by adults as beautiful or especially artistic pictures makes the archive unique. It makes it possible to appreciate the breadth of children's visual expression, both when performing tasks pre-set by adults and when considered across time and age. Rather than approaching and defining the pictures as art, the archive explicitly states that they deal with 'everyday' pictures in the sense that creating pictures is seen as part of Swedish children's lives. This aspect emerges more strongly in the Swedish name of the archive because art is not part of the construction of the title, as it is in the English title. A more accurate translation of the archive's name is: the *Swedish Archive of Children's Pictures* (Sw: Svenskt barnbildarkiv, SBBA). Therefore, we have chosen to go with the original acronym SBBA in the present text. At the SBBA, all the pictures are physically stored in an archive at the museum.

Material

In 2020/21, the SBBA implemented a new digital registration system called Sofie 8.0. This is a system used by museums across Sweden to digitize their collections. When the project was initiated at the beginning of 2021, the archive was still adapting its new registration strategies, and this has created a unique situation for the research project. The system of scanning and registering at the SBBA is based on trained personnel carrying out the work, rather than using the automated procedures that are becoming more common today (Dahlgren et al. 2020). To date, 120 000 pictures have been digitized. All the pictures that are part of the "archive within the archive" project are being digitized and registered.

The research material we have used to explore the micro-politics of the archive and how children's cultural heritage is being made up in and through practices consists of: the SBBA's registration guidelines, three pictures from the archive's UNCRC collection #368: "1999:012 Barnkonventionen"[6] (Figures 1–3), and a recorded Zoom workshop (1.42 hrs) on how to categorize children's pictures involving an archivist, two archive assistants, and four researchers (two of whom are the authors of this text) from the research project *Children's cultural heritage: the visual voices of the archive*. Due to the pandemic, the workshop was conducted using the videoconferencing system Zoom. The workshop focused on the categorization of the three pictures depicted in Figures 1–3.

In the study of the micro-politics of the archive, we have chosen to analyse how different stakeholders interpret, discuss, and categorize children's pictures. We do no claim full representation of how archiving is accomplished in the field; rather, it is an empirical example that illustrates how categorization works as a micro-political enactment of the concept of children's cultural heritage.

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6. Translated from Swedish to English, barnkonventionen is "the convention of the child".

Figure 1: Svenskt barnbildarkiv (SBBA), Untitled 1999:012:0013, 1997–1998, boy.

Figure 2: SBBA, "I have the right to have it good", 1999:012;0051, 1997–1998, boy age 7.

Figure 3: SBBA, "Everyone has rights to live life", 1999:012:0056, 1997–1998, boy year 2.

The three pictures were chosen by one of the archive assistants in the research project on the grounds that they were very different to register. They were chosen from a collection dating from the school year 1997/98 and were created by children attending primary and middle school in three different Swedish towns. The collection consists of 596 pictures organized according to the convention's articles and not according to age, school class, or town. The pictures were transferred to the archive in 2004 when the International Child Art Museum in Vårby, Sweden, permanently closed its own archive. The pictures were digitized and registered in Sofie 8.0 during March 2021.

Before the workshop, digital versions of the three pictures were sent to the research group. Each group member was encouraged to make her/his categorization of the pictures before meeting up on Zoom. Everyone had access to the registration guidelines that the archive was just beginning to use. Using the guidelines was optional, and the group members chose to work in different ways. Since the registration system is not specifically designed for pictures, or for children's pictures, the archive has adapted and drafted its own object registration instructions for Sofie 8.0. The document amounts to 13 pages divided into two registration areas: basic information and object information.

Analysis

The analysis of the pictures focuses on the micro-politics of the process; in other words, what is involved in the detailed categorization of the three pictures. The analysis of the Zoom[7] discussion follows the methodological strategy of 'thinking with' (Jackson & Mazzei 2012) the theoretical concepts presented in this article: category, politics, and quietness. We use these theoretical concepts to identify how borders are drawn, which categories become relevant, and which are perceived to be best for capturing the pictures, both for the child who made them and for future archive users. This means that we are exploring the nitty-gritty of the archiving process, the micro-politics, by letting different individuals with different knowledge, backgrounds, and interests use different tags to describe and categorize the same pictures. The purpose was to determine how these shared processes enact and fill the concept of children's cultural heritage, and what kind of child this process constructs.

To be able to delve deeply into the analyses, we have chosen to focus specifically on Figure 2, supplementing when needed with discussions about the other two pictures. The analyses show that the team was concerned with the possible number of words to use when registering the pictures, when words become interpretative, whose words are most important, and what is possible from the point of view of the archive. We pay attention to all of these aspects, along with analyses of the ideas of the child generated by the workshop. At the centre of the analysis is how subjectivity and heterogeneity play out, rather than determining one correct way of doing archiving.

The micro-politics of making children's cultural heritage

Registering guidelines

All three pictures (Figures 1–3) were scanned and registered before the Zoom workshop. The registering of the metadata was neither known nor at the time accessible to the entire group. Two levels of metadata are used when registering the objects (pictures): basic and object information. Basic information comprises all the formal aspects (e.g. structural metadata) of the picture, while object information differs between motif and sub-motif. Fourteen possible categories of motifs are suggested (e.g. descriptive metadata). These are:

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7.   Online conference system.

Table 1: Motifs in the registering instructions

Activities/actions	Food and drugs	Human beings
Building/place	Objects	Machine
Animals	Feast/religion	Patterns/ornaments/shape
Fantasy/fairy tale/myth	Young children's scribbles	Nature
Vehicle		Text

After the motif has been identified and categorized, the sub-motifs should then be described and registered. There is no list of sub-motifs; however, the instruction is to write one word for every object seen in the picture. Together, the ways in which basic and object information are described in the registration instructions follow what in visual methodology is called a content analysis (Rose 2016). This means identifying, labelling, and dissecting the picture and avoiding focusing on the connections between the parts to create elaborate interpretations of the picture's content. Content analysis often means working across a large set of pictures and details to create broad generalizing interpretations of an aspect of, for example, gaze (Rose 2016). Content analysis tries to balance between being perceived as neutral, or objective, and interpretive. The aim of the SBBA is to remain as neutral as possible and to use everyday language in the registration, but just choosing a motif is a categorization in itself because it tells us something about what is considered important for capturing the content of children's pictures (cf. Duff & Harris 2002).

The SBBA's motif categories situate the child within the social world (building/place, vehicles, food/drugs, objects, machines, patterns/ornaments/shape, text). Moreover, they project a child who is also interested in the more intangible aspects of culture (fantasy/fairy tales/myths, feasts/religion), and nature (animals, nature). There are two motifs that are more difficult to cluster: "young children's scribbles" and "human beings". "Human beings" is a broad category, which distinguishes humans from all the other categories. "Young children's scribbles", on the other hand, defines a specific category of human beings, the youngest scribbling children. This is the only specific category of human singled out within the motif categories. The last category to mention here is the motif "activities/actions". This category identifies the activities and actions that are at play in the pictures. This category has more of an interpretive character than the other categories. The motif for Figure 1, for example, is activities/actions and here it is difficult to identify what the activity/action is. Is it the skateboarder on the ramp or the man in uniform guarding the orphanage and the skateboarder? In this case, the registering staff need to relate details in the pictures to one another in order to decide upon the activity. The rest of the motif categories are more instrumental and fixed, such as food, religious symbols, or vehicles. The motifs are not homogeneous in the sense that they work on different levels, nor are they mutually exclusive since the motif could be seen as, for instance, an activity or human beings.

So, what do these motifs tell us about children and children's cultural heritage? By clustering the categories, we see a child situated in the midst of an ongoing and active social life. The categories emphasize that children reflect upon the world in which they live; for example, housing, food, vehicles, fantasy, and religion. Nothing indicates that children might be a subordinated group living at the margins of social life. Interestingly, this means that cultural heritage and research with and about children from a child studies perspective share the common ground of taking an interdisciplinary approach to children which includes children as social and cultural actors situated within society (e.g. Esser 2016). This is not a taken-for-granted approach to children in social and cultural establishments. A more common line of thought is to read children through behavioural and psychological or educa-

tional theories. The way in which the archive positions children makes it part of the politics of strengthening children's cultural position and rights as part of the construction of both their and adults' social and cultural worlds/society.

Taken together, the motif categories construct children's cultural heritage as made up of both tangible and intangible heritage because they include hands-on and lucid aspects, such as buildings, objects, and animals, as well as less distinct phenomena, like myths and religion (Harrison 2013). All the motif categories mentioned, except the "young children's scribbles", also to some degree capture adult culture. Here, there is no distinction. However, it is interesting to notice that play is not mentioned as a possible motif, or a category. Children's activities are often described as play, which is also often seen as a self-evident part of children's lives (Cook 2018). Is it possible that this means that, when they can decide for themselves, children do not draw play? Supposedly, it could also be one activity among many other "activities/actions" that children draw. Alternatively, it could show that children were not consulted when the motif categories were being developed. To examine the categorization of children's cultural heritage more specifically, we must dig into the world of the sub-motif categories.

The multiple categorizations of a child´s picture

As already described, all the participants in the Zoom workshop received the three pictures digitally in advance of the workshop (Figures 1–3). This means that few of the participants had held the originals in their hands. Rather, the digital format made the pictures look as though they all had the same size, texture, and odour. These left-out qualities are what a registering assistant experiences when scanning the pictures.

In this text, we have chosen to mainly follow the discussion concerning Figure 2 because this picture came with special challenges for categorization. As a reminder, the group con-

Figure 2: SBBA, "I have the right to have it good", 1999:012;0051, 1997–1998, boy age 7

sisted of one archivist, two archive assistants, and four researchers, all participants in the same research project. As will be seen, the discussion turned into a discussion/negotiation of what we saw in the picture.

One by one, the workshop participants presented their categorizations. The focus of the categorization were the colours red, blue, black, and green. Later, we also learned from the archive assistant that the child had written something on the back of the picture, to which we will return later. Instead of looking at each individual's categorization, we have chosen to follow how they/we talked about the colours in the picture. The reason for this is to capture the multiple categorizations each colour was assigned and the words that were added to the colours. The underlined word "Alternative" under some of the colours is other possible ways of categorizing that came up in the discussion that followed everyone's individual presentation of their categories.

Table 2: Categorization of Figure 2

The red colour:	**The blue colour:**
• red coloured sky • red landscape picture • entire picture surface covered in red • coloured red area • red background • entire paper is red • <u>Alternative:</u> abstract background (instead of landscape)	• blue horizon line • horizon line in blue • a blue flowing river, brook, or creek • blue streak • a blue line painted like a horizon • <u>Alternative:</u> line that divides the floor and ceiling, floor from wall
The black colour:	**The green colour:**
• two people turned towards one another • two silhouetted characters moving towards one another as in a meeting • two shadow figures in black turned towards one another • figure, person times two • two people conversing • two people standing at the bottom of the picture • two ungendered people, turned towards one another? Talking to one another? • <u>Alternative:</u> a person with a video camera on a tripod, people dancing, one person pointing at and reprimanding the other, two fighting	• standing on green grass • a little green • below the line there is green in the red **Other comments:** • outdoors (x2) • technique: gouache, crayon • paper is coloured with watercolours • the line above the people • watercolour, crayon • Place? • Entire paper coloured • <u>Alternative:</u> indoors, how does this relate to the UNCRC? Freedom of speech

Later on, the shared and collaborative discussion following the individual presentations came to focus on: drawing and painting techniques, the word "abstract", archiving principles, searchability, collection knowledge, the child, the UNCRC, and the researcher/user. Our analysis will mainly focus on archiving principles, a discussion about the use of the word "abstract", and the notion of the child.

The categorization shows that, firstly, everyone focused more or less on the same details and, secondly, the degree of interpretative categories varied. As argued in this text, categorization is a mutually enacted process that includes categories, discussions, and other people's opinions as well as technologies. It is about creating distinctions and boundaries (Star 2010). Turning a blue line into a horizon or a river is one level of interpretation. If the line is a river, the picture might also be outdoors and what is seen above the river might be a red sky and the black characters or silhouettes might then be standing on green grass. An entire scenario has been created in which different details have been put together in relation to one another. The issue at hand is whether this is too detailed, whether too much imagina-

tion has been used, and whether there is a more neutral way of categorizing the picture. And is it more desirable to be as neutral and objective as possible? If we put together some of the more objective categorizations from Table 2, it could look like: coloured red area, blue streak, figure, person times two, a little green. This categorization does not attempt interpretations about what is going on in the picture. However, using these categories in the categorization would make it difficult for archive users to search for this picture because, for example, "coloured red area" might give thousands of hits. It all depends, of course, on what the researcher/user wants to know. Using colour could be one way of categorizing children's pictures. It would, however, distinguish itself from all other ways of categorizing images (cf. Kjellman 2006). It would tell us something about how children use colour and perhaps which colours they use for expressing what. If a researcher/user wanted to search across materials to investigate how children draw horizons or rivers, it would become extremely complicated (cf. Änggård 2014).

This just highlights and emphasizes the necessity of approaching archiving procedures as subjective (Tesar & Arndt 2018). The question then becomes how far subjectivity can or should be pushed. Is it possible, based on the picture, to see that this is indoors or outdoors? That the line is a river separating ground from sky or a line distinguishing between floor or wall? The reason this picture was included as part of the workshop was precisely because of the ambiguity and the challenges to decide upon what is seen in the picture. To handle the ambiguity, it was suggested that the category "abstract" could be used in order not to push subjectivity too far. Abstract is a word that is used in art contexts to describe non-figurative artworks that also often have no title or are called "Untitled". This generated a long discussion on how "abstract" can be used in relation to children's image productions.

Categorizing the child

Abstract has never been used as a category in the SBBA. As seen in Table 1, there is a motif called patterns/ornaments/shape, but not abstract. It was agreed that, although the entire picture is not abstract, there is potential to define how the red colour has been applied as abstract. Two strands of thinking about abstract appeared during the workshop. The first highlights the possibility of acknowledging that children can paint in an abstract way to explore colour and space, and that some children enjoy dwelling on colours. The second suggestion was to avoid "abstract" as a category. The risk is that the concept may be overused. Children do not always possess the right tools or techniques to express themselves visually (Bendroth Karlsson 1996). The workshop presented an idea of adults as focused on the figurative. Including abstract as, for example, a motif category might then generate a tremendous number of abstract pictures in the archive because it is stipulated that this category will be used quickly whenever it is difficult to see exactly what is depicted in a picture.

Children might lack drawing and painting skills, but it was agreed that the children themselves often know what their pictures depict. Thus, it was argued in the workshop that to use abstract might denigrate the child. It was also argued that, just because the picture looks abstract, does not mean that it is or was made to be abstract from the perspective of the child. The question was posed that, if adults categorize non-abstract pictures as abstract, how will that make children in general feel? Might they lose trust in adults' ways of representing them? The outcome may be that the category 'abstract' is then valued as either an advantage in the sense that it opens up possibilities to avoid just seeing figuratively or negatively from the perspective of the child, whose feelings might be hurt. It also shows that a category is assigned values depending upon what that category intersects with, the child or the adult, and what values are assigned to these two categories.

Since abstract is a category that is often used when talking about art, the workshop participants excluded children's pictures from a broader discourse on pictures. It could be argued that this builds on an assumption that the child is concrete and operational.

Children´s voices in categorization work

Even though notions of children and adults are present in many ways during the SBBA's categorization process, they are never spelled out in the work. Still, in the workshop, children were mentioned as both an object and a subject. However, what each person in the workshop meant by "a child" or "an adult" was implicit; they were performed as taken-for-granted, quiet values, by everyone (Bowker, Timmermans & Star 1996). The taken-for-granted use of the category "child" reveals how assumptions, values, and ideologies were indirectly enacted when categorizing the children's pictures (Bowker, Timmermans & Star 1996). Taken together, to the archive a child is enacted as a person aged 0–20 years, who has a name, is a cultural producer of pictures, is intentional when creating pictures, has free will, and can respond to claims and directives. This is more or less the same version of the child that the research group enacted during the workshop (cf. Esser 2016). The research group followed the UNCRC's scheme, which identifies children as aged 0–18 years. To the UNCRC, children are social and cultural agents, cultural producers of pictures, located in time and space, more or less competent, and a group of people who can tell us something about society and about children.

During the categorization process, the SBBA's strategy is to always let children's own words prevail over adult categories. That is, if children have written anything on their pictures, on the front or the back, their words should steer the categorization by, for example, being included in the object title of the picture. It turns out that there is information written on the back of Figure 2. It reads: "I have the right to have it good" and "Art 4" and the child's name, address, and age. The wordings within quotation marks connect to the UNCRC. Figure 2 was painted as part of a school task asking children to draw a picture based on the topic of the UNCRC. According to the archive, the routine is to make children's words part of the searchable title; in this case: "I have the right to have it good". The writing seems to have been done in three different handwritings. It looks as though the name and address were written by a child, the citation by an adult, and Art 4 by yet another adult. This means the child has been helped to write down his intentions and then someone else has categorized it as an expression of Article 4 of the UNCRC.

The fact that the child's words, the text, prevail over the expression in the picture initiated a discussion in the workshop. The workshop participants reflected upon the fact that children's own words prevail over their own visual expressions. Somewhat provocatively, children's words follow the same procedure as when adults put words to children's pictures. Children's words are, however, defined as being more neutral than adults' words. This is considered truer even if the words are written as the outcome of a collaboration between a child and an adult. The fact that children are taken at face value when putting words to their visual expressions is an inclusive act that turns children into cultural heritage producers on a different level than when producing pictures and paintings. They create pictures to be preserved for the future and they are made to be part of the archive's categorization procedures.

The Swedish Archive of Children´s Art´s categorization

We have finally arrived at the point where we want to look at the outcome of the micropolitical work involved when categorizing a child's picture from the SBBA archive. It takes about 30–45 minutes per picture to make an object categorization of a picture when follow-

ing the principles set down by the SBBA in its registration guidelines. The information we present below is a summary of the aspects that have been discussed so far. This is simply one more way of approaching and exploring the categorization of Figure 2, rather than the correct final version.

> FIGURE 2: **BASIC INFORMATION** Title: SBBA 1999_012-0051 – Child picture, school task. "I have the right to have it good" Untitled, 1997–1998. Description: picture showing the silhouette of two people who are turned towards one another. The background is made up of a red sky with a blue horizon line. The ground is coloured green. On the back of the picture is written: "I have the right to have it good", "Article 4". **OBJECT INFORMATION**: Motif: Building/Place. Sub-motif: Sky, ground, horizon, human being, the convention of the child. Creator: Boy. Age: 7 (registered 2021-03-29 by mareri)

The issue at stake when categorizing children's pictures, or for that matter any picture in an archive, is to make them searchable. Sofie 8.0 was not created specifically for registering only children's pictures. "Child picture" is a category used in the object title of the basic information to create a boundary between it and other objects and pictures. The philosophy of the archive is that everyone, including children, should be able to search the archive and the goal is that, one day, the SBBA's part of Sofie 8.0 should become searchable through engines such as Google. The SBBA is already preparing for this. It can be seen in the description of the picture under the basic information. The archive has decided to use a maximum of three sentences to describe each picture. It was pointed out in the workshop that formulating good, searchable sentences is both difficult and time consuming. The words used in the description should make it possible to conduct a Google search and land in the archive.

The three-sentence description enacts this picture as a landscape picture. The motif and sub-motif have a more stripped-down character. In particular, the sub-motif category lists words next to one another. In this sense, the outcome of the categorization is made up of a mixture of subjective and more objective-seeming tactics. There is an overlap between the three-sentence description and the sub-motifs. In contrast to the sub-motifs, the description includes spatiality, such as: the two characters being turned towards one another, background and foreground, a sky and a horizon creating depth to the picture. The last phrase mentioned in the sub-motif is "the convention of the child". This category is used to identify that the picture is included in the "archive within the archive" focusing on the UNCRC.

In the description of the picture, the word "child" is mentioned in four different ways. To identify what kind of picture it is: child picture. Child here replaces landscape, abstract, or portrait rather than adult because adult is the norm for archiving processes. When categorizing the picture in Figure 2, age and gender are mentioned. It is a seven-year-old boy who has painted the picture. We know this from his own handwriting on the back of the picture. And finally, in the label "child convention".

Both a collective and an individual child appear in this short registration and categorization of the picture: the child as a special non-normative category, a child defined by age, a gendered child, and a children's rights child. These categories could all be opened one by one to reveal further complexities. Our task for now is to point out that the more versatile we allow the child to be, the more knowledge about children and children's cultural heritage the archive can give us.

The politics of children's cultural heritage

We have investigated the micro-politics of the categorization and registering practices of the *Swedish Archive of Children's Art* (SBBA), with the aim of exploring how children's cul-

tural heritage is enacted. The different empirical material has made it possible to identify the SBBA's approaches to children, both those that are explicit and implicitly taken for granted. Even though children are treated as both objects and subjects in the archive, an important finding is that children's role as social and cultural actors still triumphs in both cases.

The analyses show that the archive has some explicit values in relation to the position of the child. Firstly, it does not remove any of the donated pictures, which makes the archive a place for knowledge about a broad spectrum of children's picture-related practices. Secondly, when registering the pictures, children's own written words on the pictures prevail over both adult categories and the children's own visual expressions. So, even though children's pictures are archive objects and children are objectified during the registering process – in phrases such as "boy age 7" – children's own accounts, their producer perspectives, are part of the registering strategies. In this way, children's voices are highlighted in a dual sense, both visually and verbally, within the archive (cf. Bowker, Timmermans & Star 1996). This in turn enacts children's pictures as situated political expressions and gives researchers and users of the archive insights into children's accounts of the world in which they live.

A more implicit accounting for children as social and cultural actors is promoted through the choice of primary motif categories in the registering guidelines. Nevertheless, these categories also highlight children's social and cultural agency. Importantly, they position children within society, and not in a special child's world of play, child peer interaction, or hierarchical child–adult relations. All the categories, except one (young children's scribbles), could also be used to categorize, for example, adult pictures. But there are also categories missing, such as the category "abstract".

There are, however, two categories in the registering of Figure 2 that are child specific: "child picture" and "child convention". These categories are used to single out this specific type of picture from other pictures. "Child picture" creates an apparently coherent category, as though all child pictures could easily fall under the same category, no matter what the age of the child. It implicitly signals that there is a norm when it comes to these pictures; however, we do not categorise adult pictures as adult pictures in registering systems. The category "child convention" is slightly different because it functions as a marker, making it possible to search across different picture collections on the same topic while creating "the archive within the archive". The category "child picture" is a way of making children visible, of giving them a visual voice in the archives, while the category "child convention" emphasizes children as possessors of rights.

Another outcome of the view of the child raised in the Zoom discussion is the prospect of adults hurting children's feelings, discounting their visual qualities, and/or only seeing children as rational through the categorization process of the pictures. This raises questions about the unavoidable relation between children and adults in the enactment of children's cultural heritage. Children depend on adults, as do adults on children. Children do not necessarily agitate for the preservation of their own cultural heritage, so adults need to do it for them. Hence, adults and children are always intertwined in the making of the concept of children's cultural heritage.

The ontological answer to the question of what children's cultural heritage 'is' means acknowledging ambivalence, lack of closure, and heterogeneity. From within the micro-practices and politics of the child-centred archive, we show how objectivity and subjectivity are intertwined. The study shows where and when subjectivity and objectivity become important and relevant for acknowledging children as social and cultural actors. *Children's cultural heritage* 'is' enacted through multiple notions of the child; the child as object and

subject, child–adult dependency, and archive procedures that struggle to be objective while inevitably being subjective, it embraces all the limitations of the archive in analogy with the broader idea of heritage politics (e.g. such as the technology of a registration system, financing, hours of employment). Taking all of this into account, what could be added to push the concept further is children's actual involvement as social and cultural actors in categorizing children's cultural heritage.

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