

Childhood and Materiality VIII

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Material Flows and Residual Childhoods

Concepts of materiality increasingly inform approaches to the study of children's agency and of governmentality as it shapes children's lives. It is increasingly apparent that materials, whether as technological affordances, non-human and more than human agents or material cultures, are crucial in shaping the agency of children and others. 'Governmentality' concerns the artful coordination across time and space of materials - including populations, individual human bodies, environments, pathogens and crops to provide for the reproduction of biopolitical power. This often figures children as human resource and as sites of state investment.

Childhoods that are agentic and securely governed do not exhaust matters. Agency and governmentality involve material flows and processes. Most material flows and processes leave residues. The flows shaping contemporary childhoods are no different.

This presentation examines two troubling cases of 'residual childhood':

- children in the European refugee crisis of 2015
- deposits of airborne pollutants in children's bodies

In each case an account is given of:

- key material flows and forces involved
- problems that have emerged
- strategies adopted by UK government to respond
- strengths and limitations of these strategies

We then reflect on the near-future sustainability and scope of 'childhood' as a global governmental strategy, asking whether 'residual childhoods' are being normalized.

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