

Creating space for ‘the political’ in environmental and sustainability education practice: A Political Move Analysis of educators’ actions

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Abstract

Literature about education’s role in realising a more sustainable world emphasises the importance of acknowledging democratic and political challenges in environmental and sustainability education (ESE). This article offers an empirically grounded theoretical and methodological contribution to future research on how ‘the political’ is introduced, handled and experienced in ESE practice. It presents an analytical method, ‘Political Move Analysis’, for investigating how educators’ actions open-up or close down a space for the political in learners’ meaning-making. The method has been developed through empirical case studies that allowed to identify a variety of ‘politicising’ and ‘de-politicising moves’ performed by educators. Through these moves, educators can engage in very diverse teaching practices which differently affect the direction of people’s meaning-making. These findings are theoretically discussed in view of how to understand the entanglement of the educative and the political in ESE. Prospects for future research and for inspiring teaching practice are pointed out.

Keywords: environmental and sustainability education, ecological footprint, community supported agriculture, the political, transaction, epistemological move analysis, political move analysis

1. Introduction: Education and the political challenge of building a more sustainable world

The UN Agenda 2030 (UN 2015) clearly demonstrates that the pursuit of a more sustainable world is one of the most important and difficult challenges today. As it is the case with many societal problems (Simons and Masschelein 2006), sustainable development is often regarded to be a *learning* challenge (Van Poeck et al. 2014), i.e. a challenge that can be met by teaching and learning the proper solutions, desirable attitudes, correct behaviour, necessary competences, etc. Policy-makers (e.g. UNESCO 2015) as well as scholars repeatedly argue for ‘learning our way out’ of unsustainability (Finger and Asún 2001). However, the role of education in tackling societal problems is not self-evident. It is the subject of an on-going discussion in educational scholarship and, specifically in relation to education’s role in realising a more sustainable world, several scholars emphasise the importance of acknowledging democratic and political challenges in environmental and sustainability education

(ESE). In particular, both educational theorists and ESE researchers emphasise the importance of paying attention to ‘the political’ (Mouffe 2005) within educational practices. Considering that sustainability issues are often very uncertain and controversial (both in factual and normative terms) and drastically affect our planet and its inhabitants it is argued that sustainability issues raise major democratic challenges. Facing the omnipresent controversy arising in the pursuit of sustainable development, ESE researchers argue that being mindful of dissonant and conflicting voices is crucial (e.g. Lundegård and Wickman 2007; Knutsson 2013; Van Poeck et al. 2016; Sund and Öhman 2014). Theories of radical democracy developed by Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe have inspired educational scholars to conceptualise the relation between the educative and the political by acknowledging conflict as an integral part of education (e.g. Biesta 2011; 2012; Todd 2010; Säfström 2011; Ruitenberg 2009). Both Mouffe and Rancière reject a consensual understanding of democratic politics. For Rancière (2003), politics is ‘dissensus’. Mouffe (2005) criticises a rationalist approach that denies the ineradicable character of antagonism and the existence of conflicts for which a rational solution can never be found. Democratic politics, she argues, always requires making choices between conflicting alternatives. It is a matter of passion and commitment, arising from people’s dreams and desires, and requires a common symbolic space where conflict can emerge.

With this article we want to nurture this on-going debate and to progress theory development on education in relation to sustainability challenges by further conceptualising how the educative and the political are intertwined in ESE practice. We explicitly aim, however, to move beyond a purely theoretical discussion of this issue. Whereas, from such a theoretical point of view, researchers increasingly argue for ‘alternative pathways that can challenge and complement mainstream [ESE] research’ which is too strongly ‘embedded in a postpolitical logic’ (Knutsson 2013, 105); or for repoliticising ESE by ‘unmasking the political dimension [...] seeing beyond the relativist and objectivist divide and using passion as a moving force’ (Sund and Öhman 2014, 639), there is currently not much empirical research literature available that examines and describes how such political challenges are actually approached in ESE *practice* (Rudsberg and Öhman 2010). Some exceptions, however, show the potential of attempts to apply this growing interest in ‘the political’ in ESE to empirical studies, e.g. Lundegård and Wickman’s (2012) analysis of how students constitute political subjects in discourses on sustainable development, Van Poeck et al.’s (2016) case studies on different ways to deal with conflicting interests, values, concerns, etc. in ESE practices, Håkansson’s (2016) work on how students make meaning of experiences of antagonism in ‘political moments’, Öhman and Öhman’s (2013) case study that showed how students tend to avoid to confront each other with conflicting views in discussions on climate change and Håkansson et al.’s (forthcoming) construction of an empirically grounded categorisation of different types of practical manifestations of the political dimension of ESE (‘the political tendency’) and how this brings about different kinds of educational practices. We believe that substantial additional empirical research has to be done in view of observing and deepening our understanding of how the entanglement of the political and the educational takes shape in concrete practices. Therefore, we develop and present an analytical method that can foster future research in this respect. Empirical research on introducing, handling and experiencing the political in educational practice can be oriented towards a variety of aspects: the subject matter, educational tools, discourses, student interactions, learning environments, etc. Here, as we will further explain below, we focus on educators’ actions, i.e. their teaching practice (practical and conversational interventions) and what this brings about in view of creating a space for the political in learners’ meaning-making.

Thus with this article we want to offer an empirically grounded theoretical and methodological contribution to the field of ESE on an, in our view, topic of major importance. First, we outline the theoretical background that underpins the method we developed. That is, we explain how we conceptualise ‘the political’ and how transactional theory on teaching and learning inspired our analytical perspective. Next, we describe how we expand the analytical framework of Epistemological Move Analysis into ‘Political Move Analysis’. We then show how we developed the method through an empirical study of two educational practices in Belgium. Analysing how the political is introduced and handled in the activities we observed allows us to identify a variety of ‘politicising’ and ‘de-politicising moves’ performed by the educators. Next, we re-address these moves from a meaning-making perspective, thereby showing how the diverse teaching practices we identified differently

affect the direction that meaning-making takes. Finally, we theoretically discuss our results in view of how to understand the entanglement of the educative and the political in ESE, we put forward some prospects for future empirical research as well as for how the presented analytical method could be translated into a didactic model that, we hope, could contribute to preparing (future) educators to deal with the political in ESE.

2. Theoretical background: 'The political' and 'the educative' in ESE

2.1. The political

Before engaging in an empirical analysis and deepening our understanding of how 'the political' can emerge and be handled in ESE practice, it is vital to elaborate on this key concept of our study by specifying what we consider its crucial features.

First, the experience of the political is always related to 'something that matters'. As Marres (2005) argues, it is always an issue, a common concern that brings about public involvement in politics. A public, then, is caught up in the issue at stake by all kinds of institutional, material, economic, biological, legal... ties as well as by being commonly touched, implicated and mobilised. In the issue of climate change, for example, diverse actors are commonly involved through various kinds of attachments such as the economic interests of the automobile industry, the physical characteristics of greenhouse gasses, Western consumers' association of materialism with the idea of the good life, rising sea levels and Maldivians' fear of losing their habitat.

Drawing on the work of John Dewey, Marres argues that an issue qualifies as a public affair if private and public interests are entangled and stresses that actors are not only jointly but also *antagonistically* implicated in the issue. What binds actors is that, in order for them to take care of an issue, they must take into account the effect it has on others. Latour interestingly elaborates upon this by referring to the etymology of the old word 'Thing' or 'Ding' that originally designated a certain type of archaic assembly. Early senses of the word included 'meeting' and 'matter', 'concern' as well as 'inanimate object'. Ancient Icelandic deputies, for instance, were called 'thingmen' and gathered in the 'Althing', in an isolate place where disputes were addressed. This old etymology shows, according to Latour, that we don't assemble because we agree or because of any common lifestyle, interest, or commitment. Instead, 'we are brought by divisive matters of concern into some neutral, isolated place in order to come to some sort of provisional makeshift (dis)agreement' (Latour 2005, 13). The Ding or Thing thus means 'the issue that brings people together *because* it divides them.' (Latour 2005, 13 – emphasis in original). Thus, it is precisely the irreconcilability between different, entangled private-public interests that turns certain problems into *political* issues.

For someone who experiences the political, there is thus always something at stake. It involves passion and commitment. Together with others, (s)he is affected by a matter of public concern through irreconcilable yet emotionally invested values, interests, ideals, concerns, etc. As (s)he has no indifferent relation to the issue at stake, an awareness of the possibility that one's passions and commitments are not taken into account can bring about a deep experience that moves beyond the purely rational-cognitive level. The one who experiences the political is emotionally engaged since there is something at stake that concerns him/her deeply.

Marres (2005; 2010) interestingly refers to this state of affectedness with the notion of 'attachment': a mode of being affected by something whereby one is both actively committed to an object of passion *and* dependent on it (Marres, 2005). As one's pleasure, fate, way of life and perhaps even the meaningfulness of one's world is conditioned by it, one must do a lot of work so as to sustain this object of passion. Marres' claim that actors are not only jointly but also antagonistically implicated in matters of public concern stems from the acknowledgement that they have divergent attachments and the care for these attachments is threatened by other, irreconcilable attachments.

The occurrence of the political is thus also connected to the enactment and experience of an unavoidable decision of inclusion and exclusion concerning the conflictual attachments at stake. This

implies a struggle over what to take into account, what to care about – and what not. Referring to Laclau and Mouffe’s (2001, xi) concept of ‘undecidability’ we can understand this as an inescapable decision that has to be taken ‘in an undecidable terrain’. This experience of undecidability reveals the inherent *political* nature of what is at stake. This differs from a moral, ontological or epistemological point of view in that it recognises the fact that this decision cannot be grounded in a universal ethical foundation (Sund and Öhman 2014) or in an absolute conception of scientific ‘truth’ (Ashley 2000) regarding the mutual exclusivities between various attachments. Both the experience of undecidability and of the inevitable process of inclusion and exclusion come together in a political situation. They occur simultaneously in the enactment of the irreconcilability of the actors’ attachments (Marres 2005). As such, the political pops-up on that moment when the point at which attachments prove exclusive is made manifest. It is about demonstrating publicly that something must give way by taking seriously the irreconcilability of attachments.

Table 1: The political

Key features of ‘the political’
– Focus on matters of public concern in which diverse actors are jointly involved
– Entanglement of irreconcilable private and public interests
– Something at stake: passions, commitments, values, interests, ideals, concerns, etc.
– Confrontation of mutually exclusive yet emotionally invested attachments
– Inevitable decision of inclusion and exclusion regarding what to care about
– Undecidability: lack of universal ethical or rational foundation for decision-making

2.2 A transactional perspective on teaching and learning

Transactional educational theory (e.g. Dewey 1938; Dewey and Bentley 1949) offers an interesting perspective to further conceptualise how the educative and the political come together in ESE practice. It draws attention to processes in which both people and their surroundings (the self and the world) transform continuously and reciprocally, i.e. ‘in transaction’. As Dewey (1938, 43) argues, ‘an experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment’. The latter encompasses both the social and physical surroundings. It can consist of persons with whom one is talking, the subject talked about, a book one is reading, materials used, imaginations, etc. Learning and meaning-making, then, are understood as processes that take place through such encounters between a person and an environment. Meaning is not seen as a static cognitive property that can be achieved but as something that is dynamically made and transformed in and by action. It comes about through a continuous process of doing and undergoing the consequences of acts. Hence, continuity and change are seen as two sides of the same coin:

‘every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences. For it is a somewhat different person who enters into them. ... [T]he principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after.’ (Dewey 1938, 35)

Meaning-making is always related to previous experience through the process of re-actualisation: it is through this re-actualisation of experience in a new encounter that both the present situation and the previous knowledge acquire new meaning on which subsequent experiences can build. Teaching and learning is thus viewed as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience leading out into an expanding world of subject-matter, facts, information, ideas, etc.

Hence, offering learners opportunities to experience and make meaning of the political in ESE practice requires encounters – through conversations with peers and educators, inquiry on the subject matter, texts and materials used, etc. – that foster people’s exposure to what we defined as key features of the political (see 2.1): issues of public concern, a diversity of actors caught up in them, intertwined and irreconcilable private and public interests, passions, values, emotions, commitments, inevitable decisions of inclusion and exclusion, etc. In the next sections (3-4), we present an analytical method developed for empirically investigating this with a focus on how the educator’s actions affect the

students' meaning-making. Subsequently (5) we take the analysis and discussion a step further by exploring the influence of educators' actions from a meaning-making perspective.

3. Constructing an analytical method: Political Move Analysis

3.1 Expanding Epistemological Move Analysis

For the development of an analytical method that allows researchers to empirically investigate whether and, if so, how educators' actions enable encounters that expose learners to the political, we drew inspiration from an earlier developed and well-tested analytical method: Epistemological Move Analysis (EMA). EMA has been developed by Lidar, Lundqvist and Östman (2006) with the purpose of clarifying the actions that educators perform in order to guide students in their learning process and the effects of these actions in terms of learning and meaning-making. Using this approach, the analysis of empirical material centres around the analytical concept named 'epistemological moves' – interventions by the educator that bring about a change or enforcement of the direction of students' meaning-making. In transactions with learners, educators perform many actions – both practical and conversational – that communicate which knowledge, skills, values etc. are valid and which are not as well as which ways of creating these knowledge, skills, values, etc. are correct and which are not in a given situation (Lidar et al. 2006). These actions can affect what is taken into account and what is not and thereby govern the learning process in a certain direction. EMA was designed to analyse such processes of what Wertsch (1993) calls 'privileging'. Participants in the meaning-making process evaluate and judge certain meanings, questions, artefacts, and so on, as reasonable, while others – although fully conceivable – are either ignored or disregarded (Lidar et al. 2006; Östman 2010). The effect of privileging – which is a process of inclusion and exclusion – is that meaning-making takes a certain direction and is thereby directed towards certain content. Through EMA it is possible to describe the role that educators play in the students' privileging process. EMA can thus be characterised as 'a high-resolution analysis of how people proceed with their activity and what the learning consequences are' (cf. Östman 2010, 83), an approach with resemblance to how Latour and Woolgar (1986) analyse meaning-making in scientific research. Doing so allows taking into account both the process and the content of learning as well as their relationships, all vital aspects when it comes to fulfilling educational purposes.

EMA has been used in different studies (e.g. Lidar et al. 2006; Rudsberg and Öhman 2010) to examine the role of teachers in helping students to identify what counts as *knowledge*, what they need to pay attention to, and what is the proper way to create knowledge. As the method has thus been used within epistemologically oriented practices it is centred around the key concept of '*epistemological moves*'. In line with our somewhat different research interest in how *the political* is introduced, handled and experienced in educational practices, we will now expand the method of analysing educators' moves by introducing '*political moves*' as the key concept of what we will call 'Political Move Analysis' (PMA). EMA and PMA share a common interest in how educators' actions affect people's privileging process, yet with PMA the attention moves from an epistemological focus on knowledge to a focus on the political. As we will show, identifying and describing a variety of 'politicising' and 'de-politicising' political moves allows researchers to explore how educators can, respectively, open-up or close down a space for 'the political' in ESE practices. That is to say, it enables us to observe and better understand educators' impact on whether or not – or to what extent – the above described key features of the political are taken into account (i.e. privileged) in the meaning-making process¹.

3.2 An empirically constructed analytical method

We developed the PMA method by purposefully engaging with carefully selected empirical material. The purpose that guided our work, is the above elaborated ambition to foster theoretical and empirical research on how the political and the educative are entangled in ESE practice and, more specifically, to develop a method that is useful for analysing how educators' actions open-up or close down a space

¹ It is also possible to conduct a PMA of learners' interventions (e.g. in classroom discussions, deliberation and argumentation activities), but here we focus on educators' interventions.

for ‘the political’ in ESE practices. In line with the pragmatist insights underlying the development of EMA (see further below), we here also opted for an *empirically grounded* development of the analytical method (i.e. PMA).

Through purposeful sampling we selected two information-rich cases (Patton 2002) that allowed us to explore a diversity of educators’ moves in ESE practices. A research project consisting of 7 case studies² in Belgium (Van Poeck 2013) provided us with a rich body of empirical material: documents (78), transcripts of audio-recorded in-depth interviews (19) as well as field notes and transcripts of video-recorded direct observations of educational activities (45) that varied in duration from half an hour to maximum a whole day. In view of our intention to conduct a ‘high-resolution’ analysis of educators’ actions, only the transcripts and field notes of observations were useful for identifying and describing political moves. Scrutinising the variety of data as well as earlier research on the same cases allowed us to select the transcripts, video-recordings and field notes of 2 of the observed activities of which we could reasonably assume that they would be information-rich in relation to our research interest. The first case we selected is a guided tour of a CSA farm (Community Supported Agriculture) for a group of students in bioscience engineering. They visited this farm, besides others, in the context of a master course on ‘sustainable production systems’. The students were accompanied by their professor and the tour was guided by the farmer. It is the latter that we consider the educator in this activity and, thus, we focus on the political moves he performs. The second case is a workshop about the ecological footprint for employees of a printing company. The activity was organised within working hours and given by a freelance educator of an environmental organisation that aims to promote ecological behaviour change. Scrutinising the empirical material, i.e. verbatim transcripts of the Dutch-spoken video-recorded conversations complemented with descriptions of the observed non-verbal aspects of the setting (gestures, movements, material context, etc.), revealed that both cases would allow us to identify and analyse an abundance of educator interventions in the conversations that were highly interactive and lasted for more than 2 hours. Furthermore, earlier research on these cases showed that the participants of the guided tour on the farm were offered many opportunities to explore controversies on sustainable agriculture as well as the conflictual attachments of a variety of actors (Van Poeck and Vandenaabeele 2014) while in the ecological footprint workshop the room for conflict and contestation was limited (Van Poeck et al. 2016). In line with this, an analysis of both cases in view of constructing ‘the political tendency’ (Håkansson et al. forthcoming), which is a classification of different ways to deal with the political dimension of ESE, shows that whereas dialogues during the ecological footprint workshop can be characterised as ‘normative deliberation’ (oriented towards an a priori specified result put forward by the educator as the only correct one), the conversation on the CSA farm is largely characterised as ‘conflict-oriented deliberation’ (oriented towards opening up for the conflictual, for raising and defending opposite and contesting perspectives). Considering all this, we assumed that the selected cases were information rich both in terms of the number of observable educator interventions and as an empirical basis that would allow us to identify and explore ‘politicising’ as well as ‘de-politicising’ moves.

We deliberately chose to analyse observed activities in order to develop the PMA method instead of, for instance, interviewing teachers about their actions, because we wanted to observe what educators’ interventions *brought about* in concrete interactions rather than trying to grasp the *intentions* they have with their actions. Dewey’s pragmatism and Wittgenstein’s approach to language conceive of the dualist distinction between an inner mind and an outer reality as a theoretical construct (Öhman and Östman 2007; Rudsberg and Öhman 2010). Not pre-supposing an a priori separation of mind and reality makes it possible to study intention *as* action. If one does not believe that an absolute neutral position, outside human practices, exists where the world can be perceived regardless of our needs and actions, it is not necessary to think of knowledge and truth in universal terms (Lidar et al. 2006). Instead, knowledge and truth can be perceived as ‘a truly human enterprise’ (Ibid., 150) and epistemology can be understood as a practice, as an integral part of everyday discourse practice. This

² An environmental education centre, an organisation that offers workshops for ecological behaviour change for adults, a regional centre for action, culture and youth, the project ‘Environmental Performance at School’, the ‘Transition Towns Network’ in Flanders, a ‘transition arena’ aiming to make a city climate neutral and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm

means that we avoid having to guess the educator's intention as the latter becomes visible through how people respond to his/her actions. In methodological terms this implies that at least three turns need to be analysed in order to define the effect of the educator's actions, i.e. in order to grasp changes or enforcements in learners' privileging process. Such a three-turn analysis can have the structure of 1) an educator's action, 2) students' responses, and 3) the consequences of students' responses on the educator's reaction. Whether or not the educator experiences the students' responses as in line with his/her intervention will be visible in his/her subsequent action. Another possible structure is 1) a student's utterance, 2) the educator's response, and 3) the student's reaction. Here, too, the change or enforcement in the privileging process becomes visible in the third turn. As our analysis below shows, however, in practice it is often necessary to take into account more than 3 turns in order to grasp the privileging that takes place since real-life conversations are often less linear and more complicated than the two abovementioned structures (e.g. because people refer back to previous utterances, connect different lines of reasoning, etc.).

Our analysis started with repeatedly examining the video-recordings and transcripts of the discussions. Doing so, we became increasingly acquainted with the conversations and searched for sequences related to our specific interest for the political in ESE practices. We identified and selected situations where the political was introduced in the conversation – be it by the educators' interventions or by the students' (re)actions. The key features of the political outlined in table 1 guided the identification of these situations and, thus, the selection of transcript excerpts that were further analysed. Then, we coded actions performed by the educators in relation to their function for how the political was handled within their teaching activities. In particular, we aimed to identify a variety of political moves through which an educator can maintain, enable, foster or prevent the enactment and experience of the political in ESE practice. An iterative process of examining the transcripts, identifying and coding actions, comparing the functions and modifying the coding accordingly facilitated the identification of different categories of 'politicising' and 'de-politicising' political moves. Two criteria guided our categorisation: internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton 2002). In the next section, we demonstrate our PMA method, present the identified political moves and illustrate our findings with excerpts of the transcripts that have been translated to English, thereby trying to reflect the original wording.

4. Identifying political moves

In order to elucidate how educators' actions open-up or close down a space for the political we identified different 'politicising' and 'de-politicising' moves, using the key features elaborated above (see Table 1) as a guiding framework for our analysis. We draw on exemplary excerpts of transcripts from the CSA case to present and illustrate our findings regarding politicising moves and on pieces of data from the ecological footprint workshop to elaborate the identified de-politicising moves³.

4.1. Politicising moves

The guided tour on the CSA farm starts in a hangar where the students, the professor and the farmer stand in a circle. The students make notes and the farmer introduces the idea of what he calls 'the three Ps', which stand for 'Planet', 'People' and 'Profit': three concerns that you must take into account when you work as a farmer. He tells the students that he believes that Planet should be the first concern, but that others might think People or Profit should be the first one. Thus, from the very start, he sets up a prioritising framework for the reasoning. He then tries to start a discussion with the students, urging them to articulate their points of view:

Excerpt 1

³ This does not mean, however, that only politicising moves were detected in the first case and only de-politicising moves in the second. On the contrary, our analysis also revealed some de-politicising moves (e.g. rationalising moves) on the part of the CSA-farmer. It would thus be a far too simplistic conclusion to characterise the studied practices as either homogeneously politicising or de-politicising (see also below: 4.3). Yet, our choice to illustrate our findings that way is driven by a concern for clearly presenting and demonstrating the PMA method.

1. *Farmer: Now I don't know if this ties in somehow with your vision of agriculture? ...*
2. *(He looks around in the group. Students take notes, others look at him. Nobody answers his question.)*
3. *Farmer: Shall I answer how I think you look at this. Then you can contest me if (inaudible)... (laughter)*
4. *Student 1: Agriculture must be productive. So much... not as much as possible, it's still the intention, yes to produce food and to make sure there's enough.*
5. *Farmer: Yes, so for you the P for profit takes precedence?*
6. *Student 1: Yes (nodding)*

The farmer connects student 1's answer that 'agriculture must be productive' to the Triple P concept he introduced, framing productivity (producing enough food) as an aspect of 'Profit'. He avoids a consensual understanding of the Triple P (e.g. as a 'balance' between three equally important aspects) by asking the student if, for him, the third P is the most important one (line 5), with the consequence that the student nods. Thus, he continues to enforce the prioritising reasoning by making this **hierarchisation move**, as we label it, which makes the student take a stand on which concerns take precedence and, consequently, which must give way. Doing so, the farmer indicates that there are irreconcilable attachments at stake. Instead of conceiving sustainability as realising win-win situations and balancing social, economic and ecological concerns, he highlights that 'Profit' and 'Planet' are to a certain extent mutually exclusive and that every stand on (sustainable) agriculture, thus inevitably implies decisions of inclusion and exclusion.

After a discussion with the students on the notion of 'Profit', the farmer proceeds with relating farmers' financial concerns to the history of agricultural policy:

Excerpt II

7. *Farmer: I think few farmers in Flanders can say I have 2,000 euro on my account every month, as a wage (...) that I can spend for myself, privately... I don't know if there are farmers here, or children of farmers? ... (Student 1 nods) Well, you don't have to tell me, I can speak for myself, don't I? Or when I look at my colleagues. There are few, you know... I just want to ask you the question to be somewhat confrontational. Because it is not straightforward in this society, farming...*
8. *But tell me if I am being too confrontational or if I also say something that doesn't make sense OK? Because this is just my subjective story.*
9. *If I look at it, it's very difficult to reverse that order isn't it. The difference with a farmer, what you say, that it's something different than a bank, right, pure money, making profit then indeed... a farm is much about financing, paying off, interests, rearranging interests, rearranging loans and making your farm grow to make profit, or, to pay off previous loans. What happened since the fifties...*
10. *But you can object me, right, I really want it to be a dialogue.*
11. *Since the... after the Second World War they devised a plan. Never again hunger in Europe. Fantastic idea. (...) Hunger has to be dispelled. Everybody has drinking-water. Well, these are very good intentions. The side effect is that agriculture became better, stronger, that it began to become more capital-intensive and that it, in fact, as a system, has been drawn out of the regular, normal economic circuit. (...) And we start with giving subsidies. We start, as a government, to manipulate that economy a bit so that there's financial support.*
12. *(...) (The farmer goes on with quite a long talk about the history of agricultural policy in Europe. He elaborates on what he considers negative side effects of it: centralisation, export, intensification and farmers losing autonomy and becoming increasingly dependent on banks and market conditions.)*
13. *So it's the third P that now has the upper hand in agriculture. All the farmers are tearing their hair out and actually their closest relationship is with their bank manager.*

Repeatedly in his teaching, for example in line 8 and 10 above, the farmer explicitly calls on the students to object his explanation and opinion if they disagree with him. There are situations where the students react on his utterances in a way that shows that they become provoked and start to contest the farmer's explanation and opinion as for example in excerpt III below. In such situations we can say that the teacher has made a **controversy creating move** (e.g. line 14). As the deliberation continues, students indeed increasingly voice divergent points of view and more and more students get involved

in the discussion. This move thus opens-up the political in the deliberation through making the students raise and defend opposite and contesting perspectives.

Here (excerpt II), however, it is the farmer himself who proceeds. He connects his own and other farmers' particular, private concerns such as low wages and struggling with loans and interests (line 7, 9) to larger matters of public concern such as dispelling hunger in post-war Europe (line 12). By doing so, he draws attention to the entanglement of public and private interests, thereby illustrating how diverse actors are commonly implicated in the issue of agriculture through joint and antagonistic attachments, that is, through all kinds of institutional, historical, economic, legal ties, etc. We call this a **public-private move**. In Excerpt III below – which is the direct continuation of the conversation after excerpt II – we observed a student's reaction to this public-private move, in combination with yet another controversy-creating move (line 14). The farmer asks the students if what he has uttered about the entangled public-private interests can be accounted to be true or not. Student 2 agrees that it is true, but then pursues with a counter statement, thereby continuing and further expanding the controversy: 'but as a farmer it's your choice whether to start a business or not' and 'whether you want to get involved with the banks' (line 15, 17). The counter status of the utterance is visible in the word 'but'. Student 2 emphasises that it is the farmers' own – i.e. private – choice whether or not to go along with this tendency. The farmer agrees with this statement (line 16) and continues (line 18) by pointing out that such a decision has a far-reaching impact on the particular situation of individual farmers. By elaborating on his personal struggles and emphasising the tangible consequences his choice brought about (e.g. 'no financial support for us', 'we fall by the wayside', 'it is hard work', etc.) and he continues to enact this issue as a matter of public concern in which irreconcilable public and private interests and commitments are entangled and at risk of being excluded.

Excerpt III

14. *Farmer: Well, you can say if it's true or not OK?*

15. *Student 2: No, it's true, but as a farmer it's your choice whether to start a business or not isn't it?*

16. *Farmer: Yes, that's true.*

17. *Student 2: So yes, you choose whether you want to get involved with the banks.*

18. *Farmer: You have this choice. And I think lots of farmers are losing sleep over that. They think I don't want to do that or I go along to a certain level or I don't go along... (...) So we actually have put the first P first. We said: we go for the Planet. Profit is part of the game, that's only durability for us. We will be very careful and if we attract capital we won't do it just like that. We won't buy new machines but try to buy second-hand machines and so on. Therefore we directly miss out on financial support. No financial support for us. Everything that's a small investment, less than 15,000 euro, is ineligible since 2010. So we fall by the wayside again. If you choose, very consciously, for the P, that we are going to start with nature, and we start as a farmer but we are not going to get involved in the business of building a new hangar or buying new tractors and starting a completely new business, then you get left by the wayside. So we are the turnaround in fact, we are causing the changeover with our business. I am not the only one in Europe, and certainly not in Flanders, that views agriculture like that. Now, it is hard work. (...) That means that we are really managing our crops, land and nature and people in a different way. And the last P, Profit, this will indeed be a difficult issue for us. That's why we need to work hard and get started... Any questions or comments?*

All taken together the analysis shows that the farmer's utterances in excerpt II, where he connects the private to the public, was countered by student 2 through going back to the private (emphasising the farmer's own choice in lines 15 and 17). Although the farmer agrees with what she brought into the deliberation (line 16), he relates her claim to personal experiences of exclusion, thus highlighting the entanglement between mutually exclusive attachments and re-connecting the private to the public (line 18). Such **public-private moves** make learners move back and forth between public and private concerns, in a manner showing what is at stake in inevitable decisions of inclusion and exclusion between conflictually entangled passions, commitments, values, interests, ideals, concerns, etc.

The questions and reflections of the students steer the continuation of the conversation. One of the subjects that were discussed in more detail is the issue of agricultural subsidies:

Excerpt IV

19. *Farmer: I don't receive any subsidies. And I also think that it would be very good to say that we are putting an end to them.*
20. *Student 2: But you also don't live from [agriculture]! (original emphasis)(raises her voice)*
21. *Farmer: I do live from it. (original emphasis)*
22. *Student 2: Oh, you said yourself that you don't pay yourself a wage! (raises her voice)*
23. *Farmer: Yes but that's different. You don't need a wage to be able to live from it. I eat from it. That's a big difference. If you think I've got 2,000 euro on my account at the end of the month. I think I've got 900 euro or something like that on my account.*
24. *Student 2: Yes but food alone doesn't get you far.*
25. *Farmer: No, but yes, that's what we have to do. That's the transition we have to make. That's the change we have to bring about. I think some major steps are going to be necessary to consciously address or handle it.*
26. *Student 1: Not everyone can do it though. It is nevertheless...*
27. *Farmer: Why not?*
28. *Student 1: What would we eat? If everyone... There's more, I mean yes...*
29. *Farmer: Then I'd say yes, ninety percent of farming throughout the world is managed like this.*
30. *Student 2: Yes, there are also I don't know how many going hungry.*
31. *Farmer: Yes, of course but that's because our onions and the chickens that are subsidised are exported to Benin, and to Toga and to the Gambia and wherever it is. (...)*
32. *Student 3: But isn't that the fault of Africa's agricultural policy, that they have taken the wrong approach?*

On line 19 the farmer takes a firm stand arguing that, in his view, financial support for farmers can be abolished, thus suggesting an exclusion of a particular attachment at stake in the controversy. The student responds by fighting against the suggested exclusion through connecting the statement of the farmer with non-seriousness: it is easy to have this opinion if one does not live from a farm, as she means he is not doing (line 20). Both the content of her intervention ('you don't live from it') and the raising of her voice show that she's emotionally engaged and has no indifferent relation to this issue. Indeed, during the conversation this student had said that her parents run a conventional pig farm. Thus, when it comes to decisions about agricultural subsidies, there is something at stake that concerns her deeply as her family's livelihood depends on it.

This is an example of what we call an **excluding-including move** where an educator makes the students contest a proposed decision of inclusion and exclusion regarding emotionally invested attachments. It is easy to imagine that it is not only a suggested exclusion that can cause controversy over the question what to care about. Also a suggestion of an inclusion can do so. For instance, a proposed inclusion of the concern for dispelling hunger could be a starting point for enacting the – to a certain extent – mutually exclusive concerns for productivity and care for the Planet. By performing an excluding-including move, decisions of inclusion and exclusion – that is, of which concerns are taken into account and which are not – are made manifest. Doing so allows to highlight the mutual exclusivity of different attachments. The dialogue between the farmer and the students that follows (line 21-23) shows how both are deeply engaged in this discussion, that, for them, there is something at stake. This is visible in their strong expressive mode: 'I do' (line 21) and the raise of the student's voice. This excluding-including move also enforced the on-going argumentative discourse in which the farmer and the students regularly contest each other's arguments and points of view – here for instance on what it means to earn a living (line 21-25) and whether or not the economic model suggested by the farmer could be mainstreamed (line 25-32).

Throughout the conversation, we observed how the farmer's interventions made the students privilege an argumentative discourse: taking a stand, defending one's position with arguments, contest the farmer's and each other's points of view with counter-arguments, etc. What made this happen, was the abundance of controversy creating moves made by the farmer. By performing these, he explicitly avoided a consensus-oriented conversation. The three other kinds of moves we identified (hierarchisation, exclusion-inclusion and public-private moves) complement the controversy creating moves by orienting the argumentative discourse towards a very specific focus on the political dimension of the issues at stake. It is obvious that combining controversy-creating moves with other types of interventions could privilege, for instance, an ethical or epistemological instead of political argumentative discourse in which people contest each other's position with moral or fact-based argument.

Table 2: Summary of politicising moves observed in this study

Politicising moves	Lines	Description
Controversy creating move:	8, 10, 14	This move makes the learners create, express and defend conflictual standpoints
Hierarchisation move	5	This move makes the learners prioritise amongst different alternatives and thus create a hierarchy of concerns by taking a stand on which concerns take precedence and, consequently, which must give way
Excluding-including move	19	This move makes the learners contest a proposed decision of inclusion and exclusion regarding emotionally invested attachments
Public-private move	7, 9	This move makes learners move back and forth between public and private concerns

4.2. De-politicising moves

The workshop on the ecological footprint⁴ starts with a PowerPoint presentation through which the educator explains the concept. After the presentation, the participants are divided into small groups to discuss behaviour clues for reducing their ecological footprints. After this exercise, each group has to report on their findings. The excerpts below are sequences of the whole group discussion that follows. After the first group has presented the results of their exercise, one of the participants explicitly demanded attention for a particular concern that emerged during their discussion:

Excerpt V

- a. *Woman 2: We also thought it interesting to reflect a bit. People in poor countries are on the look-out for drinking-water all the time*
- b. *Woman 3: Walk for miles to get water...*
- c. *Woman 4: Me too, formerly [she lived in Africa in the past]. Really. It doesn't matter now. (laughter) And we actually just stand in the shower and let all that water run down to us, what those people actually could drink. Well, if you give it a thought...*
- d. *Woman 3: We flush our toilet with it.*
- e. *Woman 2: But it would be very interesting if it would become more and more widespread to use rainwater for that.*
- f. *Educator: Let's look at them, the behaviour clues. (He shows the next slide of the presentation and starts to explain the several clues and their impact on the ecological footprint.)*

The fact that these participants deliberately demand attention for this issue as well as the repeated and explicit utterances of concern (line a, b, c, d, e) by several group members shows that it is not indifferent to them. Moreover, woman 4 voices a personal experience and commitment regarding the topic raised (line c) and woman 2 mentions that it would be interesting if it became more widespread to use rainwater (line e). The response of the teacher is to change focus towards explaining the behaviour clues in terms of facts and general guidelines that are part of his presentation and the workshop's scenario. This move has a re-orienting (Lidar et. al 2006) effect since it turns the participants' attention to something other than what they brought into the conversation and discussed. In terms of our focus on political moves, we can more specifically say that, by performing this **reinstating move**, the educator reinstates the participants' attention from particular, emotionally invested concerns, commitments and experiences towards the ecological footprint conceived in terms of predetermined and rationally calculated facts and behaviour guidelines. In the remainder of the conversation (after line f), the women do not return to the issue of drinking-water. It is the educator that teaches about the content of his presentation and the next intervention of a participant concerns a new topic, related to one of the clues addressed in the workshop's script. The effect of this move is that it shifts the focus from a concern-oriented dialogue towards a fact-oriented performance of a preconceived scenario focusing on a standardised transfer of knowledge and instructions. By performing such a move, the educator closes down the possibility for the participants to further articulate and explore the potential conflicts between different commitments at stake.

⁴ The ecological footprint is a standardised measure of human demand on nature representing the amount of biologically productive land and sea area necessary to supply the resources a human population and to assimilate associated waste (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. Ecological Footprint).

Another group reports on their findings. They reached the conclusion that their ecological footprint would benefit from using their cars less and biking or walking short distances:

Excerpt VI

- g. *Woman 5: One obvious improvement would be to bike or walk short distances.*
- h. *Educator: What would you consider a short distance?*
- i. *Woman 5: Going to the bakery, for instance.*
- j. *Educator: How much is that in miles?*
- k. *Woman 5: One and a half?*
- l. *Educator: No, let me help you out: in fact, we should bike any distance under 3 miles.*
- m. *Woman 6: Hello-o!! (laughter)*
- n. *Educator: Why 3 miles? Because cars consume most over short distances. (...)*
- o. *Woman 5: Then we also had to say why we found it difficult. We found it can be time-consuming at times.*
- p. *Educator: Remember the word I just used: planning?*
- q. *Woman 5: Yes, but still... Our kids, too. (...) That's why we thought it's not so convenient when you've got kids. In our view, a cart like that is more dangerous and a delivery trike is expensive. We've agreed among ourselves to use our bikes once our kids have grown.*

After urging them to be more specific regarding what a ‘short’ distance is, the educator disagrees (‘no’) and introduces a norm: ‘we should bike any distance under 3 miles’ (line l). Doing so, he indicates that this is not a matter of divergent opinions and considerations but a matter of fact (‘in fact’) that everyone should behave according to a certain standard. We call this a **norm installing move**. It makes the participants react and take a stand on the postulated standard about how to behave in a certain situation. Thus, the educator renders the conversation into a normative discourse. The first reaction is by woman 6 (line m) and indicates that she considers the norm raised by the educator unreasonable. The educator ignores her disagreement and continues by delivering a fact as a backing of the norm he suggested (line n). The reaction of woman 5 reveals how she responds to this claim by delivering an alternative backing for another, conflicting consideration: it is ‘time-consuming’ (line o). Next, the educator – again neglecting the emerging controversy – reacts with the statement that it is all a matter of ‘planning’ and one of the women agrees (‘yes’) while all the same indicating that she still thinks the consideration she raised is valid (line q). The educator’s reaction to invoke a fact as a justification for the proposed norm (line n) we call a **rationalising move**. By performing it, he re-orientes the conversation from a political discussion over conflicting concerns and commitments towards an epistemological discussion about facts. It makes the participants take a stand by either accepting the fact as a legitimate backing for the educator’s claim or delivering a factual reason that justifies their divergent opinion. The educator’s statement that it is all a matter of planning (line p) is a **closing move**. It makes the participants end their argumentation and agree on one particular normative conclusion: since it is only a matter of planning everybody should bike under the distance of 3 miles. As such, the educator again re-orientes the political – that is introduced into this conversation by repeated actions on the part of the participant – towards the epistemological (reducing conflictual concerns to consensus based on undisputable facts) and the moral sphere (reducing conflictual concerns to consensus based on moral principles for individual behaviour). Reducing one’s ecological footprint thus emerges as a matter of individual will and behaviour in accordance with universal and uncontested factual guidelines and moral standards.

Table 3: Summary of de-politicising moves observed in this study

De-politicising moves	Lines	Description
Reinstating move	f	This move makes the participants re-orient their attention from particular, emotionally invested concerns, commitments and experiences towards ‘the lesson’, which in this case is about the ecological footprint conceived in terms of predetermined and rationally calculated facts and behaviour guidelines
Norm installing move	l	This move makes the participants react and take a stand on the postulated standard about how to behave in a certain situation
Rationalising move	n	This move makes the participants take a stand concerning a factual justification for a proposed norm by either accepting the factual justification or delivering a factual reason that justifies a divergent

		opinion
Closing move	p	This move makes the participants end their argumentation and agree on, in this case, one particular normative conclusion

4.3. Summary and discussion: The political in ESE practices

Our analysis shows that the educator's actions can contribute to either opening-up or closing down a space for the political to emerge in ESE practice and largely affect the ways in which the political is handled. We tried to clarify this by identifying a range of politicising and de-politicising moves to characterise different teaching practices in this respect.

Our analysis of the guided tour of the CSA farm shows an educator, the farmer, who employs a combination of political moves that are politicising in the sense that they open-up possibilities for addressing and enacting the political in relation to the issues that are discussed. This allows the students and the educator to focus on the issue of sustainable agriculture as a matter of public concern in which diverse actors are jointly involved; to explore the entanglement of irreconcilable private and public interests; to articulate and experience that there is something at stake (passions, commitments, values, interests, ideals, concerns, etc.); to be exposed to the confrontation of mutually exclusive yet emotionally invested attachments; and to jointly face situations that imply inevitable decision of inclusion and exclusion regarding what to care about.

The political moves performed by the educator of the ecological footprint workshop, on the other hand, constitute a practice that is characterised by de-politicising interventions on the part of the educator. His interventions express an orientation of the lesson that focuses on the knowledge, facts, clues and guidelines that form the content of his presentation and the well-prepared workshop scenario. As a result, the participants' attempts to bring conflictual and emotionally invested concerns and commitments into the conversation are repeatedly countered and expressions or experiences of undecidability regarding the inclusion and exclusion of irreconcilable attachments are neutralised. What this second case shows, is that even if the potential of the political was present the teacher acted in a way that de-politicised this potential, e.g. by re-orienting the conversation from the political towards the moral or the epistemological sphere.

Obviously, besides the educators' interventions other aspects such as the learners' behaviour and the design of the activity, have a major influence on the space for the political in ESE. We can assume, for instance, that the educators' actions were also affected by the context in which they operated, that is, on the one hand a guided tour that was organised as a rather informal visit and talk and on the other hand a workshop with a strict and detailed scenario aimed at the well-defined objective of reducing the participants' ecological footprint. Out of the analysis of the first case one could draw the conclusion that with the right teaching technique the political can and will be staged. Such a conclusion would be too instrumental, however. If student 2, for example, would not have responded as she did, the educator's actions would never have created this situation. In the second case it is the opposite: the educator could have acted in a way that would have strengthened the attempts of the women to stage opposite and contesting views. Thus, even if the educator – or the learners – act in order to facilitate a political situation, the outcome thereof is unpredictable and uncontrollable. An experience of the political can, thus, be made latently present by an educator's action but it can never be guaranteed or taken for granted. Often, educational practices such as classroom conversations and pedagogical role play are aimed at engaging learners in a discussion about issues involving different and conflictual opinions, perspectives, values, standpoints, etc. and at reflecting on these deliberations. Yet, such forms of political deliberation and reflection will not necessarily include or affect the learners' personal and emotionally invested commitments and concerns but can be approached from a solely rational-cognitive perspective. The latency of the political in educational settings also means that, although many if not all sustainability issues indeed imply a variety of irreconcilable opinions, values, passions, interests, ideals, concerns, etc., the (potential) controversy over the latter will not automatically become manifest.

5. Learning and meaning-making through politicising and de-politicising teaching practices

We now take our analysis a step further by examining how educators' actions can bring about very different educational practices as to how educators and learners engage in a joint meaning-making process. In particular, we explore how the enacted politicising and de-politicising moves influence the direction of meaning-making through the specific privileging process that is encouraged by the educator's interventions.

In the discussion about walking or biking short distances during the ecological footprint workshop, for instance, we observed the educator staging reinstating, norm installing, rationalising and closing moves (see above: excerpt VI). In terms of privileging, i.e. of what is taken into account as reasonable, valid, relevant, correct on the one hand and what is ignored or disregarded on the other, it becomes clear that the educator's interventions affect the privileging process in line with the workshop's theme (the ecological footprint) and purpose (reducing the participants' footprint). That is, what is put forward as reasonable, correct and relevant considerations in relation to the issue at stake here, are specific norms, facts and behaviour guidelines that are well-known and determined in advance by the educator and subsequently transferred to the learners through the workshop. Thus, this de-politicising teaching practice influences the meaning-making and learning process in a particular direction. From a transactional perspective on teaching and learning (see above: 2.2) we can argue that, by affecting the privileging, the educators' actions affect the learners' *environment*. As Dewey (1938) argues, it is important to realise that only some aspects of the social and physical surrounding conditions become actualised in action and thereby become part of an experience, i.e. become 'an environment'. Privileging, then, is one of the mechanisms through which such a process of 'envirning' takes shape. PMA allows to grasp the effect of educator's intervention in this.

In the case of the CSA farm, we observed an educator influencing the privileging – and, thus, enviring – process in another direction. As we showed above, both the farmers' politicising moves and the students' responses to it contribute to a politicising privileging process: what appears to be important to take into account when addressing the issue of sustainable agriculture, is the diversity of actors involved, the passions, commitments, values, interests, ideals, concerns, etc. at stake for them, the entanglement of irreconcilable private and public interests, the mutual exclusiveness of emotionally invested attachments, and the need to make decisions that imply inclusion and exclusion.

Thus, the meaning-making emerging in the two cases are steered in very different directions as they come about through two qualitatively different kinds of transactions. In the first case, the educator and the workshop participants are engaged in normative and consensus-oriented deliberation. The educator's de-politicising moves do not only lead to the transfer of normative knowledge and guidelines but also has the effect that the women orient their deliberation towards reaching a consensus. In Excerpt VI, line q, for instance, we observed how they dealt with conflicting concerns about reducing their ecological footprint, a lack of time, the safety of their children and the high cost of a delivery trike by agreeing to use their bikes once their kids have grown. The students and the CSA-farmer, on the other hand, engaged in a much more conflict-oriented deliberation. In Excerpt IV, for instance, we observed them discussing different possible ways to understand what it means to earn a living. The farmer's interventions encourage the students to react by bringing in more arguments and conflicting considerations (e.g. hunger in the world, Africa's agricultural policy, etc.) thereby again staging the political as a key topic to take into account when addressing sustainable agriculture. This can be understood as a 'Deweyan' deliberation. As he argues, deliberation is a process where we deal with incommensurable values in conflict, not with the purpose of making the incommensurable commensurable, but with the purpose of creating something new:

'Deliberation is a work of discovery. Conflict is acute ... Deliberation is not an attempt to do away with this opposition of quality [by reducing it to commensurable quantities]. It is an attempt to uncover the conflict in its full scope and bearing' (Dewey 1922, 150 – cited in Garrison et.al 2015, 195).

The form of deliberation we observed in the ecological footprint workshop is very different since either divergent values and concerns are handled as commensurable, or the educator is making the participants privileging particular dominant values that subordinates and suppress all others.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The entanglement of the educational and the political in ESE practice

Our analysis of how educators' actions affect privileging processes that guide the meaning-making in ESE practices shows that an educational practice is always a 'concernful work of composition' (Goeminne 2012) that is, in itself, inherently *political* in the sense that its construction, or rather its composition, necessarily entails the demarcation of what is taken into account and what is not – that is, an inevitable struggle over what to care about. In this respect, the cases we analysed differ sharply as to the way in which this process of inclusion and exclusion is given shape. We found how, in a de-politicised practice, the educator strongly determined which concerns and commitments are to be taken into account and which much give way. He decides, in advance, which knowledge and factual as well as moral guidelines should be learned. Säfström (2011) calls this a 'schooling's practice, which he distinguishes from 'education'. Schooling, he argues, is based on the assumption that teaching and learning reveal the inner truth of society, in which one is supposed to occupy a predetermined place corresponding to that truth. Through schooling, the individual is introduced into a certain regularity and social order. Education, in contrast, enables us to emancipate ourselves, that is, it offers us the possibility of disidentification from the existing order. The kind of 'schooling' practice we observed in the ecological footprint workshop brings about a very particular relation between the educative and the political: *education as politics*, but with other means (Masschelein and Simons 2013). ESE, then, is about changing the world in a particular, pre-defined direction through education. In educational practice characterised by politicising moves, on the other hand, the educator does not hold the monopoly over the inclusion and exclusion of conflictual attachments. Instead, the latter is implied in a collective meaning-making process through which education opens-up a space – a Thing, in Latour's terms – in which sustainability issues can be discussed and around which concerned people can be assembled (Goeminne 2010) to open-up new understandings and new possibilities for the future. The educator and the learners deliberate together instead of the educator prioritising dominant values and norms and excluding all others. Viewed this way – and fully acknowledging *the political within education* – ESE is 'not just (about) changing the world but giving others the chance to do so' (Venturini 2010, 269).

6.2 Prospects for future research and for inspiring teaching practice

As mentioned, this article is meant as an empirically grounded theoretical and methodological contribution to nourishing further research on the entanglement of the political and the educational in ESE-practice and, in particular, on the impact of educators' teaching practice on creating a space for the political in learners' meaning-making. The empirical analysis we presented was conducted with this particular purpose and, as such, the findings we described and discussed are non-exhaustive and exploratory. Rather than pretending to represent a complete overview of how teachers' action can open-up or close down the space for the political in ESE, the study should be seen as a 'teaser' or invitation for much-needed additional empirical analyses. We are convinced, for instance, that applying EPA to other case studies will result in identifying and describing more and other kinds of politicising and de-politicising moves which will allow us to gain richer insights in the mechanisms of handling the political in ESE practice. Furthermore, much more work can and should be done in order to deepen our understanding of the impact of teachers' political moves on students' learning. A useful framework to do so is 'Practical Epistemology Analysis' (PEA), an analytical method created by Wickman and Östman (2002) on which EMA – and thus also PMA – is based. PEA approaches all meaning making as a matter of bridging gaps by constituting similarities and differences between the new and unknown and what is already known. It can be used to analyse in detail how teachers' politicising and de-politicising moves affect learning outcomes.

⁵ As our analysis shows, practical manifestations of the theoretical concept of 'schooling' are not necessarily limited to formal education in schools: here, we saw how a schooling practice took shape in a non-formal learning setting. All the same, it is possible to observe and characterise particular formal education practices in schools as 'education' instead of 'schooling'.

With this article, we did not only want to contribute to further theoretical and empirical research but we also hope that the ideas and empirical examples presented above (as well as in future research in this topic) may contribute to preparing educators to deal with the political in ESE. Not by providing detailed and ready-to-use guidelines and instructions but by inviting them to be attentive to and reflect on different possible ways of seeing, thinking about and acting within educational practices in which ‘the political’ can always pop up. As its appearance and impact cannot be guaranteed, predicted or planned out in advance, educators are inevitably left to their own devices when they face a (potential) emergence of ‘the political’ and have to think and decide by themselves how to react.

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Katrien Van Poeck is a postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University’s Centre for Sustainable Development. She conducts research in the field of environmental and sustainability education (ESE). Critically examining education’s role in building a more sustainable world fostered her interest in questions of democracy, controversy, citizenship and public involvement in the light of sustainability issues. She empirically analyses how these are addressed in ESE practices and policymaking and aims to contribute to further theoretical conceptualisation of the relation between education and politics from this specific perspective of sustainability issues. Thereby, she is particularly interested in the relation between ESE research, policy and practice.

Leif Östman is a professor in Curriculum Studies at Uppsala University in Sweden. He is director of the research Environment SMED (Studies of Meaning-making in Education Discourse), the Institute for Research in Education and Sustainable Development (IRESD), the Graduate School in ESD (GRESO) and Chairman at the Swedish International Centre of Education for Sustainable Development (SWEDES). He has published widely in the areas of EE/ESD, science education, curriculum theory, and sociocultural research. Pragmatism is the major source of inspiration together with the later work of Wittgenstein.

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