Caring as predominantly ‘silent’, sociomaterial acts of mutual well-becoming

*Niklas Alexander Chimirri
Roskilde University, Denmark

Human beings express their care for one another via a wide variety of communicative or expressive acts, of which only a miniscule part are verbal. And yet, it is via words and concepts that human beings primarily come to negotiate and agree on fellow notions of well-being, including agreements of what good care in childrearing institutions entails. This verbal/non-verbal discrepancy becomes particularly evident when investigating children’s contributions to promoting one another’s as well as one’s own well-being, as a current participatory practice study situated at the Danish Center for Early Childhood and Care Research underlines: While acts of promoting well-being through caring pervade daycare institutions, the language available for negotiating and agreeing on which direction our mutual caregiving is to take tends to either draw on technocratic indicator models alienated from everyday practice, or on everyday concepts that can describe some of the more immediate emotional experiencing but have a difficult time projecting current practice into the future. Both possibilities render it difficult to ground negotiations and agreements on the directionality of mutual caregiving processes in the everyday life conducted across children and adults at a daycare.

In order to sustainably tackle this discrepancy in the attempt of communicating and acting on well-being together across generational orderings, the contribution at hand exemplifies empirical and conceptual possibilities for communicatively exploring acts of well-becoming. These acts are not only immanently social, as they are always already grounded in everyday life conducted together with others. It is also immanently material, and it is precisely this latter theoretical clarification that is necessary for expanding the scope of communicative acts towards mutual well-becoming to include non-verbal expressions. The aim of the presentation is finally to argue for a processual-relational methodology that focuses on exploring the material dimension of well-being from within practice. It suggests ‘sociomaterial conduct of everyday life’, ‘acts of mutual well-becoming’ as well as ‘transgenerational teleogenetic collaboration’ as fundamental concepts in order to ground understandings and negotiations of practicing well-being through caring in fellow everyday life, including that of the researcher.

Keywords: participatory methodology, mutual caregiving, transgenerational teleogenetic collaboration, nonverbal communicative action