The church space as a cultural and material context of musical activities for infants

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The infants live their everyday life mostly at home surrounding. However, many of them also participate in different kind of organized family activities with their parents. For example, musical activities for babies and their mothers are popular and they can support mother-infant interaction (Marjanen 2009) and well-being of families (Pantsu 2010).

In Finland, musical activities for babies are organized, for example, by musical institutions. Also, the congregations of Evangelic Lutheran Church of Finland provide musical activities that are held mostly in parish halls and playing rooms. At the same time, in Denmark, many families participate in ’Babysalmesang’, baby hymn singing. It is a special musical activity for babies that it is held mostly in the church space (Vejrup Nielsen 2015). Meetings include singing hymns and other songs, playing and exploring the church space, for example lighting candles and exploring the baptismal font.

In this presentation, I focus on one special context of material culture of everyday life that is musical activities for infants and their mothers in the church space. This research is a part of my ongoing doctoral study in the field of religious education. The question is: What kind of interaction do the infants have with the church space during the musical activity? The church space is studied as an educational context from the perspective of sociocultural theories.

The data was collected in Denmark 2012 and in Finland in 2016 by observing, recording videos and interviewing the mothers and instructors. During the activity, the participants interact with the specific context including traditional religious music and the church space with special acoustics, religious artefacts and the architecture of the sanctuary.

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