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Spaces of early childhood: Spatial approaches in research on early childhood education and care

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When Friedrich Froebel established his first 'Kindergarten' in late 1830s, he chose purposefully the name of this institute, dedicated to educating young children in radically new ways by means of play and guided activities. For him, the term 'Kindergarten' – the garden of children – signified two spaces "a garden for children, a location where they can observe and interact with nature, and also a garden of children, where they themselves can grow and develop in freedom from arbitrary imperatives"[1]. As a paradise 'given back to the children', the Kindergarten was construed as a confined, protected non-societal place where the innocent children could grow to full potential. Hence, as such a natural place aside from adult's society – that similarly to Rousseau he has seen as corrupted –, the kindergarten was not just a place for educating young children. Rather, it was a whole new kind of spatial arrangement to let the children come to their dignity in substance with god and nature and, therefore, become through their play the founders of a more human future society.

[1] http://www.froebelweb.org/

These foundational ideas of early childhood education demonstrates how ideas of children's nature and their proper education are very much bound to (utopian) spatial imaginaries and arrangements (e.g., Gulløv, 2003). With its idea of a non-societal place for the youngest, it furthermore shows how modern childhood cannot be understood without considering the processes of spatial separation – the "demarcation of specific places within which children are gathered, primarily for the purposes of play, learning and 'caring'" (Kernan & Devine, 2010, p. 371). Thus, the production of 'childhood spaces' was crucial for the modern process of institutionalizing childhood, based on the significant processes of children's 'relegation' away from the streets to the home, and from the labour market into schools, youth centers and the early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. As parts of the shifting 'civilizing project' (Gilliam & Gulløv, 2017) towards the youngest, those childhood spaces have ever been filled with images, expectations, rationales and norms about children's needs and nature. And this is also why, how Zeiher & Zeiher (1994) notes, the places that children find for themselves show specifically which position a society assigns to them (see also Aitken, 1994; Philo, 2000).

Given this underlying relation between *space* and *childhood,* the massive expansion of ECEC services taking place in recent decades (and decades earlier in former socialist regions) is thus not just accompanied by academic concerns about raising the quality of and professionalization within the field of ECEC. There is also a growing field of research that explores how this expansion of *early childhood spaces* reorganises the formerly 'private life' of the youngest and by that, reconstruct and change our concepts of children's place within society, the spatialities of proper childhood and the normal and good family as well (e.g., Dencik, 1989; Gulløv, 2003; Kjørholt & Qvortrup, 2012; Zeiher, 2009). Studies focusing on processes, such as the 'domestication' and 'insularisation' of childhood (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Zeiher, 2001) during the late modern period, give special attention to strategies of norming and civilising that operate within spatial regulations. In the case of the 'domestication' of children, the more and more disconnected, contained and supervised places assigned for children for instance extended children's regulation to their most specific activities, such as fine-motor skills in crafts and imaginary play, as developmentally beneficial domestic occupations for children. Likewise, more recent spatial regimes in early childhood, such as the flexibilization of ECEC services leading to more free use of time and space in day care institutions, positions children to become 'self-managing choice-makers' (Kjørholt & Seland, 2012; Millei, 2012). The constructions of *spaces for childhood,* therefore, do not only allocate

certain spaces to children. As interrelations of emplacement, positioning, and subjectivation they also form the basis for the day-to-day experiences of being a child. In other words: they locate children's shifting identities (Bollig, 2018).

It would be, however, misleading to understand institutional *childhood spaces* only as spaces of adult regulation of children in society. Spatial perspectives in childhood studies also raise important questions about children's own geographies, or *children's spaces* in contrast to those assigned to children by adults, such as children's services (Moss & Petrie, 2002). Based on the agency-paradigm of the so called *childhood studies* which consider children as active agents who lead their lives (e.g., Bollig & Kelle, 2016; Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig, 2009), there is also a rapidly expanding field of *children's geographies* which focus on how children create their own places and spaces in their encounters with private and public spheres, and how their learning and socialization processes are embedded in those (e.g., Blazek & Kraftl, 2015; Christensen & O'Brien, 2003; Holloway & Jöns, 2012; Holt, 2011; Mills & Kraftl, 2014). Related studies in the field of ECEC richly illustrate, for instance, how children use their spatial surroundings to make the transition to daycare (Brooker, 2014; Rutanen, 2017) and develop discrete spaces of well-being, autonomy and belonging within ECEC services and related peer cultural activities (Gallacher, 2005; Harrison & Sumsion, 2014; Løkken & Moser, 2012; Sumsion, Stratigos & Bradley, 2014). Both perspectives, *childhood spaces* and *children's spaces*, inform also a growing research field concerned with the changing topographies and landscapes of care and education (e.g., Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014; Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004).

Spatial Theorizations in ECEC

The expansion of ECEC services offered good examples for geographers to explore modernization processes and the separation, operation and negotiations of *childhood spaces* in society both from a structural, and sociological interest in children as social actors (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). The academic field of ECEC, however, had only sporadic discussions about the utility of spatial theorizations for the understanding of *childhood spaces* and *children's spaces*. In this introduction, therefore, we consider some productive ways to explore the continuously changing spatial regimes and the places and spaces creatively produced by children within these institutions. These studies are urgently needed, since in our societies currently undergoing rapid changes, places and spaces assigned for children and their rela-

tions to other spaces in society are also in flux. ECEC has less to do today with Froebel's radical conception of place aside from society, rather it is an important place within and serving significant roles in society.

Today, ECEC is considered as an economic enterprise that produces human capital for society (Kjorholt, 2013; Lightfoot & Peach, 2015; Millei & Joronen, 2016), and governments seek to solve societal problems through ECEC, such as the care crisis of modern society manifesting in balancing flexible employment requirements and child care responsibilities in families (Léon, 2014; Michel & Mahon, 2002). ECEC is also taken as a useful platform to solve issues of societal cohesion and nation building within countries reshaped by migration (Millei & Imre, 2015; Seele, 2016) or the increasing poverty, deprivation and disenfranchisement of young people (Moss, 2015; Urban, 2014). Within the EU-countries, for example, ECEC services are more and more conceptualized as community centres placed in the very heart of regional educational landscapes and serve as central bridges between family and society, at the same time extending governments' reach into the private lives of their citizens (e.g., Richter & Andresen, 2012). Understanding ECEC as very-societal places, therefore, does not only change our conceptions of the spaces assigned for and reconstructed by children, but also leads to questions about the changing spatialities between family, governments, society and ECEC.

Early childhood education and care has also become a societal place as a result of intertwined developments in multiple spheres of influence, such as children's rights movements recognising children as citizens in societies; the development of childhood studies considering children as agentic actors contributing to societies at present not only in the future; and ECEC research that facilitates the operationalisation of children's rights and participation in early childhood curricula and pedagogies and in broader society, for example, in areas of citizenship education, sustainability, or social and global justice. In children's services, children are increasingly granted agencies to act as citizens and participate in the governance of their lives (e.g., Millei & Imre, 2009), even though their political participation is limited (e.g., Millei & Kallio, 2018). They are also considered as 'global' and 'cosmopolitan' citizens who can contribute to solving large scale challenges of creating harmonious societies and tackling human caused global environmental crisis (Duhn, 2014; Hägglund & Pramling Samuelsson, 2009). These views on children and childhood first, acknowledge and encourage children to create their own spaces and lead their lives within those according to their decisions, and second, locate children firmly, but also in very ambiguous, am-

bivalent and ethically challenging relations with their families and societies as participants on their own rights.

All this shows the potential for investing more into research on the relations of childhood and space in ECEC. Hence, they also call for new spatial approaches which are connected to at least three recent movements within scholarly work on childhood and space (Bollig, 2018).

First, the notion of homogenous childhood spaces gets more and more contested in regard to questions of how they include children differently in institutional processes taking place in increasingly porous spaces. Within the context of new references to societal and welfare agendas and cultural analysis, the focus is no longer on such 'big patterns' like 'institutionalized childhood' alone that have been earlier investigated with structural approaches. Rather, new foci include manifold, ambivalent and contradictory forms of institutionalized childhood and through that the production of diverse childhoods as well. Thus, emphasis is placed on the fragility, uncertainty and ambiguity (Hengst, 2018) of concurrent differential patterns of childhood(s) within contemporary society (Zinnecker, 2004) and their related "multiple becomings" (Lee, 2001), the unequal forms of children's lives (Lareau, 2011), and the differentiating regulations, discourses and practices that enforce various standards for different childhood groups (Betz, Bischoff & Kayser, 2017; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014).

With regard to the field of ECEC, it is highlighted that this is a complex and fragmented policy area in which at all scales (global, national, local) numerous ambiguities, tensions and contradictions co-exist (Press & Woodrow, 2005). It is especially so if we take into account recent welfare transformations particularly apparent in the field of ECEC as it spans the state, the market, and the family and several policy areas (Penn, 2011). In consequence, we have to speak geographically about very much uneven ECEC landscapes (Bollig, 2015; England, 1996; Vandenbroeck et al, 2008). Moreover, and given to the multitude of functions ECEC services designed to meet and the diverse desires and needs of families, the politics of placing children in early childhood services are not just "filled with paradoxes, ambiguities and negotiations" (Gulløv, 2003, p. 36), but also with inconsistently layered and chronologically shifting conceptions of 'good ECEC childhood' and children's respective sense of place.

Second, globalization and changed patterns of mobility have allowed for the emergence of new types of spatial references. Altered conditions of pro-

duction and consumption, and migration-related movements lead to a far more complex spatialization of children and childhoods (e.g., Faulstich Orellana et al., 2001), both in everyday practical terms and in conceptual terms. The relations of space and childhood are therefore no longer be understood merely as spatial productions within nation-state 'containers', instead, they are analyzed in terms of their global-local, multiple-scaled, multilocal and transnational spatial relations (e.g., Mahon, 2006; Millei & Jones, 2014; Wells, 2015).

Third, these new spatial relations are attended by those perspectives that have been modified in the course of the so-called 'spatial turns'. New spatial theory approaches are united first and foremost by the notion of ever open, complex and multiple productions of space understood as dynamic and relational arrangements of things and bodies through which social relationships are materialized, represented and reproduced (see for an overview Robertson, 2009). Here, from predominantly practice, post-structural and actor network theoretical perspectives, unified container-like and 'objective' spatial relations are negated, leading to new theorizations that better account for the diversity of childhood spaces, and which can help explore children's involvement in multiple productions of place and space. In this non-absolutist sense, space is seen as a relational category (e.g., Löw, 2008) where relations are embedded in the ongoing flow of carried-out practices and networked relations, space is inseparably interwoven with time, always in the process of being made and open-ended. Or in other words, space and time are taken as processual. Such a relational understanding of spatiality implies a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces which mutually limit each other, are interwoven, or else organize themselves paradoxically and antagonistically vis-à-vis each other. This also means that "social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions as part of it" (Massey, 1994, p. 3).

Given these developments, and more that we have no space to outline here[2], that inform and challenge our notion of early childhood spaces, there is a small but growing body of ECEC-related research which already demonstrates the wide ranging and productive insights new perspectives on space can offer: such as political strategies that produce certain and constructed scales of ECEC-governance (e.g., Mahon, 2006), related 'governable spaces of ECEC' (e.g., Gallagher, 2012), the production of a 'global educational

[2] See for example the multi-volume reference on *Geographies of Children and Young People* edited by Tracey Skelton https://www.springer.com/series/13414

space' (e.g., Millei & Jones, 2014); educative spaces within ECEC services (e.g., Kjorholt & Seland, 2013) and children's spatial strategies to take control and act autonomously within them (e.g., Gallacher, 2005). Although these studies rely on the same basic assumptions about space, they use quite diverse theoretical approaches, such as post-structural theories on space informed by Deleuze & Guattari (e.g., Sumsion, Stratigos & Bradley, 2014) as well as practice-analytical ones referring to Lefebvre (e.g., Rutanen, 2012), de Certeau (e.g., Schnoor, 2015) or Massey (e.g., Bollig, 2015), or perspectives based on post-colonial (e.g., Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017) and citizenship theories (e.g., Gustafson & van der Burgt, 2015).

The Contributions to this Special Issue

By presenting a concerted engagement with these developments, this special issue wishes to offer a more comprehensive discussion about some spatial perspectives that are productive in exploring ECEC and children's negotiations of ECEC spaces within and outside the narrowly defined institutional place. The contributors to this special issue offer their perspectives and their uses of different spatial theorizing by cutting through spaces of ECEC institutions in their empirical examinations in ways specific to their orientations to space and place.

Gallagher explores how technological changes in the management of ECEC produce new spaces for the government of educators, parents and children's lives. She describes how the development and introduction of a new software for creating eportfolios aim to allow closer participation of parents in children's everyday activities in day care, aid educators' work to create documentation of children's learning, and help balancing working parents' responsibilities to be present also in their children's lives. However, she argues that through *new virtual spaces* created by this technology, the closer observation and regulation of educators as well as parents take place. Besides this new regime of governance, children are also subjected to new forms of visibilities that further open and enable the more intensive scrutinization of children's lives in these settings. Drawing on Actor Network Theory, she offers a rich conceptualisation of how technology can be researched as a form of materiality in ECEC, despite of its virtual nature, creating new spaces and bringing about new power relations contributing to the heterogeneity of ECEC spaces. In her conclusion, Gallagher poses a question for further exploration by asking 'what exactly is being documented through the eportfolio' given the new virtual spaces and visibilities it produces.

Vuorisalo, Raittila and *Rutanen's* paper shows how autonomy, an important ideal of Finnish early childhood education, is being produced through the creation of multiple spaces by parents, educators and children related to their own positions in the institution. Through their relational analysis of data produced in a team ethnography, they highlight how autonomy unfolds within these spaces. Educators produce spaces of freedom for children within the constraints of institutional boundaries trusting that children act independently and suit themselves within educators' pedagogical aims. Children lead their lives within these spaces in and outside of educators' view and skilfully negotiate their own time and choices within those and the spaces educators assign to them. Most interestingly, educators expect children to fit in the rhythm of pedagogical work in a rapid manner upon starting preschool, so children can start to act independently and responsibly to fulfil pedagogical ideals. Parents construct the autonomous space of ECEC as their children's space separated from their life for a period of time during the day that they do not always know about. Their account contributes to understanding the preschool as an ideologically governed space that connects the preschool with larger projects aiming to shape children's subjectivities as citizens.

Green continues with the concept of autonomy but explores it in its particular form as 'spatial autonomy'. She sets out to further conceptualise this concept through empirical data produced in two research projects: one is in Alaska's outdoor places and the other in US children's family homes. She describes the various ways children enact their spatial autonomy by crafting their play places both inside and outside. Green shows how children creatively negotiate their play spaces, for example to intentionally avoid adults' gaze, to create private spaces, which in our view, might also fall outside of society and its rules, perhaps recreating the spaces Froebel imagined for children. She summarizes her findings and defines spatial autonomy as an expression of children's independence, influenced by and created in negotiations with adults and in relation with the human and non-human environment. She concludes her paper by pointing to the importance of spatial autonomy in children's emerging sense of self and confidence in their environments.

Children's encounters with nature and public spaces are also one of the perspectives *Ekman Ladru* and *Gustafson* take in raising attention to children's mobility through their study on a mobile preschool in Sweden. A mobile preschool continuously carries children to public places in a bus. Their article discusses how in public spaces children collectively create their own

spaces for routines, collective movements and secret locations within teachers' concerns for their safety. The mobile preschool is thus seen as creating new relations between children's institutional life, their material surroundings and society. In referencing Masseys spatial thinking and along their close observation of the very prominent feature of 'walking-in-line', they show how those routines are entangled with the material and interactional spaces children reproduce and create within those routines. While being in a preschool site provides physical boundaries for rules and routines to be in effect in a more constant way, in a mobile preschool the boundaries are shifting and changing, continuously accommodating to the actual environment. By combining such a view on mobility and space with considerations about peer-culture, the authors argue that those walks create important social and learning spaces, because they allow children to move with and through multiple socio-material trajectories.

Instead of their spaces being expanded to include a variety of public spaces as institutional sites, 'babies' in *Sumsion, Harrison* and *Stapleton's* study are limited to a relatively small and enclosed environment. This place, initially perceived as very confined and confining, expands as we follow the authors' analysis in which they highlight the relational interactions children, their carers and the non-human things around them have as they together create for 'babies' a space of belonging. Using Massey's concepts blended with Deleuzian spatial theorizing the authors interpret how 'babies' might experience belonging through their encounters with the texture of the baby's room. Along a story (and possible other stories) of a baby's 'navigating moments' with a pink carnation they show how baby Nadia expands the spatial possibilities of belonging in their tiny room by intensifying space. Yet again, this paper adds to the multiple ways in which ECEC spaces can be theorized and the analytical insights spatial perspectives can produce. They also help drawing out less explored qualities of spaces that very young children create. Furthermore, their approach also raise important questions about the ethics of representation in research with very young children.

Aligning with its aim to discuss the quality of ECEC spaces, but perhaps in contrast to the very locale places of early care and education services, *Millei* reconceptualizes the preschool place as connected and layered with distant spatialities. She explores how children's images, ideas and imaginations of distant places embed in preschool activities as children emplace themselves in expanded spaces of the preschool in sensory and embodied ways. Operationalizing Massey's concept of 'global sense of place' to analyse ethnographic data produced in an Australian preschool, she portrays how

places, bodies and objects entangle and participate in everyday activities, and how children create images of and inhabit the world in their sensory emplacements. Millei calls for more critical engagements with children's 'doings' that reproduce global power relations in potentially fixed and stereotypical representations of the world and that contribute to their relations with distant others and their identity formation as global and cosmopolitan citizens. With her study, she places an emphasis on the need to move away from interpretations that singularly focus on children's verbal sense making and include the rich ways for research offered if attention is paid to phenomenologies of children's emplacement in relational spaces that spread to the globe.

The next contribution also extends the gaze from one setting to multiple places of care and education. *Bollig* emphasizes the diverse spatialities that interplay in the 'daily accomplishment of ECEC' as children participate in multiple services during their days. With 'daily accomplishment', she refers to the ways in which institutional processes together with children's and parents' participation produce ECEC as it is provisioned. The complex Luxembourgian ECEC system provides a perfect focus to explore how ECEC systems unfold through children's everyday activities as shifting fields reproduced and transformed in children's own particular education and care arrangements. By using Schatzki's practice theory and Massey's concept of 'throwntogetherness of place', Bollig zooms into the linguistic landscapes of Luxembourgian ECEC and demonstrates how the spatiality of children's ECEC arrangements are produced through multiple spatial relations which intersect and align in places of ECEC. Through her analysis we can, thus, see how the complex and layered spaces of ECEC produced, are connected to wider spaces in society that are shaped by migration and the diversity of the Luxembourgian context, policy frames and organizational routines and with which children skilfully navigate, within and against the boundaries this ECEC system constructs. Bollig's study richly demonstrates the impossibility to produce insightful research if one explores ECEC today as a bounded and only institutionally framed place, and without considering also children's participation in the production of place.

Together these studies explore the utility of spatial theorizing for understanding complex, highly contextual and shifting positionings and realities of ECEC today and children's lives led within and across those institutions. De-centering many existing studies' engagement of ECEC places as bounded, they identify the multiplicity of spaces that coexist within an institution and that are in connections with multiple other spaces outside of it (that

perhaps were considered unconsciously by many as part of society separated from these spaces). Focusing on the materialities, movements, constructions, embodiments, place-making, power relations and sensory experiences through which children create and experience the production of these spaces and their negotiations, contributors offer novel ways for experimenting with these ideas in further research on early childhood education and care.

In relation to the three recent movements discussed above, we can offer some preliminary, very short and inconclusive ideas here. *First*, spatial theorizing offers some needed conceptual tools to examine the many kind, manifold, connected, ambiguous and contradictory forms of the institutionalization of childhood and the creation of diverse childhoods during late modernity characterised by rapid change and technological advances, the more intense intertwining of societal and private spaces and their governance, and the diversification and expanding connectedness of spaces and multiple ECEC services in which and in between which children live and lead their lives. *Second*, contributors offered examples of how spatial conceptual tools enable to theorize children's ECEC spaces as intimately connected to and embedded within global processes, such as consumption, neo-colonialism, technological change, growing inequalities, diverse forms of governance of everyday life and mobility. Studies explicitly undertaking this task in the field of ECEC research are still rare. *Third*, spatial perspectives developed in these articles allowed to approximate children's different and diversifying positionings and experiences within global and local processes, public and private spaces, inside and outside environments. Authors paid particular attention to how different and unequal realities, belongings and opportunities for children within early care and education services and outside of but in relation to those were formed and re/produced.

Contributors also provoked further questions and opened avenues for follow-up research, for instance, about the changing or liminal spaces which are produced when technologies, institutional spaces and routines, and related to those children's affects, desires and so on, fold onto public places and vice versa. Or they put forward new foci for explorations, such as about the ways in which children intensify and expand spaces they inhabit, or the various and often (unrecognised) mundane and sensuous ways they encounter those and create encounters with the world. These also raise potentials to think about new forms of children's agencies which are produced by and negotiated within the complex spatialities those unfold within. With this special issue, our aim was to bring together researchers who work with spatial theories in ECEC and to continue and open up further discussions,

and to inspire new studies that more intentionally use spatial theories in their explorations of early childhood spaces.

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E-portfolios and relational space in the early education environment

Aisling Gallagher

Abstract: This paper considers the role of eportfolios as an online tool intended to foster greater engagement between parent, teacher and child in early education settings. Drawing on New Zealand based research, I will critically examine the introduction of this technology as more than an addition into already existing ECEC services. Rather, I will highlight the generative impact it has in facilitating new kinds of relations between parents, teachers and managers, within what I term an emergent 'virtual landscape of ECEC'. Ultimately I argue that this landscape is shaped by asymmetries of power, which allow for processes of subjectification and governing in ECEC to occur in new ways.

Keywords: eportfolios, relational space, ANT, virtual landscape of ECEC, governing.

Introduction

Its a sunny Tuesday afternoon and I am sitting in my office. An email pops up in the corner of my screen which immediately draws my attention. It's my daughter's daycare service, and a new learning story has just been added to her eportfolio. Keen to see what my two-year-old has been doing in the sunshine, I log in to see her smiling face as she runs around cooling off under a water sprinkler. I read about how she was immersed in making pretend muffins for her friend Isabella most of the morning. Heartened to see she is enjoying herself, quelling the perpetual pangs of guilt that my children are separated from me for most of their waking hours, I send a message in response about how much I enjoyed seeing her 'baking'. I wonder if her grandmother will see this

story and also comment, as they made a cake recently together. I think about what I can do to encourage her new-found interest in making and sharing, before a knock on the door breaks me from this reverie.

I am but one of thousands of parents in New Zealand who are involved in their young children's learning experiences through eportfolios. The rise of online portfolios, as repositories of children's learning stories[1] and platforms for engagement between teachers, children and parents, has been a marked change in the early education (ECEC) environment in the last ten years (Higgins & Cherrington, 2017). In New Zealand, as in many other countries, online portfolios have become an increasingly popular way for educators to document and communicate children's learning to parents and in return for parents to respond (Goodman & Cherrington, 2015; Lewis, 2015). Indeed, for parents like myself, online portfolios have become an invaluable way of being in touch with your child and their development during the working day. Moreover, the platform has the capacity to facilitate the involvement of wider family members, who may be located in far flung parts of the world and thus operating on asynchronous timeframes, to feel part of their learning journey too (Beaumont-Bates, 2017).

The introduction of eportfolios follows on from a broader proliferation of digital technology in the early education setting. This of course has not occurred without concerted debate in education and related disciplines over the last twenty years (Kerckaert, Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2015; Plowman & Stephen, 2005). The development of more mobile, ubiquitous technologies (such as tablets and 'smart' devices of various kinds) have led to a flourishing of ICT in young children's lives more generally (Valentine & Holloway, 2002). While the literature on eportfolios in early education is relatively new[2] (Higgins & Cherrington, 2017), a primary focus of this work has been to consider the potential benefits and disadvantages the integration of the technology may have in the early education setting (Lewis, 2015; Penman, 2014). To that extent, it has been argued that the increasingly interactive online environment offered through eportfolios has overall tended to be more conducive

[1] A Learning Story is a record of what a child has been seen doing in an ECEC environment. It can be a paragraph or longer, and usually focusses on a specific snapshot of the childs learning over a particular period of time. Learning stories are written from the perspective of the adult who is interpreting what the child is doing. These narratives are usually written up after the event, during the teachers 'non-contact' time. However, there have been some criticisms of the use of learning stories in ECEC. See for example Blaiklock (2008).

[2] Eportfolios have a much longer history of use in tertiary, secondary and primary education (see for example Jafari & Kaufman 2006).

to building relationships between teachers and the child's wider family unit. As Beaumont-Bates (2017) has documented, reliance on paper based means of communication led to minimal involvement and response by parents, in large part because of the time taken to engage and respond to the stories[3]. Indeed, as I will illustrate, digitally recording and documenting learning stories has allowed for new temporalities and spatialities of communication to emerge through the online platform. As suggested by my opening narrative, parents can receive and respond to stories at the desktop or via their phone in a more convenient and expeditious means than before. It is perhaps unsurprising then that research findings suggest that it has helped foster more supportive learning environments for the young child by bringing family and teachers closer together, and by reinforcing learning that parents can repeat at home. Justified by ECEC services through a discourse of efficiency in communication for both parents and teachers, the introduction of eportfolios across early education environments in NZ has therefore been surprisingly expeditious.

From another perspective however, it is perhaps no coincidence that eportfolio technology has flourished in the early learning environment at a point where more mothers than ever are entering the workforce (OECD, 2014). Indeed in many countries, like New Zealand, being an active participant of the workforce is increasingly seen as the basis on which your rights as a citizen are founded, and so women are openly encouraged to place their child in early education in lieu of being at home (MacLeavy, 2011; McDowell, 2004). Within this neoliberal politico-economic context, I argue that eportfolios can also be viewed as part of a suite of technologies that work to address the anxiety many parents feel when separated from their young children for most of their waking day. As suggested by my opening narrative, it offers a means of drawing parents closer to their young child(ren) and their daily experiences in a way paper based portfolios could not do. In an increasingly neoliberalised work environment, where a universal worker model takes priority over more traditional gendered divisions of labour (Lewis, 2001), technology like the eportfolio aims to overcome the 'friction of distance' of being separated from your child. In so doing, it serves to visibilise the day to day relations between parents, child and teacher in new ways, and through such visibility I argue can become a significant means through which new forms of governing and subjectification can occur in the ECEC space.

[3] However, this is not an either or situation. Some early education providers continue to maintain the paper copy of the portfolio alongside the electronic one, so children can reflect back on their learning by looking through the paper based version (Penman, 2014).

To further develop my interest in eporfolios, and in keeping with the aims of this special issue, I will draw on recent work in geography on networked, relational space, coupled with critical work on processes of governing (Rose, 1999; Lemke, 2002) to explore the potentially transformative impact of eportfolio technology on the subjects and spaces of ECEC[4]. Thinking about the ECEC environment as a closed discrete space into which the eportfolio technology is merely 'added' overlooks the centrality of this technology in shaping the experiences of ECEC for parents and teachers. To develop this alternative view of eportfolios I have foregrounded poststructural understandings of relational space as open-ended, dynamic and importantly involving both human and non-human actors in its constitution. In doing this I have positioned the eportfolio as a constituent part of an emergent 'virtual landscape of ECEC'. This landscape is not apolitical, but rather is shaped by undulating power relations and asymmetries which frame how parents and teachers engage in this learning and communicative space. Ultimately this paper will offer a critical examination of the normative work of subjectification which takes place through the technology in shaping the subjects and practices of the 'good' parent and the 'good' teacher. The discussion herein is empirically informed by exploratory interviews conducted with creators and developers of the two main online portfolio companies in New Zealand in 2014. Reinforcing this empirical work, I have drawn on my own position as a mother of two young children in an early education setting which uses eportfolios, to reflect on the experience as a parent-user of this technology.

Rethinking Notions of Space, Flow, Distance and Proximity

Debates in geography over the last twenty-five years have (re)turned to the ontological footing on which the idea of space is understood (Eldon, 2009; Murdoch, 2006). In doing so there has been a move in geography and the social sciences more generally beyond analysis of Euclidean or topographical understandings of space as an absolute, fixed container, in which life merely occurs. Rather, space has been understood as an increasingly subjective and processual emergence. Reimagined as the outcome of the interaction between different sets of relations, spaces are understood as multiplicities which are made of different spatial practices, identifications and forms of belonging (Crang & Thrift, 2000; Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2006). Through this poststructuralist lens, it is argued that objects exist in a system of re-

[4] In this paper I have only considered parents and 'teacher' within the analysis. Further empirical work is necessary to consider the impact on children.

lations to other objects, such that space itself is constituted *through* these interrelationships. As Harvey suggests, a particular space once formed is merely a 'permanance', where relations have only ever been temporarily stabilised (Harvey, 2006). Space therefore is always in the process of (re) creation, open-ended and never closed (Massey, 2005). There is a power geometry to this stabilisation, such that some relations are expressed as dominant and important, and others diminish out of existence (Allen, 2011). Working through this flattened and relational ontological lens, it follows that there are no essential qualities of any given place or object outside the relations you are situated in. Taken for granted ideas of local and global, or micro and macro are merely the outcome of the position occupied within the particular network relations you are embedded in[5], rather than a predefined hierarchial power structure.

One way of understanding relational space is through the metaphor of the network. Within poststructural understandings of networked space both human and non-human actors are understood to have potential agency. As part of the broader relational turn in the social sciences, Actor Network Theory has emerged as a popular methodological approach which adopts this ontological perspective and allows us to trace networks of relations between human and non-human actors in the creation of socio-spatial phenomena (Latour, 2005; Law & Hassard, 1999). Stemming from a broader critique of the impact of science and technology on society (Law, 2008), this approach focuses in particular on how actors are enrolled and how power flows through networks in particular ways. Stretching network relations outwards to bring new actors in is known as a process of translation. In this process, "the enrolled actor identifies with the network through a modification of the actor's identity or a modification of the network to encompass the actor" (Murdoch, 2006, p. 62). Thus those involved in the network are changed in some way through their involvement in network relations. Actors come with pre-existing identities, but all adapt and change to some extent to enter into the network. It is through this process that we can see how subjectification takes place *through* translation. In order for a network to be stabilised and to work, a degree of normalization has to take place such that behaviours and practices of those involved become regularized and in turn potentially governable. This is a two-way process, as modification of the actors identity is only one part, modification of the network itself to accommodate a new actor is also required. The stabilization of a network and the enrollment of

[5] Although see the 'scale debate' in geography for further discussion (Marsden, Jones & Woodward 2005).

diverse actors into that network is only possible once actors different goals are aligned. The work of stabilization however, is often left to the non-human component of the network, as they make "good disciplinary machines" (Murdoch, 2006, p. 66).

Thinking through a more networked understanding of space, as espoused by ANT, has profoundly changed how geographers understand the constitution of social and material relations. One of the key outcomes of a relational ontology has been a questioning of the taken for granted assumptions of concepts like distance and proximity. As Murdoch suggests (2006, p. 87) "places with a similar set of elements and similar relations between them are close to one another and those with different elements or relations are far apart. Thus distance is a function of the relations between elements" (see also Mol & Law, 1994). An example of this would be how we experience notions of proximity over and above physical closeness. I could *feel* closer to my colleagues in the UK through working on the same project together than my office neighbour who I only see sporadically. Rethinking distance and proximity as the outcome of more emotional and affective experiences, rather than solely physical locatedness, opens up alternative ways of exploring our perceptions of caring spaces like that of ECEC.

Building on this understanding of relational space, health geographers Christine Milligan and Janine Wiles (2010) extend it to reconceptualise the well utilised concept of 'landscapes of care'. In their work they seek to disrupt accepted notions of proximity in the delivery of care as being based solely on physical closeness. As they suggest "work on care has tended to overlook or underestimate the frequency, importance and quality of alternative forms of contact and proximity (for example, via telephone, email, webcam or videolink) and the ways in which advances in information and care technology are contributing to the folding or collapsing of the time-space continuum" (2010, p. 741). Other examples of care giving where this plays out is telemedicine and forms of remote monitoring technology (the St Johns alarm for the elderly for example). Drawing on their work on landscapes of care, I suggest that there is ground for a more indepth examination of the particular role of different technologies in facilitating care at a distance. I propose to explore this through what I call here a 'virtual landscape of ECEC'. My adaptation of Milligan and Wiles' work proposes to take into account care which is happening at asynchronous times (rather than solely in real time between participants via the technology). In such an analysis, the way the technology operates and the means through which it generates affective and emotional responses is an important aspect in caring for another in lieu of

direct contact. I suggest that examining this process allows for new insights into the agency of the technology in forming and maintaining the relational network, in this case that which I call the virtual landscape of ECEC.

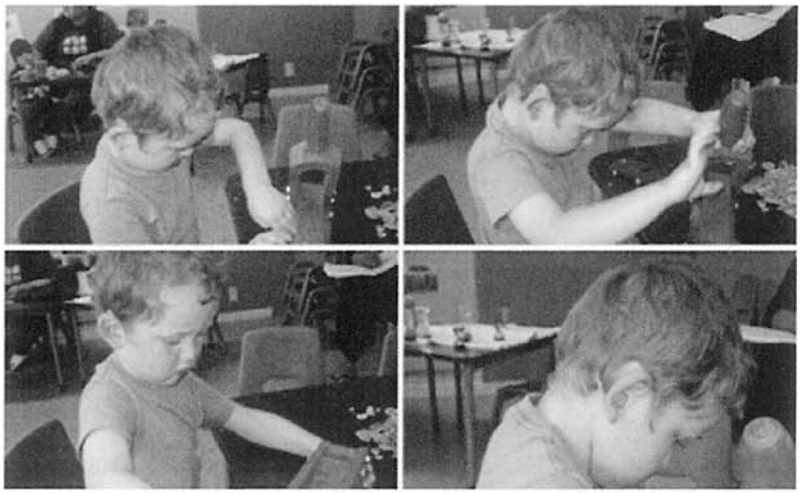
In the next section I will draw on the insights from ANT and relational space in two ways. Firstly, by drawing on ideas of relational space I will re-conceptualise the work of eportfolios as being fundamental to the creation of a virtual landscape of ECEC between parents and teachers. In doing so I will illustrate how the technology can be viewed as an actor in this networked assemblage. Secondly, I will explore some of the power asymmetries expressed across this landscape, by considering the process of subjectification at work through the technology which serves to differently position actors. In so doing, I will caution that the creation of eportfolios and the unanticipated outcomes of the digitisation of new forms of data and knowledge has potentially profound implications for how the early education space is experienced and governed.

Eportfolios and the Early Learning Environment

This paper has been informed by empirical work which was conducted in New Zealand during 2014. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with two companies in NZ who provide an online platform for eportfolios. More specifically, I spoke in their place of work with company creators and some of the developers of the software who worked in those companies. One of the companies gave me access to a 'behind the scenes' look at their platform, to understand how managers and technicians view the software and the kind of information they can glean from it in addition to the primary communication function. In accordance with the ethical terms of the research, specific names of the companies and the interviewees have not been used. Images drawn on in this document have been adapted from promotional material, made publically available by the companies. In conducting the interviews, no specific eportfolios nor particular families were discussed. Instead I have drawn on my own observations and experiences of a mother of two young children, who are in an ECEC service which uses eportfolios to further inform my discussion.

'Virtual' Landscape of Care between Parents and Teachers

Thus far in the paper I have argued that the eportfolio technology can be seen as an important non-human constitutent of the relational space,



Following on from the wider group interest in the walnuts from our special walnut tree, today I brought my nutcracker in for the children to use. Tom watched and showed so much curiosity as I demonstrated to a group of children how to use it. Tom was eager to have a turn and waited for the others...

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Tom's Mum (Tom) 21 August at 7:57pm
This is really great that Tom is learning how to take care of the new kids, he is really picking up on this behaviour you teach so well at Storypark Kids as we've seen him do the same thing at home when we've had friends come round with little ones. And Tom LOVES nuts - surprised you got him to put any in the jar at all! Cool nutcracker too.

Alex's Nan (Alex) 27 August at 7:59pm
Thats nice to see Alex with Tom, We will hear all about the story of cracking the nuts next time we see Alex.

Alex's Dad (Alex) 1 May at 10:14am

Figure 1: An example of a learning story and the eportfolio interface

which I have called the virtual landscape of ECEC. The emergent space is not discrete and bounded, into which technology is merely added. Rather the ECEC space should be seen as the product of the dynamic and multiple interrelationships between actors (human and non-human), knowledges, material objects and desires around the care and education of young children. The introduction of the eportfolio technology, as a non- human actor, profoundly alters the relational ECEC space in complex ways. In this section I will expand on this statement to explore just how the eportfiolo works to extend the relational space in order to enrol teachers, parents and wider family members.

One of the primary benefits of rendering learning stories into digital format, and of eportfolios more generally, has been the potential it has to

bring family members closer to the learning experiences of their child(ren). In terms of how it works, learning stories are created by teachers (usually documented through a portable device) and then 'posted' via email to the child's parent(s). Under password protection, only people who have been approved to receive the stories (parents and grandparents for example) can access them. Speaking with the developers of the software, they have worked closely in conjunction with parents, teachers and children to ensure the software is customisable to the specific needs of the early education setting. As the creator of one company stated:

> *"It has to work for everyone involved. We work closely with teachers and conduct regular surveys to ensure that what we are providing to them is adaptable to their needs and is meeting their expectations. It needs to make the communication process easier, not be burdensome. So, we are really open to suggestions for new functions. To be honest that's how we get ideas for these developments. We aren't experts in teaching and pedagogy, that's not where our expertise lies. So we are pretty much reliant on the teachers and services to tell us what works and what doesn't". (Company A)*

From speaking to the software developers, the platform is described like a living entity, one which is adapting and changing in close response to the needs of its parent and teacher users. By so doing it embeds itself centrally to the emergent relational network between teacher and parent.

In *Figure 1* an example is given of a learning story and the eportfolio interface which is received by parents. In this example both parents of Alex and Tom[6] received the message, and they in turn posted a response. As described in my opening narrative, parents are alerted to the creation of a learning story often when a message pops up on their computer or phone. In my case, and that of many parents who have their email open during the day on multiple devices, there is an immediacy to the alert which is important to the success of eportfolio technology. As one company creator suggested:

> *"Well we intended it to be something which will catch parents attention, so linked to their email account. Most parents have phones which are*

[6] Learning stories and eportfolios in general are held under password protection. The story of Tom and Alex was adapted from promotional material derived from the interviews conducted with one of the companies in the study.

connected to the internet these days. It's something parents told us in our surveys that they liked, getting unexpected updates and images of their children while they were separated from them. The phone app was an add-on to be honest, to give people more options to access that information". (Company A)

Considering the agency of the technology at this point in shaping the virtual landscape of ECEC is important. Messages are being delivered asynchoronously, as its often a story which was recorded or documented at an earlier time, which the teacher wrote an accompanying narrative for and posted to family. The measure of the success of the technology is the extent to which parents engage with the portfolios in response to the learning stories. I suggest here it is successful in capturing parents attention (as the developer described it) through the use of affect in triggering a response in the parent recipient which encourages them to engage with the plaform. This positive affective response is stimulated via the use of images, recordings and other forms of documenting the childs experiences. While this was also the case with the paper based portfolios, I suggest that the manner in which the learning story is received (unexpectedly, to an electronic device and presented in a more engaging manner) heightens parents affective response. As described in the opening vignette, the very action of a message appearing in your email account (in my case popping up on screen) and the alert which can be activated to receive these messages creates a heightened anticipation of seeing your child at play and offers for most a welcome interruption. The traction of this technology is all the more potent, given the neoliberal working environment and the separation many parents feel during the working day.

The motivating idea behind the design of the platform for both companies who were interviewed is to facilitate ease of communication between parents and teachers and for greater connectedness to your childs learning experiences while in care.

"If your child makes its first step or some significant milestone, it's possible to capture that and relay it back to you on the day. It's very powerful to be able to capture that". (Developer, Company B)

The different ways of capturing the childs learning and development allows for a recognition that development is potentially physical, as much as cognitive (in terms of learning how to walk for example). Moreover, it is anticipated that members of the wider family can also be in contact with the

child through documenting these experiences, and get to know them a bit better even though they may live on the other side of the world. This relay of information is crucial for the success of the network. Information from the parent about what the child enjoys doing at home in turn can be shared via the platform, in theory helping the teacher to design activities for them. Working from an ANT perspective, there is an extension of the relational network between home and ECEC service through the platform. This extension shapes how experiences of distance and proximity are felt and reworked. The virtual landscape of ECEC which is produced changes the spatio temporal experiences of the ECEC environment for users of the technology. The stories created are snapshots of childrens experiences already past. They may have only been of a short duration, before the child found some other more intriguing source of play (see Gallacher, 2006). However, they are used to extrapolate outwards as to the nature of the childs day. From my experience as a parent, learning stories tend to be only positive, leading to an assumption that learning only occurs from positive encounters where no tears are shed. Such is the bind of the ECEC teacher, whereby parents only want to see how contented their children are at all times, rather than the reality of life with a three year old, which tends to be more of a daily emotional rollercoaster.

The durability of the network is only maintained as long as the network speaks to the interests of all users and if they can find purpose in it as a result. Therefore it is only successful once the parents (all parents) use it. If it is not able to enroll parents to actively work through it, then it will not be sustainable. Convenience therefore is important. It cannot be a burdensome technology otherwise parental usage will be minimal. Consequently it must be able to manage messages from parents back to the teacher in multiple formats and as easily as possible (via recording or text or email generally). The developers innately understood this vulnerability in the technology, as it envisaged busy working parents and teachers as the users and therefore sought to widen the forms of engagement and communication (for example integrating recording functions for parental responses) to make it as amenable to parents, family and teachers as possible. This was an important part of the ongoing adaptation and development of the platform.

As a parent, once you delve into your childs learning story you may notice that it has been tagged or linked to different aspects of the curriculum (see Lee, Carr, Soutar, & Mitchell, 2012), so parents can see what it relates to pedagogically and click on live links to inform themselves. Undoubtedly it is a significant development for parents to be better acquainted with the

early years curriculum, not least as they can differently appreciate what their child is doing and how it speaks back to their broader development. To that extent it has an important function in shaping parental subjectivities, as 'informed' parents who can read their childs play and development in a different light. However, it is also important for teachers that parents have a better sense of what it is that they do as early years teachers. As one creator discussed

> *"Something which we developed later, through trialling the technology in services, was the links to the curriculum. Not all services do this, but it is an option we now provide. We are constantly looking to improve the software in keeping with the demands of teachers and parents…Yeah, we are always amazed at how innovative the ideas can be from teachers about what new design features to add to the platform. It keeps the software relevant and as useful as possible for teachers and their work with parents". (Developer, Company A)*

In New Zealand, as is the case in many other countries internationally, ECEC teachers have to battle the continued devaluation of their work, despite its professionalization, as it is aligned with the care of young children and consequently is socially relegated as a glorified form of 'childminding' (Osgood, 2007). Allowing parents to see the pedagogical aspects of the work ECEC teachers do, by linking to the curriculum, potentially offers a powerful means of raising awareness of the professional practice of ECEC, with subsequent implications for how its viewed and practiced in society more generally. This is important for parents but also for teachers themselves, as it allows them to perform their professionalised identity as a teacher in a evident way. We can see then how not only parental identities are altered through engaging with the platform, but also those of teachers as well. Of course the question of subjectification is one which is associated with issues of power, and it is to this aspect of the virtual landscape of ECEC which I will now turn.

Analytics, Power and Governing through the Network

From the interviews conducted with the eportfolio companies, one of the most noticeable discourses was that of the technology being as 'user-friendly' as possible. The reiteration of the online platform as being user friendly, shapes the terrain in which actors become involved with the technology and moreover creates expectations around its usage (and non-usage). The extent that the ICT designers go to to allow learning stories to be captured, narrated and then relayed to family creates a perceived inevitability that the

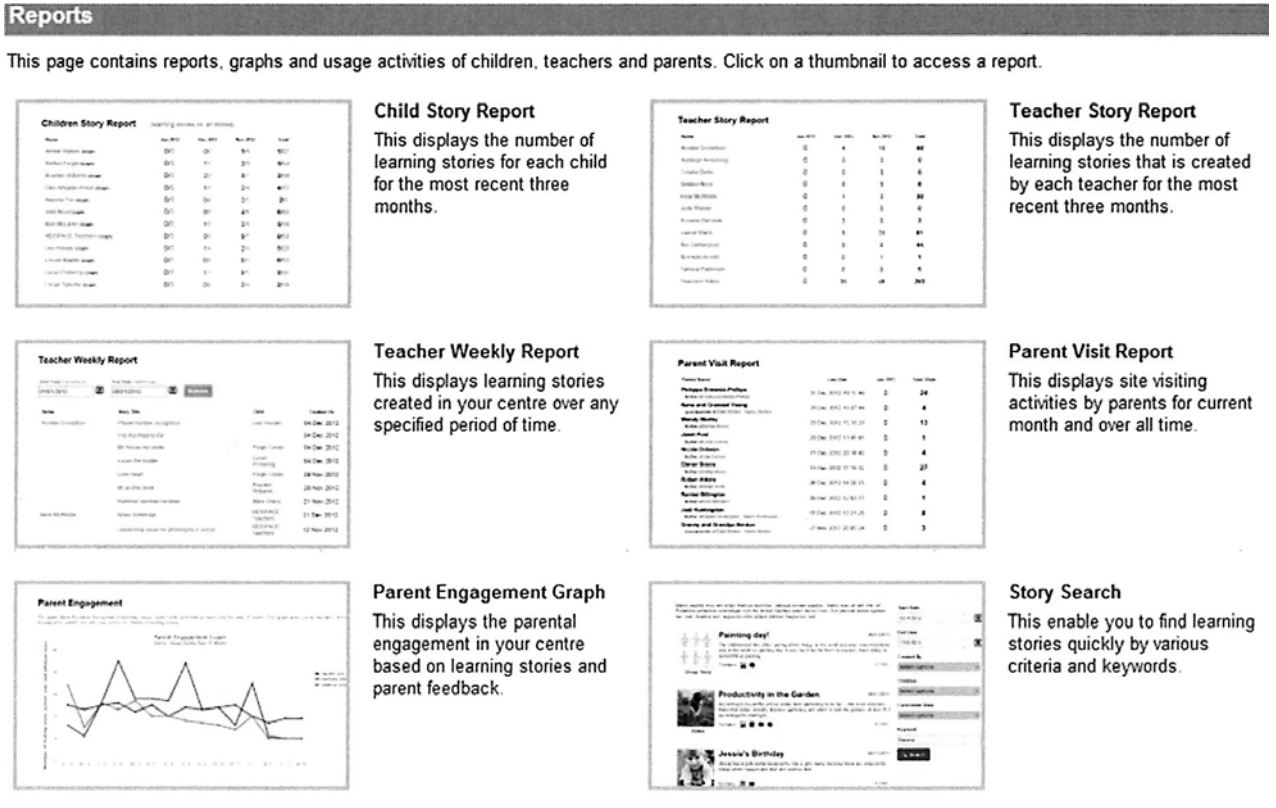

Figure 2: Data from the learning stories and online engagement to track and monitor the ECEC service

technology will be used by parents and teachers as prospective consumers. If parents or teachers are not engaging with the technology, then the problem must be with the user rather than the technology. Consequently non-usage or participation in the network can lead to negative perceptions, such as parental disinterest in a childs learning for example. From an ANT perspective, the strength of the network is based on aligning interests and goals of actors, such that involvement becomes almost inevitable, the new 'normal'. Participation then becomes either through consent or coercion. The platform thus shapes what we expect in terms of behavior of the actors involved, such that non participation with the technology undermines the network.

The platform, while having communication as a primary function, is also making visible the early education space in a way which was not before possible through the generation of new data. As Foucault convincingly argued, with knowledge comes power (Foucault, 1997). There are other unanticipated aspects of this online platform which have emerged after its initial introduction, stemming from the information which can now be gleaned from the eportfolios. One of these alternative uses has been the generation of new forms of visual data derived from the learning stories. This has manifested in a substantial analytics and reporting function now available as part of the platform. As *Figure 2* shows, data can be derived from the learning stories and online engagement more generally to allow a manager or head office to better track and monitor the ECEC service. It does so through production of a range of graphs which capture aspects like: how many learning stories a teacher creates, how many stories for each child and so on. As the creator of one company suggested

> *"The report was initially developed to help the centres understand parents' engagement because it's really troubling for the centres having great documentation, great parental feedback on paper but it's really time consuming and difficult to demonstrate that. As times gone by we've built a lot more types of reports into the system. If you look at the reports that we've built they're mostly around giving the centre more visibility into how well the parents are engaging and documentation around their children's learning, curriculum and goals and the interests of children and discovering the common interests and continuity of particular learning. Those groups of reports were basically created because we want to help the centre to refine their planning and give them a greater control so they can provide an even higher quality programme for children to achieve a better outcome." (Company B)*

Engagement can be traced not only of parents (through the production of graphs showing the ebb and flow of parental views) but also of staff interaction with children. Importantly however, not everyone has equal access to such information. Rather, its part of a suite of functions available to ECEC manager, suggesting that information flows in the network are not equal. While parents receive learning stories from teachers, and can respond, much more information is gleaned about the nature of the participation from a managerial perspective than parents are perhaps aware of. From an ANT perspective, the network has been *lengthened* to take account of managerial concerns and to encompass the interests of managers alongside teachers and parents. The increase of governmental and self regulation in the ECEC environment (Osgood, 2006) offers a natural home for this data, as the above interviewee suggests it can be used to demonstrate good practice and strong levels of engagement between teachers and parents in instances of external practice review[7].

Moreover, engagement with *Te Whariki*, the NZ bicultural curriculum, can be monitored as each story can be tagged or linked to an aspect of the curriculum. If a teacher or centre is consistently overlooking one key aspect of the curriculum, this can be identified through analysis of the learning stories. As was suggested

> *"a third, more recent group of reports have been produced around helping centers support teachers, because teachers only have a very limited amount of non-contact time. You may have a junior teacher who is less experienced than others and so having the ability to uncover that information about how they are relating to the children and the curriculum is useful for the centre in order to provide greater support to that teacher". (Company B)*

These new metrics give a sense of the unevenness within the emergent landscape of care and illustrate how asymmetries of power are being produced through the technology itself. The e-portfolios and broader data being derived from them, take on an active role in shaping the relationships between centre, teacher and parent. To that extent they are more than a benign technology. They occupy a central role in the virtual landscape of ECEC, as they have an impact on how others act in response. For example, a centre manager gains a different insight into the work of each teacher through their eportfolio data and may act accordingly. Moreover, teachers' perception of

[7] In NZ ECEC services are subject to review every three years or less by the Education Review Office.

parents can be shaped by whether or not they actively engage with their children's learning stories and the extent to which they respond. As the data illustrates, there are inequities in how the reporting ocurrs, whether that is deliberate or not. The analytics function makes visible forms of exclusion in new ways (for example if a child is not getting as many stories created about them or if parental engagement is not as frequent as others). Consequently we can see how the technology allows for power to flow in particular ways through and across the network, positioning actors differently and producing forms of knowledge which shape our behaviour and expectations of one another.

Discussion

The significant growth of online portfolio technology marks an interesting shift in the constitution of the early education environment. As this technology gains significant traction in a highly competitive childcare market (Gallagher, 2017), I suggest that this is a pertinent juncture to reflect on the complex intended, and unintended outcomes for early education providers, teachers and parents. In so doing it is important to view it as much more than a simple communicative device, added into an existing set of ECEC relationships. As my interviews with creators and developers of the technology have illustrated, the platform is an ongoing, emergent space which is *co-created* alongside parents, teachers and more recently managers. However, each of these actors are very differently positioned within the virtual landscape of ECEC which has emerged. Power is not equally distributed through the network, but rather flows and rests at particular points. Through ongoing adaptation of the platform it has morphed into something with much more functionality than originally intended, and in a way which positions it as increasingly fundamental to the running of the early education environment as a networked, relational space. ANT scholars have shown the success of any technological innovation is strongly wedded to how well it is embedded in the network of users. Once it loses utility and functionality, it becomes obsolete. Thus the ability of the platform to capture the diverse interests of those involved in the sector, to *translate* those interests, is crucial to its continued centrality in the emergent network.

As networks generate their own specific time-space configurations, they also produce variegated landscapes of engagement with connections of differing lengths and duration. Thus engagement through the platform flattens and reshapes our time-space understandings of the early education environment. It forges new temporalities and spatialities of education and care,

with the ability to incorporate family from far away parts of the world. One of the significant changes eportfolio and online engagement more generally has brought to the fore is that it alters our understanding of distance and proximity to children's experiences. The platform invokes different experiences of closeness, which supersedes physical distance, and allows parents to feel part of their child's experiences although they are separated from them. It also has the potential to bring family members into proximity with their child or grandchilds' learning journey, even over asynchronous time zones. As I have suggested, this kind of development speaks more broadly to the distancing of parents during the working day from their children. As the political emphasis is increasingly placed on workforce activation in neoliberalised countries, like New Zealand (Kingfisher, 2013), the traction of interactive technologies like eportolios may represent an important development which addresses parental guilt[8].

The virtual landscape of ECEC mediated through the technology relies on strong affective resonances with those receiving the learning stories. Building on the work by Milligan and Wiles around landscapes of care and the role of technology in mediating how we care for another, I suggest that the way the technology works to generate emotional, caring and affective responses is a crucial part in the performance of ECEC. The way the stories are mediated, the manner in which they are delivered and the kinds of insights they tend to capture, all seek to compel parents to want to engage with the platform. Making the technology as 'user-friendly' as possible suggests failure to engage as a mark on the user rather than the technology. Thus within this emergent virtual landscape of ECEC a potential question to be asked is whether there is space for parental and teacher non participation?

However, the platform can also be viewed as playing a central role in governing parents and teachers, and has the capacity to be a disciplinary tool in equal measure. As Latour suggests, its often the work of the non-human, such as technology, which stabilises the network, because as Murdoch suggests "technologies can make good disciplinary machines" (2006, p. 66). In an increasingly neoliberalised environment, where we are all expected to act as 'entrepreneurs of the self' (Lemke, 2002; Rose, 1990; Rose, O'Malley & Valverde, 2006), eportfolio technology has the potential to become a dis-

[8] An alternative reading of this development of course is offered by advocates of the theory of 'paranoid parenting', which would position eportfolios as part of a suite of technologies which force parents to feel singularly responsible for every aspect of their child's life (what Furedi refers to as 'parental determinism'). (Furedi, 2008)

ciplinary tool for all involved[9]. In relation to parents we can see the disciplinary potential at work in a number of ways. For example, the immediacy with which a new learning story is made known to parents urges you to engage with the technology. It invokes an affective response through the images and stories created about your child. It encourages both teacher and parents to engage and respond by making the interface as 'user friendly' as possible (even to the extent of recording a message rather than typing one out). Moreover, the production of graphs and other analytic material allows for a different reading of the relationships between teacher and parent and can shape how each participant in the network is viewed. To that extent teachers may adapt their behaviour, both in terms of their practices with the children (through having to link to the curriculum for example) and how they perceive the child's parent(s) and their engagement in response to the data produced. Teachers themselves may also be encouraged to reflect on how their teaching is seen at a managerial level, as read through the graphs. Thus there are new power asymmetries emerging in the ECEC setting as a result of some of the unanticipated uses derived from eportfolios. Rendering the relational work of teaching and caring for young children into digital form via the learning stories has made visible this work in new ways for management[10]. As illustrated, the production of new analytics to capture the relationship between teacher, child and parents offers potentially powerful means of governing and subjectifying individuals subjects. Consequently, I suggest that it is important to be cognisant of the potential disciplinary role of eportfolios in governing and shaping the behaviour of those involved in the network.

Conclusion

In keeping with the theme of this special issue, this paper has sought to highlight how geographical thinking, in particular some of the key ideas around relational space, can offer new insights into the role of eportfolios in the ECEC environment. Influenced by ANT, an approach which broadens our understandings of agency to incorporate a more than human lens, I have shown how the technology can be viewed as an agent in the relational network between managers, teacher, parents and wider family. What emerges is a co-created, virtual landscape of ECEC one which is mediated through the technology. Through the platform, traditional notions proxim-

[9] See O'Brien, Osbaldiston & Kendall (2014) for a comparable discussion of the role of eportfolios as a regulatory and disciplinary tool in higher education.

[10] See Osgood (2006) for a critical discussion of regulation and managerialism in the early education environment.

ity and distance are disrupted as parents are drawn closer to the learning experiences of their child. In this paper, I have argued that this development is all the more pertinent in light of broader political and economic policy ambitions in countries like New Zealand, where work force participation by mothers is increasingly an expectation rather than a choice and where more children than ever are in extra-familial care during the working day. However, questions can be asked as to what exactly is being documented through the eportfolio? It remains to be seen in what way are eportfolios *for* children rather than solely *about* children. Moreover, how representative is it of the childs day or is it cherrypicking positive aspects of their day and extrapolating outwards to generate a learning story for parental consumption? These are perhaps quite pessimistic questions to pose, given the large scale adoption and general endorsement of eportfolio technology, however I suggest that it is important to query at this juncture who the introduction of this technology is for and to what end.

The platform also performs other functions which have been developed as the interests of more users have been enrolled into the network. In this case, the data derived from the eportolio serves the needs of managers in understanding the relationships between teachers, parents and the children in new ways. As suggested, the graphs and analytics created can have a powerful effect on how participants are both viewed and addressed, and plays a role in shaping the behaviour of all involved to produce the 'good' teacher and the 'good' parent subjects. Thus, once parents and teachers are enrolled into using the technology, the platform can become a disciplinary tool which operates at a distance to shape practices and engagement of all involved. A second set of questions can be asked about how participation or non participation is being read by other actors in the network. With the production of a range of new analytics and the power now potentially derived from the knowledge they produce, are levels of engagement (frequency, expediency of reply of parents and so on) being viewed as a proxy for care within the emergent virtual landscape of ECEC?

Finally, while I have drawn on the theoretical insights of ANT in this paper, what I have offered here merely begins to open up some new ways of thinking about eportfolios in the ECEC environment. A more in-depth, comprehensive study would involve a longitudinal ethnographic methodology, which takes account of how the learning stories are generated and the experiences of children as well as adults in the creation of the portfolio. As proponents of ANT have suggested, the only way to truly understand a network and the relations being produced is to 'follow the actor'. In the case of

eportfolios and the early education environment, this would involve a ethnographic approach which would seek to trace the connections, materials *and* the relationships between different materials in order to flesh out the network and to understand where power is held in that network. Empirically this approach would follow parent-users, teachers, managers and children, as they engage with the platform. As stressed in this paper, both the human and non-human should be taken into account as potential actors within the network, thereby not closing off the possibility of the technology to shape and stabilise network relations. Indeed this approach may offer an innovative means of exploring the role of ICT more generally in the early education environment, in so doing allowing for a more heterogenous understanding of ECEC and the relations and materials that make up this crucial resource for children and working families.

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Kindergarten space and autonomy in construction – Explorations during team ethnography in a Finnish kindergarten

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Abstract: Children's autonomy is a cultural ideal in Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC). In this article we examine autonomy in spatial terms. The theoretical background is developed by applying spatial sociology. Our starting point is that space is relationally produced, thus, we understand space as continuously negotiated, reconstructed and reorganized phenomena. In this article, we investigate the production of space by different actors in ECEC and seek to show how autonomy is also continuously produced and re-produced in the negotiation of space. For this investigation we use data collected as part of a team ethnographic project in a Finnish kindergarten. The project included conducting observations and interviews with parents and educators. Our research shows that autonomy is developed in multiple ways in kindergarten spaces. Educators as well as children and parents continuously produce and reproduce the kindergarten space within which children's autonomy variously unfolds as linked to independence, freedom and responsibility in the cultural and ideological setting of a Finnish kindergarten.

Keywords: space, autonomy, early childhood education and care, team ethnography.

Introduction

Children's autonomy is a cultural ideal in Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC), and in this article we will examine autonomy in spa-

tial terms. We aim to show through our investigations of the empirical data how autonomy unfolds as spaces are produced in ECEC. For the purposes of this article, *space* is understood as relationally produced in social relations. Similarly, we understand *autonomy* as a controversial concept, with multiple meanings and interpretations.

Our starting point is that Finnish ECEC has been shaped historically and relationally, and carries traces of various ideals and values that have been underlined in education practices. Children's autonomy is one of these topical ideals and characteristics of Finnish ECEC. For example, Strandell (2012), in her analysis, characterizes Finnish ECEC as valuing children's independence, autonomy and agency. Being capable, independent and agentic are linked to having and showing respect and responsibility for others around us. For example, the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2017, p. 17) stresses that one of the aims of ECEC is to guide children towards "acting responsibly and sustainably, respecting other people and becoming a member of society." Therefore, becoming a skilled team worker and a person with interaction skills, as is also described in the curriculum, involves valuing and taking others' views into consideration. As Broström and colleagues have said (Broström, Skriver Jensen & Hansen, 2016), in the Nordic context, autonomy is seen as a basis for educating children to develop democratic values and for fostering participation in society both today and in the future (also Vallberg Roth, 2014; Gulløv, 2011; Bennet, 2010).

To investigate how autonomy is constructed in practices we utilize relational approaches to space. We understand space in the sense that Fuller and Löw (2017) and Massey (2005) do: as continuously negotiated, reconstructed and reorganized phenomena. In this ongoing production of relational space, the physical environment, personal interpretations of physical and cultural space, and culturally and collectively shared views of space entwine (Soja, 1996; Raittila, 2008). Understanding that human action produces meaningful space (Raittila, 2012; Fuller & Löw, 2017) makes it possible to explore how children and adults produce space relationally by combining personal interpretations and shared views of kindergartens as physical and cultural spaces.

By approaching kindergarten as a relational space that contains cultural and educational ideals and values, we explore how autonomy is produced by children and adults in educational institutions. It is expressed and lived in diverse ways, and has links to independence, freedom and responsibility.

Thus, in this article we focus on how different actors construct and perform kindergarten as space, and how, as a result of this construction, autonomy unfolds in the cultural setting of a Finnish kindergarten.

In our analysis, we will use data from an ethnographic project conducted in a Finnish kindergarten. This ethnographic data generation process has involved various data collection methods with diverse participants (parents, children and educators). The joint discussions and both the theory and data driven reflections within the team of researchers has enabled us to investigate the process of constructing space from various perspectives, as an ongoing phenomenon and as a process of formation.

Space and Autonomy in Finnish ECEC

In line with spatial sociology (Fuller & Löw, 2017) and with the view on relational space, we are interested in the ways spaces are produced and the consequences of that. Olwig and Gulløv (2003, p. 10) note that space can be "used as an analytical tool to understand the social life of children." This points to personal, social and political questions of childhood. Carefully analysing reciprocal relationships in physical surroundings and in relational space-making makes it possible to discover the positions children can achieve in society (Olwig & Gulløv, 2003) and, particularly, children's possibilities for acting and defining everyday space.

Space does not simply exist, but is created in action. Children's spaces in kindergarten are shaped in relations that go beyond here and now contexts. Relations refer to those contexts and networks from which we learn to see and interpret the built environment and the different discourses about space sedimented in the social relations and structures of our lives. Relations include power structures and individual choices, as well as reciprocity and interdependencies between actors (Pierce et al., 2011). Every child, educator and parent constructs the kindergarten space from their own position in society, with the knowledge and 'pre-interpretations' they have taken on in their own networks (see Pierce et al., 2011). Linked to this process is the social and cultural aspect of relational space that refers to the values, rules and symbols of culture, politics and ideology (Soja, 1996; Raittila, 2008). For example, kindergarten space is 'determined' as a space for education and care in society. People, including the children in the kindergarten space, have cultural and social knowledge about this space, such as how it could be organized and used (Raittila, 2012; Vuorisalo, Rutanen & Raittila, 2015).

In this article, we approach kindergarten as a relational space that contains cultural and educational ideals and values, including autonomy. We understand space as being socially constructed, interlinked and embedded in cultural and ideological frames that offer definitions of that space. Space is constructed through a continuous process, thus the ideologies, ideals and values in that space present particular constraints, boundaries and possibilities for defining that space. (Soja, 1996; Löw, 2008) When a particular process of constructing space is in focus, such as that in the kindergarten space, the cultural ideologies are intertwined in this construction. In this article, we will investigate how central aspects of autonomy appear when space is negotiated.

The concept of *autonomy* has deep roots in education. During the Enlightenment, the autonomous subject became the subject of education (Readings, 1996). The function of education was to form rational, self-governing, knowing and free subjects, who made responsible judgements in society. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) recognize that these same values guide education today. They summarize the aim of education: "the subject, in short, must be formed to be able to exercise freedom and responsibility" (p. 20). The core act of autonomy is usually seen to be a capacity to make responsible choices where relationships and interdependence between humans and things are evaluated (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Rose (1999) adds a further aspect in emphasizing people's capacity to recognize their desires and fulfil their potential as features of autonomy. However, autonomy is an ambiguous phenomenon. The other side of the coin is control and autonomy always has its limits in society (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). A responsible participant should know these limits while acting autonomously and utilizing his or her freedom of choice.

Our interest in children's autonomy in kindergarten arose initially from the clues in the empirical data. We combined the empirical cues with our theoretical starting point that space is imbued with ideals and ideology (Soja, 1996; Massey, 2005), and with previous research (e.g. Strandell, 2012) that understands autonomy as one of the values and ideals present in the negotiations of space. This cultural ideal and the value of children as autonomous actors enables particular negotiations but delimits others. The starting point for autonomy is that an actor that seizes the opportunities offered by the space, is active and shows initiative, and is free to use and construct that space by using the resources and opportunities it offers. However, this should all happen in a responsible way within the jointly constructed limits. For example, as we will show later, children recognize particular opportuni-

ties in the daily events and routines in ECEC. They recognize the moments for freedom and how much freedom they have to make their own decisions about activities. They also recognize and identify the moments when they are expected to follow more tightly the preplanned schedule and particular routines. These degrees of freedom alternate during the day. However, in autonomy the question is not only about freedom, but also about responsibility. In the everyday flow of events, the actors learn first the boundaries and restrictions, and then start to maneuver their way around the activities and adjust their actions to these boundaries, and even challenge boundaries. If we focus on investigating the aspect of responsibility in freedom, it becomes obvious that children themselves participate in actualizing the ideologies and ideals in ECEC (e.g. Millei & Imre, 2016). This occurs when their actions fit into the structure and routines in ECEC, but they are also able to seize their freedom in those moments in which there is no place for it. In other words, they are able to use and construct that space for their own benefit. Thus, autonomy assumes a certain independence.

In summary, we approach autonomy as an interrelated combination of freedom and responsibility, where freedom refers to an individual's independence and responsibility existing in relations as a negotiated attribute of social living. This notion of relational space has helped us in our attempt to investigate empirically the unfolding of autonomy, in terms of children's possibilities for defining space, for acting and utilizing their freedom of choice within the boundaries of the jointly constructed space. We move away from a concept of autonomy as an individual capacity, and instead investigate how autonomy unfolds as a spatial construction. Theories of space offer tools to investigate how ideologies form and shape in space and in relations. Thus, autonomy is constructed by diverse actors who have different roles and responsibilities in ECEC and in young children's lives, and also by children themselves.

Ethnography and the Analysis

This article is based on team ethnography (e.g. Lahelma, Lappalainen, Mietola & Palmu, 2014) conducted in a kindergarten in Finland. The broad focus of the project was to investigate how daily practices, culture and pedagogical spaces are constructed. All three authors of this article and one research assistant collected the ethnographic data in the same kindergarten (see Rutanen, Raittila & Vuorisalo, forthcoming; also Paavilainen, 2017). Over a period of about half a year (2–3 days a week), we followed the everyday activities in the kindergarten, in three groups, one consisting of under-

threes and two groups of three to five year-olds. In addition to the observations and our written notes, we also made video recordings of selected events during the day and conducted interviews with educators, children and parents. Throughout our team ethnography, we held regular meetings to discuss the data collection and our individual observations. The data were handled confidentially and only shared within the research group. All names used in this article are pseudonyms.

The data are examined in light of the perspectives on autonomy described above, including, particularly, the aspects of freedom and responsibility in action, which are also related to independence and the individual's 'opportunities for choice-making. After a preliminary reading of the data, the analysis focused on episodes that offer rich events where these central features of autonomy could be interpreted. In analysing the observational data, we focused on, on the one hand, children's free choice and independence, and, on the other hand, how children negotiate or even exceed some of the boundaries set by their physical environment and adult expectations. In the data from the interviews with educators and parents, our analytical gaze focused on negotiations of autonomy as expectations related to the child's independence. With these different gazes on the diverse data, we shed light on how autonomy unfolds in the process of negotiating kindergarten space and everyday life in ECEC.

Autonomy Unfolding in Kindergarten Space

In our illustration we start by discussing a selected episode. Our analysis of an indoor morning session after breakfast demonstrates that the foundations of children's spaces are constructed at the crossroads between the (pedagogical) practice of daily life and the free flow of children's action. This episode is followed by accounts from educators and parents that illustrate how the construction of space and autonomy is also linked to their views and accounts of the children's independence and distance from the parents.

Autonomy as negotiated within pedagogical practices and children's freedom

The institutional starting point structuring the actions in the daily practice in this kindergarten is guided by a schedule determined by the educators. The schedule is presented to the parents and children in many ways. In this particular setting, the daily (Figure 1, on page 52) and weekly timeta-

bles and pedagogical programme were displayed on the wall in the entrance hall. The basic structure of the day was presented in picture form for the children (Figure 2, on page 52). Timetables and pedagogical programmes are agreements between educators about how the (pedagogical) practice of kindergarten is organized; these indicate the order of the events and how long each activity is planned to last. This general time structure is crucial for directing children's actions and explicitly indicating some of the spatial boundaries regarding their freedom. At the same time, the children have their own opportunities to select and 'shape' their spaces. This is illustrated by the following extract from an observation of a morning with a group of three to five year-olds (10-17 children) and three educators:

> At 8:50 ten children and Niilo (educator) come back to the classroom from the dining room after having had breakfast. Niilo asks who would like to do arts and crafts with him first. Elsa, Aino and Satu are keen to participate and they go to sit at the table the educator has prepared for arts and crafts. Other children freely choose different activities. Roni, Olli, Aimo and Ossi mark off their play area in the corner of the classroom with chairs. Eerik shows the Batman print on his t-shirt to Olli, while the other boys construct their play corner. After getting the corner ready Roni, Olli, Aimo and Ossi start to browse through a Lego catalogue and to chat about their favourite things in it. Eerik peeps into the boys' corner every now and then from under the table, but does not get invited to join the group. Sanni sits alone at the desk and starts to arrange Hama beads following a pattern. Vilma remains on her own at first, but then Anu arrives and they start to build a mermaid's hut. At 9:35 Roni, Olli and Ossi start building something with the Lego blocks and Aimo continues reading books. These four boys continue playing together for over an hour.
>
> At 9:40 Annette (educator) comes and asks some of the children to join her for a painting workshop in the dining room. Anu, Vilma, Erkka, Eerik and Reko follow Annette and they paint a post box for the children's group.
>
> While I was momentarily watching the painting workshop, Robin and Joona came into the classroom and started playing together. I continued to observe in the classroom where Erja (the third educator) came in at 10:15 and immediately began to finish the Hama bead pieces by ironing them. By this time, three children had joined in to make things with the Hama beads. At 10:30 Roni said he was bored. Niilo replied

saying that sometimes life is boring and suggested that Roni go and lie on the big cushion and read books. Roni didn›t take up the suggestion.

At 10:35 Annette comes back from the painting workshop with the children and the finished post box. Now, there are 17 children and 3 adults in the room and the children are doing different activities. Reko starts reading books. Anu and Vilma go back to their mermaid's hut. At 10:40 Erja (educator) takes seven children to the other room for gym. Niilo chats with Reko who is reading alone. At 11:05 the gym group comes back and Niilo starts to organize circle time for the whole group.

Figure 1

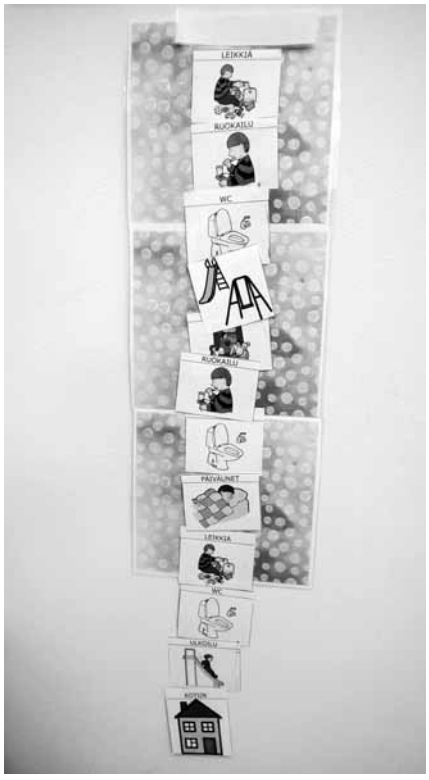

Figure 2

The description above shows what happened over two hours and 15 minutes. In general, the description gives a very dynamic picture of early childhood education: there is a wide variety of activity going on. The morning is usually the time for planned pedagogic activity in Finnish kindergartens. The space is at least partially predesigned and controlled by the educators and children often have less freedom than during other moments of the day. However, this example shows that these pre-structured activities, and the

more controlled spaces relating to them, can also be optional. All three educators, Niilo, Annette and Erja, openly invited the children to participate in more structured activities and the children had the freedom to decide when and if they wanted to take part in adult-led or suggested activity.

During that particular morning, the children who did not join the adult-led activities were free to move from one child and activity to another at their own will. Some children, like Vilma and Anu, used this opportunity to independently and repeatedly reconstruct their spaces during the morning without educators' influence. The space frames varied in terms of physical space, the participants in the space, or the activities performed in space and the nuances of those. Some children moved between an adult-led pedagogical space and a more clearly self-constructed space. The varied aims of the different activities also led to the construction of separate spaces and the variation in autonomy discussed below.

Some of the activities organized by the educators were clearly structured from a pedagogical orientation. For example, the arts and crafts workshop and the painting workshop were both aimed at developing children's hand and fine motor skills, creativity and concentration. However, pedagogical goals and spaces also appear when the children are allowed to construct activities following their own interests. That morning, Sanni chose to work on her own with the Hama beads. This kind of work demands good concentration skills, especially in a room where more than ten other children are working. This is an example of how children are able to create pedagogical spaces without intervention by an educator or through adult-led activities. In this kind of situation children also utilize their freedom in a responsible manner.

The length of time the children's freely chosen play spaces can exist for is limited by the predesigned schedule (Figure 1). On that particular morning Roni, Olli, Aimo and Ossi succeeded in constructing and maintaining the same play space for an hour. The boys had extensive freedom to organize their physical and social space. They marked their physical space out by separating it from the rest of the room using chairs. The social space changed as the boys decided to do two different activities: Aimo read a book and the other boys built things out of Lego. The boys' autonomy was actualized in the relational space where social and physical spaces intertwine. Eerik tried to enter their play space by peeping in now and then, but they paid no attention to Eerik's efforts. In this way, they defended their play space so that it was just for the four of them, and they kept their distance from the others.

Thus, the children's autonomy is not something that is total or absolute, that either exists or does not. In this example, the children had opportunities to negotiate the timing of the individual activities and the pedagogical work. They could also organize their own participation in the different activities and groups. This freedom is linked to current pedagogical thinking. In the 1980s and 1990s it was still customary for adult-led activities to be organized for large groups of children. More recently, one pedagogical principle and approach has been to teach children in small groups (Raittila, 2013). Also the emphasis on children's participation as a foundational principle has changed the spaces, and now they are more open for children to use at their own initiative. Children are given and take more responsibility for their own activities, and they plan their activities as a group together with the educators.

The increasing self-management of children in kindergarten is seen as one aspect of autonomy. It has also prompted criticism, raised questions and even been challenged by childhood researchers. Strandell (2012) has drawn attention to the fact that aspects of this freedom and self-organization can be seen as new ways of controlling and governing children. Control has become more indirect and implicit, and participation is based more on the child's individual ability to manage in different situations than was previously the case when education was more teacher-oriented. Millei (2011) has described how guidance and teaching practices aimed at children's autonomous action are perhaps even more value-loaded than outward control. The latter was only targeted at changing children's behaviour, while the former are about attempting to influence children's minds. Thus, we should not assume that autonomy is a self-evident value in kindergarten. It is accompanied by new demands and (more insidious) forms of control over young children's lives.

Trust is one aspect present in the construction of space presented above and it is also related to autonomy. In the kindergarten, because of the freedom given, taken and spatially constructed, children gradually get used to working independently. The children are allowed to play without adult supervision, even in a room with no adult present. As our description of the morning activities shows, although most of the children were allowed to freely choose an activity (cf. Rutanen, 2004), they were expected to be responsible and adapt their activity to the physical space shared with the other actors. The educators showed they trusted the children in their decisions and judgements on the appropriate activities. Following on from this, the children's independence was also expressed in their ability to find suit-

able tools and toys, and to select an appropriate physical space and good company. The children utilize their freedom, but they also have to show that they do so responsibly and align their activities with the pedagogical spaces and ideologies supplied by the educators.

In summary, the joint construction of children's spaces in everyday activities in kindergarten takes place at the crossroads between pre-planned and adult-led pedagogical practices and the free flow of activities. The children gradually embody the rhythm of the pedagogical work prescribed by the adults and use all the available moments to make their own choices, that is, the freedom to construct their own spaces and take responsibility for their own activities. Children need time to learn and commit to pedagogical practices when starting kindergarten. They have to learn what responsibilities they have, and how to responsibly use the freedom that is offered and allowed in this particular setting. Autonomy is actualized through the negotiation of these two elements, freedom and responsibility, in ECEC. This view gives children the opportunity to utilize the widest range of spaces that encourages and supports their activities and autonomy. At the same time, when schedules and pedagogical practices require the involvement of the autonomous child, the children produce the relational space of autonomy within the pedagogical spaces of the kindergarten.

Autonomy as a characteristic of the 'perfectly fitting child' in kindergarten

In the educators' verbal accounts, the themes of independence, freedom and responsibility were evident in their spatial constructions. From the analysis of the educators' interviews about everyday practices, we see how educators participate in the construction of space and *the ideal independent child* becomes visible. Starting from their first days in kindergarten, or even before, during preliminary visits to the kindergarten, their expectations concerning autonomy unfold. A 'perfect newcomer' is described in the following example:

> Interviewer: So what is it, could you describe in more detail what it is about him that is so perfect or [inaudible]...?
> Educator 1: He is social.
> Educator 2: Yes and, well, all this, this daily rhythm, and all this feels, that it kind of works. When we go to sleep, so since his first days here he has fallen asleep there, and he goes to sleep very nicely by himself. He doesn't have that sort of panic about a situation that this is strange or odd or anything like that.

In their accounts of the child who 'fits in perfectly' in the kindergarten, the educators list various aspects regarding their evaluation of the child in relation to the kindergarten space. A child who fits in perfectly is social, follows the routines easily and does not require much assistance despite his or her young age. The child is able to fall asleep and follow the daily pedagogical practices and rhythm of the kindergarten. Thus, in these accounts, autonomy is not assumed in the sense of being independent of adults, but in the sense that the child is able to use the structures provided for her or his benefit or for a specific purpose from early on. The educators also believe that the child is able to do the required things; thus freedom is linked to the child's responsibility for following the routine and structures provided. In their descriptions, the educators discussed very specific aspects that they thought indicated the child's autonomy and independence: the child's behaviour, skills, initiative and competence when pursuing different tasks and activities, such as eating or getting dressed without assistance. However, while the educators were evaluating the child and her or his competences and knowledge about the setting and the routines, as represented in the child's actions and nonverbal and verbal behaviour, the educators were also taking into account the child in his or her relational context, acknowledging the environment and what it enables. A competent and autonomous child is one that is able to identify the possibilities provided and to act freely, and "easily", to use the term one of the educators used. An autonomous child makes the educators' work easier.

Continuing this description of a 'perfectly fitting' child, in another example, an educator constructed autonomy as an ideal that is also expressed in this instance through distance from the mother.

> Educator 2: Well, I had, based on the home visit and that one day when they were visiting, that sort of feeling, that, most likely, we will do well. That she was really interested in everything, and the mother said her child likes to sing, and to read, and to be outdoors, and indoors. The sort of active child that likes to help, and then sort of having basic trust and being positive. And that sort of feeling I got, she laughed easily and was already moving a bit further away from her mother.

In this account, the physical distance from the mother is interpreted and reported as a sign of emotional wellbeing, initiative and as an indication of potential autonomy within the boundaries of the kindergarten space as expressed and observed in its routines and structures. Thus, in this example autonomy emerges as the ability to be distant (emotionally and physically),

not independent, but interdependent. The child exhibited the abilities and agency to use her or his freedom within these boundaries and interdependencies.

In summary, the educators' accounts construct the 'perfectly fitting child' at the point where the normative space of the kindergarten intersects with the cultural ideal of autonomy. These accounts include assumptions about children who observe and adjust to the structure of the day and other constraints, have knowledge and resources, and are able to actively construct their spaces within and in relation to these structures. By being autonomous and independent the 'perfectly fitting child' also makes educators' work easy. It is important to note that some scholars have been critical of how these new demands are applied to children, now that the emphasis is on autonomous and self-managing children (Gulløv, 2008; 2011). Obviously, there is a risk that some children may find these demands for independence and self-management more challenging than other children. Children who lack these skills may eventually challenge this organizational functioning that is no longer based on the idea of individual attendance or assistance, but on children's self-managing skills, if taken to the extreme.

Parents reflecting the ideal of autonomy

We extended our analytical gaze to cover the parents' interviews. In Finnish ECEC, parents bring their children to the kindergarten but are not present at the kindergarten at other times. They rarely spend a whole day or even part of a day at the kindergarten. Thus, parents are not directly involved in the negotiation of space between educators and children, and so they have a different position in relation to the construction of kindergarten space. However, responsibility for children's education and care is shared between families and institutions (Karila, 2012). In the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2017), parents have the status of important participants in their children's education and care, thus the parents' role in negotiating kindergarten spaces is something the educators have to take into account. Parents, also contribute to the socio-spatial space of ECEC, and in the relational approach to the construction of space it is possible to investigate this contribution. Parents' understanding of space and autonomy at kindergarten guides their own activities and most certainly how they discuss kindergarten with their children.

In the parents' views, kindergarten seems to be a place where children learn to be independent. Their interpretation of kindergarten is similar to

the educators' construction of the ideal independent child. A mother describes her thoughts about her child being at kindergarten:

> Mother: It [kindergarten] has been an important thing during the last year. A big, big thing. When a child starts kindergarten. It will form the child's own world, trust on that, I am not able to […] I have to give him that space, I can't be there all the time as his protector, I have to let him cope with his challenges on his own. And I have to trust that he will do all right and he will not, he will keep at it even though he is feeling sad.

For the mother it seems that placing her son in kindergarten was quite controversial. It is challenging for her to let him have his 'kindergarten world' outside the reach of his parents where he might even feel sad. At the same time it is unavoidable. She trusts that her son will cope with all the challenges he may face without them. One of the fathers approaches this same issue:

> Father: Though Elsa is quite small, I want to teach myself that there is a world where I will only get some crumbs. […] Even though I visit that place with Elsa daily and I see all the things there, when I chat with Elsa about those things, I realize that she doesn't necessarily… She wants to keep that stuff to herself, though she is nearly five.

The father starts by expressing the idea that he actively wants to learn, as part of his role as a father, that his daughter has her own life and world, starting in kindergarten. He also explains what he means by 'the crumbs' he gets: he recognizes that he doesn't have the same knowledge about events in the kindergarten as his daughter has, and he also recognizes that already at the age of four his daughter not only has her own kindergarten world but also wants to keep it her own.

The two parents portray the kindergarten as a specific and separate space for their children, as an independent world of their own. The parents are not able to share these experiences with their children, but that is as it should be in kindergarten. They also emphasize the need for them to learn how to cope with this situation themselves. All this supports the idea that autonomy is embedded in the parents' understanding of the kindergarten space. They have chosen to take their children to kindergarten, and obviously they also participate in constructing the ideals of that space. In their view, the kindergarten helps their children to become independent (see Broström, Skriver

Jensen & Hansen, 2016). They realize that they could not and should not interfere with that process. Thus, the ideal of the autonomous child is strongly present in the parents' understanding of 'what kindergarten is' and in how they position themselves towards the kindergarten space. While the parents say the process of their children becoming 'autonomous children' is not easy for them, it gives us some insight into the negotiation occurring in the space: the parents recognize the ideal of autonomy in the cultural interpretation of that kindergarten space, and they adjust their own feelings and expectations of the kindergarten as a specific place for their children. It is not only the children but also the parents who reproduce the values the space offers and the special ideal of autonomy that guides the construction of the kindergarten space.

Discussion

A considerable amount of research in ECEC has recently focused on diverse approaches to space and place, and the application of spatial lenses to the analysis of practices related to children's institutional lives (Gallacher, 2016). Many of the studies have been inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), which focuses on heterogeneous assemblages including non-human and human elements. One such study, that bears close resemblance to our application of a relational approach, is the work of Jennifer Sumsion and her colleagues in Australia. In their work, following Tamboukou (2008), *smooth spaces* refer to open spaces that allow transformations to occur, whereas *striated spaces* refer to spaces that are ordered, more bounded and fixed, and that can be more limiting than smooth spaces (Sumsion, Stratigos & Bradley, 2014, p. 47–48). Similarly, in our analysis, we have illustrated how the ordered, fixed and somewhat predetermined structure of the pedagogical spaces enfold freedom and the free flow of activities.

Kindergarten and ECEC space is characterized by socio-spatially embedded and located routine-like events that occur repeatedly, in a somewhat similar manner, for all children (Williams, 2001). Even though, in our example, the schedule was presented to the children and parents, space and action were created on the basis of negotiation and independent decisions. Both the educators and the children had opportunities to shape the relational spaces. In the first example, the educators' autonomy could be seen in the planned activities and the division of labour between the working adults. The children's autonomy hinged upon at least two different kinds of knowledge base: first, regarding how the ECEC daily system normally works, and second, how the physical environment can be made accessible

(Eerola-Pennanen, 2013). The former refers to knowledge about how to participate in adult-led small group action and how to organize the independent action freely, parallel to the guided activities. The latter refers to the possibilities that space offers with its different kind of objects, such as the shallow shelves or other furniture and toys available. In the process of constructing the space, the children could stretch the boundaries between the adult-led and self-organized spaces.

The concept of autonomy was empirically associated with the attributes of freedom and responsibility that we identified in our first example. There was an openness to initiative-taking and spontaneity within the overall structures, which are often, but not always, predefined. It is in the encounter between freedom and responsibility and within their tensions and negotiations that the space and children's autonomy are constructed. Here we follow on from previous research into children's spaces and places that shed light on how places organized for children and children's own places intertwine with each other (Rasmussen, 2003; Raittila, 2008).

Educators continuously construct kindergarten spaces not only through their actions but also through their accounts and reflections. The interview data showed how they evaluate the child and children's behaviour in relation to the structures and the routines in the setting and their own work. A child who is able to use the structures to construct his or her own space and agency in relation to the potential and available opportunities 'does well', both socially and emotionally. Similar to the observational data on practices, the educators' verbal accounts emphasized freedom and responsibility. They also stressed that children's developing independency and self-management skills within the routines and rhythm of the day are important resources for children.

The parents are observers and play a part in ECEC practices through their accounts; thus, they also produce and reproduce the children's autonomy in the kindergarten space. However, they themselves position ECEC as a distant, separate and unique place to which they do not have full access. It is the child's own world, outside the home, beyond parental knowledge and influence, reach, and control. The parents acknowledge the limits of their knowledge and, thus, of their participation in the world of the child that was previously shared and embedded in the private sphere of the home. The parents are nonparticipants rather than participants of the daily practices of the kindergarten. The children also recognize this tension and utilize their autonomy as freedom to keep the kindergarten as their own space. They choose

what to tell the parents and they know that their parents do not have the same knowledge of daily practices as they have. This is part of the relational construction of the children's autonomy where the children have an active role, and the parents are engaged with the ideal of the independent child.

The experience of autonomy is lived through everyday action in the kindergarten and by the educators and children together. This analysis shows that achieving autonomy is not only an educational goal, but that it also affects the way space is organized, through the experience of daily life in ECEC. As an ideology and ideal, it envelops the space of kindergarten practice and, as a value basis, it overlaps simultaneously with everyday practices and accounts of how kindergarten space is determined. It is inevitable that through these practices children also learn broader political ideologies, such as democracy, rights and the responsibilities of members of society (Millei & Imre, 2016; Strandell, 2012). On the basis of our investigation, we understand autonomy as extending from separate actions and producing an 'ethos' of the space where the practices indicate a joint awareness of the diverse opportunities and limitations affecting children's and adults' ability to participate in the production of that space.

The child moves through these accounts and narratives of the various actors. It is a space that is future-oriented and that is continuously constructed based on previously created experiences and meanings. It is both simultaneously being constructed whilst constructing further social relations. In conclusion, theories of space offer tools to investigate how ideologies and cultural ideals are formed and shaped in space and in relations and how, in turn, space shapes them. Ideologies, ideals and goals are present in this, guiding our doings and thinking and spatial approaches offer productive tools for illuminating how these values and ideals operate in educational practices. This article has merely sketched out one perspective that should be developed further.

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Young children's spatial autonomy in their home environment and a forest setting

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Abstract: Places assigned and places chosen have major implications for the lives of children. While the former are a result of children's subordinate position in an adult world, the latter are the essence of their agency. Beginning at a young age children seek out places to claim as their own. Places, real and imaginary, shape children and children shape them. This phenomenon of spatial autonomy is a formative, and extraordinary, part of their identity formation. While spatial autonomy has been casually referred to in the children's geographies literature, a theoretical framing of the concept is generally lacking. This article draws together findings from two research studies, which were conducted by the author, to further theorize the meaning of young children's (ages 3-6 years old) spatial autonomy in their home environment and a forest setting. Informed by a phenomenological framework, the studies used children's tours as a method. The findings reveal that spatial autonomy is an expression of children's independence enacted through symbolic play and hiding activities. The children sought out small places and high places where they could observe others while maintaining autonomy. Additionally, spatial autonomy is relational, negotiated within adult imposed-regulations and influenced by peers, siblings and other more-than-human elements in their environments. By claiming just-out-of reach places, the children collectively and independently established their own rules and a sense of control. The achievement of spatial autonomy plays an important role in young children's identity formation, boasting their self-confidence as they develop a sense of self with places in all the various environments of their lives.

Keywords: young children, sense of place, spatial autonomy, symbolic play, hiding.

Introduction

Spaces and places do not only influence children, but children also influence and shape places. Indeed, from a very young age, children express a desire to create or claim their own places in the world (Green, 2011; 2013). This constructing and claiming of place, is an important part of children's enactment of spatial autonomy, and plays a significant role in children's discovery of their sense of self (Cobb, 1977; Green, 2013; Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). While the concept of "spatial autonomy" has been casually referred to in contemporary children's geography literature (Bromley & Mackie, 2009; Freeman, 2010; Lehman-Frisch, Authier & Dufaux, 2012; Tomanović & Petrović, 2010; Travlou, Owens, Thompson & Maxwell, 2008; Wilson, Houmøller & Bernays, 2012), it has not been specifically theorized or defined. In other words it appears to be a somewhat taken-for-granted concept, and has often been used simultaneously with "spatial negotiation" and "spatial practices." The purpose of this paper is to further theory on the meaning of young children's spatial autonomy and how it is enacted in their home environments and in a forest setting. The decision to compare and distinguish children's experiences in these two settings was taken because they are shaped by different social-relational dynamics; namely, the home environment is largely structured by parents, and the forest, generally speaking, is less structured and restrictive. This paper explores what children's spatial autonomy can include, mean, and how it is enacted by two groups of preschool-aged children from two different regions of the United States.

Conceptualizing Children's Spatial Autonomy

The concept of spatial autonomy is drawn from older research and related fields such as environmental psychology and is generally used to refer to children exercising their own agency in particular places and with others (human and more-than-human beings and objects) within these spaces (Chawla, 1992; Hart, 1979; Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). Chawla (1992) argued that from the time that children first become mobile, they seek to achieve spatial autonomy by making their own place in the world and exercising agency within their places. From crawling into a laundry basket, to building forts with blankets, to exploring a nearby waterway, children strive to find their own sense of place in their environment. This, Proshansky and Fabian (1987) argued, plays an important role in children's identity formation. Others have discussed how children's spatial autonomy is negotiated and renegotiated within adult-imposed boundaries, situated in both time

and space and within particular social and cultural contexts (Punch, 2002). The word "spatial" is defined as "relating to, occupying, or having the character of space" (Merriam-Webster, 2018). "Autonomy" refers to "self-directing freedom" or "the state of self governing" (Merriam-Webster, 2018). So putting these two words together, *Spatial Autonomy*, might imply a self-directed space, or space where an individual seeks freedom and independence.

Place, child embodiment, and situated agency

Drawing from environmental psychology literature, "place" can be conceptualized as an "environmental locus in and through which individual or group actions, experiences, intentions, and meanings are drawn together spatially" (Seamon, 2014, p. 11). Places can range in scale from small to large, from a space under a table to a forest setting, or a city (Seamon, 2014). Seamon (2014) asserts a phenomenological understanding of place in that "place is not the physical environment separate from people associated with it, but rather, the indivisible, normally unnoticed phenomenon of person-or-people-experiencing-place" (p. 11). This understanding of place framed the qualitative approaches taken in the research presented in this article.

Furthermore, in seeking to understand children's spatial autonomy, we must also consider the meanings that young children themselves assign to a place. Meanings, however, should be recognized as fluid rather than stagnant; what a place means to one individual might mean something quite different for another. As well, the meaning a child assigns towards a place shifts over time and with growth and changes in physical, cognitive, and socioemotional understandings. As Manzo (2003) argued, "people's relationships to places are an ever-changing, dynamic phenomenon, and as such, they can be a conscious process in which people are active shapers of their lives" (p. 47).

In considering a phenomenological perspective of place, it is important to recognize the embodied child. The embodied experiences of children are unique and distinguished from those of adults, both physically and psychologically (James, 2000). A child's embodied experiences are informed by their "situated agency," that is, where a person is at a particular time and a particular place (James, 2000). Agency is related to a child's will to act either independently or collectively with others. Children exist within both an adult world and within their own constructed childhood culture (Corsaro, 2015). Young children, however, have little to no control, over the environ-

ments or settings in which they are exposed. In other words, they are born into certain family structures, located within specific geographical locations, and embedded within particular cultural values and traditions (Punch, 2002). For instance, Punch (2002) found that children's spatial autonomy in rural parts of Bolivia is negotiated between work and play. Particularly because of work demands "the time that adults allow children to dedicate to play is limited, [therefore] children devise ways of extending that time by combining play with work" (p. 59). Among children from urban societies access to spaces outside the home is often more limited because of parental concerns for safety (Valentine, 2004).

To this extent, children's spatial autonomy is also constrained by adult permissions and restrictions. As Valentine (2004) writes in regards to public spaces, children's spatial ranges are a negotiation of power between children, and between children and adults. Adults set the boundaries of where a child can and should go (Hart, 1979), and children's experiences of places, depending upon the amount of freedom provided by adults, are more or less influenced and shaped by adults. Thus, situated agency informs a child's spatial autonomy, that is, how they relate with and make meaning of place.

Research related to children's spatial autonomy

Hart's (1979) seminal study of *Children's Experiences of Place* in New England, U.S., revealed children's perspectives of their surrounding outdoor environment. His findings revealed that children lay claim to forts, hiding places, and other places of solitude and retreat where they can "look upon the world from a place of [their] own" (Hart, 1979, p. 211). Others have investigated children's experiences of (outdoor) forts, huts, and secret hideouts during the middle childhood years. (Kjørholt, 2008; Kylin, 2003; Sobel, 2002). Kjørholt (2008) argued that "often these places are seen as secret places, reflecting a separate children's culture developed within a particular microcosm" (p. 261). Similarly, Sobel (2002) noted that such places provide children with the opportunity to control and manipulate their environment and provide a space separate from adults. Although there have been a substantial number of studies that have considered children's fort-making activities during the middle childhood years, none have interrogated fort-making during the preschool years and how it relates to children's spatial autonomy.

Additionally, studies have looked at preschool children's place interactions in school and day care settings (Lowry, 1993; Skånfors, Löfdahl &

Hägglund, 2009). These studies show that young children are attracted to indoor places of secrecy and places that can be used for the purposes of exclusive and/or selective play (Lowry, 1993; Skånfors et al., 2009). Skånfors et al. (2009) identified two withdrawal strategies used by preschool children: "making oneself inaccessible" and "creating and protecting shared hidden spaces" (p. 105). Such strategies, although occurring in a preschool setting, reveal young children's enactment of spatial autonomy. There is a need to further theorize young children's spatial autonomy, what it means and what it can include, in children's home environments and in a forest setting. This article draws together findings from two research studies that I conducted to elucidate the meaning of young children's spatial autonomy.

Researching Young Children's Spatial Autonomy in their Home and in a Forest Setting

The two research studies involved preschool children (ages 3-6 years old) from two different locations. The first study focused on the locations, experiences, and characteristics of young children's special places in their home setting, both indoors and outdoors. It was conducted in 2010 and involved 31 preschool children from a small Rocky Mountain community in the western United States (Green, 2013; Green, 2015). The second study was also comprised of 31 preschool children, who were attending a university early childhood education program; this study took place in a forest near a city in the interior of Alaska during the summer of 2015. Its aim was to investigate participatory methods for engaging young children as active researchers (Green, 2015b; Green, 2017a). The study also examined how children's interactions in a forest shaped their environmental identity development (Green, 2016b). While the study was not specifically directed at investigating children's connections with particular places, the findings that emerged furthered our understanding of children's spatial autonomy in a natural (forest) setting.

The two studies were conducted within participatory and phenomenological frameworks, and focused on the essence of children's lived experiences of being in particular places with particular settings (Schwandt, 2015). Phenomenological meanings are socially and independently constructed and based on both an individual's past and present experiences. Both studies utilized participatory methods of research with children that honor children's voices and perspectives (Barratt Hacking, Cutter-MacKenzie & Barratt, 2013; Green, 2015), including child-led tours, children's artwork and model making, and book discussions. However, the findings presented in

this paper will primarily be drawn from the child-led tours. Child-led tours are effective for tapping into phenomenological meanings derived from an individual's "perception (hearing, seeing, etc.)" and "experiences of bodily action" (Schwandt, 2015, p. 234).

The child-led tours were structured slightly differently in each study. In the special place study, the children were invited to lead a "place tour" in their home environment in which they showed and told me about all of the places that were important to them (Green, 2012). In the forest study, the children were invited to participate in sensory tours (Green, 2016a). This method diverged from the place tour by inviting children to wear cameras while they explored and played in their environment. The wearable camera authentically captured what children "see, hear, say, and touch in their environments" without the interference of an adult (Green, 2016a, p. 282). Although findings from both studies provided information about children's spatial autonomy, the sensory tour method used in the forest study rendered visible more detail of children's play activities because it captured the children while they were authentically engaged in the act. Whereas, during the special place tours the children were invited to tell me what they typically do in their places, without actually being engaged in doing it.

The videos of the children's place tours and sensory tours were transcribed into text files; the text included not only the children's verbal expressions but also a detailed description of the setting, the children's activities, and their non-verbal expressions. The transcriptions were read several times to gain a sense of the material, as a preliminary stage of qualitative analysis (Bogdan & Biklin, 2007). During the second stage of analysis the data was coded and analyzed according to themes representative of the children's place and environmental connections. While the data from the two studies generated a wealth of information on children's preferences and experiences of places as well as their environmental identity formation, for the purposes of this article I have considered the qualitative themes that emerged from both studies in order to theorize further about children's spatial autonomy. Specifically, findings from both the studies will be used to explore what the concept of spatial autonomy can include, mean, and how it is enacted by young children in their home environment and in a forest setting. Thus, the findings presented in this paper should not be considered a comprehensive account of the findings from the two studies; rather some of the findings were purposively selected to provide illustrative examples of children's enactment of spatial autonomy in two distinct contexts. The findings presented below include transcribed portions of the children's place

and sensory tours. The children's tours are indented in the text and quotes from the children's verbal expressions are italicized to draw attention to their voices and perspectives.

Young Children's Enactment of Spatial Autonomy

The findings from the research supported and went beyond past studies, revealing that young children achieve spatial autonomy through multiple ways, including through play (constructive and symbolic), hiding, and retreating to spaces that provide them with a personal sense of comfort and security. The children sought out small places (too small for an adult), and high places where they could look out over peers and adults. They also pointed to a connection with places that had been personalized in some way, using either images[objects] associated with characters from popular culture (e.g., Santa Claus and Hello Kitty), which in turn reflected wider cultural values and beliefs Furthermore, while some achieved their spatial autonomy independently, many discovered it with others (peers and siblings) through play and creative innovation.

Gaining independence through symbolic play

Across both studies, children's spatial autonomy was demonstrated through symbolic play in certain spaces. Symbolic play occurs when children use their imagination or role-playing to transform themselves or objects into play props (e.g., a leaf becomes a cookie) (Smilansky & Shefta, 1990). Following their play themes, the children transformed places, people, and the objects within these spaces. Examples of the indoor and outdoor places claimed by the children as well as their symbolic play activities are represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of the indoor and outdoor places claimed by the children

Places in/near Home	**Play Scheme**
Behind a couch	Playing tea party with friends and dolls "Play with my babies"
In a closet	Pretending to be a witch: "Sometimes I turn some stuff into magic, sometimes I play with magic, sometimes I play witch, and sometimes I play with people."
Under a table	"Playing babies" "Play monster"
Behind living-room chair	Playing "campout"
In/under bed	"Playing with babies and bears"

Under blankets	Playing with toys and stuffed animals
Blanket Tents (indoor)	Pretending in an ocean Playing with dolls and stuffed animals "Have a fire pit so the fire would block my tent so no one would get through it." "Baby games"
Under trampoline	Playing tea party
In sandbox	Building castles
In a bush house	Hiding with friends, rocks became furniture
On a hill	Constructing bombs and magic potions to "thwart off the enemy"
Rocks	"Looking for diamonds and rubies"
Places in a Forest	**Play Scheme**
A spruce tree (house)	Making tea or food with leaves and birch sap.
A "Princess Castle" (under trees)	Playing "princess superhero," with super powers
A Castle (under trees)	Hello Kitty's birthday Wild rosebushes are strawberries for kitty's birthday cake
"Monster castle" (fallen tree)	Fighting off monsters and bad guys
A tree limb	Moving a "robot arm"
In trees	Pretending to be Santa Claus: "It's Christmas time!" "Ho, ho, Merry Christmas! Pretending to deliver presents by picking up forest foliage
In the forest	Pretending to be Arial in *Little Mermaid* "There's a sea monster!" Breaking branches from the trees, two boys proclaim that Wolverine is the strongest
On a tree branch	Riding on a spaceship to "California" Swimming in a submarine in the sea

In the special place study, the children indicated a preference for playing in small-personalized spaces inside their home environment. They would bring certain toys to these spaces to enhance their play themes (e.g.,dolls and stuffed animals). For example, Emily shared her special place behind the couch in the living room. During her tour, she took me behind the couch and showed me a little round table with two tiny chairs, a purple tray, a pink teapot, and two tiny mugs. She told me how she used this space to host tea parties for her friends and dolls. Although it was in the family's living room, the space was personalized in that it contained her playthings.

The outdoor play spaces selected by the children were more open-ended and abstract. Specifically, the spaces were not as small or confined. Perhaps, this is because parents or other adults do not necessarily control the natural environment, as they do in the family home. Outdoors, the children imagined places using existing physical elements (e.g., trees, fallen branch-

es). Instead of using play toys that represented certain things, the children transformed found and natural objects into props for their play. A few took on the role of certain characters (e.g., Arial from the Little Mermaid; Santa Claus; and Spiderman). The scene below, captured during Jade's sensory tour, demonstrates how she achieved spatial autonomy through the children's symbolic play. Jade claimed a "princess castle" with her friend Eleanor among four tall trees that formed a circular dome in the forest:

> *"We are in the castle,"* Jade said as she looked up towards the sky.
> *"You gotta be quiet. Shh…"* Eleanor said putting her finger next to her lips.
> *"This is a castle,"* Jade repeated.
> *"I know. The princesses…this is our castle,"* Eleanor agreed, *"Let's stay at our castle and have a nice warm snack."*
> Eleanor gave Jade a tiny crumbled leaf, after blowing on it.
> *"I wanna eat that one,"* Jade indicated, pointing to a leaf on a branch.
> *"Okay we've gotta snack. We've got cookies!"* Eleanor said, looking up at the trees.
> *"Okay, mmm…"* said Jade.
> *"A castle…"* Eleanor said.
> *"Do we have cherries?"* Jade asked, grabbing a flower from the nearby rosebush.
> *"Princess magic. These are magic cherries, we have to put on our sprinkles,"* Eleanor sprinkled crumbled leafs on top of the "cookies."

In this example, Jade and Eleanor achieved spatial autonomy together by imagining a shared space in the forest where they could be princesses. In their princess castle, the children delighted in magical sweets that they harvested and gathered nearby. In their princess castle anything was possible, the children transformed their environment to fit their desires.

Claiming forts, castles, and houses

Notably, like children in middle childhood (Kjørholt, 2008; Kylin, 2003; Sobel, 2002), the young children in both studies claimed forts, castles, and houses. As shown in Table 1, some children constructed blanket tents inside their homes. Others claimed forts and monster castles outdoors. These types of places, particularly those found in the forest, were not constructed, rather they were inspired by environmental features (the arc of leaning tree branches, the rise of a fallen tree trunk, and other logs of different sorts that distinguished a particular area in the forest). There were also

notable trends between the genders. Girls primarily claimed "houses" and "homes" as places to make food or participate in other domestic-like activities. "Forts" were primarily claimed by the boys and served various play and utilitarian purposes (e.g.., staying dry from the rain). "Castles," depending on the type, were discovered by both genders. A group of girls found "princess castles" where they played "princess super hero" and one boy became infatuated with a "monster castle" where he battled with monsters and bad guys.

Heather came upon her "house," a tall black spruce tree in the forest, where a group of girls had gathered. While the other girls went to play somewhere else, Heather liked the idea of a house and shared it with Priscilla. The girls soon gathered leaves and brought them to the house to make tea, sticking them on the sap covered trunk. However, after some time Priscilla lost interest in the house and told Heather that she wanted to go explore somewhere else. Heather reluctantly went along with Priscilla, but after some time exploring she invited Priscilla to return to her "home". Depicted below is a scene from Heather's sensory tour:

> *"If you get hungry in pretend, then I will lead you back to the house,"* Heather suggested to Priscilla.
> *"What did you say?"* asked Priscilla.
> Heather explained, *"If you are wanting to get back to the house, I can lead you. When you want to go back to the house. I'll lead you."*
> Priscilla appeared uninterested, but Heather insisted, *"Hmm... I want to go back home. Follow me and we'll be back there."*
> Heather started back towards her house, her pace quickened and she began to softly hum as she neared her "home." The video shows how Heather went away from her house three additional times to explore with Priscilla. Yet after each exploration she eagerly returned to her spruce tree. Heather shared her desire to stay, *"I don't want to go. I want to be in the house."*
> *"Don't you know you're supposed to go?"* Priscilla persisted.
> *"Yes, I like it here. And I explored around and realized this could be... well somebody else finded that out and then I finded that out and then I wanted to use this as my house and I explored the farthest place so we'd be alive. For all the food and drinks. So that is exploring..."*

In this example, Priscilla and Heather seem to have formed a different relationship to their "house." Heather was more attached to the idea of a house than Priscilla. Heather retreated back to the house time and time again

while Priscilla said that she would rather explore elsewhere. Both behaviors denote a form of children's spatial autonomy, that is, children's shared and individual connection to place. Neither was wrong or right; rather their spatial autonomy was just of a different nature.

Additionally, Priscilla's statement, "don't you know we're supposed to go" suggests that she is drawing on some authority, maybe the teacher's, who had perhaps asked them to exercise their spatial autonomy through exploration. Priscilla seemed convinced that staying at the house was not something that they were supposed to do. In this way, the two girls negotiated what it means to explore, and how to exercise spatial autonomy within adult rules and expectations. Heather's final statement defends her goal of staying at the house, while pointing out that she had sufficiently engaged in the exploration: "And I explored around and… the farthest places… so that is exploring."

Negotiating adult-rules through hiding

Hiding, a form of play, was the second most prevalent activity in the special place study. Children hid in closets, under blankets, under tables, behind curtains, and in between furniture. The children enjoyed the social aspect of hiding; during home visits all of the children appointed me as seeker in their game of hide and seek.

Four-year-old Sara and three-year-old Caleb, siblings, hid in 18 different places during their special place tour. When I arrived at their home the children were already hiding under their kitchen table. Next, Sara hid in a little corner behind the couch, and Caleb hid in the cabinet under the stairs. They hid in their brother's room (a place typically forbidden by their parents), in a toy chest, in the dark bathroom with flashlights, in a closet, under their beds – Sara slid under hers first and Caleb mimicked Sara in sliding under his. Once spotted the children proceeded to the next places: behind a white plastic shelf, behind a chest of drawers, behind their bedroom door, in another closet, behind a bathroom door, under the blankets in their parents' bed, behind window curtains in the living room, behind the couch again, and between the refrigerator and the wall in the kitchen. I asked the children why they liked to hide. Sara answered, *"Because…when Laura (her friend) comes, we hide!"* Caleb added, *"Because we want to!"* By choosing where, when, and how long to hide Sara and Caleb exhibited control over their environment. Additionally, the children challenged parental rules during their hiding game by accessing places that were typically off

limits. Their mother unlocked their brother's room for the children to access and although the cabinet under the stairs had previously been banned the children climbed inside it anyways.

Similarly, Tesa led me to a "forbidden place" during her hiding game. She took me to her parent's walk-in closet, a place that I would not likely visit on any other occasion. The transcript from Tesa's place tour reveals our interaction:

> *"How do you like this?"* Tesa asked, pointing to one of her mother's dresses.
> I smiled and nodded my head in agreement, feeling apprehensive about being in her parents' closet.
> *"I'll be right back,"* Tesa said, sliding quietly to the other side of the hanging dresses.
> *"Can you see me?"* she asked, *"This is one of my special places. Can you see my toes? Can you see me now?"*
> Playing along, I answered, *"No, I can't see you. I can just hear you."*
> *"I'm playing hide and seek with you,"* she stated, pushing through some of the shirts. *"Let me get out of the clothes,"* she said. *"Watch, I'll show you how I got through, I put all the clothes in a pile, and look, then I snuck through, then I'm trying to find the dress, there's no dress. Then I pushed through."*

The children in the special place study gained a sense of spatial autonomy through claiming hiding places in their home environment. Whether it was sneaking around in a closet, hiding under covers, or surprising me in choosing when and where they wanted to hide, the children created their own rules of their hide and seek games. Corsaro (2015) argued that one of the most prominent features of childhood is children's "persistent attempts to gain control of their lives" (p. 134). Through hiding, the children created their own childhood culture, which gave them a sense of autonomy in their homes, a place largely controlled by adults.

In the forest research study, children's hiding activities were not readily noted. Perhaps, this was because one of the parameters set by the teachers during the children's forest play was that they must be visible to a teacher at all times. Thus, hiding had been indirectly restricted. However, another way that spatial autonomy was exhibited was through claiming high places where they were unreachable.

Some children also sought out high, almost unreachable, places. *"Look at us! Look at us! Teacher! Teacher! Teacher! Teacher!"* four-year-old Sergo shouted at his teacher from up high above the branches of a dead spruce tree. The main trunk of the tree, with its brittle and bare branches, rose at an angle nearly 8 feet above the ground. *"I am climbing right here."* Sergo explained.

On more than one occasion, four-year-old Sergo climbed up the skinny trunk of a fallen birch tree in the forest. Calling out to his teacher and peers to take notice, Sergo ascended the tree with confidence. Sergo was the leader of most of the climbing adventures in the forest, with other children following. Scaling up the tree, in turn, demonstrated Sergo's sense of spatial autonomy, his desire to be above his teacher and peers. Corsaro (2015) argued that children have a preference for places "where they are, in a very real sense bigger" (p. 135). Not only did climbing the tree provide Sergo with a heightened view of the world, he also felt strong on the tree branches, engaging in battle with the monsters and bad guys. He called the fallen tree his "dinosaur castle" and the following scene captured during Sergo's sensory tour unfolds his engagement in battle:

> Sergo moved the dead branches up and down, holding them to keep steady.
> "*This one here, Teacher, this here is monster. This here is monster. And it goes rahh!!! RAH!!!! RAH!!! RAH!!! RAH!!! RAH!!!"* Sergo explained to his teacher, moving the two branches apart and back together, shaking them at each other.
> *"What did you make?"* his teacher asked.
> *"This is dinosaur,"* Sergo explained, pointing to one of the branches.
> *"Dinosaur?" His teacher asked.*
> "*Yeah," Sergo said, "This one is more like people and this one is going Rah! Rah!"*
> Sergo trimmed the small limbs off the larger branch. He showed how the two sticks fight (the dinosaur and people). A "people" stick broke off and fell to the ground.
> *"Uh-oh. That's okay. Rah! Rah!"* Sergo roared, shaking the "monster" stick around.
> *"This is dinosaur. Right there, right there, and right there. This all dinosaur.*" Sergo pointed to all of the branches ascending out of the fallen tree.
> "*This is dinosaur castle. This is dinosaur castle.*" Sergo explained.

Sergo's dinosaur castle provided him with a strong sense of place in the forest environment. His play scheme continued visit after visit, with Sergo seeking to gain new heights on fallen branches to battle dinosaurs, monsters, and bad guys. Through claiming a dinosaur castle, Sergo constructed an identity where he felt strong and confident. He gained a sense of spatial autonomy, which also seemed to enhance his self-esteem (Laufer &Wolfe, 1977).

In the special place study, children often claimed small places, too small for adults (e.g., in closets, under beds, under blankets, in cupboards, and in places between furniture). Although I am not a large person, I was initially taken aback to learn that many of the places that the children claimed were too small for adults (including myself) to access. Additionally, while the children happily showed me their places, they never invited me to enter their spaces. Most of the children were quite agile in their ability to fit into small spaces. Several showed me how they liked to hide inside closets with built-in shelves and tight spaces. Emily crawled through the small space under the dining room chairs to show me her special place under the table. One of John's favorite special places was in the tiny space under his brother's crib. Sara liked to climb on the back of a couch and hide behind the curtains. Lisa and Tesa both liked to play in their closets, and Robert's attempt to crawl under his bed suggested that he also had an interest in small places.

In the open-ended environment of the forest, it was challenging for the children to tuck away into small places. Instead the children sought private places where they could play undisturbed by adults and other children. This segment from Heather's sensory tour, revealed how the presence of a teacher nearby stalled the children's play:

> Heather and Priscilla were making "tea" in the forest. Heather disclosed to Priscilla that she was thirsty and Heather dared her to ask the teacher for a drink. Noticing a teacher nearby, Priscilla's eyes got big and they paused from their play.
> *"Hugh! Tell the teacher..."* Priscilla dared Heather.
> *"Hugh...tell the teacher..."* Heather repeated.
> The two girls look at each other. The teacher walks towards the girls who remain still and quiet. Heather rubs a leaf against the tree. They look back towards the teacher who pauses to converse with another group of children. Seeing that the teacher is once again occupied, the girls resume their play.

In this case, the presence of a teacher interrupted the children's achievement of spatial autonomy. The children stalled in their play, which suggests a loss of comfort and independence in their exercise of agency in their environment.

While on the one hand, the presence of adults disrupts the children's achievement of spatial autonomy. On the other hand, the findings reveal how parents also positively influenced children's enactment of spatial autonomy. In the special place study, some parents purposively designed special places for their children to play in. John's mother placed fake food and play items in a kitchen cupboard for John to pretend to cook. She also created a special drawer for John to store his tiny treasures. Robert's mother positioned books in the cubby at the head of his bed, attracting Robert to this place to read.

Family and parental influence on children's place connections was also presumed in the forest study. From the very first day, some children were reluctant to venture into the forest to play, while others were quite confident. Likely, some had had more opportunities for free play in the forest with their families than others. While parents or caregivers should not initiate children's enactment of spatial autonomy, they can certainly provide a foundation of comfort and security, which influences children's confidence in venturing into their environment (Green, Kalvaitis, & Worster, 2016).

Furthering Theory on Children's Spatial Autonomy

So how can these findings be taken together to further theory on young children's spatial autonomy? Three themes emerged across the findings of the two studies including children's enactment of independence, their negotiation of agency within adult structure and regulations, and multiple facets of children's relational dynamics. These will be described in further detail in the sections that follow.

Spatial autonomy as an expression of children's independence

Spatial autonomy is an expression of children's independence, which is explicitly linked to the social-cultural elements of particular settings. While past studies have examined how children's spatial autonomy is enacted through outdoor fort-making in middle childhood (Kjørholt, 2008; Kylin, 2003; Sobel, 2002), and as a negotiation between work and play in rural non-Western contexts such as in Bolivia (Punch, 2002), this paper specifi-

cally examines how young preschool children from the United States express their spatial autonomy inside their home environments and outside in a forest setting. Children's home environments are highly controlled and regulated by their parents. As such, inside their homes, children achieved spatial autonomy by claiming small (micro) places within their environments. Spaces such as behind a couch, in a cupboard, under a crib or bed provided children with independence from adult authority where they could exercise control over their environment. Furthermore, by claiming these microspaces children exercised their freedom to play exclusively with others, hide from adults and siblings, and/or be alone. In these spaces, children brought with them particular play objects, including toys, stuffed animals, and dolls. Children's places were often located in common areas (e.g. living rooms and kitchens) where they could observe family happenings yet maintain a sense of privacy. However, children also preferred personalized spaces located in their bedrooms, including in and under their beds, beneath blankets, and amongst their favorite toys.

Independence, as a primary construct of children's spatial autonomy, was also gained in the forest environment. However, unlike the home environment, the forest setting appeared less restrictive and controlled by adults. The places that children sought were not necessarily hidden nor were they small. Rather, children achieved spatial autonomy through their imagination by transforming natural features into places and props for their symbolic play. Children ventured to high places for a heightened view of the world, towering over other children and adults. These places made them feel strong and the feat of ascending a tree seemed to both be driven by and inform a child's sense of self-confidence. Children imagined the forest into magical places for princesses and superheroes, doing battle with sticks that were transformed into bad guys and partaking in leaves and flower petals, which symbolized delicious treats. Through the achievement of spatial autonomy children achieved some level of control over their environments and the objects and spaces within them. This, in turn, builds and strengthens their confidence, independence, and self-identity (Laufer & Wolf, 1977).

Children's spatial autonomy as influenced and negotiated with adults

While children's spatial autonomy is characterized by their exercise of independence, it is also both influenced and negotiated within adult boundaries, rules, and expectations. This idea is not new to the literature. Previous research has described how children negotiate their spatial autonomy in relation to the social and cultural expectations placed on them by more

powerful adults (Punch, 2002). However, the findings from the research presented in this paper extend this understanding by examining how spatial negotiation is enacted among *young* children. First, the findings show that through the act of hiding in their home settings children are able to adjust and bend adult rules, asserting their power and control in a setting that is highly structured by adults. Second, by claiming high places (e.g., scaling up trees in the forest) some children also exercised a level of autonomy and control over their environment by elevating themselves above adult authority figures and their peers. Although adults asserted the rule that the children must be in visual range of an adult, the high places provided the children with a space out of reach from adult teachers.

Finally, as Benwell (2013) points out, "the imposition of adult structure and surveillance on childhood should not be automatically perceived as negative" (p. 28). Adults can positively influence children's autonomous choices and spatial preferences. The young children in the special place study indicated their preference for reading nooks and crannies purposively designed by their parents. Children expressed their desire to snuggle with their stuffed animals and read books on their bed – a comfortable space, which one could argue played a positive role in their identity formation. Additionally, the preschool children's level of comfort at engaging in their forest environment was most likely influenced by previous familial exposure, although this was not explicitly accounted for in the data collected. All in all, the examples in this paper extend understanding of how young children negotiate their spatial autonomy amidst adult-imposed structures and regulations. This paper shows that it is through the just-out-of-reach places claimed by children, although characterized a bit differently in the two settings, that children gain a sense of independence and control.

Children's spatial autonomy is relational

Finally, children's spatial autonomy is relational; however, different social and phenomenological relations inform children's spatial autonomy in their home and forest settings. In the home environment, human-to-human relations were expressed primarily between children and parents, through spatial negotiations, as described above. Additionally, spatial autonomy was also negotiated between siblings in the home environment, for example, in Sara and Caleb's performance of hide and seek in their home. Caleb followed Sara's lead in hiding, when Sara slid under her bed Caleb mimicked her, sliding under his. Caleb was younger than Sara and, perhaps because of this, Caleb submitted to Sara's charge. Whereas, in the forest study the

children's spatial autonomy was heavily influenced by peer culture and to a lesser extent the teachers' rules and expectations. Groups of peers identified forts, castles, and houses and negotiated what and how they related to those spaces. Children scaled up trees, not only because they wanted to, but also because adult teachers allowed them to. The children quieted their play when they were threatened by interruption from teachers or worried about not adhering to teachers' expectations. Finally, it should be noted that the relational dynamic of the children's spatial autonomy in both environments was signified by the roles they chose to take on during play and how they symbolically related to other human and non-human elements in their environment. These roles provided the children with the autonomy to transform places and objects, relating to others in a way that best suited their individuality.

Conclusion

Spatial autonomy is an important theoretical construct in the study of children's geographies and other related disciplines, as it signifies the importance of children's exertion of agency in various spatial contexts. Yet although it has been commonly referred to in the literature (Bromley & Mackie, 2009; Freeman, 2010; Lehman-Frisch, Authier & Dufaux, 2012; Punch, 2002; Tomanović & Petrović, 2010; Travlou, Owens, Thompson & Maxwell, 2008; Wilson, Houmøller & Bernays, 2012), a theoretical framing for the construct has not been fully developed. This paper provides an important contribution to the literature by specifying what spatial autonomy can include, mean, and how it is enacted by young children (ages 3-6 years) in their home and forest environments.

While the findings presented in this article certainly provide insight as to how spatial autonomy is achieved in the lives of young children, it is important to point out that both studies were situated within Western middle class culture. Emerging findings from a more recent study of Alaskan Native children growing up in a rural setting (Green, 2017) suggests that there may be some differences in the way culture and geography influence children's enactment of spatial autonomy. For example, fishing, berry picking, and participating in other subsistence-based activities occupy much of children's outdoor time in nature in rural Alaskan Indigenous settings (Green, 2017). The findings presented in this article emphasize spatial autonomy as a construct enacted through recreational activities (e.g., playing and hiding). Future studies could examine children's spatial autonomy in collectivist cultures, particularly in cultures accustomed to a subsistence

lifestyle. With that said, in this conceptualization of spatial autonomy as a self-directed space where one might develop a sense of individuality and self-competency, there is no reason to assume that this should be accomplished independently. Rather spatial autonomy should be recognized as a positive construct that can be accomplished alone or collectively with others, and as the findings show, the achievement of spatial autonomy boasts a child's emerging sense of self, their self-confidence, and the relations in which they forge with place and their environments.

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‘Yay, a downhill!’: Mobile preschool children’s collective mobility practices and ‘doing’ space in walks in line

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Abstract: In the field of early childhood research children’s mobility is usually discussed only in terms of physical activity in the preschool yard. More seldom is it discussed in terms of mobility practices and how young children move in public spaces. With unique detailed video-ethnographic data on mobile preschools and a new combination of theories on space, mobilities and peer culture this article analyses how young children negotiate mobility practices and engage in embodied learning in the collective preschool routine of walking in line. Two empirical examples of walking in line in contrasting public spaces show how the mobile preschool group moves in space as a collective body co-produced by children’s and teachers’ individual bodies. It is argued that walks in line are not merely a form of ‘transport’ between places but are important as social and learning spaces. While walking in line, children collectively ‘do’ space in diverse ways depending on where and how they move, and in relation to where and when teachers negotiate safety issues. In this process, the spaces, activities and routines alike are transformed.

Keywords: mobile preschool routines, young children’s mobility practices, collective action in peer culture, doing space, embodied learning.

Introduction

> *It is a sunny afternoon in May. The preschool bus is parked on the large, gravelled area at Hammarskog recreational area. The children and teachers have just finished eating lunch in the bus, after spending the morning playing in the forest nearby.*

'Those of you who are ready are welcome to put on your jackets and vests and go outside. Lisa's table, you can start!' a teacher says. The children sitting at Lisa's table slide off their adult-height seats and start putting on their jackets and orange traffic vests in the narrow bus aisle. They collect their hats from the shelves next to the stairs at the rear door. One by one, the children gather outside the bus and play or look for 'gold' in the gravel while waiting for everyone to disembark.
Jenny (bus driver and teacher) blows her whistle and tells the children to hurry and line up. The children line up behind Jenny, who starts walking. They all follow her. Another teacher joins the end of the line. As they walk the children discuss such topics as their favourite Pokémon cards, where they are heading, what to play and with whom.
Suddenly, Jenny raises her voice and instructs the children to focus: they have to cross a road on their way to the garden where they are to spend the afternoon. Once at the road, they all stop. The children and teachers turn their heads to look out for traffic, and chorus 'Left, right, left' before crossing. Sue and Leo exchange looks, giggle and keep turning their heads very fast while crossing the road. On the other side, they realise there is a gap between them and the children ahead of them. They race to the others to close the gap.

As this vignette illustrates, mobile preschools – preschools in buses – imply mobility practices that both resemble and differ from mobility practices in 'regular' preschools. Mobile preschools travel to various locations roughly 30 minutes away by bus from the 'home preschool', allowing children to move around in a variety of public spaces on a full-day, everyday basis. Without bus access, children in 'regular' preschools usually spend most of their days within the confines of the preschool, indoors and outdoors in the preschool yard; they remain comparatively 'immobile' and spatially confined, with only occasional visits to spaces outside the preschool for play or educational activities. The extended activity space of the mobile preschool approach changes the spatiality of children's mobility, allowing the children to visit various 'learning environments' in public space (Gustafson et al., 2017).

In our ongoing ethnographic research on mobile preschools, we investigate how children and teachers in mobile preschools participate in a variety of public spaces and what this means for children's learning and sense of citizenship. In this particular article, we analyse how mobile preschool children negotiate mobility practices and engage in embodied learning in the collective preschool routine of walking in line. We argue that our unique data on this new preschool pedagogy, along with an original combination of

theories on space, mobilities and peer culture, provides new knowledge on young children's mobility practices and embodied learning in early childhood education settings. The specific spatiality and mobility of mobile preschools call for in-depth consideration of the role of space in this preschool practice. Geographer Doreen Massey's (2005) conceptualisation of space helps us to understand space as a product of interrelated practices and processes. Although Massey's theorising takes place on an overall, abstract level and makes no mention of children, it helps us to think about how space is 'made' through the practices and processes associated with people (children and teachers) and things (preschool buses). Theories of children's mobilities (Mikkelsen & Christensen, 2011; Nansen et al., 2015) are helpful for considering the interdependency of children to move around in space. Sociologist William Corsaro's (2018) theory on interpretive reproduction and young children's interaction and collective action in peer culture facilitates understanding of how young children engage in collective routines, in order to share play and take control over things important to them in their everyday lives. By combining these theories and adding 'children' to Massey, 'young' to children's mobilities and 'space' to Corsaro, we contribute to and expand the theory in these areas.

Space, Place and Mobilities in Mobile Preschools

With the rise of the Children's Geographies field in the late 1990s (Holloway & Valentine, 2000), and as part of a more general 'spatial turn' in the social sciences, emphasis on space and place has steadily increased in the field of childhood studies. In our research on mobile preschools and children's mobilities, ways of conceptualising space and place are important for understanding the spatio-temporalities of mobile preschool practices and children's mobility practices. Massey (2005, p. 9) conceives of space as 'a sphere of multiplicity; a simultaneity of stories-so-far'. To Massey, space is the product of interrelations, where 'relations' are understood as embedded practices, and space is to be imagined as open and always in the process of being made. This view is in sharp contrast to a view of space as an empty container within which life takes place. Massey views *space* as just as full as life as *place* and imagines places as 'events' in space, 'collections of trajectories' that meet up in a particular time-space. The uniqueness of place can be imagined as a 'thrown-togetherness' of trajectories. Massey (2005, p. 64, 83) underlines that power relations are always part of how agents negotiate relations with trajectories, thus of 'doing' space. In different spatial configurations, varying forms of power – such as exclusion and/or inclusion or confinement – are articulated.

This conceptualisation of space and place assists our understanding of the spatiality of mobile preschools as comprising interwoven practices and processes associated with the trajectories of mobile preschools, children and teachers. The relational aspect of space helps us to understand how the various spaces to which the preschool travels are not bounded and static but interconnected through practices. The latter include mobile preschool children's mobility practices, such as walking in line. Conceiving places as 'collections of trajectories' (Massey, 2005, p. 130) helps us think differently about what happens when mobile preschools travel to different places and engage in activities there. Instead of viewing the places visited by mobile preschools as bounded, static 'learning environments', and journeys to and from these places as merely travel by bus or on foot, Massey's conceptualisation of space allows a different focus. It enables us to focus on how children's trajectories 'link into' the bundle of trajectories that make up these places and how they (are allowed to) take part in and negotiate their making. According to Massey (2005, p. 119), on arriving in a place we engage in '(p)icking up the threads and weaving them into a more or less coherent sense of being "here", "now"'. With our ethnographic data, we can capture and empirically bring these concepts to life in children's experiences in the mobile preschool. How do children pick up the threads and weave them into their play routines and mobility practices when they move through, or arrive in, a (familiar or new) place as a mobile collectivity?

In the context of mobile preschool practice, the conceptualisation of space as relational helps us grasp that what happens in one place is to be understood in relation to what happens in another, owing to the social practices connecting the two. In mobile preschools, spaces are connected through mobility practices – movements of bodies in space, inside and outside the bus. Another example is the connectedness of space through the practices of play. Children in mobile preschools engage in play on and off the bus, at home, in the yard of the 'home preschool' before and after spending the day with the bus, and so on. Play practices are performed, experienced and imagined in places in relation to how play is performed, experienced and imagined elsewhere.

Viewing space as a product of interrelations, we can see that a place like Hammarskog is a collection of trajectories, a thrown-togetherness of human and non-human trajectories. In this place, non-human material trajectories, such as natural elements (soil, sky, rocks), built material (benches, public toilets) and the technology of the parked preschool bus, converge. These material trajectories intersect with other trajectories through social prac-

tices when the area is used by people like the mobile preschool children and teachers, families, dog walkers and other visitors, or through the practices and processes associated with insects, plants and other non-human living things. Together, these trajectories make up the socio-material space of Hammarskog, which is more than a mere geographical location – a dot on a map.

Massey's conceptualisation of space enables us to see how the mobile preschool group is part of and negotiates the space through its practices. Being in space is 'encountering' and 'making' it, and children and teachers are co-producers of space through their practices. The Hammarskog space changes when the preschool group is there, as does the space of the bus. When trajectories meet up, the event of place changes as space is made differently. Similarly, children's and teachers' encounters with new spaces alter their practices through the meeting up with other human and non-human trajectories that make up that space. Massey points out that not only 'culture' but 'nature', too, constantly moves and changes, but that there are strong notions of nature as 'staying put' (Massey, 2005, p. 98, 137) in society. This also has implications for our analysis of bus travel to the venues where the activities of the mobile preschool take place. Since place is a collection of trajectories, Massey argues that travel does not happen across space. People (and mobile preschools) travel 'across trajectories' (Massey 2005, p. 119), and in the process of travel, people (including children travelling by bus) also slightly alter space. In research on mobile preschools, this conceptualisation of space thus helps us to understand how the mobility practices of the preschool group 'do' space while travelling by bus and on foot.

Theories on mobilities (Cresswell, 2010) help us understand the bearing of mobility on how we interact with the world (Sheller & Urry, 2006) and, in line with Massey's discussion on travel, to conceptualise mobility as more than mere transport or 'crossing space' (Cresswell, 2010). Mobility research concerns the movement of humans and non-humans, ideas and objects; how these move in space; where they move and do not move; how they move in relation to other (non)moving things; and the experience of moving, stillness and/or 'mooring' (Cresswell, 2010; Hannam et al., 2006). A (preschool) bus not only moves; it is also stationary in a car park or garage. Similarly, a walk may include pausing to tie shoelaces, or have a picnic. Mobility, in terms of the movements and moorings of the preschool bus and the children and teachers, is central to an understanding of mobile preschool practices. These practices, including standing still or being a passenger, are always active and embodied (Cresswell & Merriman, 2016).

Few studies from the 'mobilities perspective' (Cresswell, 2010) have focused on children's mobilities (Barker et al., 2009; Horton et al., 2014). In their review of the literature on children's mobility/mobilities, Christensen and Cortés-Morales (2016) perceive a rise in interest in theory on mobilities. This has led to a shift in focus from children's *independent* mobility – opportunities for and constraints on children's unsupervised mobility (e.g. Hillman et al., 1990) – to 'the complexity of the *interdependent* and *relational* aspects of everyday mobility practices' (Christensen & Cortés-Morales, 2016, p. 2). Mikkelsen and Christensen's (2009) critique of the independence of children's independent mobility has led to new ways of conceptualising children's mobilities. One way is the notion of mobility as *companionship* – moving about with friends, adults and pets (Mikkelsen & Christensen, 2009). Nansen et al. (2015) highlight the notion of *composition* – children's mobility practices as 'enabled and configured through a diversity of relations and materials'. They also highlight the notion of *collaboration* – 'children's mobility as assembled through the cooperation and assistance of a range of people, objects and environments, working in concert with children to enable them to move about in public' (Nansen, 2015, p. 9).

The concepts of companionship, composition and collaboration assist understanding on how children and teachers move and moor by bus and on foot; how this enables them to move around in new and familiar places and encounter other trajectories; and how this changes how children in mobile preschools interact with the world. Very few studies have focused on very young children's mobilities and on what happens in mobility practices (but see Cortés-Morales & Christensen, 2014). Our ethnographic research on young children's mobilities contributes to this field by focusing on children aged four to six in an early childhood education context.

Children's Interaction and Collective Action

To analyse young children's mobility practices and collective action in the various spaces the mobile preschool visits, we need concepts to help us understand their social interaction. For this purpose, we use Corsaro's (2018) theory of *interpretive reproduction* and *collective action* in children's production of peer cultures. Instead of viewing socialisation processes as children's individual internalisation of adult culture, Corsaro sees children as becoming part of the adult world and adopting adult cultural routines through the process of interpretive reproduction. This view recognises children as social agents in their own everyday lives, and is thus crucial for our understanding of children as co-producers and co-organisers of mobility

practices in mobile preschools. Children collectively reproduce and extend adult routines 'through their negotiations with adults and their creative production of a series of peer cultures with other children' (Corsaro, 2018, p. 43). *Peer culture* is defined as a 'stable set of activities or routines, artefacts, values and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers' (ibid, 2018, p. 18). Activities and routines that children produce and share in interaction are observable in time and space, and thus central to our analysis. While not engaging explicitly with issues of space and place, Corsaro (2009) underlines the usefulness of spatial theories for understanding children's peer cultures. We see children's mobility practices as integrated in the collective action and social interactions that children engage in within their peer cultures.

Methods and Data

The article is based on ethnographic research[1] in which fieldwork was carried out in a mobile preschool practice, the 'Pippi Longstocking bus'[2], for 14 months, including 44 days and 150 hours of video-recorded observations. We conducted a '*mobile ethnography*' (Cresswell, 2012, p. 647), moving around with the children and teachers, taking field notes and video recordings to analyse the where and when of children's mobility practices and time-spaces of the mobile preschool's everyday organisation and activities.

The bus is based in a medium-sized Swedish city and connected with a stationary preschool as one of its divisions[3]. The bus is used by 20 children aged four to six and three teachers, two of whom also drive the bus. The children are on the bus Monday to Friday from 9 am to 3 pm and, depending on parents' work schedules, at the stationary preschool before and after bus hours. The bus has been remodelled and equipped with a toilet, a kitchenette and seating arranged in fours around small tables. The preschool travels to various locations where the children and teachers move around and moor up during the day.

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2 For reasons of confidentiality, the names and details of places, children and teachers have been changed in the text as well as in the photograph captions. The project has been approved by the Ethical Review Board.

3 Mobile preschools are primarily a Scandinavian phenomenon, and in 14 municipalities around Sweden there are currently 40 preschool buses, mostly organised along the lines of the Pippi bus (Gustafson et al., 2017).

Walking in Line

Peers, teachers and a bus are part of the *composition* of mobile preschool children's mobilities, and as such the people and 'things' *collaborate* in enabling children's mobility practices, activities and routines in a variety of public spaces on an everyday basis (Nansen et al., 2014). One consequence of the bus's mobility is the need to *walk in line*. Walking in line is, in fact, a particularly prominent feature of mobile preschool mobility practices. Because of the need to park the bus appropriately on arrival in a space where they can engage in preschool activities, the children and teachers recurrently walk to and from the bus and the various places where the group engage in ECEC activities. Walks in line are thus routinised mobile practices occurring several times daily in and among a varied range of public spaces. Along with the mobilities of the bus and the fact mobile preschools can visit different public spaces on a daily basis, walks in line are an essential element in the spatiality of mobile preschools. On location, the bus is parked and stationary, transformed from a transport unit into a preschool on wheels. The children and teachers, however, continue to move around (and moor), both inside the bus and in a variety of places outside it. On arriving by bus at their destination for the morning and/or afternoon, the group walk from the parking space to an area chosen by the teachers where they will engage in different activities. After a while, they may walk elsewhere to engage in other activities. When it is time for lunch or the afternoon snack, the children and teachers return to the bus. These walks are always collective and performed in line. In observing numerous walks in line, we have come to view these as *collective bodies* – composed of children's and teachers' individual bodies – whose spatial movements are a mobile choreography both orchestrated and improvised by teachers and children alike. On these walks, just like everywhere else, the children interact with one another, the teachers and the surroundings. The children also often carry small items (stones, toys) that they discuss, play with, or show one another, or plan to show other children at the 'home preschool' or parents and siblings at home. The notion of *companionship* (Mikkelsen & Christensen, 2011) is therefore useful for viewing not only mobile preschool children's mobilities as performed with their peers and teachers, but also the material objects that accompany the children as they walk in line (Nansen, 2014; Rautio, 2013).

Below, we give examples of how we combine these theoretical perspectives with the analyses of the Pippi bus and group walking in line in two places. The first is an ancient natural area of uneven, hilly terrain covered with stones and ice, adjacent to a large road. The second is an indoor shopping

centre with a moving walkway (a long escalator without steps), and many other people around.

Walking in Line on Icy, Stony and Steep Terrain

The mobile preschool group has spent a cold December afternoon playing on a large shingle flat that formed 7,000 years ago, when the area was part of the seashore. Today this place is in the middle of a forest, 75 metres above sea level. The bus is parked at the foot of the hill, about a 10-minute walk away. On the shingle flat the teachers explained to the children how the stones ended up in this particular place. After this teacher-led educational activity, the children played with the natural material – round stones of varying size, branches and twigs. These material objects become part of the children's many different play activities, such as Allie's (girl, 4) project of trying to lift up a large stone with a branch.

Now it is time to return to the bus for the afternoon snack. Jenny (teacher) takes her whistle out of her jacket pocket while talking to Karen (teacher). Immediately, two of the children position themselves closely behind Jenny, forming the start of a line. The whistle is the signal for this routinised activity of walking from one place to another, and just spotting the whistle is enough to tell these two children what to do: to show that they are prepared for the walk back to the bus. Jenny blows the whistle and all the children now quickly position themselves in a long single-file column behind Jenny. The children know that whenever a teacher blows the whistle and silently adopts the 'waiting position' – facing in the walking direction and looking slightly downwards – a single-file line should be formed. Collectively, they coordinate their body positions to create the shape of a line. As soon as Jenny sees the children approaching her, she starts walking slowly. In following her, the children form a growing line. Another teacher usually waits until every child has joined the line and then brings up the rear. They now form a collective body in motion.

The walking-in-line routine is the teachers' means of controlling the group of children while walking from one place to another, in this example, from the shingle flat back to the bus. Keeping together as a group is a skill that children starting mobile preschool need to learn. The children show that they know what is expected of them, and quickly respond to the whistle, lining up behind the teacher and walking. While performing the learnt choreography in the collective, moving body, the children engage in multiple bodily improvisations, such as jumping, bumping, speeding or lagging behind. They have

clearly appropriated the preschool walking-in-line routine; having learnt to perform it, they feel secure enough to engage in their own improvisations (Corsaro, 2018). While walking in line, the teachers and children engage in ongoing negotiations regarding which trajectories the children can relate to. 'Linking into' trajectories the children find interesting is allowed as long as they keep moving within a certain bodily ordering and spatio-temporality (Massey, 2005, p.119).

On this particular day, the teachers are somewhat dissatisfied with the children's earlier performance of the line routine. This has been something of an issue all week, with too much bumping into one another. Now Jenny (the teacher at the front) stops walking and starts instructing the children on how to keep the child in front of them at arm's length (holding their arms at a right angle) to avoid bumping into him or her. However, this teacher-led educational activity fails to achieve the intended effect. Instead, some children start playing by bumping into one another while others raise their arms as if playing zombies. Standing very close to one another is part of the children's embodied knowledge of how to coordinate and create a line. When the teachers direct the children's attention to the positions of their bodies and arms, the children's collective focus turns to how they can play with their bodies. They are quick to exploit the space of the line in play routines of 'bumping' and playing zombies, indicating their shared knowledge of these practices and collectively turning the line into a play space.

The walk to the bus starts on the shingle flat. Crossing an area of large, rounded stones requires the children to balance on them, treading carefully to avoid slipping and falling. Some children spread their arms out to keep their balance. The children focus on the terrain. The walk proceeds into the woods, and as soon as the terrain transitions from the shingle flat to the relatively even ground of the woods, the line's spatial grouping changes. The single-file line breaks up in places and broadens as the chatting children form pairs or threes. The terrain is now easier, and, since they do not slip, requires less concentration. This immediately shifts the children's focus from the terrain to one another. Whenever the terrain gets rougher or the path narrower, the line formation changes and narrows again. This, in turn, modifies the children's interaction. This is an example of how the trajectories of the line, the terrain (stones, shrubs, trail etc.) and the social interaction among the children, and between the children and teachers, are intertwined in this particular walking situation (Massey, 2005).

Our ethnographic data contains numerous examples of how children

share play and talk while walking in line and keeping up with the collective pace. In this specific situation, in the relatively smooth terrain of the woods, Erik (boy, 4) is interacting (talking, laughing, gesturing) with the boys behind him in the line. While walking, Erik turns his upper body backwards to create face-to-face contact and talk, or see what is going on behind him. Turning backwards, he slows down or pauses his sideways walking to include himself in the 'interactive space' (Corsaro, 2018 p. 56) created by the boys behind him. This shows how mobile preschool children collectively organise their peer culture in relation to the trajectories of the terrain, as well as to the mobile spatiality of the walking-in-line practice (Massey, 2005). After a while, Erik speeds up again and runs a little to catch up with Jenny (teacher) and Iris (girl, 5) in front of him, and close the gap in the line. Closing this gap by speeding up and running to 'touch' the bodies in front again is also part of the mobile practice of walking in line, and the children enjoy it. The spatiality of the collective body is thus shaped by the material aspects of the space (Massey, 2005), as well as by the grouping and coordination of the children's bodies aimed at creating a social space (Corsaro, 2018; Massey, 2005).

Depending on the terrain, the pace of the line and the conversational rhythm, the shape of the line follows a certain choreography and pattern. Children both adjust to the rhythm and choreography of the line and co-create it. In observing walking groups, Lorimer (2011, p. 29) describes how 'the linear quality of the walk and of the walkers' own formation is rhythmic; encouraging participants to keep plodding onwards.' Our many observations of children walking in line show that when it becomes a routinised daily activity, the line's space and rhythm are conducive to the children's playful interaction, as well as to a quasi-meditative state. As we have observed many times during fieldwork, some children – often roughly mid-line – may walk silently, apparently daydreaming, reflecting or listening to other children or teachers talking, with their bodies closely following the rhythm and pace of their peers in front. They then somewhat resemble a boat floating on the sea or what Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 214) might term 'dwelling-in-motion'.

While the walking-in-line routine is an adult-imposed spatial routine to which children must adapt, we found that it may also enable them to take advantage of the spatial arrangement of bodies by assuming control of a specific situation (Massey, 2005). While walking in the woods, Iris (girl, 5) approaches teacher Jenny, who heads the line, and starts a conversation while remaining behind her. Iris then speeds up, and she and Jenny form a pair at the very front of the line. Iris wants to talk to Jenny about what

starting school may be like, and does most of the talking. Jenny listens and comments now and then. As they talk, both Iris and Jenny look forward and slightly downward at their feet to see where to step next. Whenever the terrain gets particularly difficult, they slow down slightly to focus more on where to tread. According to Lorimer (2016), this kind of 'mobile-social arrangement', where conversation and embodied gestures happen side by side instead of face to face, resembles a conversation between a passenger and a driver. However, while Jenny's occasional talk 'happens outwards' (Lorimer 2016, p. 29) most of the time, Iris – doing most of the talking – is looking sideways up at Jenny (Picture 1) for much longer periods. Iris is active in maintaining the social space she has created with Jenny, and co-ordinates her pace and body position to achieve this. Thus, Iris is able to manoeuvre the spatial configuration of the line to create a space in which she can get the teacher's full attention (Massey, 2005).

Picture 1: Iris looks sideways up at Jenny.

There are some felled trees on the path, and Iris and Jenny (followed by the rest of the line) jump over them. Some children crawl over them. The walk continues from the woods into the more open moor landscape, with low-growing pines, along the slope of the hill. While most of the snow has thawed in the surrounding vegetation, the stony trail is covered with ice and is also quite steep in places. Iris slips, slides and falls several times, but neither she nor the teacher comment on this except to utter an occasional 'Oops!' and perhaps giggle. Iris keeps talking while getting up and maintaining her pace and spatial position beside Jenny. Falling, getting up again and moving on happen all the time in all sorts of terrain and are part of everyday walking in line, at least for the children. It usually passes uncommented by

the children and teachers.[4] For Iris, keeping up the conversation, as well as her position beside Jenny, is a way of ensuring she can protect the mobile interactional space she has created – and continuously re-creates – during the walk. Overcoming difficult terrain while walking in line is a physical skill and the mobile preschool children get ample training and consequently learn to master it. During our fieldwork, we observed many instances of children creating space for one-to-one time with teachers, as Iris does in this example. Walks in line thus give mobile preschool children the opportunity to 'link in' with and negotiate other children's and teachers' trajectories (Massey, 2005) in a given mobile social arrangement, to share play or talk (Lorimer, 2011; Corsaro, 2018). Thus, children engage in embodied processes of learning how to retain control of shared interaction in elements important to them while walking in line (Corsaro, 2018 p. 169).

Further along the line, the children talk about where to put their feet to avoid constantly slipping and falling. The unusually slippery, steep terrain leads them to have a conversation on how to avoid stumbling. One child (Lasse, 4) leaves the trail and instead makes his own way through the vegetation, where there is no ice – just stones, shrubs and small trees. Now he can move faster. Other children follow his example and have soon caught up with Jenny and Iris, who are still at the very front of the line on the trail. Usually, when walking in line in open areas, children are allowed to run ahead of the teachers, but only if they stay in the teachers' field of view. Teachers thus sometimes allow children's creative negotiations in relation to the spatial configuration of the walking-in-line routine (Massey, 2005 p. 91). However, in this particular place there is a large road near where the bus is parked. Jenny therefore tells the children to stay behind an imaginary line. 'You can walk there at the side but you can imagine a line next to me,' she says, showing the direction of the imaginary line by lifting her arm outwards (Picture 2). This is in line with what Corsaro says about rules needing to be understood as situational (Corsaro, 2018, p. 45). In mobile preschools, children learn to understand rules in relation not only to specific situations but also to particular spaces.

Several children start to move off the trail and into the terrain for shorter or longer periods. They stay within the imaginary line, although some need reminding by Jenny once or twice. The children's initiatives, engaging with the terrain differently so as to move faster, change the shape of the collective

[4] The children wear snow suits and boots that protect them from getting cold and wet if they fall.

Picture 2: Teacher Jenny indicates the imaginary line.

body of children and teachers. While Jenny orchestrates the body's choreography, the children's bodies create improvisations. When the first group members arrive at the car park, Jenny instructs them to wait until the whole group have got down the hill. Most of the children remain behind Jenny, but three run a little further on. When called back again by Jenny they run and deliberately slide on the ice down into a ditch, and laugh as they crawl back up to the waiting group. We see how the children, in their interaction, both follow and challenge the teacher's instructions and negotiate the rules on how far they can move around in this specific place – Corsaro (2018), in line with Goffman (1961), refers to this as 'secondary adjustments'. While secondary adjustments are usually seen as circumventing rules, in this example – and in Corsaro's work – they are more about subtly and creatively negotiating rules.

Walking in Line in a Shopping Centre – The 'Downhill'

This warm and sunny day in May it is 'Preschool Day', an event initiated by the municipality, which has arranged an exhibition of photos of local preschools in a large shopping centre. The Pippi bus is one of these preschools. The teachers decide to go and visit the exhibition so that shoppers can see the photos of the preschool practices accompanied by 'real' preschool children. This shopping centre is a familiar space to the children, who have all been here before with their families. Viewing the photo exhibition does not interest the children much, and the teachers decide after a while that the children can play in the small indoor playground (on the second floor), which they also know well.

The play space, some 30 square metres in size, has a spongy coloured surface, hillocks with a slide and several small climbing frames. After some fairly wild physical play involving climbing, sliding and running, Jenny whistles through her fingers and tells the children to put their shoes on. It is time to go back to the bus. The children put on their shoes while discussing such matters as shoe size. Those who are ready position themselves behind Jenny. Katja (girl, 4) takes Jenny's hand. Whenever walking in places where they are surrounded by crowds, or in traffic, the children are instructed to hold hands with one another. This is a way of coordinating the children's bodies in controlling the spatial formation of the collective body for safety reasons, ensuring it remains complete and intact. 'Do we hold hands with the one we walked with when we came here?' Natasha (girl 5) asks Jenny. 'Find a friend whose hand you can hold!' Jenny tells the group, and starts walking. The children follow her. The teacher's answer makes the children responsible for organising the pair formation. From our ethnographic fieldwork, we know that the children in this mobile preschool are used to this.

Creating access to interactional space with other children is an essential part of children's peer cultures, as is protecting the interactional space they have gained (Corsaro, 2018, p. 56). Whom a child holds hands with in the line is important, since walking together offers many opportunities for social interaction. Anna (girl, 5) tries to pair up with Elsa, asking 'Will you walk with me, Elsa?' Elsa shakes her head, turns around and positions herself at the end of the line, alone. Anna starts following Jenny on her own. Karen (teacher) ensures that every child joins the line. After a few metres, Jenny stops walking to make sure every child is ready to go and has someone to hold hands with. She calls to Elsa, telling her to walk with Anna, and with no further discussion they now make a pair. While forming pairs, the children discuss what will be the next activity and stop. The children's visits to the shopping centre with their families often include shopping, playing in the playground and visiting a café. Starting to walk, one boy says he is sure they will have something sweet at a café. Previous mobility practices and experiences of spaces are frequent topics of discussion among the children, and this is a sign that the boy is ready to 'link into' the trajectories that meet up in this place and pick up a thread in the 'collection of interwoven stories of which that place is made' (Massey, 2005, p. 119).

As soon as the preschool group have left the playground, other children enter the play space and start playing. The preschool group seem to have dominated the space because of their group size and wild, intense play. The group form a long line, with pairs of children holding hands while walking,

hopping and running whenever they perceive a gap in the line ahead. People in the shopping centre observe the line of walking, hopping and running children.

The line approaches a moving walkway that leads to the ground floor. 'Yay, a downhill!' a child says. They step onto the walkway in pairs. The children place one hand on the railing and hold the child next to them with the other. Other children just hold hands and not the railing. Fjodor (boy, 5) is the only child not holding another child's hand. His hands are inside his traffic vest, but he takes them out when stepping on the moving walkway. 'Downhill!' a child says again. Suddenly, a pair of children somewhere in the middle of the line sink down and squat. Charlie (boy, 4) sees this, turns to Leo and starts giggling, holding his hand (the one not holding the other child's hand) in front of his mouth while making eye contact with his walking friend.

Now another pair descend into a squat, followed by another (Picture 3). Like dominoes, the children squat and sit on the moving walkway. Charlie and Leo do the same. The children look at one another, smiling and giggling.

Sixteen of the 19 children are now sitting. Three girls are standing with Jenny at the front (Picture 4). The squatting started behind them and they did not notice.

Pictures 3 and 4: Showing the 'domino effect'.

'Thanks for the ride!' a child at the front says. Harry (boy, 5) turns sideways and backwards and says: 'Soon we have to get up, otherwise we may get stuck.' Two children get up immediately. The rest remain sitting. Some children say 'Hi' to a family standing on the moving walkway going in the other direction. Other children do the same: 'Hi!'

Jenny (still at the very front of the line) says: 'Just so you know, when you get to the end you have to stand up – otherwise you'll get your bum pinched!' 'And then we could get stuck,' Harry adds. 'Then you could get stuck,' Jenny confirms. 'Stand up, stand up!' says a child at the front, approaching the end, 'Otherwise you could get stuck!' The children, still holding hands, are now moving up and down from squatting to standing and back again, and at the end of the moving walkway they all get ready and take a big jump off it. 'Now, now, now!' Harry says to his pair-friend, just before they both jump (Picture 5).

Picture 5: Now, now, now!

'Fun!' Fjodor says while turning to Katarina (researcher), who is holding the camera. He then puts his hands inside his traffic vest again and walks on. The children lined up in twos, holding hands, now keep jumping – out of the shopping centre into the car park where the bus is parked.

The sequence on the moving walkway is a good example of the notion of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro, 2018 p. 18). The children collectively turn the mobile practice of walking in line into a play activity in which they integrate the material, social and imaginative aspects of the moving walkway space (Massey, 2005). This is interpretive reproduction in the sense of, and in line with, peer culture: the children transform the collective moving-in-line routine in the preschool culture into their own collective routine in peer culture. Thus, the children reproduce and extend adult culture, creating a new routine in their peer culture. Even before the line steps on the moving walkway, a child calls out that it is a 'downhill', transforming the moving walkway space into a slope, like a sledding hill or the artificial hillock at the playground. Thus, the children have their own creative name

for the moving walkway – a name directly connected with the social practice of squatting and sliding in other places (playgrounds and icy, sandy and/or stony hillsides). This is an example of a relational space and the children's active 'doing', using the moving space as a hill or slide (Massey, 2005, p. 179, 118). When a pair of children sink into a squatting position, this signals 'play' to the surrounding children, who immediately imitate the movement and body position. In terms of mobile choreography, this is an example of children's collective improvisation of walking in line, using the spatiality of the moving walkway and its related spaces, as well as the moving walkway's specific material qualities – its smooth surface, movement and slope. The collective body remains horizontal, but for a moment or two the depth of its shape changes because of the children's collective coordination of their bodies.

Charlie is one of the first to notice the first pair of children squatting, but not the first to follow suit. Instead, he looks at Leo, seemingly astonished at what is happening, and giggles with a hand-on-mouth gesture towards Leo. When more pairs of children squat, Charlie and Leo do the same. Being part of the collective body appropriating the moving walkway seems to give Charlie and Leo the courage to join in the challenging of the norms of walking in line in public areas.

Conclusion

This article has discussed the benefits of analysing unique ethnographic data on activities and routines in mobile preschools using a combination of theories of space and mobilities and theories on children's collective action and routines in peer culture. We have analysed how mobile preschool children negotiate mobility practices and engage in embodied learning in the collective preschool routine of walking in line. Using two empirical examples of walking in line in contrasting public spaces, the article has shown how the preschool group moves in space as a collective body, and how this collective body is composed of the children's and teachers' individual bodies, closely coordinated in relation to the positions and movements of other bodies.

Walking in line is a mundane routine in mobile preschool culture and an important tool for teachers, enabling them to control the group and keep it together for safety reasons. Mobile preschool children have appropriated this routine through collective mobility practices and learnt to coordinate their bodies to adjust to the spatio-temporality of the collective body in mo-

tion. Depending on where they are moving, the children carefully adjust their movements to the quality of the terrain or floor. They collectively engage in the continuous embodied and social learning processes of how to manoeuvre difficult terrain, traffic situations and crowded places. However, the children not only adjust and conform to the mobile collectivity of the walks in line; they actively negotiate the spatio-temporal configuration of the line, in terms of re-ordering their bodies and increasing and decreasing their pace and rhythm.

Children's mobility practices are thus to be understood as active and collaborative: they negotiate mobilities with one another, teachers and the other human and non-human trajectories they intersect with. These insights change the view of walks in line conducted within the context of educational settings. Instead of viewing these as mere disciplined 'means of travelling to 'cross space', they should be seen as dynamic time-spaces in which children and teachers actively engage in activities and routines important in preschool as well as peer culture. As such, walks in line are also important as learning spaces. Walks in line are co-produced by children and teachers in terms of orchestrating and improvising the mobility practices that make up the collective body. While walking in line, children collectively engage in the creative transformation both of spaces and activities and of routines central to preschool and peer culture alike.

Mobile preschool children relate to space, as an integral part of their peer cultures, actively, constitutively, creatively and collectively. How children 'do' space differs according to where and how they move, and in relation to where and when teachers negotiate safety issues. In 'doing' space, children engage in activities and routines important in their peer culture, transforming them in relation to the nature of the public spaces they move in. In this process, *the spaces, activities and routines alike are transformed.*

Since walking in line is also a common activity in regular preschool practices – especially in inner-city preschools without enclosed yards – it is key to understanding children's mobility practices and embodied learning in preschools generally. However, the recurrent nature of the walking-in-line routine in mobile preschools, in a variety of spaces in and around the city, shows how mobile preschool children's appropriation of the routine and the spaces they occupy (and have moved in before) in their peer culture enables them to play, interact and thus 'do' space more flexibly and creatively. Since mobile preschool children move in and through a variety of spaces, they have the opportunity to encounter and 'do' space in many different ways

and link into the multiplicity of the human and non-human trajectories that make up these spaces. As the examples show, the children do this in creative ways and it is something they enjoy doing together, jointly. Compared with the more spatially bounded 'stationary' preschool pedagogies, the mobile preschool pedagogy provides children with a greater variety of spatial encounters through its mobility. Extending the results from the analysis in this article, we suggest that mobile preschools provide children with a larger palette of agencies and creativities for transforming spaces, mobility practices and play and/or educational routines, resulting in various embodied and social learning processes.

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Spatial perspectives on babies' ways of belonging in infant early childhood education and care

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Abstract: In this article, we endeavour to think spatially about the texture of infants' everyday lives and their ways of 'doing' belonging in the babies' room in an Australian early childhood education and care centre. Drawing on data from a large, multiple case-study project, and on theorisations of space that reject Euclidean notions of space as empty, transparent, relatively inert containers into which people, objects practices and artefacts are inserted, and instead emphasise space as complex, dynamic and relational, we map the navigating movements (Massumi, 2002) of baby Nadia. Through the telling of 'stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005), we convey how Nadia, as part of a constellation or assemblage of human and non-human beings, found ways to intensify space and to mobilise new vantage points, thus expanding the spatial possibilities of what we initially took to be a particularly confined and confining space.

Keywords: early childhood education and care, belonging, infants, babies, space.

Introduction

As I (first author) peered for the first time over the stable-like, half-height door into the babies' room of the Happy Families[1] early childhood education and care (ECEC) centre, I was jolted by what felt like a shock of recognition. At a deeply visceral level, I was reminded of the setting for the first half of Emma Donoghue's novel, *Room*, published in 2010 and shortlisted for the

[1] Pseudonyms are used throughout.

Man Booker Prize in that same year. The room of the book's title measured 11 feet by 11 feet. It was in this room that the narrator, five-year-old Jack, had lived, along with his mother, for his entire life. Skilfully, if somewhat disconcertingly, Donoghue portrays Jack's experience of such confined surroundings, not as claustrophobic, but rather one of intimacy and security. Jack "seems happily ensconced in a routine that is deeply secure, in a setting where he can see his mother all day, at any moment. She has created a structured, lively regimen for him…", wrote Bender (2010, n.p.), in her review of the novel. "We have thousands of things to do every morning", says Jack, (Donoghue, 2010, p. 10), referring to the routines and rituals that he and his mother have created for themselves. Looming large in these routines and rituals are their co-inhabitants of the space — a rich cast of non-human, "named beings" (Bender, n.p), amongst them Door, Skylight, Wardrobe, Table and Shelf and, of course, Room, itself. Notably, Jack "does not feel trapped", even though he and his mother "live in Room against his mother's will" (Bender n.p.); a situation of which Jack is unaware for much of the first half of the novel. This incongruity, Bender points out, "creates the major fissures and complexities in the book: Room is both a jail and a haven" (n.p.).

We are not suggesting that the babies' room of the Happy Families centre is a jail, even though the babies[2] themselves have little, if any, 'say' about how much time they spend in it. Nonetheless, it shares some striking similarities with the fictional room. At approximately four metres by four metres (13 feet), the babies' room, in which the four youngest children attending the centre on any one day spend most of their time, is a little larger, but not by much, than the physical dimensions of the confined space in which Donoghue's protagonist, Jack, lived for the first five years of his life. Like Room, the babies' room is, to practical effect, windowless to the outside world. At least initially, both invoke a sense of disquiet for the reader/researcher. But upon growing familiarity, both spaces begin to exude a sense of cosiness and security – skilfully created in the novel by Jack's mother, and in the babies' room by Ms Connie, the babies' educator. Both spaces convey busyness and, more subtly, purpose. Like the routines and rituals that Jack and his mother have created for themselves, the routines and rituals of the babies' room generate almost constant activity and motion. In both spaces, non-human beings play vital roles in the flows of everyday life. In the babies'

[2] We use the terms baby/ies and infant/s interchangeably to refer to young children up to the age of approximately 18 months. For coherence, we also refer to Nadia as a baby, although she was 19 months of age at the time of data collection.

room, for instance, the half-height, stable-like door and the centrally-positioned, low table have a similarly prominent non-human presence to Door, Wardrobe and the other non-human participants in the novel.

We are mindful that gesturing to unsettling parallels between the Room of Emma Donoghue's evocative novel and the babies' room of the Happy Families ECEC centre might be seen as spurious, sensationalist, or even offensive[3]. Yet, we are also conscious that affronts to our sensibilities, assumptions and expectations — in our case, concerning the spatial provisions of infant ECEC — can potentially generate new insights. Affronts can afford access to new forms of knowing (Pink, 2015), just as "encounters with the apparently familiar … where something continues to trouble … [can open up] unexpected lines of thought" (Massey, 2005, p. 6). It is in the hope of harnessing the possibilities alluded to by Pink (2015) and Massey (2005) that we use these speculative parallels as a springboard for thinking spatially about the texture of infants' everyday lives in the babies' room of the Happy Families centre, and how that texture might contribute to (or constrain) the babies coming to experience a sense of belonging.

Taking Pink, Mackley, and Moroşanu (2015) as a point of departure, by texture, we mean the temporary 'cohesion' arising from the site-specific interweaving, for example, of people, objects, desires, practices, routines, rituals, and rhythms that differentiates everyday life in one room or ECEC centre from that in another room or centre, and one child's experience from that of another child in the same room / centre. As we elaborate upon later, this cohesion is inevitably momentary for the interweaving is ongoing, with interconnections continually forming, un-forming and re-forming in new configurations, constellations and assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). We are acutely conscious, however, that any endeavour to understand infants' experience, especially of such a nebulous phenomenon as belonging, is ambitious and contestable. Our hesitation is not because we consider they have a limited point of view, as book reviewer Bender (2010) ascribed to the five-year-old protagonist, Jack, but because we consider it presumptuous to assume that we can 'know' with any certainty how infants experience their lives in ECEC (Elwick, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014). In this article, therefore, rather than focus entirely on the babies, we grapple with the broader question of how the texture of the babies' room 'works' as a space of belonging.

[3] Donoghue's novel is also concerned with sexual exploitation. In alluding to the novel, there is absolutely no intent to imply any ill intent or wrongdoing by the early childhood centre.

We contextualise our endeavours by first outlining the *Babies and Belonging* project from which this article derives and then, more specifically, by describing the Happy Families centre, one of the project's four case study sites and the source of the empirical data upon which we have drawn for this article**.** Next, we elaborate on some of the theoretical influences on how we are conceptualising space and thinking spatially about the texture of infants' everyday life and their ways of 'doing belonging' in the babies' room of the Happy Families centre. We then turn to the "navigating movements" (Massumi, 2002, p. 210) of baby Nadia to tell a 'story-so-far' (Massey, 1994) about how she expanded the spatial possibilities of the babies' room. We also gesture to other possible stories that could be told about her navigating movements and expansion of space. Finally, we reflect on our use of spatial perspectives and, more broadly, on the potential of these perspectives to extend and deepen insights into infants' experiences and lives in early childhood education and care settings, with particular attention to belonging.

The *Babies and Belonging* Project

The genesis of the *Babies and Belonging* project (Sumsion, Harrison, Bradley & Stapleton, 2013-2016) was the emphasis placed on fostering a sense of belonging in Australia's first nation-wide ECEC curriculum, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009); and subsequently, albeit more indirectly, in the National Quality Standard against which ECEC services are assessed as a requirement for receiving government funding (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2017). The study was conducted in the infant-toddler rooms of four Australian ECEC centres in localities of relative socio-economic disadvantage. Each centre was selected as a 'critical' case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) in anticipation of its potential to illuminate the phenomenon of belonging in the presence of one or more risk factors for marginalisation, for example, through poverty, migrant/refugee status, and/or Aboriginality. Approval to undertake the study was obtained from the Charles Sturt University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Within a primarily ethnographic design, the project brought together diverse disciplinary lenses, theories and methodological approaches with the aim of developing situated, multi-layered and critical insights into the phenomenon of belonging, infants' experiences of belonging, and how belonging can be fostered in ECEC settings. Specifically, the study investigated the questions: 'How do babies come to develop a sense of belonging in ECE set-

tings?' and 'In coming to belong, (how) do babies contribute to a broader 'climate of belonging?' Each of the disciplinary lenses (primarily developmental psychology, social psychology and the sociology of childhood) contributed additional questions, as well as key foci, theoretical constructs, analytical lenses and interpretative approaches. Consequently, our conceptualisations of belonging have continued to evolve with the unfolding of the project but encompass children experiencing a 'sense of belonging' and their active participation in the 'politics of belonging'. The former includes attention, for example, to matters of identity, acceptance, security, togetherness, and nurturing relationships; the latter to issues such as diversity, power relations, agency, inclusion and exclusion (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014). Belonging can be both an experiential state and a practice, making it possible, therefore, to refer to 'doing belonging' and to how belonging 'works', as well as to the experience of belonging (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). Across the four case studies, we have endeavoured to draw on these different facets of belonging, but some facets have been more prominent in some case studies than others. In the case study we draw from in this article, we focus primarily on identities, power relations and agency in baby Nadia's belonging as she navigated the spatiality of the babies' room in the Happy Families centre.

Data for the Happy Families case study were generated over a period of 10 months and 22 field visits by a research assistant who was familiar with the centre and well-regarded by centre staff. On five of those visits she was accompanied by Author 1 or Author 2 of this article. Data comprised digital video recordings, Time Use Diary observations accompanied by still photograph (Go-Pro©) images, transcripts of conversational interviews with educators and the centre director, and reflective field notes written by the research assistants (for further details, see Sumsion, Harrison & Bradley, 2018).

The Happy Families Centre

The Happy Families centre was located in a culturally and linguistically diverse suburb of South West Sydney. Licensed for 33 places for children aged from 6 weeks to five years, it opened from 7am to 6pm year-round, except for public holidays. Under the national quality assessment scheme, the centre had been rated as 'working towards' the National Quality Standard; a rating consistent with findings that in Australia, ECEC centres in low-SES areas tend to be of a lower average quality than those in more advantaged areas (Cloney, Cleveland, Hattie & Tayler, 2016). The centre had changed ownership immediately prior to the commencement of field visits when the family-operated business, which was well-regarded in the local community,

was sold to a stock market-listed corporation that operates a large national chain of ECEC centres. The corporation undertook to make minimal operational changes and to preserve the centre's warm, family-like atmosphere that was highly valued by the parents, staff and former owners.

The centre had three class/play rooms: the babies' room (for children aged from six weeks up to two years), a toddler room (for two-year-olds) and a preschool room (for three- to five-year-olds). The toddler and preschool rooms flowed directly on to a large, shared, outdoor play area. Access to the babies' outdoor play area was more complicated, and involved walking through the toddler or preschool room, and then through the play area used by the older children. It was out of sight of the older children's play area and bounded by high walls. Sun protection awnings obscured most of the sky. Perhaps because of complicated access, but also because of the rainy weather and playground renovations following the change of ownership, the babies generally spent only minimal time in their outdoor space during the 22 field visits to the centre. This article, therefore, focuses only on the texture of the babies' room.

The Babies' Room and its Occupants: Towards Rich Description

The babies' room opened off one side of the narrow central hallway running from the centre's front door to the toddler and preschool rooms towards the rear of the building. It was centrally located directly opposite the kitchen, diagonally opposite the centre director's office, and only a few metres from the front door, which opened into the car park. When the front door opened, the babies could hear some of the comings and goings in the car park, including the daily ebb and flows of arrivals and departures. Moreover, as the hallway was the centre's only thoroughfare, everyone who entered the centre and proceeded beyond the office necessarily passed by the half-height, stable-like door of the babies' room that, at the time, was the only entrance to the room.

Despite this central location, the babies' lines of sight beyond their room were extremely limited. The void above the half-height door provided partial glimpses, for instance of the heads and shoulders of passing adults (e.g., staff, parents, tradespeople and other visitors). An internal and curtained window looked into the separate babies' cot room that, at the time, could only be accessed from the central passageway. Another internal window was

almost entirely obscured by children's artwork and operational documents. The only external window faced a high blank perimeter wall. Like the doorway void, all windows were above the babies' head height and line of vision.

On any one day, the babies' room accommodated four babies and their educator, Ms Connie. Diploma-qualified[4] and with more than 20 years' experience in the field, Ms Connie was a long-standing and highly-regarded member of staff. The four focus babies from this centre who participated in the *Babies and Belonging* project ranged in age from 14 to 16 months when data generation commenced. Nadia and Joey, who feature in this article, attended the centre three days per week, for approximately eight hours per day. Jemilah and Ali, to whom we refer only tangentially, had attended the centre since they were approximately six weeks of age, for five days per week, and generally for 11 hours per day. In effect, they had lived a considerable proportion of their lives in the babies' room.

Relegation of the babies to this confined space appeared to stem from operational considerations rather than from any perceptions that the babies were not yet able to negotiate the larger spaces of the centre. Conversely, operational considerations also provided some opportunities for the babies to venture beyond their room. For instance, if, on any day, attendance fell below four babies, the room was 'closed' for reasons of economic viability, and those babies who were present would spend the day in the toddler room instead. Similarly, to economise on the costs of meeting mandatory staff-child ratio requirements, babies who attended for long hours also spent some time in one of the larger rooms in the early morning and, less frequently, in the late afternoon, when the early arrival and late departure babies, toddlers and preschoolers were brought together as a mixed-age group. Occasionally, other children accompanied by an educator, would enter the babies' room to make use of the centre's only nappy (diaper) change bench. Other educators also spent time in the babies' room when relieving Ms Connie for meal and other breaks. Sometimes, if the babies seemed especially restless, they were allowed, as a group, to run up and down the central hallway for a few joyously boisterous moments. For the most part, however, the spatial arrangements meant that the babies led a relatively secluded life.

Most of the non-human occupants of the babies' room —such as the nappy change bench, the low 'high-chairs', various forms of soft seating

[4] In Australia, this is a sub-degree level vocational qualification, generally requiring two years of study.

that could accommodate adults and children, the open shelves containing toys and blocks, and locked storage cupboards —were arranged around the room's perimeter. Notable exceptions were the low, square, centrally positioned table and the geometrically patterned mat upon which it stood. Together with Ms Connie, they functioned as pivot points and centrifugal forces for the flows of a typical day. As the day progressed, toys, blocks, and many of the other more mobile non-human beings joined the babies in flows to, from, across and around the table, mat and MS Connie (Figure 1). The half-height door into the hallway also exerted considerable force on flows throughout the day. It beckoned babies with a range of enticements, including photographs of them displayed within their line of sight on the inner side of the door. As noted previously, the void above the door offered glimpses of the goings-on in the hallway and in the kitchen directly opposite from where appetizing smells regularly wafted. Given its propensity to encourage hallway passers-by to peer over the door and greet the babies, it also provided the babies with opportunities for spontaneous interactions with assorted adults; and, indeed, many of their relatively few opportunities to participate as social actors in the broader life of the centre.

Figure 1: Flows of babies and non-human beings around Ms Connie and the table

Many of the flows of movement and interactions within the babies' room were skillfully but subtly orchestrated by Ms Connie who, like Jack's mother in the novel, ensured the smooth functioning of the relatively cloistered space. Softly-spoken and seemingly always relaxed, Ms Connie sat, for much of the day, on the geometrically-patterned mat or a low chair adjacent to or near the centrally-positioned low table. When she needed to undertake

tasks beyond her immediate reach, she, too, joined the flows of babies and non-humans across and around the small space before returning to her central positioning by the table. Her warm, calm, and gently humorous interactions with the babies, and her melodious, crooning-like, running commentary on whatever was happening contributed to the sense of intimacy within the room.

So far in this article, we have tried to convey an image of the babies' room as a multisensory space. In the next part of the article, we briefly discuss theoretical resources that are assisting us to move beyond description as we endeavour to think spatially about the texture of babies' everyday lives and their ways of doing belonging in the room.

Theoretical Influences

In keeping with the transdisciplinary intent of the *Babies and Belonging* project, we have been influenced by the work of theorists from a range of disciplines. As foreshadowed in the introduction, they include cultural geographers Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift, anthropologist/ethnographer Sarah Pink and philosophers Gilles Deleuze, his co-author Félix Guattari, and their translator, Brian Massumi. These theorists reject Euclidean notions of space as an empty, transparent, neutral, relatively inert, and therefore easily quantifiable container or enclosure into which people, objects, practices and artefacts, are inserted and in which activities and events take place. Rather, they see space as far more complex and dynamic, as encapsulated in Massey's (2005, p. 9) three propositions: firstly, that space is constituted through, and a product, of interactions and interrelations; secondly that it is heterogenous and plural, with multiple co-existing possibilities, trajectories and stories; and thirdly, that it is "always under construction … it is never finished; never closed". Elsewhere, Massey (1994) refers to space as "an ever-shifting social geometry of power" (p. 3) and a "simultaneity of stories-so-far" (p. 9). Equally evocatively, Thrift (2008) sees space as "the *geography of what happens*" (p. 2, original emphasis) with its "continuous undertow of matterings that cannot be reduced to simple transactions" (p. viii). Our challenge in this article is to portray some of these continually shifting geometries, stories-so-far and 'matterings' in the doing of belonging as part of the texture of everyday life in the babies' room.

To this end, we attend to the materiality and the social and cultural dynamics of doing belonging in the babies' room. We are interested in how belonging "takes shape and gains expression"; for example, through the

material arrangements within the room and through "shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions" (Lorimer, 2005, p. 84). Because these are all entangled and in continual flux, there can be no one set or single starting point to investigating doing belonging (Pink, 2012) nor pre-established coordinates to utilise. Rather, following Pink (2012), it is a matter of attending to the entangled flows of people and things as they move around and through the babies' room and their "being and doing" (p.12) in this socially and culturally complex, multisensory, material site. These entangled flows mesh together to produce even more complex assemblages of heterogeneous human and non-human parts (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

We begin our mapping through the closely connected entry points of 'affect' and 'desire'. From Massumi (2002), we understand affect to be the embodied, inherently dual "capacity for affecting or being affected" (p. 212). In other words, "when you affect something, you are at the same time opening yourself up to being affected in turn …" (p. 212). In this sense, affects are embodied ways "of connecting to others and to other situations … of participation in processes larger than ourselves" (p. 212). According to Massumi, and of particular interest to us, intense affects can lead to "a stronger sense of embeddedness … — a heightened sense of belonging" (p. 214). Although he is referring to broader spheres of life, it seems possible that intense embodied affects might contribute to a heightened sense of belonging in the babies' room.

Affects can also be thought of as the changes and variations that occur when bodies come into contact with other bodies, situations or things (Colman, 2010). "As we move through life", Massumi (2002, p. 214) notes, "a swarm of potential ways of affecting or being affected follows along", from which we select, extract and actualise only some. Our selection, extraction and actualisation is driven by desire — a creative and productive force, flows of energy and experimentation. Desire is "at work everywhere", according to Deleuze and Guattari (1984, p.1). We all continually produce, and are propelled by, flows of desires. In the assemblage of the babies' room, bodies were constantly coming into contact with, and affecting and being affected by other bodies, situations and things. Propelled by desire, babies moved around and through the room; to paraphrase Massumi (2002), continually exploring "where … [they] might be able to go and what … [they] may be able to do" (p. 212), and continually selecting, extracting and actualising potentials from the entanglements and flows of everyday life in the room. In the

next section, we focus on baby Nadia's 'navigating movements' (Massumi, 2002) as she selected, extracted and actualised some of these potentials.

In referring to 'navigating movements', Massumi (2002) emphasises the "openness of situations" (and presumably of spaces) and how it is possible to "live that openness" (p. 214) through exploring their "margin[s] of manoeuvrability" (p. 212). "You move forward", he points out, "by playing with the constraints, not avoiding them" (p. 218) — by being immersed in the experiences and attuned to the opportunities they afford: "It's about … going with the flow … [and] surfing the situation" (p. 219). Was this how Nadia responded to the constraints of the babies' room, we wondered?

We now turn to her navigating movements and what did indeed seem to be her playful but also purposeful negotiation of that space. We attend to the embodied movements of Nadia, herself, within the space, as well as to how she negotiated the continual movements, flux and flows of the complex assemblages that constituted the babies' room, and of which she was part. We also consider how her navigating movements might constitute ways of doing belonging and what they might suggest about identities, power relations and agency play out in her navigations and belonging.

Nadia's Navigating Movements

For the purposes of this article, in mapping Nadia's navigating movements we have drawn on fragments from three segments of video footage generated on a field visit during what unexpectedly turned out to be Nadia's final six weeks in the babies' room[5]. At the time, Nadia was 19-months-old and the oldest baby in the room. Her informal status and identity as the 'senior baby'[6] in conjunction with the spatial and temporal arrangements of the room conferred considerable positional advantage, as we try to convey through the story that follows. The three video segments span from late morning through to early afternoon on a typical day in the babies' room. The camera tracked Nadia, who had woken early from her morning nap, as she moved around the room and interacted with its human and non-human occupants. During the first two segments, the other three babies remained asleep in the cot room next door and Ms Connie took a short lunch break. Her replacement, Ms Maria, arrived about 10 mins prior to Ms Connie's departure for

[5] Her sudden move to the toddlers' room was necessitated by the new enrolment of a younger infant in the babies' room.

[6] Our colleague, Ben Bradley, coined this term.

lunch and stayed on for about 10 minutes after her return. For the first two segments, therefore, Nadia had unfettered and privileged access to all the room's occupants, in that her navigating movements and negotiations did not need to accommodate the desires and movements of other children. During the third video segment, 18-month-old Joey returned to the babies' room from his morning nap, providing further opportunities for Nadia's enactment of a 'senior baby' identity.

Although the video footage focused on Nadia, in keeping with the theoretical influences discussed in the previous section, we have endeavoured to see her not primarily as an individual agent or subject, but rather as part of a heterogeneous, entangled and fluid assemblage of people and things, desires and affects, interactions and interrelations, and 'matterings' (Thrift, 2008) and 'stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005). Key to our analytic processes was repeated viewing of the footage at varying speeds. It reinforced our earlier impressions of ongoing flows of energy, objects and embodied movement around and across the babies' room that varied greatly, for instance, in their intensity, duration, components, pathways, continuity and predictability. Some parts of the footage seemed especially compelling, glowing with a kind of mesmerising intensity (MacLure, 2010) and provoking animated conversations amongst our research team. They also reflected moments, it seemed to us, of heightened intensity, embodied desire and affect —for Nadia and, at times, for various other occupants of the babies' room. To paraphrase Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), they were moments in which we were deeply engaged and affectively moved by that which seemed to enchant and move (affectively and/or physically) Nadia and, at times, other human and non-human participants. Within these mesmerising moments, we then endeavoured to discern how these flows of affect and desire within the assemblage may have been re/producing particular identities, power relations and agencies. Here, we were assisted by provocations from Spyrou (2018) who challenges traditional child-centric analyses of children's lives and contexts and argues eloquently for the turn to relational ontologies that see children as interdependent with other entities.

From fragments of some of the mesmerising footage, we now tell a story-so-far (Massey, 1994). In part, the story is about how moments of heightened intensity, embodied desire and affect contributed to the babies' room working as a space of belonging. The protagonists[7] are Nadia and a lolly-

[7] In the sense that they constitute the part of the assemblage that we particularly focus on.

pink, delicately-ruffled carnation flower that clearly fascinated her. Apparently freshly-picked, but minus its stem, the carnation had mysteriously appeared in the babies' room on the morning of the field visit, just prior to the commencement of videoing.

Nadia and the Pink Carnation

"Flower, flower!", Nadia greeted the research assistant, holding the carnation aloft. She then backed into Ms Connie's lap, where she sat for a minute or two. The carnation, pressed against her nose, caused her to sneeze. When Ms Connie rose to get Nadia a tissue, the carnation slipped from Nadia's grasp and fell under a highchair. Nadia quickly retrieved it. Propelled by her excitement, Nadia and the carnation (the latter alternately pressed to Nadia's nose and brandished in front of her) set out on a circuitous route around the small room. As Nadia-and-carnation plopped into the soft cushions piled against the wall, the flower again slipped from her grasp, coming to rest this time under the central low table. Again, Nadia quickly retrieved it. Reclining briefly against the cushions, carnation pressed against her nose, Nadia inhaled deeply (Figure 2a). Nadia-and-carnation then rolled off the cushions and slid on to the adjacent low central table, coming to rest almost on top of the cut-out shapes jigsaw puzzle that had been lying unfinished on the table, awaiting the return of its two missing pieces: a circle and a heptagon.

"Block, where are you?" called Nadia, echoing Ms Connie's playful way of engaging the babies in searches for missing objects and in doing so reproducing Ms Connie's endeavours to impose order through routines. "Block, block", she called again, tapping her fingers in the empty space for the miss-

Figure 2a: Nadia-and-carnation on the soft cushions

ing circle in the jigsaw puzzle, the carnation twirling in her other hand. Nadia stopped tapping, transferred it to her other hand, peered at it intently, possibly registering it circular shape, plucked a couple of petals and smelled it again (Figure 2b). Then holding the flower face down, she repeatedly pressed it in to the space in the jigsaw puzzle for the missing circle. In a scrubbing-like motion, she moved the increasingly bedraggled carnation across the jigsaw puzzle, and then pushed it into the space for the other missing, heptagon-shaped, piece.

At this point, the video camera suddenly started beeping, attracting Nadia-and-carnation back to the research assistant. Soon afterwards, Ms Maria entered the room. As Nadia ran to greet her, the flower again slipped from view, its whereabouts uncertain.

Figure 2b: Nadia-and-carnation with the shapes jigsaw puzzle

…. 20 minutes later

In anticipation of Joey waking from his nap, Ms Maria had enlisted Nadia's help in searching for his shoes, a frequently enacted script in their co-performances involving Nadia as senior baby assisting educators in ensuing the smooth flow of the day. Suddenly, Nadia deviated from that script. Mid-search, she stopped abruptly next to the low table, her eyes to the floor. "Flower! Flower!", she suddenly cried, "Where's the flower? Oh, where's the flower?"

She ran quickly to the low slung, fabric-covered, rocker chair, no more than a metre away, and which was squeezed between the edge of the mat and the nappy change bench. She circled it twice clockwise at consider-

able speed, bumping into it roughly a couple of times as she negotiated the tight turns. 'What are you doing?", called Ms Maria, apparently bemused by Nadia's frenzied movements. Nadia paused and gazed intently at Ms Maria. "Flower, where go?", she responded, looking under the rocker. Then, several times in quick succession, she lifted the rocker's cushioned head rest flap, as if suspecting it of hiding the carnation. "Not there! Not there!", she called each time she lifted the flap, "Where it go?" (Figure 2c). She ran around the rocker again, circling it twice, this time anti-clockwise. Again, the rocker gently fended her off as she bumped roughly into it on the tight turns in the confined space. "Careful, Nadia. Slow down, Nadia", cautioned Ms Maria, to little effect. On her third circumnavigation of the rocker, Nadia suddenly paused. "Look!", she exclaimed, as something under the low table caught her attention. It was the carnation. "Oh, the flower", commented Ms Maria, belatedly making sense of the script.

Figure 2c: Looking for the missing carnation under the head rest flap

As if to secure Ms Maria's participation in the script, with the carnation thrust out in front, Nadia ran to Ms Maria, who was sitting next to the low table, and forcefully pushed it under her nose. Reeling for a fraction of a second from the onslaught of Nadia-and-carnation, Ms Maria then lent towards them and inhaled deeply (Figure 2d). Just then, Ms Connie returned to the room. Seizing this opportune moment, Nadia-and-carnation turned to Ms Connie. Nadia raised the carnation to her own nose and again inhaled deeply, all the while gazing intently at Ms Connie. She then held it out, invitingly, towards Ms Connie who stooped to smell it. "Mmm, lovely", she said, buying into the script.

Figure 2d: Nadia-and-carnation eliciting Ms Maria's participation in the script

… a further 10 minutes later

Joey, still sleepy after his nap, was sitting in Ms Connie's lap. Ms Connie was encouraging him to watch Nadia — now positioned, in her capacity as senior baby as role model or perhaps as guide — who, less than a metre away, was stacking plastic cube-shaped containers on the low table. Once again, as if to disrupt the educator-initiated script and return to her own script, Nadia suddenly turned from her container stack and began to run in tight circles next to the table, her eyes downcast. "Oh, here it is. Here it is", she called, stooping to pick up the carnation which had again caught her eye, this time from under the rocker chair.

She brought the carnation to the table, put it into one of the plastic containers, pulled it out again, and smelled it several times. Then she turned to Joey, still on Ms Connie's lap, and thrust it into his face. Joey recoiled, refusing the invitational advances of Nadia-and-carnation. Ms Connie, in contrast, accepted. Entering into the performance on Nadia's terms, she gently took Nadia's hand, guiding the carnation to Ms Connie's own nose. "Mmm, nice", Ms Connie commented, inhaling deeply, then redirecting Nadia's hand-and-carnation back towards Joey. He did not respond. Twice more, Nadia's hand-and-carnation reached towards Joey's face. "Flower, flower, look, flower", Nadia urged. Yet, despite his less-than-powerful positioning, at least at that particular moment, as junior baby to Nadia's much more powerful positioning as senior baby, he continued to resist her attempts to enlist him in her orchestrated performance of desire. On their third attempt, Nadia's hand-and-carnation connected with Joey's nose. He grimaced, waved his hands in front of his nose, and then grinned at Na-

Figure 2e: Joey resisting Nadia-and-carnation

dia, possibly conspiratorially or perhaps in capitulation (Figure 2e). "Okay, cuddle", she called, moving in close to hug him in a display of affection that further asserted her relative positional power. Ms Connie embraced both children, then swept Nadia on to her lap alongside Joey, while the carnation faded from view.

For us, this story-so-far (Massey, 1994) both resonates with and illuminates the theoretical influences on our endeavours to think spatially discussed in the previous section. It illustrates, for example, how even very young children, as part of an assemblage, can find opportunities in what may seem uneventful happenings to generate and mobilise intensity, desire and affects in ways that can invigorate their everyday lives and spaces. The unanticipated arrival of the pink carnation that was so alluring to Nadia, afforded her the means, in concert with the flower, to inject excitement, drama, suspense, humour, possibly even joy, into what, for adult observers, might otherwise have seemed a mundane morning in a confined and confining space. With the flower, she criss-crossed the room, reproducing but also improvising on existing rituals (e.g., 'calling up' missing objects) and creating new ones (e.g., tight, frenzied circling), and establishing new rhythms (e.g., savouring, loss, re-appearance, elicitation of responses from others). The heightened intensity generated by Nadia-and-carnation drew in others (e.g., Ms Connie, Ms Maria, Joey), creating moments of shared intimacy that, in line with Massumi (2002), presumably heightened a sense of belonging for Nadia and for others involved. Consistent with Massumi, it seemed that, for Nadia, 'intensifying' the space was a way of expanding its possibilities. This was not, however, an apolitical process. Indeed, as foreshadowed by Spyrou (2018), the flows of affect and desire, entangled with spatial and temporal

arrangements of the room produced discernible patterns of power relations. Nadia's positioning as senior baby, for instance, afforded scope for spatial navigations, identity enactments and performances and co-performances of certain scripts that were arguably not as readily available to Joey, despite only a 1-month difference in their age. In this sense, her positioning could be said to reflect and reproduce a status hierarchy within the babies' room.

Other Possible 'Stories-so-Far'

'Nadia and the pink carnation' is but one of many possible 'stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005) about Nadia's navigating movements through and around the babies' room and of how she negotiated the complexity of the continual movement within the space. Each of these possible stories has multiple and fluid potential meanings and trajectories. Another story-so-far that could have been told was one that played out in the intervals between the fragments from which we constructed the 'Nadia and the carnation' story. It could have told of another means by which Nadia managed to expand the space of the babies' room: for example, through mobilising various alliances with educators, adults passing by the room, and non-human beings such as the half-height, stable-like door and the internal window into cot room to gain new spatial vantage points. This story-so-far would also have been about desire, intensity and affect. It would have emphasised Nadia's rich repertoire of embodied practices through which she manifested desire, for example her wriggling bottom; upraised waving arms; balancing on tiptoes with outstretched fingers, gripping the window sill or door so that they supported almost her entire body weight; contorted facial expressions; expertly timed, strategic eye contact and smiles. It would have emphasised, as well, as her persuasive vocalisations, especially, her distinctive, difficult to ignore "oooOOO" utterances, repeated at increasing volume, in an increasingly deep, pained determined tone.

It would have conveyed how the intensity of her embodied practices and vocalisations contributed to her being able to exercise agency; not as a resource residing in her as an individual but rather, following Spyrou (2018), within the various assemblages within the babies' room of which she was part. More often than not, for instance, her embodied practices and vocalisation repertoire succeeded in leveraging her — via assistance from assorted, amused and sometimes possibly bemused adults, as well as from non-human occupants of the room — into mid-air vantage points that would otherwise have been beyond her reach. For Nadia, access to these vantage points expanded the spatial scale and "social geometry" (Massey, 1994, p. 3) of the babies' room; for instance, by allowing her to peer through the inter-

nal window, into the cot room and to greet, with a handblown kiss against the glass, other babies as they awoke from their naps.

This story-so-far would have emphasised, too, how her access to these vantage points consolidated and reproduced her generally privileged positioning within the babies' room. This positioning seemed influential in securing what appeared to be her own sense of belonging within the babies' room, and in how she participated in and contributed to the broader dynamics of doing belonging in the babies' room. Perhaps above all, though, to paraphrase Spyrou (2018) it would have highlighted our efforts to shift the focus from questions about the capacities that very young children possess that help to foster their own and others' belonging, to questions about the capacities that emerge from their relational encounters with other entities (human and non-human) that contribute to their own and others' belonging.

Reflections

This article began by highlighting the resonance, for the first author, between the fictional Room in Donoghue' (2010) novel and her initial discomforted response to the babies' room in the Happy Families centre. We soon realised, though, that throughout much of the article, we were endeavouring, "to evoke the corporeal and experiential feelings of *being there …"*. (Pink, 2015, p. 164, original emphasis). It is from, and in, these feelings, Pink continues, that "… academic understandings are produced and … entangled" (p. 164), which we see as both a potential strength and limitation.

It has been a strength in that Pink's methodological 'validation' of attending to these feelings has encouraged us to return to the portrayal of the fictional Room to clarify analytically the differences between Room in the novel and babies' room in the Happy Families' centre. In this respect, it has been useful, as well, to return to Pink et al.'s (2015) conceptualisation of texture. The texture of the metaphorical walls of the fictional Room were almost entirely non-porous, with visits from the jailor holding its occupants captive the only incursions from the outside world. In contrast, the babies' room was far more porous[8]. It allowed the movement in and out of a range of humans and non-humans, including the pink carnation, making it a space of lively and engaging encounters. And yet, it *was* also a confined and, in some ways, confining space. The simultaneity of this space as lively and engaging *and* confined and confining highlights the importance of continuing to see

[8] We would like to thank the Editors of this Special Issue for bringing this to our attention.

specific spaces, as well as space in general, as fluid and dynamic, rather than fixed or settled, and to eschew dichotomous representations.

Indeed, as Massey (2005, p. 18) reminds us, how we conceptualise space "has effects", and how we conceptualise, respond to, interpret, and portray a particular space has particular effects. We are beholden, then, to reflect on what kind of space we have produced through our interpretations, mapping and portrayals (Dewsbury & Thrift, 2005). As we look back over our analysis and interpretations discussed in this article, many questions arise. For example: Has our initial ambivalence about the confined physical space of the babies' room unduly skewed our interpretations and representations? In particular, does our reading of Nadia's navigating movements in the babies' room as driven, in part, by desire to expand its spatial possibilities, say more about our own motivations and desire than Nadia's? Has our desire to highlight the relationality of the texture and spatial practices within the babies' room, which seemed such a strength in fostering a sense of belonging, led us to romanticise how belonging works in the room, and possibly inadvertently downplay power relations, for instance by overlooking instances of exclusionary practices, and other related manifestations of the politics of belonging? And might our emphasis on human and non-human interrelations undermine the potential for policy salience and impact? We can offer no conclusive responses to these questions, other than to say that they continue to exercise our thinking as we continue to work with the data generated in the Happy Families centre, and in the other case study centres in the Babies and Belonging project.

More broadly, questions arise about whether and how attention to spatiality might add value to the growing literature about belonging in ECEC and other early years settings. Put differently, what might spatial perspectives make possible in terms of enriching and deepening understandings of belonging that might otherwise be elusive? In our view, the spatial perspectives of the theorists we have drawn upon for this article have much to offer, in part because of their resonance with contemporary understandings of early years settings as complex, relational and dynamic sites in which belonging, in turn, must be understood as a complex, relational and dynamic phenomenon (see, for e.g., Juutinen, Puroila & Johansson, 2018; Kustatscher, 2017; Stratigos, 2015a; Sumsion & Wong, 2011). But they also extend existing understandings, for instance, by demanding attention to the relational *and* the granular materiality of ECEC and related settings in ways that, with notable exceptions (e.g., Millei & Cliff, 2014; Stratigos, 2015b), are arguably not yet common in the ECEC literature —especially in relation to infants. In addi-

tion, they challenge assumptions of an inbuilt coherence and predictability within ECEC settings and their programs, as implied in technicist forms of measurement and reductionist conceptualisations of space still evident in many ECEC quality assessment instruments and mechanisms (Osgood, Scarlet & Giugni, 2016). Massey's (2005) emphasis on the 'throwntogetherness' of space, for example, highlights the inevitability of the unexpected (such as the sudden appearance of the pink carnation in the babies' room). Careful and creative consideration of how to mobilise spatial concepts and perspectives discussed in this article, in ways that support practitioners in resisting and challenging simplistic or unidimensional conceptualisations of space and of belonging, seems likely to be needed, however; especially as practitioners may not have the luxury of time to step back from rapidly unfolding day to day events, or to repeatedly view in fine-grained detail, video footage of those events that we, as a research team, have enjoyed. In short, while spatial perspectives 'matter' in the sense used by Thrift (2008) and in an everyday sense, how to mobilise them in ECEC practice and policy in ways that fully realise their potential poses an important challenge.

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Distant places in children's everyday activities: Multiple worlds in an Australian preschool

Zsuzsa Millei

Abstract: Global flows and their geopolitical power relations powerfully shape the environments in which children lead their everyday lives. Children's images, imaginations and ideas of distant places are part of these global flows and the everyday activities children perform in preschool. Research explores how through curricula young children are moulded into global and cosmopolitan citizens and how children make sense of distant places through globally circulating ideas, images and imaginations. How these ideas, images and imaginations form an unproblematised part of young children's everyday preschool activities and identity formation has been much less explored, if at all. I use Massey's (2005) concept of a 'global sense of place' in my analysis of ethnographic data collected in an Australian preschool to explore how children produce global qualities of preschool places and form and perform identities by relating to distant places. I pay special attention to how place, objects and children become entangled, and to the sensory aspects of their emplaced experiences, as distant spatialities embed in and as children's bodies inhabit the preschool place. To conclude, I call for critical pedagogies to engage with children's use of these constructions to draw similarities or contrast aspects of distant places and self, potentially reproducing global power relations by fixing representations of places and through uncritically enacting stereotypes.

Keywords: globalisation, early childhood education, cosmopolitanism, global sense of place, ethnography.

Introduction

The integration of education systems worldwide into the global knowledge economy, concerns about sustainability, the ubiquitous presence of popular cultures and the new media, and the increased mobility of ideas, things and people all powerfully shape the environments in which children lead their everyday lives (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002; Ansell, 2009; Penn, 2002; 2011; Millei & Jones, 2014). Within this context, policy frames of international and national early childhood education and care (ECEC) position children as the global and cosmopolitan citizens of the future (James & Prout, 1997; Prout, 2005, Hägglund & Pramling Samuelsson, 2009; Penn, 2011). To facilitate children's knowledge about their world, curricula are designed to create geographical imaginations of places on a variety of scales, such as children's locality, their region, country and distant places. In relation to this they are also aimed at intentionally shaping open minded and responsible global citizens for the future (Duhn, 2006, 2014; Hägglund & Pramling Samuelsson, 2009; Millei & Jones, 2014; Jones, 2017).

Global flows, power relations and changes intertwine in dynamic exchange with the places children inhabit, and research in children's geographies brings to the fore the complex ways they shape children's experiences and identities (e.g. Katz, 2004; Hackett, Procter & Seymour, 2015). There is also a growing body of work exploring what children know and the processes they use to construct knowledge about distant places and form identities in relation to them (Holloway & Valentine, 2000b; Disney, 2005; Picton, 2008; Taylor, 2009). In this paper, I bring together these bodies of work and explore how images, ideas and imaginations of distant places form a part of the everyday preschool activities young children perform that lend the preschool space a global quality and provide positionings for children's identity formation.

Despite the global situatedness of children's present and future lives, research in the fields of childhood studies and children's geographies is mostly framed as intimate geographies of local (see McKendrick, 2000; Ansell, 2009) and within institutional spaces of ECEC (see Bollig, 2015). This kind of delineation restricts consideration of how children's lives are embedded in global processes or how they have relevance to their identities and learning that pedagogies and curricula are designed to shape. To put it differently, while children are seen as developing global and cosmopolitan citizens, and learners, who are required to acquire knowledge and maintain responsible relations to the world and others, considerations about the embeddedness

of their present lives in global flows and power relations remain limited to the local. The ways in which children negotiate globally circulating images, ideas and imaginations and perform or create identities related to those in their everyday lives in ECEC are less deliberated in research and ECEC practice. In this paper I set out to remediate that situation.

By drawing on ethnographic data I illustrate the kinds of images, ideas and imaginations of distant places 4-5 year old children draw on in their everyday activities in an Australian preschool. Here I understand 'distant place' to mean one located outside the national borders of Australia. Australia is a large country so there are plenty of distant places within it. Here, however, I focus on non-Australian places because the *Early Years Learning Framework* (AGDEEWR, 2009) specifically states in relation to one learning outcome that children need to create connections with and contribute to their *world* (see Duhn, 2014; Millei & Jones, 2014). I also explore how those images infuse global qualities into the preschool place and into the children's performance of their identities. Like Massey (1998), I see quality of place "as an articulation of contacts and influences drawn from a variety of places" (p. 124) and "the construction of [the] spatiality" of the preschool as "an important element in building a social identity" (p. 128). It is in this way that I see the *world* appearing in the preschool, as it is spatiality negotiated by the children and as it is constructed through the spatial performance of their identities.

Place, objects and children become entangled as children's bodies inhabit the preschool place. Pink's (2009) notion of emplacement refers to this entanglement and emphasises its sensory aspects. There is repeated discussion in childhood studies of the idea that children's experiences of place are more embodied and sensory than adult experiences, and have greater intensities of affect (Christensen, 2003; Hackett, Procter & Kummerfeld, 2018). The sensory aspects of place generate emplaced knowledge as children move through place with their bodies, and over time children attach meanings and memories to place (Christensen, 2003). Emplaced knowledge is distinct from spatial knowledge (abstract, generalised, represented in maps). Drawing on the notion of emplaced knowledge not only enables me to shift my exploration from understanding distant places as spatial knowledge (related to cognition, sense-making and idea construction), but also helps me to research how spatial knowledge, objects and affects come together within that place to produce embodied sensory experiences that form knowledge embedded in children's everyday activities and offer subjective positionings. In the next sections, I continue by further outlining the conceptualisation of

this project and offer some methodological considerations of how the concepts were operationalised in collecting and interpreting the data. In the analytical part that follows, I have selected situations in which objects, embodied experiences and affects have prominent roles in producing the global qualities of place in which children are emplaced. To conclude, I draw some considerations on pedagogies that help children create more critical connections with the world.

The Preschool, the Child and the 'World'

To conceptualise my exploration of how children draw on images, ideas and imaginations of distant places in their everyday activities, I draw on a relational view of place within spatial theorising. The place of the preschool, while bound by its walls and institutional practices, is also porous, and is produced through its connections with wider societies (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a). Massey (1991) conceptualised this relational view of space and developed an approach in which space is bound into the local and global networks that act to configure particular local places. Places can thus be imagined as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey, 1991, p. 28). This means that a relational understanding of place goes against any fixed or absolute conception of place. Place is continuously invested with meanings and 'doings' in relations to other places and times, thus place is bound into particular processes of space-time constitution. The place of the preschool thus is not a container in which social action takes place, but is socially produced in each given moment and as connected to other places and societies.

The notion of a 'global sense of place' is a consequence of this relational understanding of place. Place has 'roots', attached to a geographical locale, but also 'routes' that connect place to other spaces and places. 'Routes' function through a vast complexity of interconnections that form meanings in space, often as embodied experiences (Massey, 1994). For example, these 'routes' connect the preschool to global agencies (e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Bank), research institutions (e.g. brain research at Harvard University or Save the Children UK pioneering the Child Development Index) or institutions representing global trends (e.g. Reggio Emilia). Ideologies or best practice prescriptions originating at these distant places connect through different 'routes' and shape how the preschool is experienced. 'Routes' are also associated with mobility and access, and that in turn shifts understandings of locality and connections across space and place (Secor, 2004). 'Routes' also bring material and se-

miotic conditions and resources to a place, and these then feed into the 'sense of place' and its culture. Thus, the preschool is not only rooted in a particular place but it is also routed, its hybrid places are organised through interconnections to other places. Consequently, the 'routes' and 'roots' experienced in a place or by a person are crucial to the formulation of place and identities.

As Massey (1998, p. 124-125 original emphasis) expresses it, place is "*constellations of temporary coherence*... set within a social space which is the product of relations and interconnections from the very local to the intercontinental". Massey emphasises that these relations are imbued with power that directs cultural influences. Places also have roots that hold multiple interpreted histories, experiences, knowledge and spatial connotations. For example, Penn (2011) in her study of international NGOs operating in ECEC in the Global South shows how common discourses between these organisations originate in the Global North, especially in North America. However, as they encounter local histories and knowledges, and the experiences of those concerned with early childhood programmes and policies, equity and quality arguments are downplayed and investment arguments are overplayed in the interpretations of those discourses. These cultural lines of connections "are expressions in one way or another of solidarity or of a desire to belong to something believed in" (Massey, 1998, p. 125), as in the example of actors in the South wishing to apply scientifically sound, universally applicable precepts about child development (Penn, 2011). These connections also have implications for identity, since these actors may be applying these views so they are seen as and act as professionals in the eyes of their global North counterparts.

Massey (2005) suggests that place is the multiple objects, bodies, beings, 'roots' and 'routes' that constitute place in a dynamic manner. The presence, or absence, of these play a role in altering spaces, in the continuous production of place, and in making and breaking connections. They also invest the place of the preschool with objects, bodies, images, ideas, imaginaries, practices and power relations, and shape that place. In this dynamic, individuals and social groups are constantly engaged in efforts to make connections, territorialise space, claim spaces and include and exclude others. As I will show in the situations below, objects, such as a dress or a tent, can create new connections between the preschool and a distant place, such as Indonesia or Buenos Aires, and children can use them in their continuous production of place as connected to these places. Productions of place include territorialisation, fencing and bordering, in the sense that for example

a tent can be a distinct place from the preschool and children can exclude those who do not belong. Thus, the production of place has a lot to do with the social production of identities, of who we are and who the others are (those not included). The diverse senses of place these objects, images, bodies and so on, and the dynamic spatiality created by the preschool's social life also tell us something emotional about a place, for example, relating to inclusions and exclusions or the objects, images and so forth connect places that carry emotions or remind us of attachments.

Identities, which are continuously and contextually shifting and fluid, are produced through a performative, spatial and embodied process (Gregson & Rose, 2000). Here performative and embodied refer to Butler's (1990) notion of performativity: the ways in which particular subjectivities are formed through the submission (habituation) of bodies to discursive practices. Social norms within these discourses inscribe the body through repetitive and reiterative acts. The spatial refers to 'spaces of embodiment' (Crang & Thrift, 2000). Objects also gain meaning and possible uses/ actions (embodiment) mediated by space. If we observe a child acting within the context of an object world, we can see that an object's meanings and even its embodied nature, and the norms the child follows in acting with that object, are acquired through the construction of that space. Thus, space is actively present in the child's social practice and is imbued with social norms that produce identities. In this way, identities are produced and performed in space, "in and through social action rather than existing anterior to social processes" (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 434). At the same time, the spaces in which children perform these identities "do not pre-exist their performances, waiting in some sense to be mapped out by performances; rather, specific performances bring these spaces into being" (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 441).

This understanding also has consequences for how we see the world, as in, for instance, the curriculum framework for Australian preschools. Based on the previous arguments then, the 'world' is not a pre-existing space or place or a place or space that can be pre-defined. Rather it is produced and reproduced through social actions within the relations of objects, images, ideas, imaginations and people, and at the same time it is a space of embodiment. It is a space that participates in the construction of place in which performances of identity take place and in which children can produce and reiterate identities in relation to the 'world' 'brought to life' by them through their embodied performances (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000). In the next section, I discuss how I operationalised these concepts in my ethnographic project and analysis.

Methodological Considerations

I conceptualised the original project as 'placemaking' in a globalising world as a means of exploring how, within the context of mobility and globalisation, children produce spaces within their preschool that engage with and are situated within these processes. This then helped me to shift my gaze away from looking at how the 'global', both on the larger scale containing the locale of the preschool and as a predefined and pre-exiting idea or abstract concept, shapes and influences the preschool space or is brought into the preschool by children knowing about it. Children themselves produce the world or the 'global' by referencing distant places or engaging with objects, people, relations, images or imaginations that create connections with distant places. Considering how space is produced within this created context of the world, it is important to focus on how this place is entangled within the broader politics of space, social relations and power, as Massey (2005) suggests.

Over the course of 18 months in 2013 and 2014, I collected ethnographic data to document children's lives in situations where reference was made to distant places, or in which objects, people or relations appeared, which were connected to or originated from distant places. I aimed to shift attention away from children's sensemaking towards the situation and process of experiencing to create accounts of their sensory emplacements (Pink, 2009). In focusing on children's emplacement in spaces, I collected data that approximated sensory experiences and movements, bodily sensations, objects and intensities of affect in children's everyday activities. I paid attention to bodily positions and expressions, touches, feelings, objects, sensory and affective relations with objects and people, and the affective force of various situations.

As an ethnographer, I was located in the preschool, but I also followed the children to regular activities outside the preschool, such as excursions. I investigated the children's stories: for example, if a person travelled with a child who had brought an object as a souvenir to the preschool, then I asked that person about the trip. I traced images, ideas or stories that the children got from books or the media. I gave the children cameras and asked them to take photos and videos of the distant places they visit or visited. I asked them to bring in objects or take photos of objects they considered important. Later we discussed these photos and told stories about the objects.

As an ethnographer who was also a migrant to Australia, I was emplaced in the research context which helped me engage with the children's em-

placed experiences (Pink, 2009, p. 25) and emotions. As Procter (2013, p. 81) explains, emotions circulate in research situations, since "emotions are also bound up in the researcher's relational emplacement within and as part of the field site". In agreement with Procter (2013, p. 81) I see this entanglement as being productive for research since "emotional reflexivity connects the researcher with the social processes through which spatialised feeling rules are sustained, contested or transformed". Consequently, this reflexivity can be used to help understand children's socio-emotional practices. I not only participated in children's activities but also in conversations where attempts were made to elicit children's thinking, reflection and actions. The children reflected on my presence, noticed or criticised my accent, and invited me to participate or excluded me. Participating in this way also involved intervening when a child or a group discriminated against another or when I encountered unjust or harmful discourses and practices that also triggered emotional reactions in me (Millei & Rautio, 2017).

Being well acquainted with the literature on researching with children, I tried to position myself as a slightly unconventional adult. I played with the children and never acted as their teacher. I also followed the literature on research ethics, protocols, and mechanisms for engaging with children, reflected in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989). I repeatedly asked the children for their consent throughout the project and before presenting and publishing data relating to them. However, as one of the situations shows, sometimes my quest to collect data or the excitement of the research moment overshadowed the need to ask for consent. Since the project activities ran concurrently with other curricular activities, the children usually decided to freely take part and I did not appear to disturb the usual running of the day when I was just sitting in on or observing an activity. Due to Australian ethics policies, I have opted to use pseudonyms in this article, although some children and their parents stated they did not mind if I used their real names.

For this paper, I have selected situations in which special places, objects, embodiment and affective intensities play a part in how children bring to light the world with images, ideas and imaginations about distant places. The analysis presented in this paper is based on video-recorded data that helped me to identify the detail needed to draw out the sensory experiences. The data presented here stems from my embodiment and emplacement as an ethnographer participating in a place with the children, and from my analytical interpretations of the embodiment of the children and objects and affective intensities, including my own 'sensory clues' (Procter, 2013, p. 83).

Distant Places within the Preschool

In this first situation and analysis, I pay attention to how children territorialise a place within the preschool by drawing on an image of a distant place, connecting their imagination of that distant place with the preschool place. The produced place then offers them opportunities to perform their identities in relation to the preschool's social norms and the distant place imagined.

Tent in Buenos Aires

The teacher reads a Madeleine book to a group of children. The inside back cover is a picture of the Plaza de la República in Buenos Aires with the Obelisk of Buenos Aires. Inspired by the book, the children build a tent in the garden. It is constructed out of a large blue plastic sheet hanging on a rope secured between two branches of a tree providing shade and separating the area from the rest of the outside play area. The many blankets and pillows on the floor make the tent cosy. The teacher invites me to come and see the tent and the picture the children used to mark it. She knows I have just returned from a trip to Buenos Aires.

I am very excited by the invitation as that morning I have brought some photos of my recent trip on my computer and am eager to show them to the children. I have a photo of the very same square. I invite some of the children to look at the photos but they are not interested. As I reach the tent I see the image of the square copied from the book hanging above the tent's entrance, just like in my photo. The children exclaim with excitement: "It's our home in Buenos Aires!" I pull up some photos on my computer portraying the same square. The photos show the Obelisk, the large red drums used in building construction that were ongoing at the time of my visit. The children identify the square and some details in the pictures and suggest, "We need a tin (Louise looks up and points to the top of the tent), because we want to have our own kind of one". The children point to the tall houses, observe the lack of street lights and the stray dogs in other photos. They don't always understand my words and explanations of the photos and ask me to say it again and clarify. The children soon declare: "We're going to sleep now." They crawl to the back of the tent and organise the pillows and cover themselves with the blankets. While I watch them getting into their beds and think of how I can join them they add: "There is no place for you".

The picture of the Plaza de la República hanging above the tent's entrance signals the tent's location. It creates a symbolic connection between the place in the preschool garden and the place in Buenos Aires. The children seem to be emplaced in both places at the same time. The objects portrayed are part of the distant place: the picture of the square, the tins, the dogs, the tall buildings and the lack of street lights all help produce their emplacement together with the materiality of the pillows and the cosy feeling of being in the tent. The familiarity of being in the tent and the less familiar images of Buenos Aires blend together in their emplacements.

The blue sheet of the tent creates seclusion and cosiness and separates this place off from the children's regular preschool environment. In the regular environment of the preschool garden, where the children are 'rooted', they have habituated relations to the environment which offer them certain positions from which to perform their identities. To some degree the fact that this space is separated off and conflated with the distant place of Buenos Aires liberates the children's bodies from their usual habits, rules and regulations and constraints, but also presents the possibility of performing new identities. The place of the preschool is opened up by the act of connecting it to this distance place, and the sensations of being here and there at the same time, and it is from this that the activities emerge. They can act as people or children living in Buenos Aires, with dogs, constructing things from tins, walking in the streets, playing in the preschool tent and so on.

The discursive norms of the preschool dictate that the children should follow the preschool rules. One of these rules is that the children have to respect any adults present, even if they have not invited that adult to play with them. When I arrive I show them and talk about my photos and they listen. It is possible that they are interested in my photos because they add to their imaginations of this distant place. At the end, however, they exclude me from joining them in their tent. As I was not invited, I do not protest. However, it also occurs to me that their being in Buenos Aires, and positioning themselves as 'fitting' citizens there, presents them with a way of excluding me, since I am an adult and I am also different, and perhaps do not belong in their imagination of Buenos Aires. After all, I had imposed my presence on them when they were playing and had forgotten to ask for their consent. I also feel that my accent may have played a role in their exclusion of me. This is a reasonable interpretation since previously on many other occasions the children had associated language differences with different spaces: they had told me that in Africa people speak Spanish or that in France people speak French and so on. Many of them, including one of the

girls in the tent, had also asked me repeatedly what language I was speaking as she did not understand me. This was despite the fact we were conversing in English. Excluding me could therefore adds another binary construct between self and other, adult and child, play-friend and not play-friend. The children attach a language difference to the distant place, and I do not speak their language. As Picton (2008) observed in his research with middle school children, imaginations and stereotypes connected to distant places help children diversify binary contrasts between self and other.

The place of the tent could also be considered as a place for symbolic play. Symbolic play includes planning outside the playframe and acting within the playframe within which children assume the dual roles of narrators who describe what the figures are doing, and of vicarious actors who act for the figures. Symbolic play draws on social knowledge and the representation of social events and the internal states of the figures in a dynamic way. Symbolic play constitutes play with the ability of children to represent the real world (Bretherton, 1984). In their tent, the children perform their social knowledge about this distant place. They make connections between their tent scenario and life in Buenos Aires; thus they imagine this distant place as a continuum of their experience in the tent. In their symbolic play the children act out living in the tent, and maybe also in Buenos Aires, and by doing so connect these places through common ground and help produce a sense of the world.

The picture of the square and the tent helped the children to mark their place and territorialise a part of the preschool garden area. Other objects also played an important role in their engagement with distant places in the preschool. In this next situation, a dress brought from a distant place creates a new 'route' with a distant place and the preschool.

> ***Kylie's dresses (Figure 1)***
> Dressed in a red silk dress with golden floral embroidered sequins Kylie enters the preschool. Kneeling and constantly stroking her body with her hands to feel the soft, shiny silk Kylie tells me the story of how this 'Chinese dress' had been given to her by her father who frequently travels to Asia, and had brought this dress from Indonesia. While she is speaking to me Kylie's eyes and hands dart to the intricate flowers, the pleasant feel of the silk and the golden threads. "Who do you think wears this kind of dress in Indonesia," I ask. "There are different kinds of dresses." "Do you think this is for children?" "Yes," she responds. "Do you think children wear this dress in Indonesia?" "This is a dress

for all different kinds of places." "Like what?" I ask. "Like at school." "Do you know I live on a farm?" "And do you wear this dress there?" She nods, her eyes widening as she tells me how it had been the middle of the night when her father arrived and in the morning the dress was there. She tells me that she owns lots of dresses from her father's trips to different countries in Asia. "I told dad to buy this dress and he did." I asked Kylie to take my camera home with her and take some photos of the other dresses.

Figure 1: Kylie's dresses

Travel objects, such as souvenirs, may be assigned a superior value on account of their coming from elsewhere (Haldrup, 2015). Here the dress is important to Kylie, and she wants to show it off in preschool. The dress may represent a strong emotional connection with her dad, also connecting her to Indonesia, while marking a distant place there. Objects have traces inscribed upon them of where they originate from. They can also represent an imagined place of origin and an actual place of usage, or can gain relevance because of their mobility (Hahn & Weis, 2013). In response to my question, Kylie connects wearing this dress with lots of different places and children who wear it in the distant place. Kylie's dress also symbolises her emotional

attachment to her dad. As Haldrup (2015, p. 52) explains, "the 'magical capabilities' of everyday objects … animat[e] them with affects and emotions, feelings of remembrance, affection".

The red shiny silk, golden threads, intricate flowers and sequins continue to capture the attention of Kylie's hand and her eyes, captivating them into exploring these new sensations. Her embodied presence overshadows our conversation. It is as if, through stroking and wearing her dresses, she not only engages with the story of how she got them and the emotions she feels for her father, but experiences affect, through feeling the silk, and perhaps a distant place (see Anderson, 2006, 2009). The sensory and affective processes work on Kylie as 'magic' (Bennett, 2001). In Bennet's (2001) understanding, to be enchanted includes "a condition of exhilaration or acute sensory activity. To be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday" (p. 4) and "to be simultaneously transfixed in wonder and transported by sense, to be both caught up and carried away." (p. 5). Enchantment, both in its pleasurable and mysterious form, is more of an affective and somatic event than a cognitive and symbolic one. As Kylie becomes enchanted by her dress, possible affective 'routes' emerge between her locality, the farm she lives on, the preschool where she wears the dress, the place from where her dress originates and the places where other children wear these dresses.

Kylie's dresses hold possibilities that cannot be reduced to either their material forms or their symbolic meanings. Their materiality, stories, and the emotions and affects they produce, create affective 'routes' that also help to narrate her identity. Wearing the different dresses makes Kylie anew; a different girl emerges each time she encounters their textures, colours and stories. My question makes her wonder about the children who wear these dresses in a distant place. She perhaps also wonders about the commonalities and differences between her and the children there. Her wonder and the 'magic' of wearing these dresses connect the distant place and everyday life there.

Kylie's imagination of a distant place and her sense that her dress is something exotic but definitely new and different can also be understood as an imagination fuelled by Orientalism, in which the Occident imagines the Orient (Said, 1978). Terming these 'imaginative geographies', Said emphasised the spatial nature of these imaginations. The interactions between imagination and subjects are wrought with power. Encompassing 'home' and the 'abroad' that is far away they emphasise the difference and create

a power relation between those at home and those whose lives have been colonialised by Oriental imaginations. This positioning is further amplified, as Kylie, a white girl, places her hands in a stereotypical representation of a subservient gesture associated with a sense of 'Chineseness' and femininity in countless Western films (See photo in Figure 1). This gesture represents a very stereotypical image of the women and girls who wear these dresses, which could reflect how Kylie imagines them and could provide her with a means to help construct her self in juxtaposition to these subservient others. In the above situation, however, Kylie brings out the sameness. Children in lots of places, including Indonesia, are just like her, and go to school in these dresses and perhaps wear them on a farm like she does. Nonetheless, in itself the traditional dress carries old-fashioned images that are fixed in time and do not characterise how children live their everyday lives in those places today.

The dress is a sensual form of emplacement that could create power hierarchies between the home and self, and a distant place and others through an Oriental imagination. Here, however I would suspend this interpretation since Kylie assigned value to this dress through her emotions towards her father and created a connection between her places and this distant place and to children just like her who wear these dresses in different places in a way that draws on similarities and continuities with other places. The dress created a 'route', drawing on an old-fashioned image, between the preschool and a distant place, as the children in the preschool marvelled at her dress and learned about her father's travels. In the next situation, another souvenir, a girl's braid, creates a 'route' to Fiji as children mimic this type of hairstyling in their activities.

> ***Hairstyle from Fiji***
> Colourful plastic beads that can be plaited into children's hair appear at the preschool after some of the families visit Fiji, a popular holiday destination. The beads appeal to the children, who touch and explore them, turning them over, and investigating how they surround the many plaits. The dress-up area turns into a hairdresser's salon where the plaited hair with beads becomes an instant activity and fashion, and the children and dolls are paraded around the room with their new aesthetic.

The hair plaits and beads articulate the 'route' that connects the preschool's home area with the beaches of Fiji, where skilled woman bead hair as a tourist attraction. The new hairstyle becomes an instant fashion as the

children appropriate it. The hair braid souvenir appears in the preschool as a stereotypical representation of a distant place and culture and sheds light on Fiji's colonial history. In the children's hair salon, the objects acquire a new identity through their 'spatial embodiment', the craft beads become hair beads, the plaited hair becomes Fijian style. In a similar manner, the plaited hair, beads and the feel of the beaded plaits afford the children new identities.

The consumption of the material objects of travel can be understood, as Franklin (2003, p. 2) contends, as a "central component of modern social identity formation and engagement" that is "infused into the everyday". Through these material objects, cultural identities are appropriated, constructed and traded as part of a touristic exchange that mediates a sense and the memory of a place (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). Tourists, such as these children, can gain prestige within their group through the purchase of 'ethnic' artefacts, such as the hair braid, because of the value of the international travel and multiculturalism symbolised in these arts. The hair braid becomes woven into an everyday activity in the preschool, evoking associations of 'exotic frontiers' and geopolitical power relations. A local black woman braids the hair of a white tourist child. The hair braid transcends the tourist encounter on the beach, which framed its purchase, and the preschool. This in between-ness connects the distant place to the preschool, just as the souvenir "contracts the world in order to expand the personal" (Stewart, 1993, p. xii, in Morgan & Pritchard, 2005) and the children's activity in the preschool conjures a part of the world.

In this situation, when considering the meaning of the hair braid and related children's activity, the stereotypical image with its colonial charge and the orientalism embedded in its symbolism and production cannot be sidelined as in the previous situation with the dress. The hair braids, with their sensual capacities, bring particular imaginations of this part of the world into the children's play that reproduce geopolitical power relations related to colonial histories and imperialism, and exoticise the other in the distant place.

A number of research studies have examined children's imaginative geographies of distant places, many focusing on 'Third World' countries, such as Africa (Harrington, 1998) or Brazil (Picton, 2008) or on more affluent countries such as Japan (Taylor, 2009) or New Zealand and Britain (Holloway & Valentine, 2000b). This body of research not only illustrates how constructions of others help to create children's identities, but also explores the

sources and importance of stereotypical understandings of distant places in creating difference along geopolitical power lines. They also draw attention to how children emphasise the sameness of their home and the distant places and how these imaginations can be and should be contested through curricula and pedagogies that encourage children to view places in their diversity, and along a continuum and in continuity, rather than in terms of difference and contrast (Picton, 2008). Most importantly, together these studies demonstrate the ways in which these images, imaginations and ideas contribute to children's knowledge about the world, their positionings towards distant others and their identity formation.

As illustrated in the symbolic play performed in the tent, the sensation of wearing a dress from a faraway place, and the colonial world invoked in the hairdresser's salon, children produce multiple worlds and re-iterate identities where the discursive reference points of their performance originate in distant places and create connections or 'routes'. Images, imaginations and ideas of distant places move children and are actively present in and shape children's activities in the preschool and their identities. They also create visible directions of cultural and economic flows, in the privilege of the global travelling business elite, such as Kylie's father or the relatively wealthy white tourist who travels to Fiji from Australia for a cheap holiday, and reiterate the power structures of colonialism, imperialism and global capitalism through their uncritical consumption of souvenirs. While in the tent and through the dresses, the children drew out similarities between their lives and the lives of the children in distant places, creating perhaps sources for a range of cosmopolitan sensibilities, stereotypical images and imaginations, such as the hair braid from Fiji for instance could reproduce a colonial engagement with difference that makes the preschool children different and superior to distant others. Through this latter kind of experience of distant places and others, it can also be argued, that they acquire a desire for an advantageous strategic positioning within current flows of mobility, the global labour market, and tourism, such as that of Kylie's dad or the families who travelled to Fiji, instead of building a moral sense of solidarity or openness to the 'Other' with their engagements (Rizvi, 2009).

Multiple Worlds in the Preschool: Some Non-Conclusive Thoughts

The global is present in children's everyday preschool lives in at least two ways. First, there is the way in which the global economy, ECEC policies

and international frames indirectly shape children's environments through the regulations, cultures, norms and rules they institute (see Millei & Jones, 2014). Second, distant places contribute to children's production of multiple worlds through the many 'routes' they bring to place – with the images, ideas and imaginations relating to those places as well as objects from those places -, and through which children construct a 'global sense of place' (Massey, 2005). The elements of the distant places brought via these 'routes' inform the quality of the preschool place in which the preschool children are emplaced. They offer children particular kinds of spatial embodiments, new or different 'lives' and associated identities as they relate to distant spatialities. As the children 'live' in their preschool tent in Buenos Aires, fashion themselves with dresses and hair braids brought from elsewhere, they experience these connected spatialities in embodied ways and through sensory experiences. While children create and imagine these distant places and perform associated identities, multiple worlds are being produced in the preschool. In this way, the world becomes routinely incorporated into everyday life as it is being spatially negotiated and through the spatial performances of identities. Viewing the place of the preschool as 'rooted' (as is prevalent in ECEC research) while also emphasising its 'routedness' using Massey's theory not only helps us explore the wider processes that shape children's everyday lives within that place, but also points to the global power hierarchies in which children's lives are embedded and that shape children's views and identities in concrete ways.

In the current context of the global knowledge economy, previously unseen levels of interconnectedness are now visible through the new media and mobility, and education policies and heightened scholarly interest focus on how experiences derived from this context can be shaped by curricula and pedagogy that can create a new type of sociability. Studies exploring cosmopolitanism refer to an abstract notion of openness and awareness and new types of engagement with the world and others (Duhn, 2006; 2014). However, many of these studies, as Skey (2012) argues, remain quite vague in their efforts to capture or define what they term as openness and how it emerges in people. Skey (2012, p. 473) proposes that cosmopolitanism should be understood as "periodically articulated, embodied and materialized, rather than [as] being an inherent property of particular individuals, groups or situations". This view re-orients explorations to focus on the everyday activities through which cosmopolitanism emerges. Existing research on children's engagement with distant places generally considers their ideational forms and therefore only marginally addresses how these are incorporated into children's everyday activities. In my analysis, there-

fore, I have paid special attention to how images, ideas and imaginations of distant places participate in the everyday activities as place, children's bodies and objects entangle and create sensory experiences in which the worlds are created and experienced. Through the performative, spatial, embodied and sensory processes described above, researchers can empirically explore the potentiality to experience and enact forms of openness and awareness, investigate ways of engaging in a more responsible and just manner with the world, and develop ways of seeing and acting upon the world in the 'doings' of everyday life.

For this to happen, researchers and educators need to pay more attention to and critically engage with children's expressions and performances of social knowledge about distant spatialities in everyday preschool activities. Focusing on objects, feelings, sensations and modes of experiencing helps us approximate this knowledge and indicates the power relations children associate with them. As I have illustrated, children can draw similarities between distant places and their own place, and create continuities between them in their 'doings'. Even in these situations it is important to keep sight of the fact that places change continuously, and images and ideas can easily become old-fashioned. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that even if these are less harmful ways of imagining and connecting to different places, there is no authentic representation of that place. In the above situation, the children also drew on stereotypes that hinge upon harmful and oppositional binaries that associate superiority with the child's place and identity. Picton (2008, p. 246) therefore suggests "that pupils need to be taught about diversity and continuum as a way of thinking/ a way of seeing the world", and I would also add 'doing' the world, where no authentic representation or enactment of place exists. He argues for a focus on and a more nuanced understanding of the similarities, "and a positive perspective on difference (as opposed to difference defined by lacking/absence/negativities) and diversity [a]s desirable" (Picton, 2008, p. 246).

Critical engagement with one's own ideas, sensory experiences and 'doings' of distant places and others could become the seed of ethical, cultural and political engagements with others and with difference, and offer starting points for cosmopolitan conversations (Rizvi & Beech, 2017). Children's engagement with distant spatialities as part of everyday activities can thus create the necessary conditions for 'doing' and learning solidarity, democracy and rights (besides their sensemaking) that is perhaps more attuned to the ways in which children experience and enact their world. As part of activities and notions of a more just world, openness to difference and eth-

ics can be enacted with children in embodied and sensorial ways. This can also create dimensions in ECEC through which contributions to a more just world can be made (Hägglund & Pramling Samuelsson, 2009), and on which global and cosmopolitan citizenships can be formed.

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Approaching the complex spatialities of early childhood education and care systems from the position of the child

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Abstract: This paper proposes a way to understand what early care and education systems look like from the vantage point of the child. In other words, it aims to fuse a system perspective and a child perspective of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in a way that acknowledges children as active co-producers of ECEC landscapes. In developing this approach, I emphasize that children's individual education and care arrangements which combine certain ECEC settings and the family are to be understood as networks of relations. As such, these child, family and ECEC relations create particular spatialities and temporalities which in turn position children very differently within the field of early education and care. To conceptualize how this takes place in children's everyday activities, I refer to Schatzki's and Massey's relational thinking about practices, spaces, time and multiple identities with special emphasis on the spatial relations that are 'beyond' certain localities and (re)produced in the 'events of place'. How this helps to understand the ways in which ECEC systems look from the position of the child will get exemplified in regard to Luxembourg's complex 'double split system' of ECEC and its complex language terrain.

Keywords: care and education arrangements, ECEC systems, spatial approaches, children's perspectives.

Introduction

Recent years have shown multifaceted efforts of the Luxembourgian government to reorganize the complex national system of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in a more 'child-centred way'. These initiatives

ranged from implementing new guidelines for non-formal education based on the idea of children's individual learning trajectories and their right to participate, to certain legislations which aimed on improving the quality of the very heterogeneous ECEC services and the cooperation between them (see Honig & Bock, 2017). Starting from this new semantic of a child-centred policy rationale, this article raises the question of how those political ambitions might benefit from child-centred ECEC research approaches, which put children's perspectives and their unique contributions to ECEC services into the front. However, puzzling together how children participate in ECEC systems, including how they actively co-produce their provisions they participate in across different forms of ECEC and the family, seems to be a still open task in that field of research. This article aims to fuse a system perspective and a child perspective of ECEC by first exploring how spatial thinking might help to understand how the Luxembourgian field of ECEC and its complex language terrain look like from the child's participant's position.

Exploring ECEC Systems from a Child-Centred View

This article stems from the premise that even though we have witnessed a recent increase in child-centred studies related to early childhood institutions, the question of what welfare states' systems of early education and care look like from the position of the child has not really been addressed so far. There is indeed a growing field of research dedicated to children's perspectives in ECEC. Related studies ask, for instance, about children's viewpoints on 'good day care' (e.g., Clark, Kjorholt & Moss, 2005), and how children as situated actors make sense of the social, ethnic and language composition of diverse ECEC services (e.g,. Seele, 2016) and actively reproduce the specific culture and precepts of ECEC facilities within their peer cultural routines (e.g., Corsaro, 2018). Exploring ECEC services from the child's perspective has thus become a central topic of studies located at the intersection of ECEC research and *childhood studies;* the latter representing the interdisciplinary field of research investigating the ever-changing societal formation of childhood as well as children's agentic reproduction and transformation of it within their lives *as children* (Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig 2010). This child-centred research points out very clearly that children are not just addressees but also powerful actors in the ECEC institutions they attend (Markström & Halldén, 2009), making important contributions to them both individually and collectively. Hence, what most of these studies have in common is that they mostly locate children's participation and perspectives in ECEC on a very local level *within* respective facilities – or, to

borrow Ward's (1978, cited in Ansell, 2009, p. 191) phrase, the studies construe children as "colonizers of small spaces". And this applies also for the fairly new research approaches which uses spatial thinking to investigate children's active participation in the ongoing reproduction of their spaces and places in ECEC (see Bollig & Millei, 2018).

Research asking what ECEC systems look like from the position of the child can thus build upon this child-centred research, as it shares the ambition to start from the vantage point of children – but has also to expand its scope. And this is precisely because it not just asks about the small and contained spaces societies dedicate to young people. Instead, it seeks to explore systems of ECEC, or more precisely, the (trans)nationally and communally governed, historically shaped, geographically uneven and economically mixed landscapes of diverse yet interrelated ECEC services. To explore how these landscapes shape and are being shaped by children's activities, we have to take into account first that children experience those in heterogeneous ways. This heterogeneity is arising from children's diverse enrolment histories and their respective spatial and temporal and inter-relational positionings *between* certain ECEC services and the family (Gulløv, 2003; Kousholt, 2011). From the position of the child, the landscapes of ECEC comprises, thus, a multiplicity of different *care and education arrangements*.

Those care and education arrangements (or ECEC arrangements), are to be understood in the first instance to include the horizontal and vertical chains[1] of different settings combined by parents in order to provide for their children's care and early education (e.g., Betz, 2013; Claessens & Chen, 2013). The dynamic processes of setting up those ECEC arrangements are characterized by an interplay of families' different needs and resources, diverse regulations, particular local landscapes and organizational enrolment procedures – in other words, by the "dynamic relationship between accessibility and desirability" (Vandenbroeck et al., 2008, p. 245). In consequence, these ECEC arrangements differ significantly in terms of complexity (how many services are combined), stability (how often they change over time) and quality (what kinds of services are combined). Furthermore, they reflect familial and regional inequalities (e.g., Sylva et al., 2006).

[1] The horizontal chain refers to the daily combinations of e.g. childminder, grandparents and preschool, whilst the vertical chain refers to the transitions between those over the life course.

Nevertheless, those arrangements do not only represent different forms of participation in ECEC. Rather, as this article aims to show, they have to be understood as diverse networks which interrelate particular places (e.g. day care centres, childminders, preschools, homes, grandparents, etc.), people and activities to each other in specific ways. As relational networks they shape children's particular positions and experiences across and within certain ECEC and familial sites: *within* certain services, children might, for instance, have individual schedules of attendance resulting in completing different tasks as part of their daily arrivals and departures (Mohn & Bollig, 2016). Individual schedules also have implications for finding playmates (de Groot Kim, 2010) and for the coordination of the children's needs and interests in accordance with the organizational scheduling of activities and people (Bollig, Honig & Nienhaus, 2016). *Across* services and the family, children participate in very diverse relationships within among those places and peoples, for instance, in customer-like relations or community-based relationships between the families and childminders (O'Conell, 2010; Bollig, 2016) or the often more authoritarian relations between public day care/ preschools and families (e.g., Karila & Alasuutari, 2012).

Furthermore, and given their central position within these networks, children are not just active members of these relationships but also have to deal with diverse localized cultures at various sites (e.g., Brooker, 2006). The home, the day care and the preschool are meaningful *places*, offering specific expectations, norms and emotional attachments as well as particular resources for place-related identities. This is the reason why children's days *between* family and ECEC result in children's "multiple identities" (e.g., Heedegard, 2010), which in turn inform their learning and socialization across these places in terms of "multiple becomings" (Hengst, 2018). From the position of the child, the field of ECEC can thus only be adequately understood with a view to the complex "positionalities" (Sheppard, 2002) that link people and places with one another in space and time. Consequently, those complex positionalities also raise attention to the resulting heterogeneity of and negotiations in ECEC places, because the different people are positioned differently and enact their own 'senses of place' (Massey, 2003).

In this article, I argue that child-centred research on ECEC should be expanded to those more complex time-spaces which shape and are being shaped by children's participation in ECEC systems. In particular I show that children's ECEC arrangements are very much the 'sites' which contextualize children's enacted positions in ECEC and their related multiple identities and agencies. For this end, I conceptualize those ECEC arrange-

ments as complex, ever-shifting, practised time-space configurations which *take place* in children's participation in and across ECEC services, instead of being just an outside condition of children's everyday experiences.

Processual Spaces and Places

For exploring ECEC systems from such a child-centred perspective, I use practice theories which state that local practices can never be understood only from the localities in which they occur. Rather, they result from the complex interconnectedness with other practices in space and time, and they produce those same spatial and temporal relations at the same time as well. In particular, I draw on the work of social philosopher Ted Schatzki (2002, 2011) and geographer Doreen Massey (1994, 2005), who both reject the 'classic' concept of space as an Euclidian container for activities. Rather, both view space as a fundamental part of practices and, therefore, always in the process of being made and inseparably interwoven with time. Furthermore, both reject two purified ways of conceptualising spaces: first, that sees spaces as subdivided into reified, stabilized entities separated by hermetic boundaries (as in the scalar division of national systems/spaces and local practices/spaces of ECEC); and second, that sees spaces as pure flux without any persistence (Schatzki, 2011; Massey, 2005). Instead, they both locate the unceasing production of even very large and extended spaces in the bodily occurrence of widely interconnected practices which occur in particular localities and in their socio-material set-up. Hence, for Schatzki (2011), it is precisely those local bundles of practices and material arrangements ("practice-arrangements-bundles"), which allow for expansion in time and space. Likewise, Massey (2003, 2005) points to the powerful spatial relations which make up the positionality of people and places within the flows and mobilities which go through those localities. Based on this thinking about expanded spaces which occur in certain localities, Massey's (2003, 2005) concept of space/place is of particular interest, as it allows for the analysis of the complex socio-spatial relations which are produced *in* and *across* certain localities in relation to the production of children's multiple identities, or to their 'more than local' senses of place.

For Massey (2005), *space* is a product of interrelations, constituted through interactions "from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (p. 9). *Places,* like children's bedrooms or day care centres, are instead distinguished by their material localization and discrete meaning. Whereas productions of space lead us to experience that persons and objects are interrelated, places, thus, emerge out of the fixing of particular meanings

of space. This is also why places permit a 'sense of place', that is, the ever-shifting experience of place-specific identity which is created via participation in practices connected with said locale. Hence, the qualities of places cannot be understood merely within their fixed, local contexts, as they include manifold relations that stretch 'beyond'. Nor can place ever be considered complete. Massey (2005) views places as a "constellation of processes rather than a thing" (p. 125), consequently, we have to think about places in terms of the "event of place" (p. 141). Or, as Massey (2003) writes: "[I]f the spatial is thought of in the context of space-time and as formed out of social relations at all scales, then one view of a place is a particular articulation of those relations, a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings" (p. 5). This importantly includes "relations which stretch beyond" (p. 5) and this occurs "precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that 'beyond'. Places in this way are open and porous" (p. 5).

To understand, how this mix of links and interconnections comes at work in the event of place, Massey (2003, 2005) uses the concept of "trajectories" or "stories-so-far". These are the multiple socio-material and discursive lines of becoming that serve as both the practical resources and the paths for the practical generation of meaning and its effects. As resources, they materially, socially and symbolically contribute to the "event of place", and as paths they relate it to other instances. Those paths could be strongly or weakly bound to the materializations of the place, have a longer or shorter 'history' of their own, and could create different far-reaching interrelations (including both small and extended spaces). However, they always have an effect on the unavoidable negotiation of the here-and-now and on the necessity of coming to terms with others. Thus they are inextricably woven into the practices of giving meaning to places, or better, *place-making*.

Importantly, given Massey's and Schatzki's flat notion of the social in which all scales are (potentially) present in all practices at all times, places like day care or preschool are made up by a multiplicity of trajectories. Those particular articulations of relations unfold within multiple stories-so-far, "cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one another, or existing in relations of paradox or antagonism" (Massey, 2005, p. 3). Space is then exactly this "simultaneity of stories-so-far" (p. 24) and, consequently, places are made up by a "throwntogetherness" (p. 150) of multiple, simultaneously present spatial relations. For the diverse people attached to those place this multiplictiy results, consequently, in the experience of heterogeneity and negotiation – or to say, those multiple trajectories are also part of the *politics of place.*

In the following, I sound out the potential of this spatial thinking for investigating ECEC systems from the position of the child. I use Schatzki's concept of the interconnectedness of practices and Massey's concept of the multiple trajectories in an event of place to show how children participate in the everyday production of their *care and education arrangements* and its respective temporality and spatiality. I base this on an ethnographic case study conducted within the complex Luxembourgian ECEC system and its related complex language terrain.

The Luxembourgian Context and its Doubly Split System of ECEC

Despite the relatively early establishment of preschools in 1963, Luxembourg never paid much attention to public extra-familial childcare until the end of the last century. The last twenty years, however, have brought an enormous increase of day-care facilities with very flexible structures, and ever since the implementation of childcare vouchers in 2009, a mixed economy of childcare has proliferated (Honig & Bock, 2017). All of this has contributed to Luxembourgian ECEC's complex structure, which I call a *doubly split system*.

Split systems of ECEC are understood as those systems which – while addressing the same age group – differentiate according to institutions' designated function, whether education or care (see OECD, 2015). This is the case in Luxembourg, with its historically rooted distinction between day care institutions (the *crèche* for children age 0-4 and the *maison relais*, *foyer de jour* for those age 4-12) and institutions for state-administered early childhood education (éducation précoce at age three & *préscolaire* at age four). In recent years, there have been enormous governmental efforts to reorganize the split system into a more integrated one, for instance, both came under the responsibility of a single government ministry in 2013. Nevertheless, there are still two sectors of ECEC services for children under school age which are separated from each spatially (in other buildings, areas, and districts), programmatically (different curricula and guidelines) and also administratively (different staff, funding and regulations) (see Honig & Bock, 2017).

Compulsory preschool starts at age of four, but for a year before that children can attend the optional *education précoce*. This kind of pre-pre-school was implemented in 1998, mainly as an educational offering to compensate

for migrant children's lack of knowledge of Luxembourgish. However, over time, it has become an infrastructural service which is used by all kinds of families. As a result, *éducation précoce* is popular, even though it operates only part-time (mornings from 8:30-12:00 from Monday to Friday and afternoons from 2:00-4:00 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays) and does not offer care before, between or after these times. A lot of working parents thus end up in combining several care and education settings into what are known as "multiple childcare arrangements" (Claessens & Chen, 2013). There is a lack of statistical data on these types of arrangements, but it is known that more than half of the 32,000 children below age four attend childcare services (and those who attend the services of the approximately 500 registered childminders are not yet included in that number) and 71% of the three-year-olds are enrolled in *éducation précoce*. Thus, it is quite common for children to attend both day care and pre-preschool on a daily basis.

Moreover, there is an additional split in Luxembourgian ECEC according to the subfield of day care. On the one hand, there is a commercial sector of day care providers operating on a quasi-market. These include regulated childminders and centres run by for-profit providers. On the other hand, there are state-funded day care centres run by non-profit providers and the municipalities. All services accept the childcare vouchers and have to follow the guidelines of non-formal education. Hence, the state-funded centres – or 'conventionalized' centres as they are called – receive extra money from the state based on a contractual agreement binding them to higher standards of quality. The lower quality standards that apply the commercial sector manifest above all in staff members' language competencies with regard to Luxembourg's historically-rooted trilingual culture, in which Luxembourgish, German and French all serve as official languages. Commercial day care centres are only required to provide all three languages across the whole of their staff, whilst childminders must be able to communicate at least in one of the three official languages. By contrast, in state-funded centres, all staff members have to be at least bilingual (Luxembourgish *plus* German or French), a requirement related to the government's promotion of Luxembourgish as the 'official language of ECEC' (Seele, 2016).[2]

These quality regulations result in Luxembourgish being the predominant language in state-funded ('conventionalized') centres and French predomi-

[2] This 'Luxembourgish-only' approach in state-funded day care transforms at time as the government released a new 'plurilingual education scheme' in 2017, which is though still based on Luxemburgish and French.

nating in the commercial sector. When it comes to childminders, Portuguese is commonly spoken as well. As more than two-thirds of the places for children under the age of four are provided within the commercial sector, French and Portuguese are thus very likely be the 'unofficial languages' of day care in early childhood. This is especially the case in the capital and in the south of Luxembourg near the French and Belgian border, which is where lots of French and Portuguese speaking people live, where the most commercial day care providers operate, and where a large proportion of French-speaking staff members commute across national borders on a daily basis (Honig & Bock, 2017).[3]

Consequently, the expression 'doubly split system' draws attention to the fact that Luxembourg's ECEC system is criss-crossed by multiple borders – organizational, administrative, programmatic and linguistic – which also create various borderlines and border zones in relation to the family. One of the conditions of this diversity of relationships with families is the highly multicultural and multilingual nature of Luxembourgian society, which has the highest proportion of migrants in all of Europe. In 2017, only 53% of residents possessed Luxembourgian citizenship.

The diversity of Luxembourgian society in relation to the country's highly complex ECEC system was the starting point of the research project CHILD – Children in the Luxembourgian Day Care System. Its original hypothesis was that these multifaceted systems, borders and relationships are specifically reproduced and transformed not only in the socio-genesis of individual children's ECEC arrangements but also in the daily multi-sited enactment of those arrangements, resulting in a "diversity of day care childhoods" (Bollig, Honig, & Nienhaus, 2016).

The Luxembourgian CHILD Study: Rationale, Design and Methods

The CHILD- project investigated the socio-genesis and daily practice of young children's education and care arrangements via 13 contrasting case studies. Analytically speaking, these ECEC arrangements were determined to be those networked practice-bundles (Schatzki, 2002) in which ECEC-policies, parents' beliefs and decisions, local landscapes of provision, and

[3] 62 % of the staff in *all day care centers* have a Luxembourgian passport, around 50 % of staff members in *for-profit care* are speaking Luxembourgish and/or German and about 79 % are residents, the others commute to work from France, Belgium and Germany (Honig & Bock, 2017).

practical organizational cultures collude with the day-to-day practices which integrate children in specific ways as 'day care children'. The analytical focus was thus set on trailing "the thick texture of interconnections" (Nicolini, 2009, p. 5) which make up the children's particular ECEC arrangements.

Within each of these case studies a multi-sited ethnography was conducted, including interviews with parents and professionals/providers and the gathering of additional data on the local landscapes of ECEC in which they participated (Bollig, 2015). Most importantly, the study was based on participant observations of the children's daily encounters in and between ECEC services (and in some cases also within the family). The cyclic periods of fieldwork and analysis ranged from three to 21 months, conducted by five researchers, each of whom spoke the languages of the ECEC arrangements they studied (Luxembourgish, French, German, and Portuguese). One of these researchers conducted a camera-ethnography with a particular focus on children's daily transitions (Mohn & Bollig, 2016). The analysis proceeded according to a grounded theory approach, which included the analytical strategies of 'zooming in' and 'zooming out' with regard to the particular practices observed (Nicolini, 2009). 'Zooming in' asks about the socio-material and performative organisation of practices, understood as nexuses of bodily doings and sayings (Schatzki, 2002), in which children participate (such as getting into play, negotiating rules or performing pick-up routines). 'Zooming out' focuses on these practices' intersections in time and space (such as with parents' decision making processes, organizational cultures, and so on). Masseys (2003, 2005) approach was applied in both analytical strategies, by asking for how the trajectories which make up the event of place feed into local practices and at interconnects it with spaces 'beyond'. This all led to the mapping of key themes for each case study, resulting in eight detailed ethnographic portraits of distinct ECEC arrangements, including the interconnected familial, regional and organisational socio-genesis and daily practice of each (Bollig, Honig & Nienhaus 2016).

Performing ECEC Systems through Language – A Case Study of the Complex Spatialities of ECEC Arrangements in the Event of Place

In the following, I demonstrate how Massey's space/place-approach and Schatzki's concept of interconnectedness have informed our analysis. To do this, I examine parts of Kim's ECEC arrangement.[4] Kim is a boy of Asian background who was three-and-a-half years old at the time of the study and

[4] All names and places have been pseudonymized.

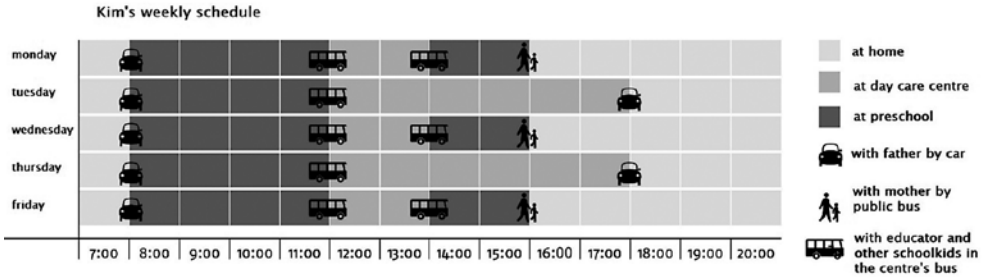

Figure 1: Kim's weekly schedule

lived in southern Luxembourg with his parents, both employed full-time. As the figure shows, Kim attended both the pre-preschool (*éducation précoce*) in his neighbourhood and the 'schoolkids group' (*foyer de jour*) in a larger day care centre in a neighbouring town on a daily basis.

Kim's ECEC arrangement is special, as it is characterized by the diversity of linguistic contexts he 'crosses' on any given day, and it is not only different languages but also different language regimes that play a role in his daily commute between his family, the preschool and day care centre. At home Kim speaks his Asian[5] mother tongue with his parents and also a bit Italian, as the family used to live in Italy prior to their recently completed move to Luxembourg.

To explain the spatiality of Kim's ECEC arrangement, I start with his participation in a linguistic place-making during an everyday scene at the centre with a girl named Carla. In my analysis, I detail four trajectories which appear to be "cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one-another" (Massey, 2005, p. 3) in the respective place-makings. The analysis is thus structured by three questions. First, which place-makings are effective; second, which spaces 'beyond' the setting are actualized by those articulations of place; and third, which spaces are produced as a result. Although these 'stories-so-far'/trajectories are presented in succession, they should be understood as simultaneous and co-entangled.

One after on the playground of Kim's day care centre

> *In the after-school area of the expansive outdoor premises, the children – having played several games of tag – are now either playing alone or*

[5] Kim's parents asked explicitly for not specifying his nationality and mother tongue in detail.

with each other in small groups. Carla rocks her upper body back and forth on a swing while Kim sits on the lawn, collecting small stones from the grass. After a while Kim runs over to Carla and as he approaches he shows her the stones in his hand. "Kuck, Carla" ("Look, Carla"), he calls to her in Luxembourgish, but at first she does not seem interested. "Nao" ("No"), she responds slowly in Portuguese. Kim stretches out his hand in front of her face: "Kuck elo, steeen" ("Look here, stones"). Now she smiles and replies, "Nao, suen", using the Luxembourgish term for "money". At this moment, François, the beloved main caregiver of the schoolkids' group, enters the playground. Several of the children run over to him, cheerfully shouting "François! François!" and trying to get his attention by explaining something to him in French. Kim, who has followed the group, tries to steer François' attention to his stones. "Kuck", he says, while sticking *out his hand. Then he adds in French: "J'ai, … j'ai …" ("I have … I have …") but François is too tightly encircled by the bigger children to notice him. Carla, who joins Kim in the second row of children around François, takes the stones from Kim's open hand and suggests "mei" ("more") in Luxembourgish. She whispers something in his ear and marches away with the stones, causing Kim to follow her to a corner of the wooden castle. They spend the next 15 minutes occupied with picking small stones out of the grass and arranging them on a wooden board. They use body language to comment on and steer their 'work', and also engage in brief conversations using lowered voices whilst in close bodily proximity. All around them, the other children yell loudly, engaged in a movement game initiated by François. Later François allows Kim and Carla to join the younger children in the day care group in their separate upper play area. After a while, the two get into a conflict over who should hold my fieldnote book. Carla builds up an alliance with another Portuguese-speaking girl, who joins her in singing a song in Portuguese very loudly in Kim's face. "Dat ass net scheng" ("That's not nice"), Kim complains in Luxembourgish, twice, in a soft but serious tone. This appears to cause Carla to include him again. She holds out the fieldnote book, points to the birds on its cover, and calls out to him the Luxembourgish word for birds: "Vugelche". Kim repeats this and then they look at the book together.*

The day care centre as s place of negotiating shared language use

The first trajectory to be highlighted here is children's practice of negotiating play and belonging (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014) via the use of language. Like many daily occurrences at the day care centre, this situ-

ation is highly multi- and translingual and characterized by more or less explicit negotiations over the specific use of languages (Seele, 2016). The centre's 'schoolkids' group is an especially complex linguistic environment, given that most of the children in it are between six and 12 years of age and thus already speak or are learning French, German and Luxembourgish in school and/or at home. The children constantly jumble the languages in ways befitting their different family languages and personal linguistic preferences. The caregiver, François, however, speaks almost exclusively French as he has no command of other languages. Kim, for his part, uses Luxembourgish and French in order to negotiate his 'place' in the given situation. Both are relatively new languages for him, as he only just moved to Luxembourg at the beginning of the school term. Things are different for his interaction partner Carla, who also does not speak any of the three official languages of Luxembourg at home, but instead speaks Portuguese. Nevertheless, she can use her family language in the centre often enough since there is a high percentage of Portuguese-speaking families in this region and, consequently, a lot of Portuguese-speaking children (and educators too) at the day care centre. Thus, she can fall back on Portuguese as a 'regional ECEC language'.

In order to draw Carla's attention to his game and to continue playing with her, Kim uses Luxembourgish. Later he also makes use of Luxembourgish to express his disappointment over the two girls excluding him *by language*. Hence, his complaint and Carla's conciliatory reaction to it may be understood as the successful defence of their shared language of play in that situation. This actualizes in a particular way the routines of both children in the centre, where they, as the youngest members of the 'schoolkids' group, form a relatively stable pair who – unlike the older children – speak almost exclusively Luxembourgish with each other. This is why Kim's insisting on this routine also actualizes their shared experience of learning Luxembourgish in the pre-preschool class, and, thus, extends their shared space at the centre with that of the pre-preschool between which they commute. There are also other situations where their shared attendance of both institutions gets actualized, such as when they reference what happened in preschool in the morning, songs they learned there, or communicate their excitement about finding the same objects in both day care and preschool, including books and toys, as well as myself as a sort of 'strange' adult who accompanies them through their days.[6] In all the situations within the centre, both

[6] Such ECEC arrangements are very much a domain of children, which is what made me seem very strange as an adult present in all locations.

children create a time-space of social relations which position them very much as *pre-preschool children* within the day care centre. Hence, this situation also highlights the fragile and challenging *politics of place* in which both children participate, as they share some equal positionings in the highly multilingual centre, but can also rely on different sources to exercise 'lingual power' in according to the language possibilities found there.

The day care centre and pre-preschool as places of contested language regimes

Hence, this positioning as pre-schoolers in day care is not only actualized by the negotiation of language use *within* and *beyond* the centre, but also in relation to the different language regimes Kim and Carla experience in their daily commuting.

In the *éducation précoce* that both children attend each day, the language situation is also decidedly multilingual, with many different family languages represented there. In the classroom itself, however, Luxembourgish is the only language the educators permit, applying also to recreation time in the school-yard. This restriction to one legitimate school language is intended by the teachers[7] to encourage the acquisition of Luxembourgish and is justified by the perceived pre-preschool regulations (which in fact are very vague when it comes to language use) and to the classes' spatial positioning in school buildings. In order to 'deliver' to their colleagues schoolchildren who are 'ready for school', in terms of their command of Luxembourgish, the teachers mostly prohibit the use of other languages. The children contribute with their own 'linguistic policies' to this classification of legitimate and illegitimate languages. They do so by peer-culturally differentiating between 'loud' and 'quiet' languages. Kim, for instance, often plays with a group of boys who tend to speak French with each other and who do so very quietly to avoid attention. Carla, by contrast, often whispers with other girls in Portuguese. In general, one can hear children softly speaking 'forbidden languages' with one another throughout the day, thereby creating protected territories of play beside the demanding organizational language regime.

In the *centre's schoolkids group*, however, there are no language limitations, at least no programmatic ones. French is dominant there – especially

[7] In the *éducation précoce* there is always a team comprised of a trained primary teacher and an educator (both called "Joffern"): the first is more oriented toward 'teaching', the second toward 'caring'.

when the care worker François is present – only because he (like most of his colleagues) has limited competency in other languages. Consequently, there is also differentiation between language use *with the educator* and *with the other children*. However, as other languages are permitted at all times, the group's activities are correspondingly lively and multilingual, with choice of language predominantly based on comprehension and catering pragmatically to language competence (or to the desire to exclude by means of language as seen in the situation above). This 'laissez faire' language approach interconnects with ECEC regulations, which permit the employment of non-bilingual caregivers in commercial childcare centres. This results in a kind of reverse generational order within the centre, in which the older kids represent the multilingualism of Luxembourgian society and schools, whilst François, a French commuter, represents the less competent 'outsider' position. Kim and Carla, however, are positioned differently in relation to François, being the youngest there and not very good at French. These different organizational language regimes that come together in Kim's ECEC arrangement, thus, are connected to and create diverse spatial relations 'beyond' the particular locations, that is, the spatial relations of regional and transnational linguistic landscapes, the state and the nation (the latter apparent in terms of the recent importance accorded to Luxembourgish as the language of cohesion in an increasingly multicultural society).

Kim and Carla do participate in those language regimes in each setting, but they also create another kind of delimited language space in their daily experiences across those institutions. They do so in both settings by speaking very often to one another with voices lowered, as in the scene described above whilst playing with the stones. This type of play accompanied by speech in hushed tones is a very common feature of Kim's and Carla's peer-cultural place-makings in both institutions, although it produces particular effects. Whereas the children in the centre carve out protected territories of play by using lowered voices as a kind of escape from the group's loud and lively multilingual day-to-day activity, such protected territories are distinguished in pre-preschool by the children's resistant use of familial languages serving as a shelter from the demands of having to speak Luxembourgish properly. Therefore, Kim and Carla use precisely this kind of mobile practice to reproduce each of the different language regimes on site, and therefore, as a proper solution in both the highly policed spaces of language use in pre-preschool and the challenging and excluding ones in the day care. Hence, these trajectories of negotiating and sheltering shared language use are interconnected with the different organizational practice-bundles beyond day care. They also cross-cut, intersect and align with the adults' trajectories

apparent in that scene, one of those being the pragmatically-oriented practice of grouping in the day care centre itself.

The day care centre as place of ambitions towards ‚linguistic quality' in for-profit childcare

In the scene above, Kim and Carla both commute within the centre as well, as later in the afternoon they move to one of the centre's toddler groups (*crèche*). The day care staff report that, given his age, Kim would be a better fit in that centre's *crèche* group, which is oriented toward children aged two to four. However, because Kim gets picked up from and brought back with the other schoolkids on a daily basis, he is, organizationally speaking, a member of the schoolkids group even though this group is oriented to older children (ages four to 12) in line with the start of compulsory schooling at age four. Given that most of the children currently in this group are over the age of six, Kim and Carla are the youngest, which often means that they are not included in the older children's collective games (as the scene above demonstrates). So in order to better suit Kim's and Carla's anticipated age-specific needs and their linguistic abilities, the day care staff often encourage them to join one of the *crèche* groups in the same centre.

For the centre's staff, this practice stems from their ambition to provide every child the most nurturing environment, although this often means to compromise between the children's perceived needs, staff members' availability and language competencies, and other organizational structures. One of these organizational structures – the age-related grouping according to the official school ages – is very much related to the mixed economy of ECEC, where caring for children outside of school hours and the provision of bus transfers between schools and day care has become one of the main 'unique selling points' of for-profit services in Luxembourg. This is the same for this day care centre, although this 'relation beyond' to the regional ECEC market regularly causes troubles to the staff in piecing together children, staff and rooms in the most 'caring' terms. Ironically, the staff's ambition towards higher and individualized quality, evidenced by occasionally allowing Kim to join the more Luxembourgish toddler group, positions Kim as a commuter between school and day care and within the centre. This in turn requires further linguistic negotiations of shared games and belonging, as in the example of the 'Portuguese-speaking alliance' in the scene described above. Therefore, this flexible placement within the centre shows very well how certain trajectories co-exist in such place-makings and are interconnected with diverse spaces 'beyond' the centre.

The day care centre and the pre-preschool as complementary lingual places of care and education

Concerns about these complex linguistic demands in the field of Luxembourgian ECEC were also central to Kim's parents' initial navigation of his ECEC arrangement. Given that the family had just moved to Luxembourg, their search strategy seized upon Luxembourg's split ECEC system as a split between a 'language of education' and a 'language of care'. To enable Kim to make a smooth transition into compulsory preschool at age four, his parents purposefully selected the pre-preschool so that he could learn Luxembourgish beforehand. At the same time, they selected a day care centre in which their son would have an opportunity to speak Italian, which ties in with his prior day care experience in Italy and, thus, provide a language of care. (As his mother noted: "*We wanted to choose in some way, for the first thing, who can speak Italian?")* Thus they adopted Italian, which for him had once been a foreign language, into a kind of 'day care-mother tongue' within the new linguistic environment. Kim's day care centre seemed at first to enable this, because the director spoke some Italian and several children were from Italian-speaking families there. Hence, in their initial configuration of his ECEC arrangement, Kim's parents stretched across a transnational space connecting the national and regional language regimes with Kim's international language biography, thereby establishing the day care centre as a place of linguistic care and the preschool as a place of linguistic assimilation to new circumstances. In hindsight, his parents saw the preschool as the more 'providing' environment, having concluded from Kim's accounts that he liked being positioned just like the other children within the preschool's language regime. Since none of the children spoke the official school language at home, all were positioned as learners of Luxembourgish. As a result, in Kim's view, he did not stick out as a 'linguistically different child' there, as he sometimes felt he did in the day care centre (according to his parents' reports). This is also related to his identity as an ambitious learner who loves the 'schoolishness' of the pre-preschool. Thus, we can see how a processual place-making occurs in conjunction with the continual process of reflecting upon Kim's ECEC arrangement within the family. In this place-making, the relational meaning of day care and pre-preschool changes very much from a complementary relationship into a ranking, in which day care is now seen as providing 'less'. In the familial practices of making ECEC their place, the spatio-linguistic character of Luxembourgian ECEC is therefore reproduced in particular ways along Kim's migration history and also towards a reflexive positioning of the boy within the family's ongoing navigation of his ECEC arrangement.

The language related temporal-spatiality of Kim's ECEC arrangement

Given how Kim's ECEC arrangement is actualized and produced within the place-makings analysed, we see that the daily creation of the arrangement's interrelated places (here: preschool and day care centre) establishes unique relational orders between persons and things, weaving together bodily proximity, and group-related, organizational, regional, national and transnational productions of space. As a result, all of these work together produce the ever-shifting temporalities and spatialities of Kim's education and care arrangement. Applying Massey's (2005) perspective on the thrown-togetherness of multiple trajectories within the event of place, thus, renders visible the interconnected productions of space in and between the family, day care centre and pre-preschool. At the same time, it also illuminates how Kim practices his 'multiple identities' in these place-makings: as a pre-preschooler positioned between organizational and peer culture who differentiates between languages of achievement and resistance, or as ambiguously-positioned day care child who negotiates vernacular speech vis-à-vis local ECEC languages and market-related organizational grouping practices; and yet again as a commuter between several languages – a 'linguistically somewhat different child' – who sits between the respective language regimes and the transitions between them.

The short example offered here thus unfolds the multiplicity of trajectories in Kim's daily place-makings, and also emphasises how those specifically intersect and position Kim in the respective ECEC settings and en route between them. His ECEC arrangement, therefore, creates its own complex fabric, which in turn shapes his positioning in the field of Luxembourgian ECEC and his own contributions to the daily process of its creation. Consequently, the double split of Luxembourg's ECEC system is reproduced by the everyday accomplishment of Kim's ECEC arrangement in a specific way: as the linguistic relationship between commercial and state-sector ECEC, regional ECEC and linguistic landscapes, and organizational language cultures – as well as the interconnected *places in-between.*

Discussion

In this article, first, I argued that if we ask how ECEC systems look from the position of the child, we first have to acknowledge that such systems manifest in (trans-)national and communally governed, historically shaped, geographically uneven and economically mixed landscapes of ECEC, in which families form complex interrelationships with distinct

ECEC services. Second, I asserted that those landscapes are not stable entities, but occur and become actualized in multiple diverse networks – the ECEC arrangements of children – which interrelate particular places (e.g. day care centres, childminders, preschools, children's homes, grandparents' homes), people and activities, to each other in specific ways. I argued in particular that it is promising to research those ECEC arrangements by means of the application of spatial theories, which make visible the processual, positional and multiple constitution of these ECEC arrangements along interconnected practices that stretch in manifold ways 'beyond' the localities in which they take place. Massey's and Schatzki's concepts have been especially fruitful, as they both draw upon a flat concept of the social which renders visible children's position within ECEC, based on phenomena which are simultaneously multiple *and* positionally concrete, fluid *and* structured, standardized *and* individualized. Massey's approach in particular offers analytical resources to trace the temporal and spatial relations that come into play in the everyday enactment of particular ECEC arrangements and the multiple and shifting identities which are produced and negotiated as a result.

However, what lessons can we draw for child-centred research in general from such a complex study of the heterogeneous Luxembourgian system of ECEC and its complex language terrain? To address this question, I highlight very quickly some conclusions related to the advancement of child-centred approaches in ECEC research.

My first point is that child-centred thinking can do more for ECEC research then just focusing on daily encounters within the respective ECEC facilities. Thinking of ECEC places as 'open and porous' and understanding space as a 'sphere of multiplicity' (Massey, 2003) help us to understand that children not just a homogeneous group 'stuck within' their ECEC facilities and their neighbourhoods, but they are also the producers of heterogeneity and diversity within and across these sites. For this reason, I propose an expansion of the notion of *children's perspectives* to include the more spatial term of *children*'s *position*, as positionality entails how certain entities are "positioned with respect to one another in space/time" (Sheppard 2002, p. 318). Moreover, this view attends to the complex interrelations that contribute to the constitution of children's positions in certain ways. This perspective is, then, not just bound to such highly complex and diverse cases as those in Luxembourg. Children in all countries commute between at least one ECEC service and the home (Brooker, 2006; Kousholt, 2011). Moreover, and if one looks closely enough, one finds very diverse, complex

and unequal forms of ECEC arrangements even in unified systems, such as Germany's (e.g., Betz, 2013).

Secondly, this spatial thinking can also be very helpful for understanding the diversity of children's enactment of their multiple identities between ECEC, schools and families. This is because it expands the recent focus on the fixed boundaries between diverse 'cultural models' operating at these sites (e.g. Brooker, 2006; Heedegard, 2011) and lead to more relational ways of thinking which see those identities as situated through networks of people, things, places and ideas in flux. This kind of spatial thinking, therefore, lays pathways to prevent researchers from taking "certain kinds of fixity and boundedness for granted" and encourage them instead to "start with the fact of mobility" (Cresswell, 2011, p. 551). Hence, such a mobility perspective results also in other conceptions of ECEC systems, as it transforms the common view on borders and boundaries established through administrative and political processes into a view which 'sees' relations (Fenwick, 2012). Ultimately, this could also remind governments – including Luxembourg's one – to take into account, that a 'child-centred' reorganisation of ECEC systems should also include children's perspectives and the complex positionalities and spatialities which result in the everyday reproduction of those systems in children's enacted ECEC arrangements.

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