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and Crop Production Science**

"Stuck in a Place"

– The independent mobility of children living in a city

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– **“Stuck in a Place”: The independent mobility of children living in a city**

”Stuck in a Place”: Barns rörelsefrihet i en stad

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Preface

This thesis is one of the concluding parts of my master's degree programme in landscape architecture at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. It is the result of my studies in landscape architecture, as well as the three and a half years I have spent working as a teaching assistant with young children in two different schools in Malmö, Sweden. After spending innumerable hours learning to talk to and interact with children, it is an attempt to answer some of my own questions on the lives of children and capture the actions, thoughts and feelings of a small group of children living in a modern city.

I am grateful to all the parents and children involved in this study, without whom, this study would not have been possible. I would like to thank Maria Kylin for her early encouragement, tips and support during the writing of this project. Furthermore, I would also like to thank all the children I have worked with over the past few years for inspiring me and for teaching me to see the world with different eyes. I hope this is just the beginning of my research into children's lives and their environments. Last, but not least, thanks to my wife Ida for being so supportive over the past few months and keeping me on track.

Mark Wales

Malmö, January, 2013

Abstract

This thesis is a threefold exploration into the independent mobility of children in living in a city. Firstly, the literature review investigated children's place in the city and found that children are spending increasingly longer parts of their daily lives in children's institutions such as schools. They form a series of urban islands created and watched over by adults. Furthermore, studies show there has also been a reduction in children's independent mobility and an increasing reliance on the car due to the perceived dangers of the city and the increasingly hectic schedules of both children and their parents alike. Secondly, this paper asks what effect this may have on children's ability to act as social agents in the generation of social networks and the building of communities. Research has indicated that the slow disappearance of a children's street culture could have an adverse effect on their relationship with place and their ability to develop a sense of belonging. Additionally, a number of studies have also questioned what this means for social cohesion at a neighbourhood level.

Thirdly, this study also attempts to apply some of the theories of previous research in the context of the lives of three children in the city of Malmö, Sweden and found that whilst they spend large portions of their week in school and other activities, they did demonstrate an interesting and complex relationship with their local neighbourhoods and the city. Moreover, this study looked to test and develop walking interviews as a potential method to capture and better understand children's everyday lives and their relationship with their local environment. By moving through the urban landscape with the children, I was granted a look into their worlds and found that movement was vital to their understanding of and relationship with the city and its places.

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Background

In an age where more and more parents are choosing to raise their children in cities, their presence in the city has never been more discussed and debated. In recent years, there has been much discourse with regards to the inclusion and participation of children in projects and decisions affecting them. However, in the decompartmentalised cities of today, there is a clear segregation and exclusion of children in many parts of the public realm. Furthermore, there is an almost unspoken set of rules for children and clearly defined spaces specifically designed for their protection and development. Moreover, the decreased mobility of children in the city and the perceived need to escort them from place to place to protect them from the city has also seen their presence further diminish in the public realm. The familiar memory many adults have of playing in the street as a child growing up is very much alien in the urban landscape of today.

Since moving to Sweden from the England four years ago, I have worked in two different schools with children under ten years old. During excursions, most often to nearby playgrounds, I often marvelled at the life a group of children brings with them. Everywhere they go, be it a playground or a quiet street, the atmosphere changes immediately, as the children leave a trail of joy behind them. The younger they are the harder it is to keep them moving, as they absorb every element of the environment they pass through. Passers-by smile at them, other children interact with them and the smallest things bring a laugh or excitement to the group. This same joy occurred throughout the city, regardless of the neighbourhood. However, this joy was short-lived, as although they brought energy to these often unremarkable in between spaces, and in a sense created places out of spaces, we were always on our way to a child approved destination.

I was often left wondering what the children themselves thought of this and the relatively abstract lives they lead. I also often contemplated what this meant for the city itself and what role

children have to play in its development. Much of the research on children and the city is centred on what the city can or can't provide for children, with little discourse surrounding the role children play in the city and their importance to the city itself. Consequently, one wonders what effect their continuing removal from the public realm and their declining independent mobility has on their ability to shape the city they live in through everyday interaction with it.

Aim

The aim of this study is to explore independent mobility in the lives of children living in a modern city.

Method

Theory allows one to see as connected what was unconnected before.

(Graue & Walsh, 1998)

This study stems very much from my own experiences of children in Malmö and involves a threefold approach that looks to expand on these: a literature study, walking interviews and a final section of analysis and discussion. The aim of this section is to give a brief insight into the methods used in this study. Reflections on the method can be found in Appendix A (p. 77).

Literature study

The first part is a literature review comprising of two parts. The first part concentrated on how children's lives have been shaped by the city in recent years. The second part explores the role of children as social agents and their ability to create their own social networks and social capital for other people. This part also examines children as shapers of their own environments and as agents of change.

Walking interviews

The second section includes an empirical study in the form of walking interviews that aimed to gain a children's perspective on life in the city and thus further examine the findings of the literature study in a modern city (Malmö). Walkabouts were performed with three children aged between eight and eleven years old from the same school and involved a combination of both interviews and observations. The walks comprised of the children being interviewed during the walk from their school to their home, with the children leading the way. The conversations were digitally recorded in order to allow for accuracy and full analysis later.

These walkabouts also served as a mechanism and counterweight to the theory obtained during the literature view so as to avoid being blinded by so much theory that the reality is overlooked. Instead the theory has been used as a support that is guiding, but not definitive. The walkabouts also highlighted any need for further exploration of literature for missed concepts or ideas recognised during their completion

Analysis, discussion and conclusion

Following the completion of the walkabouts, the results were thoroughly examined and relevant themes were highlighted for easier comparison. The findings are presented in a separate section which also includes their analysis. Here, links between the literature review and results are presented. The study ends with a discussion that aims to draw some conclusions based on the initial aims of the study and also attempts to critically examine the findings and reflect on the study and chosen method. This section also touches on recommendations for further research.

Limitations

This study primarily focuses on younger children and thus does not include the equally important role of older children and teenagers in the city. Their increased freedom makes their role just as complex, but the purpose of this study was to highlight the lives of younger children and their limited independent mobility. Furthermore, this study also does not include the voice of adults and parents in the empirical study. This has both positives and negatives, as whilst it lifts children to the forefront, it also misses the perspectives of the people responsible for younger children's daily lives. One must also consider that due to the nature of empirical research, an adult will be present during the walkabouts in order to observe and ask questions and may therefore have some influence over the children's actions and answers.

Literature Review

The aim of the literature study was to explore existing discourse surrounding children's role in the city. It is separated into two clear parts. The first part focuses on the city itself and the consequences city life has had on the everyday lives of children. The second part looks to examine children's role in the shaping of their environment as social actors in the urban realm and what effect the city has had on their ability to influence their surroundings. See Appendix A (p. 77) for reflections on the literature review.

Part 1: Children and the City

Out of Place

The world is becoming more urbanised every day and a little over half the world's population now resides in an urban environment. According to UNICEF, children now account for over a billion of these people. The city, once seen as unfit for children, is now home to more children than ever before. At the same time, a number of the developed world's cities are striving to densify in an attempt to be more sustainable. The spaces in-between buildings are disappearing as city's look to squeeze as much as possible into their existing frames. Many researchers and theorists wonder what this means for children.

Discourse surrounding the merits and pitfalls of urban life for children continues as do fears over what the future holds for children. Many of these fears also stem from the uncertainty among adults and professionals as to what a better world for children would actually look like (Graue and Walsh, 1998). A number of studies also highlight a very clear gap between what adults think

children need and what children actually want (cf. Chawla, 2002), as well as “a widespread unwillingness or inability among decision-makers to take children’s interests into account” (Berglund, 2008, p. 112). Björklid and Nordström (2007) confirm this, arguing that there appears to be some “confusion as well as political ambivalence concerning children’s environmental needs and the priority that these should have” (p. 392).

Following the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989), which amongst other things, called for the inclusion of children in decisions pertaining to their everyday life, a growing body of research on children’s participation in the planning and design of children’s outdoor environments has accumulated. Shortly after, *Agenda 21* (UNCED, 1993) also materialized following the UN’s Earth Summit of 1992 and had an entire section devoted to “strengthening the role of major groups,” including children. Following this period of conferences and conventions, an increasing number of countries looked to implement new policies that included children’s participation, including Sweden, who in 1999 adopted a new strategy aimed at realising the convention. Of particular note is Boverket’s (The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning) document entitled *Young People Are Also Citizens* (2000), which focused on the influence children and youth have on planning. There also now exists a myriad of books and research projects solely looking at different methods of inclusion and participation in the planning process (cf. Hart, 1992, 1997; Chawla, 2002; Wilhelm 2002; Kylin, 2004; Berglund and Nordin, 2005 2007). Benefits of their participation include them learning how to become active democratic citizens and the use of the expert knowledge they have of their local environment with regards to their specific needs in new developments (Chawla, 2002). In spite of this, Björklid and Nordström (2007) declare that today’s situation is “far from the declarations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,” highlighting the failure of decision makers to address the topic of “children’s environmental needs and access to space in their everyday environments” (p.392).

O'Brien et al. (2000) list the "free movement of children" (p. 258) through the city as one of the blocks upon which to build a 'just' city for children. They go on to discuss the importance of understanding the concept of the city, quoting Webber (1964), who wrote "it is interaction, not place, that is the essence of the city and city life" (p.147). However, O'Brien et al. continue, suggesting that the physical characteristics of a place can play an important role in children's interaction in and relationship to the public realm. The city, however, continues to be a complicated arena for children and their movement through it. Jones (2002), citing O'Brien et al.'s (1999) work for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in the UK, discusses the growing awareness of environmental planners of the "impossibility of urban space for children" (p. 22), which according to Jones, often arises from the fears of parents. Additionally, this has also left many researchers and theorists wondering if there is a place for children in the city (cf. Mårtensson, 2004).

In his work on children in the city and the country, Ward (1990) suggested that much of the negativity surrounding children and urban areas often stemmed from the use of country life as a basis on which to compare city life with. The idyllic rural setting, with its free and easy access to the natural world has been and still is often seen as the perfect place for childhood to unfold as opposed to the hustle and bustle of the crime ridden, heavily trafficked city. Cities are, however, now viewed in many developed countries in a much more positive light and as places of opportunity that can, if properly designed and managed, play an important role in the development of children (Kingston et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, children's presence in the city is still a very complicated and sometimes heated topic. In every city exists people, be it residents or visitors, who would rather avoid children and don't feel they belong in the city. At the very least, they believe children should be controlled and

kept away from public spaces clearly meant for adults. People have also started to ask if it is necessary to consider children's presence in all parts of the city and if they really need to live everywhere (Wilhjelm, 2002 cited in Mårtensson, 2004). As part of the UNESCO-MOST programme *Growing up in Cities*, Percy-Smith's (1999) work on children's presence in the urban public realm discusses the "alienating and hostile attitudes" of many adults and the consequences this has on children (cited in Jones, 2002). In particular, the effect these attitudes may have on children's local geographies and spatial freedom. Jones further highlights this point, quoting Connolly and Ennew (1996, p. 133), who wrote that "to be a child outside adult supervision, visible on city centre streets, is to be out of place" (p. 23).

Protecting Children from the City

The dilemma between wanting to protect children from the traffic and other dangers while also wanting them to develop independence is well known in literature on children's use of space. (Fotel and Thomsen, 2004)

The protection of children is a prominent part of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and states that children should be protected due to their physical and mental immaturity. Many parents living in urban areas recognise a number of threats the city poses for their children and show considerable control over their children's behaviour and presence in the public realm. Jones (2002), in his paper on urban childhood, highlights the importance of adults control over children by not including the voices of children and instead focusing on the "expectations and assumptions" of adults, as well as their "critical or approving" surveillance of children. Fotel and Thomsen (2004) describe the increase in adult supervision as "a central characteristic of modern childhood" (p. 536) and argue that we do not yet know what consequences this has for children.

The well-known conflict between the protection of children and the protection of other people from children makes children's presence in the city so complex. Holloway and Valentine (2000) suggest that the contradictory view of children as both little angels and devils has resulted in the "spatial ideology that children's place is in the home, and in straying outside this they either place themselves at risk in adult controlled space, or their unruly behaviour risks the hegemony of this adult control of space" (p. 777).

The desire of parents for their children to develop independence and gain experience adds even further to the complexity of children's use of outdoor space and leaves children in a state of limbo, in a place not even we as adults quite fully understand. Fotel and Thomsen (2004) highlight the powerlessness many parents express with regards to the chauffeuring of their children and the conflict of "monitoring their child on the one hand and, believing that the child should have the right to independent mobility on the other" (p. 542). The study also discusses the difficulty of the situation today due to the spreading out of children's everyday lives and the anxieties the modern city instils in parents. O'Brien et al. (2000) confirmed in their study that there has been a rise in parental anxiety with regards to children's safety in public spaces and found that parents tended to "worry about most aspects of their children's lives" (p. 3). The study also noted the growing trend to label parents who allow their children to play outside unaccompanied as "neglectful" or "irresponsible." Björklid and Gummesson (2013) discuss the stress that many parents feel with regards to their children's lives and suggest that stress can result in both positive and negative reactions. It may in some cases lead to change, for example "attempts to improve the traffic environment," but it can also lead to over-protection and this, they state, "can have an inhibiting effect on their physical, social and psychological development" (p. 105).

Have dangers in neighbourhoods and cities increased so much that children need to be monitored in order to care for them properly, or is the monitoring of children's mobility done on behalf of parental perception with negative consequences to children's perception of space and place as a result? (Fotel and Thomsen, 2004)

Cele (2006) notes that the fast paced, bustling, lively nature of the city is on the one hand the reason people love cities and on the other, the main cause of children's restricted mobility. Indeed, Barker (2003) lists an increase in traffic and other people (stranger-danger), as well as changes in families' lifestyles as three key factors linked to increased adult supervision (cited in Björklid, 2004). Fotel and Thomsen (2004) conclude that children's autonomy can be improved if the risks perceived by parents are reduced.

In addition, many adults appear to have lost faith in the ability of children to look out for themselves (cf. Francis and Lorenzo, 2006), as well as their trust in the community to look out for their children. Weller and Bruegel (2009), confirm this, stating that children's "experiences in and of public space may be viewed as a reflection of the level of trust developed in a locality" and that neighbourhoods where social capital and trust are well established, children are afforded a greater degree of independence. Consequently, children have gradually been relegated from the adult tainted public realm to the protection and surveillance of the private realm (James et al., 1998). Where younger children are present in the public realm, they are more often than not escorted by an adult. This area of research is still lacking, both in terms of understanding parental fears and the opinions or desires of children with regards to their freedom to roam. Potential threats and fears, however, have had a number of major impacts on children living in urban areas.

The Segregation of Children from the Adult World

Historical studies, nevertheless, have taken children's presence in the city seriously... All of these studies converge in identifying a decline in multigenerational street life and an increasing segregation of spaces for children in playgrounds, schools, and recreation centers. (Chawla, 1995)

Cities are more segregated than ever before, with areas designated for living, shopping, socialising and recreation. The battle for land, as cities continue to grow and expand, has seen a reduction in variety of less formal meeting places in the interstitial spaces of the city (Corcoran et al, 2008) and the dominance of the car has had major implications for children in urban areas. Cele (2006) writes that “the denser a built environment grows the more people will live, work and travel there, and this in itself seems to restrict children’s mobility” (p. 43). Many children also find themselves living in residential areas often segregated from the rest of the city. This is of particular significance for children who often have limited mobility and thus limited experience of the world outside their neighbourhood or that of their parents. Their place in the city’s public realm is more unclear than ever before and their presence on the street, especially without supervision, has declined as cities develop.

Hillman et al. (1990) discuss the reduction in children’s play territories as one of the consequences of the car’s domination in the modern city, stating that in some cases “playing in the street is not only dangerous but a practical impossibility” (p. 79). Opportunities for free, creative play in urban areas have therefore also declined as possibilities for appropriation diminish or are denied. Younger children are almost always accompanied by an adult, be it a parent or teacher, and when in the street are more often than not on their way to a child-approved destination. The sight of children playing in the street has become a rare thing in many cities.

All these adult constructions of childhood (and others) play to adult desires and agenda and can be restrictive of children's lives in terms of identity, space and practice (Jones, 2008).

The first playgrounds arose as notions of childhood evolved and changed in the 19th century and public spaces and other areas not regulated by adults were no longer viewed as suitable places for children (de Coninck-Smith et al., 2004). Playgrounds provided a perfect solution for all and would be places where children could learn and play under the watchful eye of adults. To ensure the safety of children and to allow for easier supervision, many playgrounds are typically relatively formal and are frequently demarcated by a fence or some other form of protection to keep the reality of the city out. Jansson (2009) takes this a step further, proposing that by designing places specifically for children, there is a risk “of separating them from possibilities for social interaction and closeness to grown-up's activities, which children often highly appreciate” (p. 33).

Cunningham and Jones (1999), whilst acknowledging the importance of playgrounds, even go as far as suggesting that playgrounds are an admission of failure in understanding and incorporating children in the adult world. They state clearly in the beginning that we, as adults, “are wrong to ignore the children's needs within the built environment and we are wrong to assume that these needs can be met by playgrounds alone” (p. 11). Cele (2006) supports this notion stating that “children's sense of places is so much more complex since their playful exploration of place is a continuous action that cannot be restricted by fences” (p. 40). Norén-Björn (1977) found, in her study of playgrounds in Stockholm, that many playgrounds were often poorly designed and felt isolated due to a lack of any real sense of connection with surrounding places (cited in Cele, 2006).

Planning for Play

The problem with plans is not just that they are rectangular, but they create a frame. The grid not only permits the segmentation of the world within empty coordinates, it allows that world to be framed, bound, and bordered (Edgerton, 1975). (Olwig, 1990)

Discussions surrounding the concepts of space and place are well documented (cf. Tuan, 1977, 1979; Lefebvre, 1991). One can see the planning for and provision of spaces for children in the form of parks and playgrounds in urban areas, but it is the decreasing opportunity for children to create and find their own places in cities that is becoming more and more of an issue. Olwig (1990) perceived that “the resultant planning and landscaping of environments designated for children can run counter to the needs of children to find and form their own special places” (p.47). Nordström (2010) also highlights the huge gap, acknowledged by Chatterjee (2005), between the place concepts of children and those of adults such as policy-makers and city planners. Wilhjelm (2002) found in her study that the desire of professionals to clearly organise and label space functionally often contradicted the daily needs of children (cited in Cele, 2006).

Kylin (2004) discusses the importance of children’s own places and the difficulties they often present in the planning process due to the ambiguous nature of such places, which are often outside of places for children. Mårtensson (2004), discusses the importance demarcated play environments can have, but insists this can only happen when they provide “children the opportunity to create their own places and coordinate collective movements through the environment, and when their interest in the surrounding landscape is recognized.” Playgrounds do, however, play an extremely important role in children’s lives. Jansson (2008) found that children often developed strong ties to specific playgrounds with which they often also had strong social links due to the close proximity to friends or their home. The study goes on to

highlight the notion of children's place friendship and the role this might play in the creation of child-friendly cities (cf. Hart, 1979, Chawla, 1992 and Chatterjee 2005).

Olwig (1990) goes on to suggest the visual nature of plans and designs and their inability to show the full experience of an environment as part of the problem, asserting that "the transferal of environmental information to a plane surface itself represents a form of abstraction that is biased against the environmental experience and preferences of children" (p. 48). Children use all of their senses in the experiencing of place and often place greater importance on non-visual aspects, such as the people and activities of the environment, whereas adults often have a more aesthetical idea of a space. Nochis (1992) discusses children's creation of place meaning in their everyday physical environment through the development and use of two different structures that make up a larger network (cited in Kylin, 2004). The first structure includes the key nodes that children's lives revolve around, such as school and playgrounds, as well as the links between them, such as the journey to school. The second structure, which is much more difficult to plan for, includes interstitial spaces that afford unofficial opportunities for play and the secret passages children make themselves that often go against intended uses. Together, the two form an intricate network that overlaps and intertwines. Kylin (2004) questions whether it is possible or even beneficial to plan for the second structure, arguing that the whole point of these unofficial places and paths is the thrill the children experience in the finding of places outside of their planned for world. Olwig discusses children's perception of space, citing Sack's (1980) work on space and place and children's conceiving of space as a continuous surface. He goes on to argue that the segmentation of children's play isn't just a physical problem, in the form of fences, but that "even invisible frames run counter to the needs of children" (p.49). Consequently, children may, if allowed, teach us to see from their perspective and, as Olwig puts it, "help us learn how to develop methods and tools that allow for a richer, multisensory approach to the development of the potentials in our environment" (p. 52).

The visual mess and disorder that drives the average parent, let alone the visually trained architect, to distraction is prized by children (Olwig, 1990, p.52).

The messiness and disorderly nature of childhood is also very much part of the conflict between children and the city, but a number of researchers argue this is precisely why their inclusion is so important. Messiness is an essential part of childhood and learning, with a host of research supporting “messy play” and the importance of “loose parts” in children’s development (cf. Nicholson, 1971, White, 1997, White and Stoecklin, 1998). The role of “messy play” and “loose parts” is to provide a level of diversity and creativity that allows children to manipulate their own environment. Hart (2002) discusses the difficulty in providing “loose parts” in today’s playgrounds, due in part to the desire for easily maintained, safe playgrounds. He goes on to suggest that children’s safety is sometimes used as “an excuse for laziness or for the unwillingness of adults to provide a good play setting for children” (p. 146). Jones (2008) suggests this is as a principal reason children seek out other children to play with. Children seek out “beings who can share their own (children’s) world, and who, even with the best will in the world, do not impose orders and tidiness on their ‘other’ logics and practices, as adults do” (p. 18). He continues, highlighting recent calls by Thurock Council (2006) for the “roughening up” of urban spaces in order to allow for the inclusion of “other geographies” in our cities. Kylin (2004) calls for research into exploring exactly where children are in the outdoor environment in an attempt to understand and validate these ‘other geographies’ and thus provide them the chance to be visible and present in the less official networks that only they can create.

Reduced Independent Mobility

Children's rights are fairly well catered for with respect to matters such as nutrition, protection from illness and physical and mental abuse. But the deprivation associated with their loss of autonomy, the threat to their lives owing to the growth of traffic, and the loss of the street as accessible communal playspace have been largely overlooked in the development of transport and planning policy. (Hillman et al., 1990)

As has been shown, due to growing parental fears and the increasing complexity surrounding children's presence in the city, many children in developed countries have seen a significant reduction in independent mobility in recent years (cf. O'Brien et al., 2000, Hillman et al., 1990). Independent mobility refers to the ability of children to freely explore their environment without the accompaniment of an adult (Björklid and Gummesson, 2013). In Sweden, Björklid and Gummesson (2013) report a reduction of almost half of 7-9 year olds being allowed to walk to school alone between the mid-1980s and 2012.

As children become older, their range of mobility and autonomy generally increases. Björklid & Gummesson (2013) found in their study that between the ages of ten and eleven a real sense of independency begins. Large proportions of children in this age group are allowed to walk to school alone and travel alone to places other than school or go outside after dark. Younger children, under ten years old, often therefore face the highest restrictions and are usually restricted to their home or apartment's garden or yard or the street outside their home. It is this lack of independence and their reliance on adults in urban areas that make this group particularly interesting in urban areas. In their report, Weller and Bruegel (2009) reveal the worries of some children in playing alone outside sometimes stems from a lack of experience or 'street literacy'

(Cahill, 2000) and the preference of certain children to stay indoors and play computer games or watch television over the outdoor environment.

The ability of children to play outside or walk to school without adult supervision is important for their development both physically and mentally. Heurlin-Norinder (1996) states that the ability to actively participate in the outdoor environment allows for the development of children into “independently functioning members of society” (Heurlin-Norinder, 1996). Cele (2006) compares the results of Kytä’s (2004) and Karsten’s (2002, 2005) studies and concludes that:

Children who have restricted mobility still can be compensated with both movement and, to a certain extent, experiences, if they have parents who are able and willing to compensate the children by driving them to activities and who make sure in other ways that the children are compensated for their lack of mobility (p. 46).

However, she continues, stating that although children may have experiences of city life, they are “deprived of their own explorations and private experiences” (p. 46). Björklid and Nordström (2007) discuss the important role independent mobility and children’s own experiences through “active involvement” have in their development into adults:

Within environmental psychology, sustainable development is based on children acquiring their own experiences of the physical environment through active involvement. This forms the basis for children’s understanding and evaluation of the physical environment. Children have a unique environmental sensitivity which provides the basis for their engagement with, and appreciation of, the physical environment as adults (cf. Klöfver 1995). Children’s knowledge and their opportunities for independent mobility—and therefore their physical and psychological health—are clearly related to the environment (physical, cultural and social) in which they grow up (cf. Björklid 2002) (p. 390).

Berglund and Nordin (2007), in their study *Using GIS to Make Young People's Voices Heard in Urban Planning*, discuss the importance the local environment plays in the lives of “those groups who are more geographically constrained in their movements” (p. 469). The study found that it supported previous research which found that children ten years and older could orientate themselves on a map and also that individual differences do occur depending on their experience of the environment. The aim was to illustrate how children's knowledge of their local environment can be mapped and used as “a tool for the more inclusive planning of the urban fabric and also for management of open spaces” (p. 479). The study continues, stating that:

We believe that planners - just like others who take an active part in today's society - have increasingly adopted the understanding of young people as social actors and as individuals, whose wishes and desires should be taken into account (James et al., 1998).

The paper concludes that GIS mapping “when used with children above 10 years of age, can give meaningful results with sufficient accuracy for planning on a city district level” (p. 480). This leaves one wondering what this means for children under ten, whose movements are most restricted of all groups. According to Prezza (2007), reduced independent mobility has meant that children lose the opportunity to learn the code of the streets and an understanding of the environment they live in through exploring their neighbourhood on their own. It is outdoors, through activity in the physical environment that children learn how to interact with the world and gain an understanding and connection to the place they live (Olwig, 1986).

A place, including ‘places for children’, becomes a ‘children's place’ after a child connects with it physically. Physical sensation allows a place to be encoded with meaning as special emotions arise, knowledge of place is generated and so forth. (Rasmussen, 2004)

Hillman et al. (1990) beautifully illustrate the notion of connection and identity with a quote, from the School Education Diversion of the Council of Europe (1979), which defines a child's cultural identity as "the end product of a series of interactions between himself and the various surroundings in which his life is spent."

The New Routine of Childhood

Children are spending more and more time commuting between home, school and other recreational activities (Rasmussen, 2004). Mårtensson (2004) discusses the impact time has had on children's lives and their ability to play outside. She suggests that the varying interests and needs of the modern family has resulted in the search for a more time efficient and controlled recreational life for all the family. This, in turn, has led to a geographic spreading out of children's leisure time and outdoor recreation, which places the car at the centre. It has become common for parents drop their children off at school or other leisure activities by car as a means of saving time. Björklid and Nordström (2007) also discuss recent findings by Sarracco and Strandlund (2007) in the Netherlands that show the "time-saving value of short distances in the inner city" for women in high-ranking positions that desire "smooth control over everyday life" (p. 392). Zeiher (2001; 2003) agrees that there has been a scattering out of children's activities in segregated urban environments and that their lives are becoming increasingly insularized. This geographic spreading out has seen, what Zeiher describes as, the creation of "children's islands in space and time" and an everyday life that has become well regimented in order to accomplish the daily schedule. Fotel and Thomsen (2004), discussing Zeiher's study, highlight the highly networked nature of children's everyday life and the "adult orchestration of their mobility" (p. 541) which mobilizes them and means they are not place bound.

Additionally, Mårtensson discusses the decline in outdoor play in local environments and the importance many parents place on play in ready-made children's environments, as well as the increasing time children are spending in the virtual world. Fears for children's health due to a lack of physical activity has led to parents signing their children up for scheduled adult led activities, rather than, as Mårtensson puts it, ensuring their children engage in self-led, free play outside. Moreover, the continued commodification of children's play via privatisation has led to fears of further segregation (McKendrick et al., 2000) and is cited as a cause in the reduction time spent outdoors by children. Olwig (1990) acknowledges the rationale behind the creation of child friendly spaces such as playgrounds, but proposes that "spatial segmentation" is not the only solution to the problems facing children in the city.

Consequently, the structured daily life of urban children has seen a reduction in free or alone time, as they are monitored around the clock (Hillman et al., 1990), when they can learn and grow at their own pace and on their own terms. Kylin (2003) discusses the importance for children of decision making and control over one's physical space for children's development and independence. Citing Wolfe's (1978) observations on privacy and a healthy mental development, she argues that young children in particular have "no or very little possibility to choose privacy, since adults control children's time and space" (p. 45).

Part 2: The Social Role of Children

Children as Active Social Agents

The socially cohesive neighbourhood and the street as the communal meeting-place for all its residents are purposes aspired to by many European policy-makers. Segregation has to be avoided (Andersson, 2006). (Karsten, 2011)

The previous chapter highlighted the issues facing children in the modern city and illustrated the downsides of increased parental escorting, reduced independent mobility and the decline of children's play in the outdoor environment for children themselves (cf. Hart, 2006, Hillman et al., 1990). But what does this mean for the rest of society? Hoffmann-Ekstein et al. (2008) acknowledge that, although children have been segregated from the adult world, they have “not stopped observing and participating in communities” and still play a vital role in the social make-up of the urban realm. A number of studies highlight the important social role of children and the impact they can have on the lives of adults and neighbourhoods. Corcoran et al. (2008), discusses the emphasis often placed on “providing *for*” children and the lack of discourse concerning the importance of children for society, as “agents in their own right.” Children spend more time surrounded by adults than ever before and have taken on an increasingly significant role as a source of social interaction. Morrow (1999), citing James and Prout (1990 & 1997), discusses the need to study children's role as “active social agents...whose social relationships are worthy of study in their own right” (p. 1). Research has also called for further research into the importance of children as social and cultural actors “within public settings shaped by adult interests and concerns” (de Coninck-Smith and Gutman, 2004, p. 134). This is taken a step further by Weller and Bruegel (2009), who assert that “little research has explored the relationships between children's differing spatial freedoms and social cohesion at the

neighbourhood level despite renewed policy interest in local social relations and cohesion” (p. 629).

Corcoran et al. (2008) highlight children’s interactions with other children, both at school and locally, which help to create new bonds and links within communities and their ability to “actively draw their parents into contact” with other parents. Studies on children’s ability to generate social networks and connections often list the indirect and direct effect of children. In their study, Weller and Bruegel (2009) list the indirect involvement of children in the forging of friendships for parents “via antenatal classes, nursery and the primary school, or through their children’s friends’ families.” More direct involvement included the actions of the children themselves in speaking with neighbours or simply through their presence in the public realm.

Buonfino and Hilder (2006) found that “neighborhoods where there are children, nurseries or primary schools...tend to be more neighbourly than others” (p. 5) and that the networks of parents linked with children’s spaces and places are key factors in the formation of strong neighbourhoods with good connections between residents. Indeed, the report also listed a number of studies that found that people with strong local ties were often also those who had several children (cf. Nasar and Julian, 1995; Skjaeveland, Garling and Maeland, 1996; Guest and Wierzbicki, 1999), before going on to label children as key neighbourhood connectors.

Parents may increasingly orient themselves to the neighborhood because it is a prime locale for family activities and a place to make social contacts through their children’s activities. In contrast, the childless may have little inherent interest in their home territories and may opt to emphasize outside social opportunities. (Guest and Wierzbicki, 1999, p. 97)

Edwards et al. (2006) found that a number of parents even stated that “it was only when they had children that they developed local friendships” (as cited in Weller and Bruegel, 2009, p. 638). The increasing inclination to escort young children outdoors further amplifies this effect and a number of researchers have studied the link between walking and creation of community and a sense of connection to the neighbourhood for both children and adults. Gwillam et al.’s (1999) research confirms the importance of pedestrian movement and its role in increasing social contact in the process of community building (as cited in Corcoran et al., 2008). Leyden (2003) found that more walkable neighbourhoods allowed residents a greater sense of belonging, that included knowing and trusting their neighbours. Can young children, therefore, in this respect, also be viewed as social agents due their reliance on their parents when travelling or playing in the city? Could a simple task such as accompanying children to local parks have a snowball effect within a community and increase the chances of what Leyden labels as “casual contacts” or spontaneous meetings? Leyden’s study indicated that these meetings helped create a “sense of familiarity and predictability that most people find comforting” (p. 1546) and that over time such occurrences develop into “a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighbourhood need” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 56 cited in Leyden, 2003).

Children and social capital

Notions of neighbourhood and sense of community are often grouped under the concept of social capital. There are a host of different definitions for social capital, but for the purpose of this study we will adopt one of the most commonly occurring understandings, which is Putnam’s (1995) idea of “networks, norms and trust.” These are, according to Putnam, key features of social life and that, if present, allow individuals and communities to reach common goals, together as a group. Putnam is careful to point out the difference between public participation in the political system, a popular topic of discussion in children’s rights, and social capital, which he

defines as “our relations with one another.” Social capital also builds on the idea that the greater connectivity there is within a neighbourhood, the greater the trust there is and the greater the trust, the greater the connections between people are. Morrow (1999) discusses the lack of research with regards to children’s role in the creation of social capital and the emphasis on adults as the primary agents in its generation.

Much of the research involving children’s social capital often centres on the role of the school and family, but Morrow also urges further research into expanded social networks and activities out of school and in the community. In other words, further studies focused on the role of children in the public domain, not just in institutions or at home, but a closer look at their position in the wider community. Hoffmann-Ekstein et al. (2008) also underline the apparent exclusion of children’s opinions and experiences in communities, as well as their role as agents in the generation of social capital, in literature. The report also confirms a particular gap in knowledge with regards to younger children, declaring a focus on teenagers and a reliance on parental reports over children’s voices that leaves us with less reliable data.

According to Holland (2008), Schaefer-McDaniel (2006) takes Putnam’s ideas a step further by introducing the concept of “a sense of belonging or place attachment” (p.8) to the framework for understanding children’s social capital. In order to gain a sense of belonging or attachment to a place, one first has to experience it. Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) discuss the meaning of *place attachment* and the wide array of similar terms used in a similar way. One definition of place attachment they use is “an affective bond or link between people and specific places” (p. 274), which, according to Altman and Low (1992), can vary greatly in scale; from a neighbourhood to a playground or object. O’Brien et al. (2000) observed in their study, a sense of connection to a neighbourhood is often an important factor in many parents’ stance on their children’s independence. In other words, children whose parents feel like they belong to a community are

more likely to have a greater sense of freedom with which to explore their local environment and in turn create their own sense of place attachment.

Karsten (2011) targets the negative effect a “loss of children’s street culture,” and therefore place attachment, has had on their agency on the street and their ability to generate bridging social capital. The notion of bridging capital is taken from Putnam’s (2000) definition of two different types of social capital; bonding and bridging, where bonding social capital “brings together people who are like one another in important respects” (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p. 112) and as Karsten puts it, are founded on “strong mutual ties” within “socially homogenous groups.” Bridging social capital, on the other hand, “brings together people who are unlike one another” (Putnam & Goss, 2002) and according to Karsten is often “characterised by looser networks” across barriers between social groups with different classes and ethnicity. Putnam and Goss also state that where bridging social capital is likely to be mainly positive, bonding social capital is at risk of creating negative externalities due to its often exclusive nature. He goes on, however, to state that most people’s social networks are within the bonding domain and that this isn’t always a negative. Karsten goes on to state that it is the disappearance of children from our streets that has removed their ability to “bridge differences on their own.” She also compares the freedom children had when playing outdoors in Amsterdam during the 1950s with the reduced independent mobility of today’s children and the potential children had to bridge differences across communities, as well as the “wide circle of people” children knew “with different backgrounds living nearby and further away.”

Children as agents of change

Could it be that within all these pedagogic, economic, legislative, technological and emotional interventions and investments in childhood, society has somehow missed what children really are, and what they really need, as Brooks (2006) suggests? (Jones, 2008)

As discussed in Chapter 1, there is no shortage of discourse surrounding children's direct participation in the planning and design phase. There does, however, seem to be less focus on children's participation in shaping the city simply through being children. Torres (2009) recognises children as "shapers of their environments" (p. 4) and acknowledges the active role they can and do play in their communities. In particular, he highlights the ties children can establish with their communities and even the power they have to transform them. They are *agents* who are "influenced by their living environment and capable of influencing it" (p. 4).

However, one wonders how the suppression of children's active role in society on an everyday basis affects their ability to influence their everyday environment. Corcoran et al. (2009) discuss the potential role children have in civil integration due to their "everyday interactions in the spaces beyond the private sphere" that "helps to bring adults into contact with each other and create a social structure that is rooted in locality" (p. 38). They go on to argue that children's movement through space functions as a sort of living social glue that can hold together new communities, but recognise that:

At the same time, their freedom of movement and right to autonomy are increasingly compromised by the undermining, and in some cases disappearance, of public arenas for the enactment of those freedoms (p. 38).

Fotel and Thomsen (2004) also wonder what the gradual disappearance of children from public city life and the increasing reliance on the car will mean for their ability to get a sense of “public democratic, daily life” and what affect this will have on the “social glue” of the city. Hart (2002) makes a case for the importance of a society that provides children with opportunities for interaction with people of different ages, cultures and social classes so that they may learn to grow and develop with them. He too describes children as shapers, who are both “shaping culture and building communities” (p. 137), before concluding that children’s play in public spaces should be viewed as importantly as other arguments “for why public space is so fundamental to civil society in a democracy” (p.137). Not only does the disappearance of public arenas affect children’s opportunities to learn and develop through interaction in the real world, but, as Luken (2007) puts:

Adults as well miss the opportunity to see how creative, energetic, mobile, and unbiased people move through our own space, a phenomenon that has inspired many artists...but few urban planners (p. 19).

Jenks (2005) also discusses the lessons to be learnt from children’s active role in society, which may, as Jones (2008) suggests, provide a valuable “critique of the norms of adult(ist) society” (p.23). If children continue to be suppressed and removed from our streets and the public realm, how then will we learn from them if their experience of their community is continually shrinking? According to Heurlin-Norinder (1996), the creation of inclusive urban areas that allow for children’s active involvement in everyday life and the exploration of their local environment, will provide children the best possible chance of becoming active citizens in a democratic society (cf. Hart, 1992). The report concludes with a word of warning with regards to quality of life and the effect declining children’s mobility may have on it as cars continue to dominate.

When the conditions are lacking for mental and physical health and for influence and control over one's existence, we can never achieve quality of life. And without mobility these conditions cannot be created. Children's mobility in other words has far-reaching consequences, not merely for the individual but for society as a whole (Heurlin-Norinder, 1996).

Walking Interviews

Studying Children in Context

There is no shortage of literature on young children nor is there a shortage on research projects on children, but as Graue and Walsh (1998) state, it is still “surprising how little we know about their lives.” They hint that this may be due to the objectification of children and their use as instruments by academics to achieve academic goals, rather than a deeper understanding of children’s experiences. They also suggest the quantitative nature of the majority of children’s research as being problematic, with its focus on *precision* over *accuracy* (cf. King, Keohame & Verba 1994). Precision is more measurement based and accuracy more about “how well the actual phenomenon of interest is being described.” Children are very curious and complex and interact with everything and everyone.

It is in their day-to-day lives and their various interactions that we can learn most about children. Some things just cannot be measured. Graue and Walsh (1998) suggest that by studying children in context we can start to gain a deeper understanding of their lives. They continue with a recommendation to researchers to learn to better portray “the richness of children’s lives across the many contexts” they experience rather than spending endless amounts of time on developing theories.

Children cannot possibly remain untouched by their contexts. Just as their contexts are shaped by their presence, children and their contexts mutually constitute each other.

(Graue and Walsh, 1998, p. 8)

Walking Interviews

It is for the above reasons this study's empirical research was conducted in the form of interpretative walkabouts with the children. Young children's lives and the context they find themselves in are very much controlled by adults, but children are experts at creating subcontexts within these adult defined arenas (Graue and Walsh, 1998). The walkabouts involved the children themselves showing me, the adult their world (cf. Moore, 1986 Percy-Smith, 2002). This will also allow for a better understanding of both the local context and the larger context which incorporates the research study (Graue and Walsh, 1998). In this case, the local context may well be specific objects on the walk home or favourite playspaces, each of which are embedded in the larger context of the neighbourhood. The two contexts, although separately labelled, are intertwined and connected in a multitude of different ways, something Graue and Walsh clearly highlight as being overlooked in previous research and has resulted in large gaps in our knowledge. Children are constantly shaping and being shaped by their context. Contexts, according to Graue and Walsh, are "fluid and dynamic, constantly reconstituting themselves within activity" (p. 11). Contexts are also perceived and experienced differently by different people and it is therefore interpretative research of children in the form of walkabouts is important in understanding the children's relationship with their city.

Cele, in her work entitled *Communicating Place* (2006), investigated different methods for understanding children's experience of place. She discusses the multi-dimensional aspect of walks that include "movement, perception, observation, conversation and inner processes" (p. 128) and allow for total immersion in and the experience of a place. She also asserts that:

To understand the experience of a place, it is not possible to be only an observer; instead, it is necessary to be a participant, but without losing the ability to observe, hear, feel and touch – to active and feeling without ever neglecting the clear sight and open eyes of the researcher (p.126).

Wästfelt (2004) also found that by moving through a place, as opposed to the staticness of an indoor interview, the landscape often prompts conversation and discussion that may otherwise not happen (cited in Cele, 2006). Clark and Emmel (2010, p. 2) discuss the benefits of using walking interviews and cite the ability of the participants to place “events, stories and experiences in their spatial context” as a means of helping “participants to articulate their thoughts.” This is of particular importance considering the age of the participants in this study. Cele warns, however, that if the individuals involved in the walk “do not feel at ease with each other, the walk is not successful and the children will not reveal their places” (p. 128) and it is the job of the researcher to ensure this isn’t the case. It is also for this reason that the children chosen for this study were taken from a class the researcher has weekly contact with as a substitute teacher, with the hope that familiarity would be conducive to a relaxed conversation. In order to help achieve a setting the children can feel at ease in, the aim, from the start was to walk with pairs of children, which would provide the children with a support mechanism to help answer questions (Graue and Walsh, 1998). Furthermore, the pairing up of children also intended to encourage conversation between the two of them and, as noted by Graue and Walsh, “identify better questions” (p. 114).

Clark and Emmel (2010) also highlight the use of walking interviews as a “method that can be adapted to fit in with participants’ everyday life, while also revealing some of their everyday practices” (p. 2); something of particular value when attempting to fit the walks into the busy schedules of both the children and parents. At the same time, walking interviews also allow a real life glimpse into the participants in the outdoor environment where the unanticipated can happen and may lead to discussion or reaction.

The Participants

The participants are a boy (Lucas) and a girl (Anna) from a class of sixteen 8-9 year olds and a boy (Tom) aged 11 from an international school in Malmö, Sweden (Note: for anonymity purposes all children have been given different names). This study had originally set out to focus on children under ten years old, however, following negotiations with Anna's mother and due in part to a lack of response from other children in the class it was decided that Anna's brother, Lucas, would also take part. The hope was that by doing this, she would have a sense of security and that conversation would be more natural. It was also hoped that Lucas would not walk alone, but unfortunately this could not be avoided.

All children in the class were invited to take part in the study and were given parental consent forms to take home before being allowed to participate in the study (see Appendix B, p. 81 for a copy of the letter). The letters were all written in English as this is the common language in the class, although the level of English of the children's parents was unknown. The class teacher was involved as much as possible in order to instil a sense of trust and helped with the handing out and collection of letters.

This class was chosen as it contains children from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds who have been living in Malmö for varying lengths of time. The hope was that the study may provide a wide array of different insights into the children's experiences of the city. In the weeks prior to the walks, the interviewer had worked as a teaching assistant in Anna and Lucas' class and therefore already had a relationship with the children which hopefully helped the children to feel at ease. The focus on children under ten years old also chosen due to their proximity to the age range of 10-11, the age other studies have found most children begin to gain a significant amount of freedom (cf. Björklid & Gummesson, 2013, Hillman et al., 1990). Therefore, rather

than focusing on children with a greater degree of independence, this study aims to find out what children with reduced independent mobility think about their situation. Why do they think they aren't allowed to walk to school alone? Do they understand the reasons? Do they wish they could have more freedom? Who do they play with? Where do they usually play?

The Procedure

On the day of the walks, the children were collected from school and the basic idea of the walks was explained to them. Care was taken not to be too prescriptive, in order to allow for a sense of openness, whilst also ensuring the children knew what their role was (cf. Clark and Emmel, 2010). Both walks involved the children guiding me during the duration of the walks. The researcher was at no point in control of the route. More details on each individual walk can be found in the findings section that follows.

In order to both observe the children in a more informal context and encourage a more natural dialogue, interviews were carried out during the walks. The interviews were of a qualitative nature and were situated somewhere between structured and unstructured, with a number of guiding questions for each walkabout to ensure key topics are touched on. At the same time there was an element of looseness that allowed the children to talk about what is important to them. If they strayed off topic, this was not discouraged and instead allowed to unfold in order to create a more natural conversation style. A combination of hypothetical and third person questions were also employed in order to encourage the children to talk freely and to instil them with a sense of confidence by treating them as experts on the questions at hand (Graue and Walsh, 1998).

The conversations/interviews were recorded on an iPhone. Before conducting the interviews, tests were also done to ensure voices were not muffled in the street environment. By recording the audio, as opposed to only using field notes, the interaction between the children was more

clearly captured. Tone of voice, which may allude to doubt or excitement for example was picked up and proved useful during analysis. Audio recording is also much less obtrusive than video and allows for a more natural experience. There are, however, downsides to the use of a recorder. As Graue and Walsh note, an over reliance on the recorded conversation may lead to a less attentive interviewer. For this reason, field notes were also taken where necessary in order to reconfirm what was said and enforce attentiveness. On the contrary, Bell (2005) encourages the use of digital audio recorders, highlighting the ability of the interviewer to focus more on the interviewee when not worrying about taking notes. Audio recording can also sometimes prove to be a distraction, especially for children and therefore care was taken to minimize its presence.

A camera was also taken on both walks and the children themselves were asked to take pictures of anything they wanted to. The aim of this was to capture the places and objects the children themselves found most interesting (Cele, 2005). The camera also gave the children an added feeling of control and independence as they were in charge of it and could decide to take or not take photos (Rasmussen, 2000 cited in Cele, 2006). However, due to poor light conditions on the second walk, no pictures were taken. Several photos were taken on the first walk and are included in the findings section. See Appendix A (p. 79) for reflections on the walking interviews.

The Location

Malmö is a city located in the south-west of Sweden and is the third largest city in the country. The city's population has risen for the 28th year in a row and now sits at around 308,000 (Malmö Stad, 2013). A third of the city's population are aged between 25 and 44 and roughly one fifth of the population are under eighteen years of age. Just under a third of Malmö's residents were born outside of Sweden. Five major urban areas make up the city and the school is located within Innerstaden (Inner City). The area stretches from the Öresund strait in the west to Folkets Park

in the south-east across the city's most central areas and incorporates or borders the city's three largest parks and has a population of roughly 67,000. The majority of the buildings consist of three and five storey apartment blocks, but the western edge also includes some of Malmö's largest houses. The area has a combination of busier main roads and smaller neighbourhood streets with little thru-traffic. As shown by the map below (Figure 1), the spread of children (0-19 years old) is relatively even across the city and makes up a significant proportion of each neighbourhood.

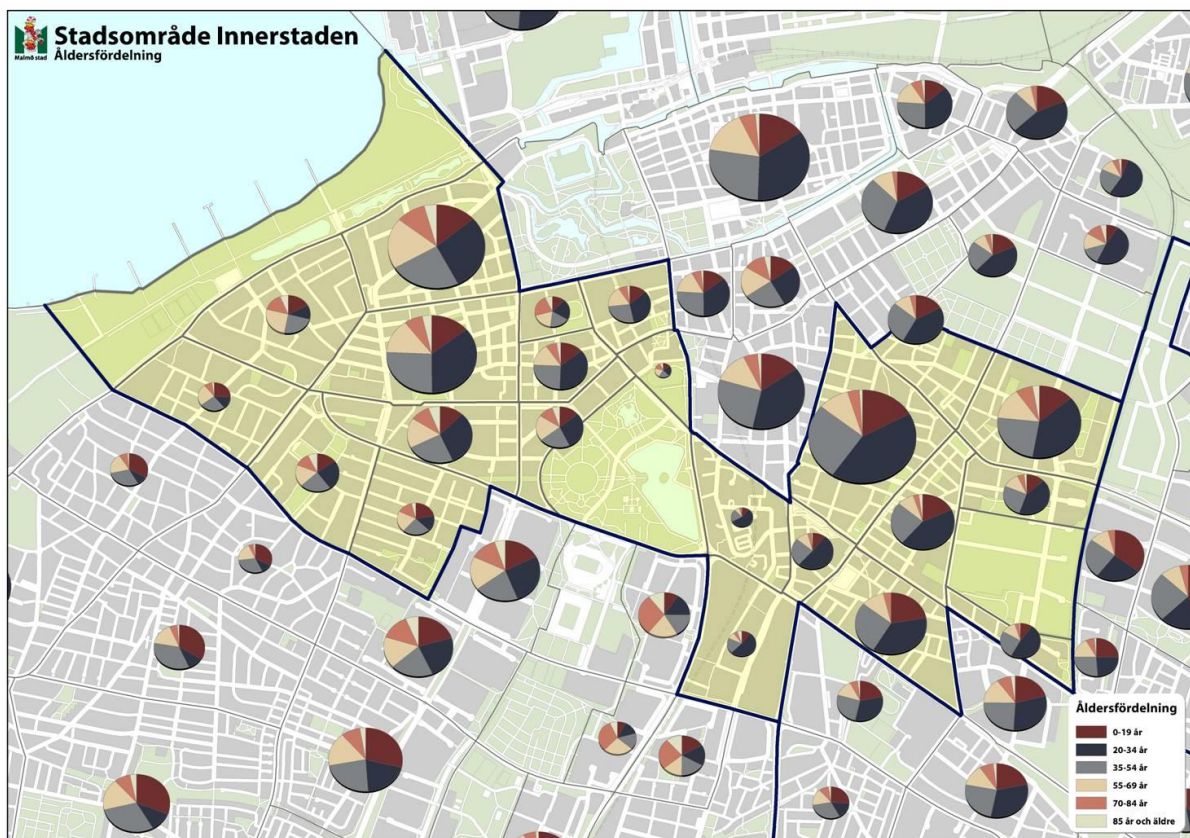


Figure 1: Map showing the spread of different age groups across Malmö (2012).

Generationsskifte med hipa undertoner



Figure 2: “Generation shift with hip undertones.” The article from Sydsvenskan (2012).

The newspaper article above (Figure 2) discusses the generation shift that has occurred in Slottsstaden in the western part of Innerstaden, an area once labelled “käppastan” (walking stick city) and seen as “sleepy, ageing and far from the city.” The re-emergence of young families in the area has seen it renamed “nappastan” (dummy city) in recent years. The article also discusses the new life the area has and the range of hip new restaurants, cafes and other meeting places that have emerged during the generation shift (Sydsvenskan, 2012).

The School

The school is an international school comprising of a Swedish and international side and caters for children between three and sixteen years old. The school has over 300 students from roughly 30 different countries. It is only a short walk south-west of the main high street and is positioned in a largely residential area comprising of mainly 4-5 storey apartment blocks sandwiched between the city’s two largest parks. It is located beside one of Malmö’s busiest roads on one side

and one of Malmö's largest parks on the other. There are traffic lights and pedestrian crossings outside the school, as well as a well-connected cycle route. The school itself has a number of different yards and is surrounded by a fences and gates.

The Findings

All walkabouts were followed by a post-walkabout analysis as close to the walkabout as possible. This involved the writing down of anything not captured on the audio recording which may be of use during the analysis of the results and the consideration of the procedure itself for future reference. Any notes made during the walkabouts were also collaborated. The audio recording from each interview was listened to and all relevant dialogue was subsequently transcribed for presentation in this study and more in-depth analysis and discussion. Following transcription, an attempt was made to highlight any themes with regards to the literature review.

This section will begin with a short description of each walkabout, before continuing with a more detailed presentation and analysis of the major themes highlighted during the walks.

Walkabout I

For the purpose of anonymity, the participants from the first walkabout will be referred to under different names. Anna is an eight year old girl and Tom is an eleven year old boy. They are siblings and have been living in Sweden for roughly five years, following their move from France with their parents and younger sister. Both children attend the same school.

Following the inclusion of Anna's older brother in order to provide a sense of security and familiarity, the only concern was that Tom, being three years older, would dominate the discussions. Although Tom spoke for longer periods and led the way for most of the walk, his presence did provide a very interesting chance to compare the thoughts and actions of two children, only three years apart, with very different circumstances and positions in the city. Since moving to Malmö, they have lived in several different parts of the city and only recently moved

to a new neighbourhood. It was for this reason that their mother suggested we visit their previous house and neighbourhood, stating a lack of a “special routine” at their new address with regards to playing outside. The walk was conducted in the afternoon and involved collecting the children at school and dropping them off at school upon completion. This meant there was considerable flexibility time wise and allowed the walk to naturally unfold without any predetermined route. The children were asked to lead the way. The total walk (see Figure 3) was a little over five kilometres and took one hour and twenty minutes. It involved a tour of their old neighbourhood that included a visit to the park they frequented most often and their old road.



Figure 3: map showing the walking route

Walkabout II

The interviewee will be referred to Lucas for the purpose of anonymity. Lucas is an eight year old Swedish boy who has lived in Malmö the majority of his life. As stated earlier, the hope was to walk with pairs of children, but due to time constraints and difficulties in arranging times and dates that fit in to the busy schedules of all involved, this walkabout was performed with only one student. Although Lucas is not normally allowed to walk home alone, after some discussion with Lucas' mother, we agreed that it would be more convenient for all parties if the walkabout involved walking Lucas home from school. Lucas' mother insisted he would not know the way home and said if we walk to a tennis hall close to their home that he would then be able to take over. However, on the day of the walkabout, Lucas explained that he did in fact know exactly where to walk and that he would lead the way. This two and a half kilometre walk was conducted at the end of the school day and lasted just under thirty minutes (see Figure 4).

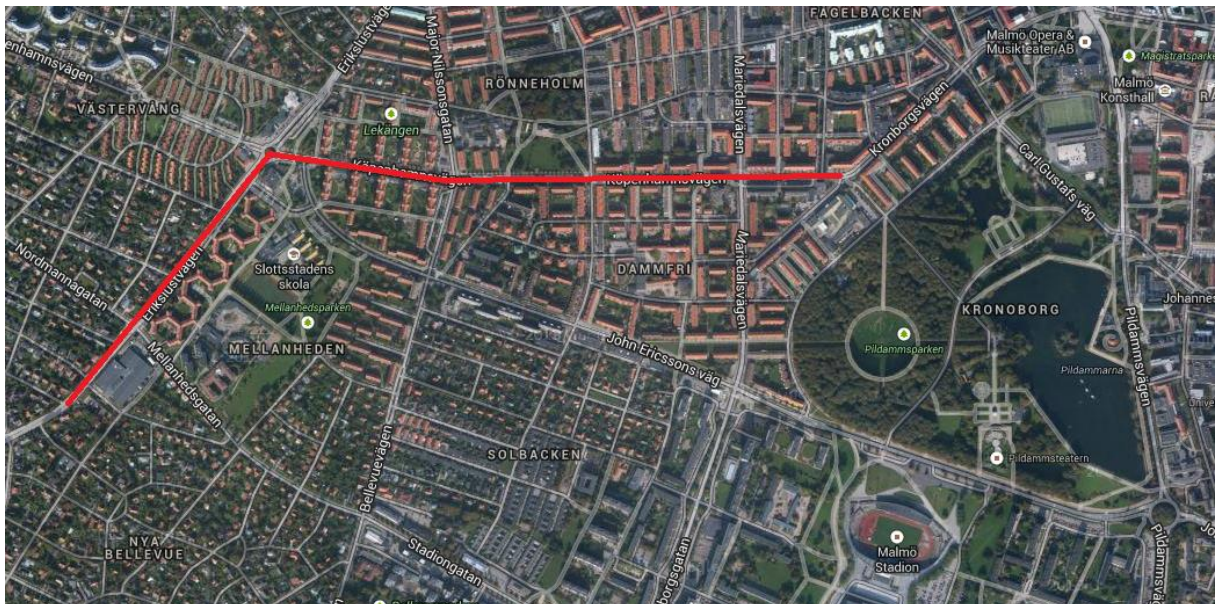


Figure 4: map showing the route walked.

Living in the City

Both children in the first walkabout seemed very content with living in the city, although clear differences in preferences were highlighted in discussions on the city and countryside. Tom, when asked which environment he thought best suited children, clearly preferred the convenience and thrill of city life stating:

The city, because it's nearer to all the shopping malls. So if you want to buy something or something for your iPad, for example. Or even just go around with friends and go to the skatepark. I think it's...and for example there's Lazerdoom, there's bowling, there's like a lot of fun stuff in the city.

Anna, on the other hand, found herself torn between the city and the countryside, explaining that although she likes “big places where you can do whatever you want...like big gardens ...the sea,” she also enjoys “shopping, buying new clothes and things like that...so it's hard.” Although the city offers a myriad of fun activities, she clearly feels a more natural environment symbolizes freedom and open space. It is a place where a child can escape the rules and structure of the city and the “critical or approving” surveillance of adults that Jones (2002) spoke of. One could also argue that due to the adult controlled nature of Anna's life in comparison to her brother's, that a place to escape adult supervision is of greater importance. Whereas Tom, with his greater independence, feels he can escape supervision more easily. Research has also shown that as children grow older they also start to desire closeness to adult's activities, something the city offers in abundance Jansson (2009). Anna's preference for “big places” and the affordances they offer also adds to the discourse on the inability of plans and places for children to fully capture the boundless nature of children's play. Big places also allow for exploration and allow children to find their own places. Tom, however, jumps in arguing that:

From the countryside it's further from everything, so it takes longer and our parents might say it's too far for us to go alone and so when we want to get there we have to ask them and sometimes they might not be able.

Tom, perhaps because of his greater autonomy, clearly recognises the threat a more rural setting could have on his ability to travel alone and also acknowledges the control parents have over their children's mobility. Anna, sounding hopeful, reasons that "countryside doesn't mean you can't go shopping coz they might build Emporia (a shopping centre in Malmö) next to the countryside." This raises a number of interesting questions with regards to perceptions of rural and urban and the boundaries between the two. Where does the city end and the countryside begin? What exactly are the differences between an urban and rural childhood today? There exists a wealth of stereotypes of both, but as Ward (1978) puts it, "there is much more in common in the experiences of children in affluent families, rural or urban, than in those of rich and poor children in the same city." Anna hints at a willingness to live in the countryside and doesn't seem too fussed either way. They both agree, however, that the countryside is older and as Tom puts it, "it (the city) feels more modern...because on the countryside if it's like a town there's like big forests sometimes." The desire for new, exciting things and a modern life appears to be very important to Tom and it feels, to some degree, as if nature and a more rural life are seen as old fashioned in his eyes. Anna attempts to explain this difference, demonstrating an understanding of the changing nature of cities, suggesting there are "older things in the countryside cos they don't rip (tear down) as much."

On discussing their old apartment in the heart of the city, Tom excitedly described how he used to watch the closing of the shopping centre's "big entrance doors" from their bedroom window and reminisced over the fun of watching the protesters that gathered on a weekly basis in the square outside their apartment. Anna had other ideas, stating "but it was horrible, because I tried

to go to sleep and then you always heard horns, traffic, buses, things closing, opening, people talking...it's horrible." Once again, the excitement of living in the city shines through in Tom's description, but Anna takes a more negative, somewhat pragmatic stance.

Lucas, when asked about living in Malmö, stated he enjoyed it, but didn't show a preference for either. When asked what he liked best about Malmö, he replied "the food that they have and the people that live in Malmö." Lucas also spoke of the city and his neighbourhood as two very different things. In the neighbourhood he was allowed to cross roads on his own and sometimes play floorball in the street, but he felt the city was a place that was dangerous for someone of his size and age.

Moving Through the City

The different ways the children moved through the city during the walks was one of the first things that stood out. Children's movement through the city was a recurring theme in the literature review and was both seen as essential to the creation of a *just* city for children and also a complex issue in the adult arena that is the city. Tom clearly had experience of using the streets without adult escorting and was very observant of the rules of the city and the bigger picture. For example, when asked if he wanted to walk back to school the same way he stated "there is another way over there. It's basically the car way." He also warned the group not to walk in the "bike way" on a number of occasions. These statements give a glimpse into his imagining of travel within the city, where there are "ways" where the car dominates and "ways" where it doesn't. Anna, on the other hand, tended to focus on smaller things she found along the way and interacted and played with various objects of different sizes during the walk. She hopped and skipped, kicked up leaves, balanced on walls and picked up things she found interesting. Hart (1979) found that when moving around the urban landscape, children tended to focus on and

find joy in the smaller things often missed by adults, who are usually in a hurry or travelling by car (cited in O'Brien et al., 2000). It was clear that Anna was more accustomed to following others and thus didn't have to worry so much about roads and other such things. There was a curiosity for exploring the environment with all her senses.

Luken (2007) spoke of the opportunity adults miss out on, as children continue to disappear from our streets, to observe how “creative, energetic, mobile, and unbiased people move through our own space.” This creative, unbiased energy was on display during most of the first walkabout. After finding a dead pigeon Anna immediately asked if she could turn it over, and upon realising its head was missing, begun searching for an explanation. “It might’ve gotten killed here and then flew down there,” she pronounced after finding a trail of feathers. Although Tom was also curious, taking a picture of it, he suggested Anna shouldn't turn over the pigeon and was keen to move on. These tiny interactions with the physical environment may only be fleeting moments in the grand scheme of things, but it was clear that the children were constantly learning from and testing the world around them. It is through action and movement in the outdoor environment that children create an understanding of the place they live in. Rasmussen (1998) found, during her research with children, that:

It was particularly difficult to see the strange in the familiar, and not to trivialize what is important to children. It took a long time to understand the meaning of tiny objects and the great importance that single events may hold from children's perspectives (p. 216).

Lucas, on the other hand, perhaps due to the absence of another child, walked beside the interviewer and seemed to be concentrating on the task at hand. The route Lucas chose was also the most direct route and the way he knew, and perhaps due to the lack of time limited possibilities for further exploration of his favourite places.

Places

During the walks, and particularly during the first one, the children displayed a pride in the telling of many of their stories and in some instances a sense of ownership in places they themselves had *found*. Tom spoke fondly of a place he and his friends had found to rollerblade:

This year for my birthday, like my last birthday, we invited friends for sleepover and they all brang their rollerblades....we found this street hockey place, and I'm pretty good at street hockey, not ice hockey, but street hockey, and so we went over there to a park and there's like this small wooden walls around a court that form and there are two goals and so that was fun.

The need of children to find and make their own special places is well documented (cf. Olwig, 1990; Hart, 1979; Kylin 2003) and it is through this freedom to explore one's own environment that connections are made with the surrounding landscape and a feeling of security created in children (Mårtensson, 2004).

Upon approaching a cycle path (see Figure 6) under a road, Tom stopped and announced, "I used to bike under here with my friends...and we used to sit and pick some things on the trees..." Anna, who had earlier stated she would like to be an actress when she grows up, started to scramble up the embankment off to the right, eager to show what he meant, pronouncing "from here...like this." Tom jumped back in, continuing with "and try to throw them as far as we could. There's like those really small green balls." Anna quickly took over again, asking "right here!!.....is it like red berries...are they poisonous?" This type of interplay was very common during the duration of the walk and the two spoke almost as one at times, especially when showing the interviewer their favourite places. Is it possible that the children's enthusiasm for their places stems from the instability of their living situation since moving to Sweden?



Figure 5: Photo taken by Tom showing the cycle path tunnel under the road

They can no longer go inside the places they used to live, but they can still visit their favourite places to play. They are places that have special meaning following physical interaction. It is through the act of physically connecting with a place that “allows a place to be encoded with meaning, as special emotions arise, knowledge of place is generated and so forth” (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 165). This story, however, didn’t stop here. Anna started to climb higher until she was standing on top of the tunnel. Tom explained that they used to stand up there and throw the berries at cyclists and said “that was fun.” Anna, seemingly eager to impress, continued with:

Imagine if you had a big board here and then you could see a bike was coming and then you would wait for somebody...a sign from over there saying a bike is almost here and then you put the board down and they can’t get through.

Anna’s imagining also highlights the unexpected and fantastical element of children’s play that can’t, and maybe shouldn’t, be planned for. Relishing the freedom they had, Tom showed the

interviewer what is record height for jumping was, before Anna asked if he'd dare jump from where she stood. He replied "I could...," before Anna confirmed that it was probably too dangerous. These moments occurred several times during the walk and often in the most unexpected places. Although these places may seem completely random to the eyes of many adults, such moments are anything but random. Researchers have found that children, in their descriptions of their outdoor environment, often describe the different activities such places afford as opposed to describing what is present. The use of their bodies and physical contact is essential to the creation of a relationship with their surroundings (cf. Hart, 1979; Mårtensson, 2004;). Kylin (2004) emphasizes that, contrary to popular belief, children do not play anywhere and everywhere. Rather, the physical environment affords different types of activity depending on its characteristics and properties. Children's movement through their outdoor environment comprises a complex, multisensory combination of different signals that may or may not lead to physical activity.



Figure 6: A photo showing the other side of the tunnel, as photographed by Tom.

Early on in the walk, Lucas stated that we would walk past his best friend's place and that he would point it out. After several minutes we stopped and he pointed across the road to where his friend lived. The recognition of places for all three children appeared to help them piece together a mental map of the city and helped them orientate themselves in the city. Kylin (2004) discusses how direct physical contact with the outdoor environment allows children to get to know their surroundings and create familiarity. Before embarking on the walk Lucas' mother had told me to walk to a tennis hall and that from there he would be able to show me the way as he has played there and would recognise where he was. However, his friend's flat appeared to act as an early marker in the walk that helped confirm we were heading in the right direction. Lucas also demonstrated, as we got closer to his home, his knowledge of his local surroundings and on a couple of occasions he described how to walk to his favourite places. Other than school, he said he knew how to walk to another school and the playground there where he usually played. There was little evidence of his use of any informal locations for play which make up the second structure discussed by Nochi (1992), but this was perhaps due to the time restraint which limited his opportunities to show his favourite places. These places did, however, appear to act as nodes for all three children and were often referenced when asked where places were located. At times it appeared as though they had to mentally envisage previous physical experiences and movements throughout the city in order to locate these places and these shone through in the detailed directions they offered. Both Tom and Anna also referred to landmarks and commented on places we walked past demonstrating a good understanding of the city's layout. For example, Anna asked "haven't we biked here Tom?" to which he replied "yeah that's the place (route) I took every morning" on the way to school. Tom, in particular, displayed on several occasions his detailed knowledge of the city and his descriptions most often included him being on his bike or on foot. This echoes Tuan's (1974) sentiments on spatial concept and behavioural patterns being "rooted in the original pact between body and space" (cited in Kylin, 2004, p. 13). By walking or cycling through the urban landscape children use all their sense and gain a real sense of place and

are also able to position themselves in it. Therefore, for younger children, who are more accustomed to following or being escorted by car, they perhaps miss out on this chance to create connections with the places in-between. One also wonders if the several changes of address in the short time living here have enabled Anna and Tom to explore more of the city and thus gain a better understanding of its layout and therefore their location in it.

Travelling to School



Fig 7: The route Tom took to school every morning from their old address

The journey to and from school clearly played an important role in the lives of all three children. They all also had very clear standpoints and understandings on how and why they travel to school like they do. Since moving to their new address the situation has changed for Anna and Tom. Tom said that he first cycled to school without adult supervision when he was ten and a half and that he used to from the old house, whereas Anna travelled by car with their younger sister, but declared that since moving he was no longer allowed to as “it’s a little longer” to

school from their new house. Now, from their new house, he usually travels to school by car, but said he sometimes takes the bus home alone, although he professed that “I can still do it and I think I probably could ride to school, but it would just take a little longer and I would have to leave earlier...and it’s getting cold as well.”

Anna knew one boy who was allowed to walk to school alone, explaining “I have some friends who walk to school, but a lot live like on the other side of (town)....and so it’s a little far.” She declared a desire to travel to school by herself, with Tom clarifying that due to their parent’s jobs they often have to get dropped off a little earlier than their friends. Thus, by being able to go on their own they can get there when they want, when their friends are there. When asked how she would travel to school if she was allowed to do so unaccompanied, Anna said “probably bicycle...but if I could have my dream one I would go ice skating.” Anna’s dream of travelling to school by ice skates also highlights one of the difficulties in capturing and including children’s thoughts and desires in decisions affecting their lives. Whilst this may be extremely difficult to accomplish, it is not the impossibilities of making this a reality that matters, but the idea and imagination. As Jones (2008) stated, children seek out beings that “do not impose order and tidiness on their ‘other’ logics and practices.” This surely must also apply to places? How can planners and architects create places do not impose order and tidiness, but instead allow for children’s fantasy? Places where sticks become swords, leaves plates and stones food.

Lucas usually travels to school by car and said he didn’t think any of his friends were allowed to go to school by themselves, declaring “I think most of them go by maybe bus or car...bus or maybe bicycle.” When asked if he wished he could go to school on his own, he announced “I would go by car some years more, until I go by myself.” He went on to state that he would maybe start to travel alone in two years and that he would like to go by bicycle if he had the choice. When asked why, he declared that he was “too small” to walk by himself. He said that

perhaps when he is ten or eleven years old that he'd maybe be able to go to a park without adult supervision, but he felt twelve or thirteen would be a more suitable age for travelling to school alone.

Independence and control

When asked what they thought of the restrictions placed on many children's mobility Tom replied:

I think it's good that children get to go around, as otherwise, first of all they wouldn't learn and like when we grow up, then it would be harder or big change and it would be kind of sad if, like, I couldn't go around the city alone cos it would get boring after a while.

Tom displays an understanding of the importance, discussed by a number of researchers (cf. Hillman et al., 1990; Heurlin-Norinder, 1996; Prezza et al., 2001; Hart, 2002), of the outdoor environment and independence for children's physical, psychological, social, cognitive, spatial and emotional development and thus the transition into adulthood. Anna, carrying on from Tom's sentiments of boredom, felt that "if you're not allowed to be outside, it kinda feels like you're stuck in a place and you're more (unclear) and bored."

She perfectly captures the feeling of what it feels like to be a young child in the city today when she speaks of being "stuck in a place." Exactly what this "place" is isn't clear, but it feels very much like a mental state that could very well occur in her room or the car ride to school. The use of the word "stuck" also emphasizes the feeling of not being in control and being trapped. Notions of control frequently pop-up in discourse on children and the urban environment and often revolves around the adult control of space and time (cf. Wolfe, 1978; Holloway and Valentine, 2000) or children's lack of control over their own lives (Heurlin-Norinder, 1996; Kylin,

2003). Many of these studies also underline the importance of control in children's development and Heurlin-Norinder state that without "control over one's existence, we can never achieve quality of life" (p. 316).

One of the key elements of a walking interview is the control afforded the children. During the walks, without any prompting, the children would recount stories that showed they were independent and capable of doing things without adult supervision. Particularly during the first walk, both children reminisced over trips to buy candy and playing in their local park. For example, Tom declared, "sometimes when you've had, you know, a hard day I would go on my bike, go home, take my money ride back and buy some candy there (the shop)." Being slightly older than Anna, Tom illustrated the control he has over his own life in describing a simple trip to buy candy. The use of "my" stresses the level of control and independence he is afforded due to his age. Anna also displayed a willingness to show that she too ventured out without her parents, only in her case the "me" is replaced with "we" (with Tom). She also says that they were "allowed" as opposed to the casualness of Tom's story.

Anna: Yeah, and sometimes we were allowed to like take the bike road, either where we've walked and do the bumps (the hillocks in the park) and everything or go buy some candy at the shop at the end of the street.

Anna also excitedly recounted "oooooh once, my best friend, we went outside rollerblading by ourselves and it was really fun." Lucas also showed a certain pride when explaining that he could show me the way home from the school. Although he has very little independent mobility and is almost always accompanied by an adult or his older brother, he seemed to enjoy the control he had in leading the way. Despite of his lack of autonomy, he was eager to show the interviewer he knew his way around. This included pointing out where a friend lived and when discussing his

most frequented playground he made sure the interviewer knew he could find his own way there, declaring “I know where to go by myself.” He also mentioned that he had recently spoken to his mother about possibly cycling to his friend’s house instead of taking the car. When asked if he meant cycling alone, he said that he meant with his parents.

Barriers to Independent Mobility and Outdoor Play

Whilst walking the children spoke of a number of different obstacles for their independent mobility and outdoor play and involved a combination of their own opinions and attempts by them to explain things from an adult perspective. Lucas was of the opinion that the city itself was out of bounds for many children, declaring that “people in my age, I think, are not allowed to be outside...like in the garden yes and the neighbourhood yeah, but like in the cities I think you should maybe be like thirteen or twelve.”

The children highlighted a number of barriers during their accounts of their lives and were also asked why they thought children their ages had less independence than ever before. Their responses were grouped into themes and are listed below.

Traffic

Traffic is most commonly listed as one of the major contributors to children’s mobility restrictions (Hillman et al. 1990; Björklid, 2002, Barker 2003) and all three children cited cars and traffic as a major obstacle and a reason they believed children aren’t afforded the freedom to roam the city. During the first walk, it was evident that Tom was very much aware of the risks cars and roads posed and was always the first to press the button before crossing at traffic lights. Anna on the other hand often seemed to be unaware we were about to cross a major road and

was told several times to stop or wait. The children highlighted the drivers themselves as a problem as opposed to just the cars.

Tom: Sometimes it might be the traffic or like all the cars. Sometimes cars, either they don't see you because sometimes it gets dark early like now and if you don't have a vest it's quite hard or sometimes they just don't stop at all. Like you know, some people aren't polite sometimes.

Anna: There are lots of people in bikes and people in cars that can be not the best.

Lucas also spoke of traffic being an issue and the risk of drivers not seeing younger children due to their size. He also spoke of being allowed to cross neighbourhood roads, but not roads in the city. Due to the relative quietness of the road he lives on, Lucas explained that he sometimes played floorball in the street outside his house with a friend and that they would have to move the net to one side when a car came. Speaking to his mother later, she mentioned that she was stood guard the entire time, looking out for cars. The literature review highlighted the belief of many researchers and adults of the impossibility of the city for children. Hillman et al. (1990) spoke of the car's presence and the threat it posed for children's outdoor play, which is hinted at here by Lucas's story. He is lucky enough to live on a relatively quiet street, but many of the city's other children do not have this luxury.

Knowledge/Trust

Knowledge is at the heart of much of the discourse surrounding children's presence in urban environments. The inclusion of children in decisions and projects affecting their lives is often founded in the belief that children are experts of their own environments and that by using their knowledge one can create better places for children. Children acquire knowledge through the

physical experience of different environments. Children's lack of knowledge was something all three children spoke of several times and something they felt prevented them from being more independent. Tom explained that adults "might think we don't know as much and so we shouldn't or we don't belong..." The concept of belonging, as previously discussed, is also very prominent in discourse surrounding children and the city and something the children are clearly aware of. It echoes Connolly and Ennew's (1996) sentiments of unescorted children being out of place on the city's streets. Lucas also spoke of the lack of knowledge younger children in particular have:

We're just smaller. We don't know that much. Maybe you're six and you're allowed to go by yourself and then you go somewhere that you don't know and then when you are there you don't know how to go back.

When asked why they think adults sometimes don't think the city is for children, Anna replied that perhaps "they think we can get lost and I don't know do random things like jump onto a car..." Tom further highlighted this during a discussion when he stated that he would be allowed to travel to a newly built, edge of town shopping centre "if I had my bike I think they would probably allow me to go if I knew where I was going." As discussed earlier, children build their own mental maps of places based on their experience of different places and by restricting their opportunities to explore the city, their ability to do this is diminished.

Anna also hinted at a lack of trust on the behalf of parents, explaining that parents "probably know where you went, but not where you are." It also suggests the perceived need of parents to know where their children are at all times in order to avoid being worried, which O'Brien et al. (2000) found parents tended to do about most aspects of their children's lives. This resonates with Weller and Bruegel's (2009) work which explores trust and the impact this can have on

children's "experiences in and of public space" (p. 631). By denying children to play freely outside, they found that children's ability to create connections and relationships is reduced and that this also affects their ability to generate social networks. Good social networks and a sense of belonging also imply trust and a trusting neighbourhood is key in affording children greater mobility.

Location and distance

Many parents choose to raise their children in cities due to the time-saving distances the city provides and the convenience of having everything on your doorstep. The distance and location of places also plays a very important role in the lives of all three children. Several times they spoke of things being too far away for them to go to alone and thus the dependence they had on their parents to do the things they want to. Anna and Tom have always attended the same school, despite their address changes and the location of each address has also played a large part in the ability of Tom in particular to travel to school alone. At their previous address he was allowed to cycle to school on his own, but following the move he is no longer allowed. On the other hand, he showed his joy at being able to go to the skatepark when he wanted following their move to their new house:

The skatepark's probably my favourite thing cos, I used to, whenever my friends asked me if I wanted to go to the skatepark I had to ask Mom and usually she would be busy an stuff like that and now I live really close I can just go their whenever I want.

This statement also further emphasises the reliance children have upon their parents and the importance of control for children over their own lives. Anna, however, said that although she liked the new neighbourhood, there is a shortage of things she can do outside. She continues,

“I’m not really allowed to go outside in Västra Hamnen, because like I don’t know,” before explaining that:

There’s not like candy I can go and buy at like 3 minutes of bike or there’s not like a park I can go play if I want to. Yeah, and you can’t go play tennis. Sometimes I play tennis in the garden with Tom.

She clearly feels frustrated at the lack of opportunities she has to play outside on her own terms. Her mother had, during initial contact, spoken of the lack of a “special routine” at their new place of residence and suggested that we visit their old neighbourhood as she was allowed to play outside there. This also alludes to the lack of knowledge of the new area as an issue, suggesting the parents must first gain their own knowledge of the area before granting Anna her own freedoms.

Time

Tom: “I can still do it and I think I probably could ride to school, but it would just take a little longer and I would have to leave earlier...”

A shortage of time and longer journeys were also clear barriers to the children’s independence. The children themselves indicated that longer journey’s meant leaving earlier and perhaps this could prove problematic to the children and parents in fitting it in to busy schedules (cf. Mårtensson, 2004). Each of the children discussed their weekly schedule and the planned activities they attended. Anna ice skates twice a week and Tom plays piano and tennis and mentioned that he was considering taking up horse riding. He went on to state “I think we do about enough” when asked if they were happy with their current schedule. Lucas was very exact

with the details of his week, explaining “I do gymnastics three times a week, two hours, and tennis an hour on Saturdays.” He also went on to say that his parents both think he has enough activities, before clarifying that he has six hours of gymnastics per week.

On other occasions, Tom also suggested he had previously missed out on opportunities as his parents were too busy or didn’t have time to drive him to, for example, the skatepark. Discussing their travel to school, they spoke of having to be dropped off earlier due to their parents’ schedules and suggested that greater independence would allow them more control over their own time and schedule and thus more opportunities to socialize with friends.

Weather

The weather was mentioned several times, particularly by Tom, during the walkabout as a barrier to outdoor play and even freedom to play without adult supervision. Warm, sunny weather was seen as being more preferable to outdoor play although it seemed it was as much Tom’s decision as it was his parents. Both Anna and Tom spoke of the cold and that during the colder months this could limit their ability to, for example, walk to school alone. Snow was also described as being dangerous in the winter due to the added time it takes cars to brake. In one account, the children spoke of cycling to buy some candy together, but that “it started to rain a little, so we just went home.” Lucas also stated that weather plays a huge role in the time he spends outside and that during the winter or on rainy days he prefers to play inside as he is outside quite often at school. Snow, however, was only seen as a negative with regards to cars and during one account Tom spoke of the fun he had sliding around in his snow pants on their local football pitch.

Darkness

Anna: In the light I feel safe, but in the dark when there's not so many lights I don't feel as safe.

Tom: Now nothing makes me feel unsafe, I feel really safe. Maybe the dark is like, usually you can't see as well and usually like scary things tend to be during the night or when it's dark. And when it's dark it's quite late and there's not usually a lot of people outside so you feel more alone and like anything could pop up any second, probably.

Darkness was also something the children themselves saw as a barrier to playing outside and it was mentioned on a number of occasions, particularly in relation to cars and traffic. Tom felt that not being able to see added to a sense of insecurity and recounted a trip home from tennis on his bike and the darkness created by some large trees that made him feel unsafe.

Stranger-danger

Parent's perception of strangers and the threat they pose to their children is well documented (Barker, 2003; Fotel and Thomsen, 2004; Björklid and Gummesson, 2013). Both children, in the first walkabout, were very aware of a recent string of attacks on children in the city and other "dumb people," as Anna described them, and listed such people as a reason children may not be allowed outside unaccompanied. Lucas also spoke of "mean people" as a potential reason he thought none of the children in his class were allowed to travel to school by themselves. Following a number of well publicised attacks on young children, both Anna and Tom were very aware of the situation:

Anna: There is this person that, in Sweden, that we know, but that we've not found that's stealing children.

MW: Stealing children?

Anna: Taking children away!

Tom: I've heard, once they were talking about it at school and they're like "try to get your parents to come"...or like "walk in big groups" and stuff like that

In this account, the power of the school and the school's perceived duty to protect its students is unmistakable. In this instance, the school may well have, even if only temporarily, limited the children's ability to walk to school unaccompanied.

Other users

Anna: "Here is the park. Over there the play area is and here it's just green if you want to play and here there's sand pits and stuff. Once we tried to bike here (on grassy hillocks), but we couldn't because people were sleeping."

On a number of occasions the children suggested that other users can inhibit their ability to play outside. In this case, some grassy hillocks in a park which they found perfect for riding their bikes on were appropriated by people during warm days for sleeping and other activities. Although in this particular instance the children had been able to cycle without adult escorting, this example highlights the competition for space children's activities often face in urban environments. As discussed earlier, the children also spoke of the impoliteness or disregard for children some bike and car users showed, something they believed made streets dangerous and thus limited their ability to play outside without adult supervision.

Siblings

Tom: Now we're allowed to go out whenever we want, but or I'm allowed and Anna and (our younger sister) usually have to come with me, but we're pretty much allowed to go out if we want to go out.

Tom: But not everywhere in Malmö

Due to the age difference, Anna and her younger sister rely heavily on being able to go out with Tom to play. Anna had previously said that she wasn't allowed outside on her own very often, but Tom states here that they're allowed out whenever they want to, which suggests he plays a very important role in his sister's time outside without adult supervision. Other stories Anna recalled of time outside without her parents also usually always involved Tom and although this is not total independence, the excitement in her voice suggested such excursions meant a lot. Lucas also said that he was allowed to go out with his older brother and that they sometimes go to the local playground. He also hoped that he would be able to cycle to school with his brother in the near future.

Social Network

The importance of the children's school was evident throughout both walkabouts. It also appears to have provided a source of stability, both physically and socially, for Anna and Tom since their move to Sweden, particularly due to the instability of their living situation. Karsten (2010), in her study of children's social capital in Amsterdam, states that in many instances it is the primary school that "determines the children's social world" (p. 1660). Anna said that she usually plays with friends from school and that she usually invites them home to play, but she went on to say that "when I really have fun with, that's really of course sometimes when friends from France

come over and then I can like play with them for like at least 5 days.” Tom also said that he usually invited people from school to play:

I usually invite people from school cos there’s like...and actually there’s like 4 or 5 from my class that live in Västra Hamnen (their new neighbourhood) as well, very close to where I live...but I have to like, know a little more before I can invite them cos I don’t know exactly where they live, but err I remember seeing one of the girls from my class who was going to the other girl in Västra Hamnen.

Karsten’s (2010) study also found that friendships forged at school make it easier for children to ask other children to play outdoors and that this in turn can create connections in neighbourhoods.

Both children clearly have strong ties to France and other French children at their school. Tom spoke about a new French boy that had started in the school and that he had recently invited him to come over and play. The internationality of the school, as well as providing opportunities to meet other people from France, also played a huge role in the global reach of their social network. Both children have had friends move abroad recently, but ensured they still remained good friends.

Tom: Like two years ago I had a friend, a really good friend, since I had known him since primary school, the year we moved to Sweden , and he moved to America and I Skype him now and then and we’re still really good friends.

Anna: That’s kinda like my friend. She’s Swedish, but she moved to England, cos she also has English. Once, they came to Sweden for the summer house...I was invited for a sleepover and

once they came to Malmö to do something and then she was over to my house. But before when she was living in Sweden we had some play dates...

Both children also talked at lengths about the internet and other forms of technology they used to keep in touch with friends. They were both very knowledgeable on the latest models and ways of social networking online and said they also often used some form of social networking application to ask their friends to play.

Many of the friends they had in France were children of their parent's friends, but they said that since moving to Malmö they had themselves generated social networks for their parents on a number of occasions. It was also very clear that friends with French parents were amongst the most common their parents also made friends with. Tom described being friends with the new French boy and that his parents later invited them over for a coffee and became friends. Anna too had "a really good friend that was French" and another boy who was also French and that their parents also all became friends. She also spoke of a friend of hers who was the daughter to one of Tom's teachers who later became friends with her parents. When Lucas was asked about his parents and the friends of his parents, he said that although they weren't really close friends that his parents often stayed a while and talked to his best friend's parents after being dropped off by car. He also explained that his two brothers also attended his school and discussed the impact this had had on his parents' social networks. His parents had made friends with other parents with children at their school, therefore confirming the school's social importance in the city and that children are not simply the passive receivers of their parents' social networks, but social actors in their own right (cf. Corcoran et al., 2008; Weller and Bruegel, 2009).

Lucas said that the majority of his friends did not live nearby, but pronounced that his school friend lived "kinda close." Two girls from his school also lived nearby. He labelled one of the

girls as his “best” and “first friend” and said that they had known each other since preschool. Whilst a lot of the friends he spoke of were classmates, he also spoke of a boy from his neighbourhood. When asked how he met him, he replied “well, he just lives one house away from me, so he’s a neighbour” and that they had met whilst playing outside when they first moved into the house six years ago. He also highlighted that their parents had also become friends. What is clear after both walkabouts is the bonding nature of the social networks generated by the children. They are relationships between people who are very similar in many respects and belong to socially homogenous groups (Putnam and Goss, 2002; Karsten, 2011). Although the school is international and has children from around the world, there was still little sign of any bridging relationships, between people from different backgrounds and social groups. On the other hand, it is hard to draw any real conclusions on this due to the limited scope of this study.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to explore children's independent mobility in an urban context and found its role to be even more multifaceted and far reaching than expected. It is also clear that children's position in the urban landscape is more complex than ever before. The literature study found their position in the city to be full of conflicts, paradoxes and vicious cycles. As the number of children growing up in an urban setting continues to expand and competition for space also continues, the spaces in-between buildings become ever more precious and I worry as to what the future will look like for children living in urban environments.

Both the literature study and the walking interviews point to a daily life that consists of increasingly longer periods of time spent segregated from the city itself, in children's institutions, such as schools, and other places specifically designed for children. The walking interviews highlighted that, besides school and home, it was scheduled activities that represented the next most significant event in the everyday lives of all three children. In accordance with the findings from the literature review, the empirical data also found a reliance on the car as the key mode of transport in all three children's lives, due in part to time considerations and the geographic spreading out of their lives. Whilst the children may not be place bound as such, due to an increased overall mobility, it is their declining independent mobility which poses the greatest threat on the children's own development and relationship with the city.

Can it therefore be supposed that due to the geographic spreading out of children's worlds into small urban islands, that children have a good overall image of the city, but due to the marginalised, scheduled and fast pace of their lives, miss out on the chance to create any real connection with it? With the continuing dominance of the car in children's lives, what chance is

there for the creation of a real connection without physical sensation? One of the key components of this study was the testing of walking interviews as a method to explore and better understand children's relationship with the city they live in. Theory has shown that it is through physical connection that places become children's places (cf. Rasmussen, 2004). The walking interviews proved invaluable in this respect and clearly demonstrated the strong bonds the children had with places and spaces they had physically experienced with all their senses. A perfect example of this was the pedestrian tunnel under the road, a place the children had a clear multi-sensory connection with. On other occasions the touch or sight of something triggered thoughts and feelings within the children which led to a story or discussion. For example, upon seeing the grassy hillocks in their old park, Anna told of the time her and some friends wanted to cycle on them, but couldn't due to the presence of sunbathers. On the other hand, due in part to their increased mobility, the walking interviews also clearly demonstrated their good spatial understanding of Malmö's layout.

The significance of studying children in context (Graue and Walsh, 1998) was apparent immediately and the multi-dimensional nature of the walk allowed for a complete experience of place (Cele, 2006) for both me and the participants. Walking interviews are a research tool that put children in charge and asks them to show their world. The world they have created within the adult defined world. Moving together through the city's landscape prompted emotions and memories in the children that often resulted in the description of a story both verbally and physically. The excitement of the cycle path under the road was fully dramatized by Anna as Tom recounted the story of him and his friends throwing berries at cyclists. By physically being there with the children, one begins to see the most ordinary of things with new eyes and it is easy to get lost in their world. And if this project has taught me anything, it is that there is too little room for children's fantasy and creativity in the outdoor environment of the city of today.

All children in this study had varying experiences of the city and spoke of both the thrills and dangers of living in an urban environment, but what was clear was that it is still very much an experience steered by and including adults. Studies (Björklid & Gummesson, 2013) have shown that children start to gain more independence around Tom's age and clear differences were noticeable between the freedoms Tom has and those of Anna and Lucas. Being older, he has greater autonomy and this in turn meant he was both more knowledgeable and confident when discussing the city. His stories also illustrated a clear learning process that has involved feeling unsafe and being scared, but has resulted in an eleven year old that feels at home on Malmö's streets and also expresses a desire to further explore the city without adult supervision. On the other hand, Anna's feeling of being "stuck in a place" perfectly captures the feeling of being a child in the adult world. Her choice of words suggests she isn't talking about any place in particular, rather a time in space when she feels she has no control.

Attempts have been made in many of the world's cities to include children's voices in decisions affecting them, with the basic idea being the use of their knowledge of their own world to make a better one. On the one hand, children are seen as experts of their own world, whilst on the other, both the literature study and the walking interviews suggest this world is becoming more and more abstract and further removed from the reality of the city they live in. The exploration of their local environment and the city must also, therefore, be of some significance to their inclusion in participatory projects. How do we, as adults, planners and landscape architects, use the knowledge of children to plan for and make better cities for children if their knowledge base continues to revolve around this abstract world? Surely their independent mobility and inclusion in and experience of the spaces in-between the adult made world of children is of the utmost importance?

A key part of the literature study examined children's role as social agents in the generation of social networks and social cohesion. The walking interviews reinforced the importance of social networks generated by children at school. These networks were the most prominent in the lives of all three children both inside and outside of school and the findings also suggested, in support of theory (cf. Weller and Bruegel, 2009), that it was these networks which had the most impact on their parent's social networks. Through the arrangement of play dates outside of school, the interviews showed that the children did in fact "actively draw their parents into contact" (Corcoran et al., 2008) with other parents. However, due to the nature of this study and the exclusion of adults, it was difficult to assess the nature of these relationships and their impact on the building of communities. The children appeared to have an extensive network of friends spread throughout the city and one wonders what impact this spatial spreading out has had on notions of neighbourhood and community.

It was suggested by Fotel and Thomsen (2004) that both children's decreased independent mobility and their increased mobility can have an adverse effect on the "social glue" of the public realm. On the other hand, could it also be suggested that the spreading out of children's social networks across the city and into different neighbourhoods could lead to the creation of both bonding and bridging capital and even the gluing together of the segregated city? The geographic spreading out of their lives has seen an increasing reliance on the car, in particular for journeys to and from school. All three children in this study currently travel to school by car and this also raises interesting questions with regards to the location of schools and the choice of school made by parents for their children. It was clear from the walking interviews that the school still plays a central role in the social lives of children, but what does the choice of school mean at a larger scale and what does it mean for social cohesion and the building of communities? Weller and Bruegel (2009) urged for more research into the "differing spatial freedoms" of children in relation to social cohesion and I suggest this could also be expanded to include the effect school

location has on spatial freedoms. Buonfino and Hilder (2006) found neighbourhoods with children and schools to be more neighbourly than those without, but is this the case for schools comprised of children from different parts of the city not living in the area? What role does this choice play in the segregation of children's lives and the segregation of the city? Although this study shed some light on the social networks of the children involved, in order to capture a larger scale, further studies should also include the schools, parents and city council. Where do children live in relation to their school? Why do parents choose the schools they do and should freedom of choice still apply to schools? Schools have long been considered the hub of the community, but is this really the case today? Such questions could have major political implications on policy surrounding schools and further studies into the relationship between school choice, children's independent mobility and segregation are important and should be encouraged.

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Appendix A

Reflections on the Method

The literature review

Perhaps the most difficult part of the literature review was the initial search phase and finding the correct terminology to find relevant studies and articles. Early searches revolved around exploring texts relating to children living in urban areas and cities. This included research focusing on children's role in cities and their involvement and inclusion in everyday life, as opposed to, for example, their direct participation during the planning stage. Further searches revolved around planning for children in cities and children's geographies. This extended to searches on children's independent mobility and play before expanding to include sociology and environmental psychology based texts that included studies on social networks, social cohesion and social capital. With every new article found, reference lists were scoured and explored and this often led to the discovery of studies and research that shed light on theories and terminology for further searches. Children's geographies and the sociology of childhood is an enormous field and finding the balance between a more general overview and a more detailed look at the key issues was hard. Moreover, the uncertainties and complexities surrounding children and the city and the differing views and opinions expressed in the literature also added to the complexities in writing and compiling the literature review.

The literature study involved searching for keywords and phrases in Google Scholar, Epsilon and Primo. Keywords and phrases used included: childhood, children's geographies, social capital, social network, social cohesion, children in the city, space and place, place making, neighbourhood, independent mobility, autonomy, community development, place attachment,

public realm, agent of change, children's research, walking interviews. Other sources were also discovered through the reference lists of other publications.

One of the key objectives of this study was to test walking interviews as a method for understanding and exploring the everyday lives of children. Furthermore, it was also an opportunity for me, the researcher, to use the experience I have had working with children and to train my skills as a researcher of children. By writing down my thoughts I will hopefully better reflect on not only the method itself, but my own role as researcher and interviewer. What went well? What could I have done better? What should I do next time?

The parental consent letter

Due, in part, to a lack of previous experience, a number of reflections can be made on the parental consent letter for future reference.

The aim of the letter was to attempt to explain the purpose of the study and ask for permission in the clearest, most easily understood way possible. This was easier said than done, but I found it to be a useful exercise and a rewarding experience. Contact details were provided for further questions and the class teacher was also made part of the process. However, due to my limited contact with the children's parents, I relied heavily on the letter in conveying my purpose and in hindsight perhaps a parent meeting or something of that nature would have been beneficial before handing out the consent forms. In hindsight, the letters should also have been handed out earlier, as the letters didn't always make it home straight away. Some replies also took over three weeks and by this point time was an issue. The letter was only the beginning. A large number of parents declined their child's involvement, but a comment or two written on the reply slip led me to believe that perhaps some parents thought their child was not eligible to participate due to his/her limited independent freedom. The consent letter was therefore followed by e-mails to

parents who had declined, but had provided their e-mail address, confirming that the study was in fact interested in all children, regardless of their freedom to explore their neighbourhood. The aim being not to persuade them, but rather ensure they had a clearer picture of the study.

Those parents who had given permission were contacted via e-mail or phone and asked which time and date would best suit them and their child. This soon proved extremely difficult and on a number of occasions agreed dates were cancelled last minute due to busy schedules or illness. The varying schedules of parents and children also made it hard to walk with children in pairs.

Walking interviews

The first walkabout was the interviewer's first and also the first time interviewing or observing children in a research project. Upon beginning the walk, I posed a number of simple questions on how they travel to school to get things warmed up. It only took a few minutes before the dialogue turned from interview to conversation and became much more natural and productive. The children were siblings and this helped enormously in putting both the children and I at ease as there was already a good chemistry between them. This, in turn, led to some extremely interesting and meandering discussions and stories that hopped back and forth between story and experiences in the present. The walkabout was also performed mid-afternoon when it was still light and involved me dropping them back at school within two hours. This granted an element of freedom and flexibility to the walk, which allowed the children to take their time. This also meant we could talk about other subjects off topic in order to break up the conversation. The use of an iPhone to record all audio was very effective and due to its diminutive size, did not distract the children. The recordings were very clear and even picked up other important background noises, such as the kicking of leaves and the hops, skips and jumps of the children.

In contrast, the second walkabout was carried out with a single child and some clear differences were evident right from the start. Whereas in the first walkabout, the children had the support of someone they knew very well, Lucas was very much in the spotlight. All questions were aimed at him and in some instances he was unsure and answered “I don’t know.” This left the interviewer the task of attempting to rephrase the question or ask something else, whereas with Anna and Tom, one of them would often jump in and a much more natural discussion took shape, as opposed to an interview. There was also always the worry that by trying to encourage him too much, the result would just be him telling me what he thinks I want to hear, as opposed to his own thoughts and experiences. This walkabout was also shorter due in part to the time of day (late afternoon) and illness, which meant only a half an hour period was allotted to the walkabout, as opposed to the freedom of the first walkabout which allowed for more flexibility. Lucas therefore essentially just led me back to his house and did not get to show me his favourite places. He attempted to describe them briefly, but I found in the first walk that children love to show and tell and found great joy in acting out stories. It was cold and dark and it felt like the pace of the walk was much faster than that of the first.

Appendix B

Copy of the parental consent letter

Dear parent,

I am currently working part-time at (name of school) whilst also writing my Master's Thesis in Landscape Architecture at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

I am contacting you with regards to the possible inclusion of your child in my research study. The study is looking into children's role in the city with particular focus on their ability to create social networks and their freedom to explore their neighbourhood without adult supervision. Your child's participation would involve me accompanying them in pairs on their journey home and would involve me asking questions and observing their actions during the walk. For those children who are not usually permitted to walk to school without adult accompaniment, their participation will involve showing me places they are allowed to play without adult supervision in their home neighbourhood.

All children will remain anonymous in the final work, as will the name of the school.

If you would like any further information please contact me at markwilliamwales@gmail.com or on (tel. no.).

Your approval would be greatly appreciated. Please sign the below slip and leave it with (teacher's name) when completed.

Sincerely,

Mark Wales

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I do/do not give permission for my child _____
_____ (name of child) to participate in the research study described above.

(Print) Parent's name

Parent's signature & Date

Contact number/e-mail: _____