THE Great Book of the City:

CHILDREN'S NARRATIVES OF THE CITY

Lillian Llamas Acosta

CENTRE FOR CULTURAL STUDIES
GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Declaration of authorship

I, Lillian Llamas Acosta, declare that this thesis is submitted to Goldsmiths College, University of London in support of my application for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy. It has been composed by myself, and the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution.

The data presented in this thesis was obtained through a series of children's workshops called 'The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones' (*FIL Children* 2009, *Schools* 2011, and *Schools* 2012) that were designed specifically for this research. The workshops took place between 2009 and 2012 in Guadalajara, Mexico, and they were carried out by me. I designed and prepared such workshops, and the data analysis and interpretation are entirely my own work. I obtained authorisation by the Goldsmiths Research Ethics Sub-Committee on 29 October 2013 for the carrying out of those workshops.

Lillian Llamas Acosta

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To Víctor and Pepe, *mis niños*…

For the children you were not so long ago and for all the lessons you have taught me.

Acknowledgments

Abstract

The subjective aspect of urban experience, and urban imaginaries in particular, have not been addressed sufficiently in studies of children in the city. This thesis will address these imaginative and subjective issues as they play significant roles in the construction of children's urban lives. By referring to a set of short fictional stories that were produced by children as part of a series of workshops titled 'The Great Book of the City', the thesis approaches the city as a book made of interweaved stories, and thereby contests the idea that the city is mainly constituted by physical structures. I contend that children make sense of the urban environment through stories, and argue that their narratives are the place where they project their urban imaginaries. Narratives are also a tool for understanding the particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the city.

In particular, I explore three childhood everyday practices: moving, playing and dwelling. First, I argue that to study the child in the city we must consider the two factors of social space: the objective element (the spatial framework within which children live) and the subjective element (the space as perceived and imagined by children). Secondly, I claim that the way children make sense of the urban environment is both reliant on their encounter with the social city and on their internalisation of the cultural constructions of childhood. Finally, I maintain that children's experience of the city is partial and personal, since urban space is fragmented and subject to change, and because it involves children's own bodies at the levels of perception, memory and agency. I conclude that the short fictional stories not only allow children to project their urban experience, but also to (re)construct, imagine and contest their material realities.

Contents

Introduction

One day, around twelve years ago, I was sitting in the living room of my parents' home contemplating my eight-year-old brother riding a scooter around the dining table, and my ten-year-old brother playing some board game by himself at the coffee table. While I observed them perform children's activities considered to be 'normal', I reflected on the strangeness of the setting, and on the isolation of their play. When we (adults) think of children's play, we imagine them in an outdoor location, with other children, independent, resourceful, carefree and safe. As I observed my brothers achieve true enjoyment from this sheltered, solitary and aseptic mode of play, discordant with our (adult) imagination, I pondered the extent to which the city had changed from when I was a little girl; they were playing inside the house because (like many children from their generation) they were not allowed to play outside, whereas (like many children from my generation) I always played outside my house. As I observed them I started wondering if (and how) their childhood practices – so different from mine, and from those of other generations – influence the way they give meaning to their urban experience and what stories they would tell and use to shape their understanding and experience of urban life.

My brothers' games took place in a specific setting: the living room of my parents' home. That living room was demarcated by a ceiling, a large window, two walls, the kitchen counter, the staircase and the ceramic floor. That living room was likely drawn before it was real and it was located in a specific geographical location, so it may be mapped. It had good daylight, and several lamps kept it well illuminated at night. It had one access to the backyard of the house and one access to the street. The street was a large, well-connected avenue with the city streets network. That living room may be 'represented' in several ways as a tangible, concrete and objective space.

That living room was one of the first urban environments my brothers recognised as children – that living room as a part of the house, which is considered a part of the city, thus here understood as an element of the city in general. Those specificities are accurate. Yet that place is linked to their ideas, emotions, feelings, meanings, memories, etc. associated with it, and thus, any explanation of the urban environment focused solely on the facts would omit these important elements. It was the place where they used to play alone and together, where we had countless family reunions, where they opened their presents at Christmas, where one of them fell and broke his tooth, where the other one broke my mother's favourite centrepiece, where they used to do their homework, where they had fights with each other…There are so many stories they might tell about that particular living room and with each story the living room acquired as many meanings. Those meanings, those spatial stories, are more difficult to 'represent' than the physical living room; they do not fit on a map, nor can they be simply charted.

Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre insist that our urban experience does not merely 'occur' in concrete places, just as my brothers' urban childhoods did not merely 'occur' in that living room. The urban experience also happens in the imagination, in the constructions we make in our imaginary to articulate our experiences, in the meanings we invest in places and spaces, in the stories we tell to give sense to our urban life, like my brothers' experiences also happened in the constructions they made in their imaginaries to articulate their playing practices, in the meanings they invested in that living room, in all the stories they told when they were children and in the stories they have told since then that have given sense to their urban life.

So, if we cannot map or simply chart that subjective aspect of children's experience, then how do we access those imaginaries and meanings? Néstor García Canclini, in his study about the significance of the subjective aspect of urban experience for the exploration of urban travel, proposes that qualitative research is useful to access the ways in which different subjects and groups live in 'objective' conditions and construct their private worlds in relation to the public structures. In his study, he asserts that since a vast area of those private worlds is imaginary, it is understandable that when surveys are conducted and when one attempts to add generalities, those private worlds may not be evoked as much as when images are shown to a subject and they are invited to narrate what they see and imagine, for example (García Canclini, Castellanos & Rosas Mantecón 2013: 169).

What this implies is the significance of employing methods of research, evaluation and communication that are capable to address and convey the subjective aspect of urban experience. Qualitative, poetic modes of representation (creative fiction or narrative, for example), Natalie Collie argues, 'might be sometimes better suited to tracing this "certain strangeness" than the empirical formulations of an abstracting panoptic eye' (Collie 2011: 426). Narrative, she continues, 'can be a powerful means of making highly abstract, difficult, idealistic, terrifying, or difficult ideas and situations possible to imagine and be meaningful' (426).

We all tell stories and we live through them. Barbara Hardy says: 'We dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future' (Hardy 1968: 5). This adds up to the countless ways we use narrative to shape our lives. More than a tool for forming our autobiographies, storytelling is the frame for our everyday accounts too. This work is grounded in the idea that narrative is a fundamental way in which people fashion and make sense of urban experience. Stories connect memory, experience, the sense of time, event and other impalpable aspects as well as the more concrete aspects of the city. According to de Certeau, every story is a practice of space (de Certeau 1988: 115). In this sense, narratives do not only 'supplement' daily life and nor are they merely language translations or constructions;

stories help children to organise their urban lives (de Certeau 1988: 115-16).

Then, since stories structure and organise the experience of the city into meaningful relationships, I argue that narrative offers ways of accessing the subjective aspect of urban experience, namely, urban imaginaries. Narratives are a key to approaching urban experience as they enable children to express the meanings that underlie their own agency (which may or may not be part of a collective agency) involved in shaping their spatial practices. Children's narratives of the city are an underexplored area, but they own the potential to offer a significant approach to children's urban experiences. As Susan Engel claims: 'Children tell stories not only to represent experience as they know it to be, as they know others know it to be, but they also tell stories to represent experience as they would like to be' (Engel 1999: 57). Children's narratives not only allow us to enter into the way children give meaning to their urban experience and how they shape their understanding and their experience of urban life, but, they also allow us access into the subjective mode of children's urban experience.

I never asked my brothers about their stories of their childhood games inside the house. However, they are all grown-up now. So, I wonder what stories they would have told me back then about their childhood practices, and what those stories could tell me about their relationship with the city. I also wonder how they interpreted and dealt with adult-based intentions and interpretations of the urban environment. And, ultimately, I wonder what role the subjective aspect of the city and the urban imaginaries played in their experience of the city.

This thesis will attempt to respond those questions by focusing on the children's short fictional stories about everyday urban practices produced within 'The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones' (from now on referred to as *The Great Book*), a series of workshops designed and carried out specifically for this research. My contention is that the subjective aspect of urban experience (that is the urban imaginaries) is not considered when examining the relationship between the child and the city, although it is significant in the construction of children's urban experience. By referring to the series of short fictional stories explicitly produced for this work, this thesis approaches the city as a book made of interwoven stories, and thereby contests the idea that the city is mainly constituted by physical structures. I contend that children make sense of the urban environment through stories, and argue that their narratives are the place onto which they project their urban imaginaries. Children's fictional narratives are also a tool for approaching the distinct ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the city.

Hence, in this thesis, I contend that children's narratives of the city not only allow us to access children's experiences of the city, but also their imaginaries and the meanings they invest in it. Fictional narratives offer access into the subjective aspect of children's experience. Children's urban imaginaries, so difficult to grasp, are projected into their short fictional stories. The narrative approach I propose here is certainly new, but based on sound research. This approach can

contribute to the subjective dimensions of the city, and particularly to the deciphering of the formation of urban imaginaries, which are an undeniable force in the production of urban space. By looking at children's narratives of the city we will access children's urban imaginaries, and in consequence we will be able to reveal children's own perception and experience of the city, with an interesting reading of their needs, motives, wishes and anxieties regarding their urban experience.

Childhood memories of growing up in a spatial world

As I read the literature about the relationship of the child and the city,[1] I found an article by Kevin Lynch in which he investigates through retrospection how urban environments affect children (Lynch 1979). In 'The Spatial World of the Child', Lynch explores the childhood memories of his graduate students in city planning, and he develops a significant dimension of ekistics: the perception of children who grew up in the city.

Lynch attempted to make his students sensitive to how people are affected by their physical world. He asked them to think back about their own childhood, and then write a brief paper of their own memories of growing up in the spatial world. Lynch evaluated his students' childhood memories in terms of the features of the physical structure of cities to which adult planners and architects are generally not sensitive enough. These accounts of the city, accumulated in a lapse of fifteen years, shared strong similarities. Lynch states that all his graduate students mentioned the character of the ground, the character of space, certain features, like playing fields or schools (104-05). All these features, although they may not always be planned, are concrete, identifiable, quantifiable and measurable.

However, without realising it, Lynch's questions were definitely leaning towards finding something beyond the physical quality of urban space. He asked things like: 'What was each person's most vivid reminiscence? Where did each of them like to be? Where did he feel frustrated?' (103). 'Vivid' memories, favourite places and feelings of frustration are not only related to the quality or characteristics of a place; they are also directly linked to our personal circumstances, our interests and our education, for instance. Thus, there is a subjective aspect behind how we experience and perceive the spatial world that Lynch is not considering.

'The Spatial World of the Child' does well in terms of making the reader aware that the quality of the spatial environment actually affects children. Nonetheless, it fails to recognise the meaning element as a key aspect of urban experience. Lynch is mostly concerned with the physical and

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[1] This research does not attempt to engage with any exhaustive debate over the definition or classifications of cities, towns, etc., nor to register their differences. For the purpose of this work, the terms 'city', 'town', 'metropolis' and 'urban environment' are used more or less interchangeably.

visual aspects of the city. In fact, in a different study, he defined that every environmental image has three components: identity, structure and meaning (Lynch 1960: 8); however, he only explored the first two components (identity and structure) because he considered the meaning element too complicated to address (8-9).

Conversely, a study carried out in 1996 lead by Néstor García Canclini, albeit not working with childhood memories, does highlight the significance of the subjective aspect of urban experience. In *La ciudad de los viajeros*, García Canclini aimed to show what it means to travel in the year 2000 in Mexico City (García Canclini, Castellanos & Rosas Mantecón 2013). In this research, he aimed to understand travel not only as a macro social problem, but also as lived experiences, interactions between persons and groups, modes of living, negotiating and imagining what happens in a city (103). He concedes that what happens in a city (in this case Mexico City), and the meanings it acquires with time, is not only a result of the objective circumstances (i.e. demographic, economic and socio-political) of its development, but also the ways in which the inhabitants imagine those circumstances and nourish them with the interpretations of artists, writers, television and the media (110). One of the most noteworthy conclusions of García Canclini's work is that most of what happens in the city, even what closely concern us, is unknowable. For the inhabitants, the city is an 'enigmatic object', and to live in it, they make assumptions and myths; they articulate partial interpretations from different sources, and with all this, they construct a version of the urban reality that has little to do with 'scientific explanations' (170).

This coincides with Lefebvre's understanding of space. Lefebvre develops a theory that captures the actual changing and complex nature of urban space; he calls it 'spatial triad' (Lefebvre 1991). Many theorists provided their definitions of space, but various of these conceptions concentrate on the distinction between material space and social space – the difference between 'real' and 'imagined' space. However, Lefebvre's theory of space offers an attempt to integrate these dimensions, and in this way he articulates a 'unitary theory' of space which associates the physical space, the mental space and the social space (Lefebvre 1991) – a conceptualisation of space as 'real-and-imagined', as Soja subsequently proposed (Soja 1996: 11). And, in this regard, '"real" space, which is the space of social practice' and '"ideal" space, which has to do with mental categories', are connected and interdependent (Lefebvre 1991: 14). In this spatial triad three moments are identified:

- 'Spatial practice' is the closest to everyday life; it is the material interventions that require the competences and performance of the members of society. Spatial practice structures everyday reality and larger social and urban reality. For Lefebvre, the spatial practice 'secretes that society's space' (38); it is directly linked to the perceived space, to the perception of the world, particularly about their everyday use of space: their individual routes, places of encounter, and so on.

- 'Representations of space' refers to conceptualised space, to spatial representations. This is a

space that is invariably conceived. And, in these representations, semiology, ideology, power and knowledge are always embedded. This is the dominant space of a society.

- 'Representational space' refers to the space of everyday experience. It is the lived, a space of subjectivity, of human experiences, of people's sense-making. This is the space that bridges together the representations of space and the spatial practice.

Let us say that the representations of space is the abstractions of space, revealed in maps, design of schools, organisational policies, symbols and so on; then, the spatial practices are the material space, the concrete, the streets, the buildings, the flows of people, money and information, and every physical movement of people: their walking to work, their shopping for groceries, etc.; and, in between these two spaces, there is the representational space, the subjective space that allows individuals to make their urban experience meaningful to them. It is the space of imagination, of feeling; it is personal and intimate.

What Lefebvre maintains is that an encounter with the material space is articulated through the subjective and imaginary experience, and that the way we make sense of the urban environment is reliant on the social practices we engage with. In this regard, Lefebvre's triad also implies an incessantly evolving and dynamic construct of social relations that informs and constitutes social space. Nevertheless, the production of social and spatial relations does not aim to totalise nor to determine the complexity of space; on the contrary, it only strives to engage with the interdependent relations that produce it.

Therefore, as Fran Tonkiss says, 'the experience of the city is not only or always determined by larger social or economic structures, but also fashioned by the [people's] individual perceptions, mental maps and spatial practices' (Tonkiss 2014: 113). Then, every specific age group, social class or any particular group when experiencing space in determined time, produce certain meanings. That is, the perception of space, the symbolic meanings attached to it, and the associated everyday use will differ from class to class, age group to age group, and gender to gender. Different social actors have different 'spatial stories' to tell about their routes through the city. This way, each agent equipped with certain signs and symbols, constructs its world vision, its own perspective, and thus its own experience of space. What this suggests is that we are not mere consumers of urban space, nor constrained only by the social and spatial relations that frame our actions. To put it in other words, as García Canclini writes regarding urban travel:

> Appropriating the city is to occupy, to go through and use the material space, but it is also a combination of cognitive actions that occur within the mental space. We travel intensely through the metropolis using several means of transportation, but we travel even more through imaginary acts. (García Canclini, Castellanos & Rosas Mantecón 2013: 57, own translation)

Thus, García Canclini's study evidences what Lynch overlooked, that the urban environment is

not something that can only be evaluated in terms of its physical quality. However, while Lynch does not pay attention to the subjective or meaning aspect of urban experience, he recognises that his students' childhood memories can be organised by themes: the environment as a setting for action, the idea of territory or control, the sense of journeying, the sense of time and change, and the environment seen as a social symbol. These themes comprise something beyond the physical characteristics of the environment, they speak of those lived experiences, those interactions between persons and groups, and those modes of living, negotiating and imagining to which García Canclini referred.

Moreover, his students' childhood memories of the urban environment were emotionally charged. Lynch relates, for example, the memory of one of his students, who had been in Indonesia in a Japanese concentration camp during WWII, about a tiny patch of ground: 'The student could remember that piece of ground blade of grass by blade of grass, the tiny mounds, the little pebbles in it. It was indeed a whole landscape to him' (Lynch 1979: 103-04). For Lynch, this 'unusual memory' (104) is only relevant in terms of the focus on the character of the ground. Although we do not know the student's specific personal circumstances, we can deduce that he gave meaning to that particular patch of ground not for being a patch of ground per se, but rather as being somehow related to the traumatic experience of being in a concentration camp.[2] Thus there is some emotional process involved in his relationship with that patch of ground. Furthermore, it is through narrating the memory of that particular space and by investing meaning into that patch of ground that the student articulated his urban experience and made sense of his childhood experience of the spatial environment.

These emotional processes are not exclusive of Lynch's students' memories; they articulate every urban experience. My childhood memories of the urban environment are produced in the same manner. Unlike my brothers, I used to play outside the house. My family and I used to live (before my brothers were born) in a block of apartments that shared a small backyard. I remember playing in that backyard with other children from the neighbourhood. I have vivid memories of the height and shape of the trees that surrounded the yard and of the colour and character of the patch of dirt where I used to play to make cakes of mud. I can answer with excruciating detail every question about my childhood memories of the city, although they are mostly constrained to my particular domains: the backyard, my grandmother's garden, my travels to/from the store,

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[2] A large and expanding body of literature investigates, since the 1980s, the connection between memory and trauma in testimonies from survivors of the Holocaust with psychoanalytic, political and sociocultural approaches. The connection between memory and trauma is, since then, studied in a diversity of contexts of violence, from child abuse to genocides. In these studies, memory is analysed as a source of identity, as a site of struggle and as a moral discourse. Although I understand that there is an argument that could be developed from Lynch's example, regarding the matter of memory and its capacity to recall the 'truth' about traumatic events, and the ways in which memories of violence are defined by political and sociocultural discourses, these issues are beyond the scope of this study. I use Lynch's example about his student's memories of the concentration camp mainly because the strenuousness of the case regarding the student's experience of the urban environment allows me to confer a clearer argument about the problem of using childhood memories to study children's experience of the urban environment.

the street at my aunt's house where my cousins and I used to play…However, I constructed these memories during my whole life, feeding them with other experiences, with the acquired knowledge, with my frustrations and anxieties, with the stories I heard and read, and so on.

I have told time and again the story of how I learned to ride a bike in that backyard. I used to place my bike as near to the wall as possible, so, if I felt like falling off the bike I could hold myself to the wall. I distinctly recall the texture and colour of that wall. I remember that one of those days, a boy threw a rock at me and made me fall off the bike. I remember that day's weather, the texture of the floor as I fell down, and I also remember my scraped hands, the blood on my forehead, the pain, the tears and the girls that helped me. I have told the story of how I learned to ride a bike a hundred times, but I probably would not remember it (or would not remember in such detail) if it were not for the rock that hit me.

It is through narrating that event (or any other event) that I understood my childhood experience of the city, and it is how I gave meaning to the backyard of my apartment (or to any other urban environment). My story, like the story of Lynch's student in a concentration camp, is probably not objective, and my memories of the physical characteristics of that backyard, like the student's memories of the physical characteristics of the tiny patch of ground in the concentration camp, are probably not accurate either.[3] My experience, my memories and my story are not only determined by the social and spatial relations that shape my actions.

The urban experience is not objective. The themes that Lynch found in his students' childhood memories and the story of how I learned to ride a bike reveal that the construction of the urban experience is socially formed and it involves emotional processes. Furthermore, they show that it is through stories that we make sense of the urban world and we give meaning to our urban experience. Lynch was not specifically interested in the potential of stories or narratives. His aim was to achieve a child's point of view about the city, and by studying adults' memories of their childhood, he thought he could access it. But, although Lynch's study presented a novel approach to the urban experience through narratives, those childhood narratives of the city were in fact memories, which means that they were not the accounts of children, but of adults' memories of their childhood. Lynch also came to this obvious realisation: 'Certainly a more solid approach is to observe living children and to talk to them, trying to enter as closely as one can into their experience of the world' (Lynch 1979: 106).

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[3] It is not my aim to compare my childhood experience to Lynch's student's experience in a concentration camp. I understand that the psychological, political and sociocultural intricacies of the condition of violence and trauma in which Lynch's student's memories are situated are far off from my trivial experience of how I learned to ride a bike. So, while I recognise that the meaning, degree and consequences of the processes involved in the construction of memory of these two cases could not be comparable, here, I refer to Lynch's example only to emphasise that memories (whether the memories of a middle-class girl learning to ride a bike in Mexico in the 1980s or the memories of an extremely traumatic experience of a boy playing in a Japanese concentration camp in Indonesia in the 1940s) are not objective and they involve emotional processes.

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There are certain real inadequacies in studying an adult's childhood memories. We have to acknowledge, for example, that several people have distorted past events, or that they forgot things, or exaggerated them. As Mexican writer Juan Villoro claims: 'Although we have all been children, it is not always easy to retrieve that age: we have to shake off the defects of adulthood' (Quoted in Aguilar Sosa 2011: n.p., own translation). Accordingly, in his well-known essay 'On Memory and Childhood Amnesia' Ernest Schachtel suggests that:

> The adult is usually not capable of experiencing what the child experiences; more often than not he is not even capable of imagining what the child experiences. It should not be surprising, then, that he should be incapable of recalling his own childhood experiences since his whole mode of experiencing has changed. The person who remembers is the present person, a person who has changed considerably, whose interests, needs, fears, capacity for experience and emotion have changed. (Schachtel 2001: 285)

If we aim to explore children's experience of the urban environment, we have to acknowledge that children's experience of the world is patently different from that of adults. For instance, as Owain Jones suggests, their point of view is distinct due to their height and scale, they may have smaller spatial ranges, they know fewer 'facts' about the world, they have slighter memories and they have smaller stocks of experience, but, at the same time, 'their worlds are just as full as, or are fuller than, those of adults in their imaginative and emotional range. There are then, in effect, profound differences between these worlds, which cannot be fully bridged' (Jones 2001: 176). After all, the story of how I learned to ride a bike and the story of the student in the concentration camp probably changed over time and they are most likely filtered by our adult 'stocks of knowledge'[4] (175).

There is some consideration of the question whether adult scholars can adopt strategies permitting them to 'stand in the place of the child' (Philo 2003). To support this, Ward proposes that we 'go back to some unrevisited paradise and see how pathetically ordinary it actually is to your adult eye' (Ward 1978: 2). Thus, our adult memories and constructions of what it is or was to be a child are inexorably processed through our 'adultness' (Jones 2001: 177). So, if we want to have a child's point of view about the city, we inevitably need to study a child's point of view.[5] Nevertheless, the study carried out by Lynch, while limited, presents narrative as a seminal method to study children's experience of the urban environment.

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[4] The notion of 'stocks of knowledge', provided by Owain Jones, comes from Nigel Thrift's theory. Thrift suggests that individuals necessarily resort to their stocks of knowledge during their life. These stocks of knowledge are constituted by four types of knowledge: practical, unconscious, empirical and natural philosophy. And all these, to distinct grades, depend on experience and rationalisation, which, according to Thrift, children are short of (Thrift 1985).

[5] This thesis will not engage in any debate over the meaning of 'child' or 'childhood'. For the ends of this work, I use the definition stated in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which defines 'child' as 'every human being below the age of eighteen years' (UNICEF 1989: n.p.). However, *The Great Book* workshops only included children between seven and fourteen years old. Therefore, when alluding to children, unless otherwise stated, I refer to that specific age range.

Children's narratives and urban imaginaries

The gaps in the study made by Kevin Lynch showed that, as Alan Prout claims, 'Children experience and use the urban environment in ways that may overlap with but are also different from adults' (Christensen & O'Brien 2003: xv). It also showed that the urban experience is socially constructed and it involves emotional processes. Thus, different people and diverse social groups may experience the same city in distinct ways. The diversity in the modes of living and the heterogeneity of urban practices produce different imaginaries – that is, the heterogeneity of imaginaries is directly linked to the extent of points of view of the different subjects and social groups. This means that it is not only children's experiences of the city that differ from those of adults and other social groups, but that children's urban imaginaries are unique to the way they make sense of the urban environment and invest meaning into their experience.

Before advancing, I want to clarify that I understand children as social actors and active agents, which contrasts with former conceptions, which understood children as passive recipients and voiceless objects of concern who are reliant on adult care and control (Barrow 2002). So, it is essential to highlight that while there are still some conceptions of children that perceive them as dependent, in need of protection and incapable of effectively articulating their own needs, this is not the case. I base my conception on a constructivist view of childhood, which sees children as active agents rather than passive, engaged in taking information from their environment to use it to organise and construct their own interpretations of the world (Corsaro 2005: 10) – that is, 'Children are active agents who construct their own cultures and contribute to the production of the adult world, and childhood is a structural form or part of society' (4).

This work originates from the interrogation of how to access the subjective aspect of children's urban experience. This interrogation sets out a methodological issue: the study of the relationship between the child and the city should include a framework that not only understands and differentiates the particular ways in which children (as subjects) perceive and experience the world, but that also approaches it from the way in which children make sense of the world.

Over the last three decades there has been an upsurge in the interest from geography, sociology and urban studies about how to approach and conceptualise urban space. These studies take two distinct approaches: the conception of urban space as a product, and the conception of urban space as lived, experienced and socially constructed. On the one hand, the conception of urban space as a product is focused on the material aspect of space. This understanding of space is analysed from outside of space – namely, from the point of view of an external observer – because space as a product is understood as a footprint, an imprint mark that can be recognised by an external observer. In this conception, urban space is seen as an object, a device or a social fact. This mark or spatial form is studied in itself, that is, beyond the subject

that shaped it, although these studies may recognise that the subject (or the social group) imprints it with its own features. In any case, in these studies, the subject (when taken into account) is usually considered as a physical aspect of space. Thus, there is an aspect of urban experience that is not objective. Then, this understanding of urban space as a product, while useful, does not take into account the subjective aspect of urban experience, nor the meanings invested in the places and spaces.

Conversely, the conception of urban space as lived, experienced, represented and socially constructed aims to articulate the concrete and the impalpable aspects of urban space, that is, the 'real' and the 'imaginary' (Lefebvre 1991, de Certeau 1988, Soja 1989, Foucault 2002, Bailly 1993, Tuan 2001). This understanding of space does not mean a 'middle ground' between the 'real' and the 'imaginary', rather an interaction between both dimensions. This approach to urban space as experienced or lived entails methodological difficulties, because it means that space can only be studied from the point of view of the subject who experiences it instead of from outside of the subject. Urban space cannot be reduced to its geographical localisation, nor to the work or material product of a society or social group. Then, as Guy Di Méo & Pascal Buléon suggest, space cannot merely take into account the social groups, it must include the subject, the individual, the person and the actor (Di Méo & Buléon 2005: 39).

The challenge is to find ways to achieve the understanding of the spatial experience of the other. This suggests that the objective approaches to urban space are unable to articulate children's urban experience as subjects. As de Certeau insists, children's urban experience cannot be explained by the bird's-eye view logic, but by standing in it or walking through it (de Certeau 1988: 91-93). Thus, it is important that we recognise that any conception of urban space must include the perspective of a subject situated in a place, standing in an urban setting. In this way, we will be able to approach and reconstruct the spatiality that children as subjects are able to perceive, experience and imagine from their own place, from their own perspective of the urban world.

I must clarify exactly what is meant by the notions of 'perception' and 'experience' that will be used throughout this work. Perception is the psychological function that equips children to transform the stimuli of the senses into an organised, coherent and meaningful experience. This is part of the cognition process and it involves the presence of objects. Perception is part of cognition as long as it involves the direct sensory contact of children with any given space, while cognition may come from indirect sources (Rapoport 1977: 178). In consequence, perception is a process that involves both the interaction of the perceiver and the environment. In this sense, space exists through perception. Nobody can know a space but the one that is perceived (374).

Nevertheless, each child, individual or social group has a biased perception of the objective urban reality since this reality is determined by the perceiver's cultural values, experience, history, aspirations, adaptation level and so on – that is, a series of features that drive the child

to create his/her own universe that is organised in a concentric manner around himself/herself, and that has an immediate space, which is the environment he/she inhabits, a space constructed with personal and direct information. Therefore, perception is personal and intimate, there cannot be a sole prevalent vision of a place, as Antoine Bailly writes: 'No one single vision of a place is feasible. Above us, there is no but one sole heaven, but rather thousands of them which evolve, fall prey to change, and find their sources in our lived experience' (Bailly 1993: 247).

However, experience, as Yi-Fu Tuan defines it, is the all-embracing expression for the diverse means through which a child (or a person) knows and constructs a reality (Tuan 2011, 1979). 'These modes range from the more direct and passive senses of smell, taste, and touch, to active visual perception and the indirect mode of symbolization. […] Experience is directed to the external world' (Tuan 2001: 8-9). According to Tuan, the experience of space has a symbolic dimension that is dependent on the sensory dimension. Thus, as he writes, 'spaces reflect the quality of the […] senses and their mentality' because 'the mind frequently extrapolates beyond the merely sensory evidence' (Tuan 1979). For example, notions of amplitude or vastness of an ocean or a continent are not directly perceived, but learned through verbal or numeric symbols, which generate the emotional effect of perception. As Tuan says: 'The study of space […] is thus the study of a people's spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience. Experience is the totality of means by which we come to know the world: we know the world through sensation (feeling), perception, and conception' (388). Therefore, experience is both feeling and thought, and refers to the distinct ways in which children know and construct their reality – feeling and thought are the constitutive parts of the continuum of human experience that includes every sense and act of symbolisation. In other words, children's urban experience integrates both the objectivation (through the established relationship between the child and the urban environment) and the material and symbolic realities, within the everyday practices constructed through time and accumulated in the experience.

Then, since children's urban experience involves their own position and their own perspective of the urban world, it becomes pertinent to consider urban space as lived, experienced and socially constructed because this approach takes into account the point of view of the subject, that is, of the child. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that most of the understanding of urban space as well as the way cities are planned and organised is constructed from the perspective of space as a product and from an external point of view of the subject-inhabitant. This presents methodological difficulties, because any approach employed to understand urban space from the point of view of the subject (that is, of the child) must not only acknowledge that space is not only something material, and in consequence, measurable, but also needs to recognise and consider that the city as a material space is traditionally planned, constructed and defined as a product. Thus, urban space is the immaterial associated to the material.

In the conception of urban space as experienced (Tuan 2001), the understanding of space as a social construction allows us to find the middle ground that neither disregards the materiality of space on account of an exclusively idealist or subjectivist conception of space, nor overlooks the immaterial aspect of space, because the social construction of urban space implies both the material aspect as well as the sense and meaning. This sphere where the objective aspect of space and the meanings created from subjectivity meet is a fertile ground for the production of endless urban imaginaries about the diverse aspects of daily life.

Urban imaginaries can be defined as multiple and varied mental constructions (conceptions) socially shared, produced to invest meaning into our experience. In other words, urban imaginaries refer to symbolic constructions of what children see or what frightens them or what they wish existed. Urban imaginaries complement, supplement and occupy the fractures or gaps in what children (can) know or understand about the city (Lindón 2007a: 89-91). Edward W. Soja defines 'urban imaginary' as 'our mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality and the interpretive grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live' (Soja 2000: 324).

Hence, the study of urban imaginaries proves to be a pertinent approach into the access of the subjective aspect of urban experience, because its constructivist approach aims to articulate the relation between both the objective and the subjective aspects of urban space – that is, between the 'real' and the 'imaginary' – from the perspective of the spatial experience of the subject. This understanding of space is framed within the constructivist theory which proposes that when we narrate (in a world always shared with others) we create the reality, because our words (the pieces of a language socially constructed and shared) give meanings, identify certain elements and omit other elements of the external world (Bruner 1986, 1990, 1991, 1996, 2003, 2004, Berger & Luckmann 1991, 1995, Gergen 1997, Searle 1995, Schutz 1976). Accordingly, the same phenomenon, the same reality, can be constructed in different ways in relation to the distinct points of view and in consonance with the different ways of naming them, and even more ways to narrate them.

However, while the study of urban imaginaries can enter into the meanings of space, these meanings are not presented in isolation, they only emerge along with the children's (or subjects') actions or practices. This suggests that it is through the meaningful practices and the meanings invested in the spaces of life that children undertake day by day the social construction of each place in which their existence takes place. In this regard, Di Méo & Buléon suggest that the actor is not a mere human being, but a person that *acts* (Di Méo & Buléon 2005: 29). And, as Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann suggest, the meanings are always the meanings of something (Berger & Luckmann 1991). Hence, an approach to urban space through the study of imaginaries allows us to explore the weave of meanings in direct relation to the spaces and places, to the

practices and to the subject. In this sense, meaning constitutes an impalpable aspect that links place with its practices and with the actor who makes them.

Therefore, if urban imaginaries allow us to enter into the meanings of places and spaces, it is important to emphasise that these meanings are articulated through the 'making' of the everyday urban practices. Then, the challenge is to find ways to 'read' those practices, despite the banalities, the taken for granted and the 'natural' associated with the everyday practices. Then, how do we capture the everyday practices along with their spatiality? The literature suggests that there are at least three possible ways to capture the everyday practices and their spatiality: 1. through observation, 2. through images, and 3. through the narratives of the subject that makes those practices.

The first approach maintains that the spatial practices can be observed. This is the most common approach used to study children's relationships with the city. The most significant of these approaches is employed in *The Child in the City* (Ward 1978). In this influential work, Ward, from his observation of children's practices, makes an account of the ways children interact with their social and built environment, differently and at times in opposition to adults. It asks whether it is true that something is lost in the relationship between the child and the city, and it examines the way this relationship might be more fulfilling for both the child and the city. Along the same lines, Roger Hart wrote about children's perception of the landscape in *Children's Experience of Place* (Hart 1979). Hart spent two years working with a group of children in a small town in Vermont, observing their practices, in an attempt to understand the particular ways in which children experience the urban environment. Albeit both Ward's and Hart's works provide abundant and rich information about how children use the city, the problem with their approaches, and with the observation approach in general, is that while they do pay particular attention to the practices and their spatiality, they do not take into account children's imaginaries, because these perspectives are constructed from the point of view of an observer and are mostly focused on establishing children's particular uses of urban space rather than on the meanings of space.

The second approach proposes that the spatial practices and their meanings can be captured through images, for example, through photos taken by children (Rasmussen & Smidt 2003), through cognitive mapping (Lynch 1977, Matthews 1992) or through children's drawings (Halldén 2003a, 2003b). This approach through images is commonplace in children's urban geographies. For example, Howard Andrews contrasted the extent of children's urban knowledge and the urban image that children from different areas of Toronto internalised through cognitive mapping (Andrews 1973). Then, a more recent study by Shirl Buss explored the vision of the contemporary city of children from five sites of Los Angeles. Through the photos children took of their homes, neighbourhoods, schools and communities, Buss analysed how children

perceive the spatial morphology of the urban environment that surrounds them (Buss 1995). Nonetheless, in these approaches, like in the majority of the approaches that use images, the focus is put on the meanings that the subject attributes to the image, and, thus, indirectly, to the space represented in the image. In this approach, the visual, the images and the iconographic are understood as spatial representations and symbolisations.

The problem with this approach is that most of these works place an emphasis on the examination of the geographic image that children construct of their environment, as it is reflected on maps, drawings and other graphic representations. What we may find in these studies are mainly interpretations regarding accounts of recognised or remembered buildings, demarcation between real and represented distances, identified spaces and landmarks, preferred and avoided places, and other elements strictly related to the physical structure of the city. What is absent from this line of research is any effort to acknowledge the city as something more than a conglomerate of streets, buildings and spaces. In other words, to think the city as a social world defined also by groups of people, institutions, relations and imaginaries.

Lastly, the third approach, through narratives, is an unexplored method. This approach suggests that the spatial practices, given that they are always filled with meanings, can be remembered and spoken, and they constitute the guiding thread that articulate children's narratives. In this approach, interviews, group discussions and life stories are the most common strategies used to examine children's urban practices and their spatiality. However, the interviews and group discussions, for instance, are used more to explore specific aspects of children's uses of urban space, than the meanings or imaginaries of the city (Valentine 1997, Tomanovic & Petrovic 2010, Elsley 2004). Additionally, the life stories focus on childhood memories, that is, not a child's point of view, but the childhood memories of an adult, which becomes problematic due to the limitations discussed earlier (Lynch 1977, Chawla 1992). Therefore, all these works only take into account two out of the four fundamental aspects necessary to access children's urban experience: the spatial form, the spatial practices, the actor who makes these practices and the meanings of place.

There is, however, one example that uses fictional stories for the study of children's relationships with family, home and house (Halldén 2003a, 2003b). In this study, Gunilla Halldén asked children to 'think about a possible future life, to draw a picture of a make-believe family and of the house they could imagine themselves living in when grown up. [They] were then asked to write a story about their fictitious families' (Halldén 2003a: 34). Over a two-month period, the children wrote on the same theme from time to time, and each created a personal book of narratives. Halldén's use of fictional stories reveals, without her realising it, that children's narratives are shaped by symbolic, cultural and ideological constructions of childhood, while at the same time they present their own perception, experience and their understanding of the reality, and their wishful thinking. In this way, children's fictional stories tell something about how children as social

actors, from their particular social position and cultural point of view, make sense of the world. Nonetheless, while Halldén proved that children's fictional stories offer a valuable approach to children's practices and their spatiality, her main interest in using fictional stories was merely to determine '[w]hich places are important to children and what makes them important' (Halldén 2003a: 43) rather than to explore children's experiences in their relation to the social production of space or to explore the role of narratives in children's understanding of the world.

As discussed earlier, children's urban experience is not produced outside of the social production of space. Urban imaginaries, in this sense, allow us not only to enter children's practices and their spatiality, but also the interweaving of meanings produced in the city. This is because urban imaginaries, are, first of all, social imaginaries. They allow us to perceive, explain and intervene in what each society or social group considers the reality. It is through urban imaginaries that children, individuals, groups and societies construct and divulge their understanding of the spatial form and of their practices of the city, and, thus they are directly linked to ideology and symbolic representations.

Therefore, if we ought to explore the subjective aspect of children's urban experience, we need to employ a method that not only captures children's everyday practices and their spatiality, but that also considers: 1. the space seen through the eyes of the child (as a subject), that is, the space as perceived, 2. the place in direct relation with space and society, that is, place understood as a producer of society and, at the same time, as a social product – in this way, place is the result of the continual interaction between the subjects that construct the place and the place that shapes social life, 3. the place in the dialectic interaction between the spatial forms and the sense of place, that is, place is both material and immaterial, because the material aspect of the urban environment is the result of the feelings, perception and conception of the material forms of the social subjects that define it, plan it, regulate it and control it, and 4. the networks that articulate the urban places – even virtual or distant – from the experience of children.

In this sense, although Halldén's work fails to recognise the role that urban imaginaries play in the definition of children's practices and urban space, fictional stories, as the following short fictional story produced within *The Great Book* workshops illustrates, as a methodological resource, possess the potential to offer a significant approach to children's urban experience:

> Once upon a time there was a boy who lived in a rather ugly plot. He studied the sixth grade, his mother was a stay-at-home mom, and his father worked really hard to earn their daily bread. The boy dreamed of becoming a great professional football player. So, after many many years, the boy grew up. One day, he was playing [football] with his friends, some men saw him playing, and, his dream [of becoming a professional football player] became a reality. He, his mom and dad moved [into a house] in a gated-community. And, after several months he got married, had children and they lived happily ever after. (DWL069-JM6B)

As the abovementioned story exemplifies, when the spatial practices are narrated by the child (as a subject) who makes them, the narrative includes an attribute in addition to the characterisation of the actions, which will always be more or less altered in relation to the facts that they originated from. This additional attribute means that the events (the factual component) are articulated in the narrative with fragments from a net of meanings that have value for the child and that are part of the mesh of meanings of the society or social group in which he/she is immersed and that constitutes a part of the filter through which the child sees and evaluates the world, and acts in it. For instance, in the story we can read the child's dwelling and playing practices, framed within the socio-economic situation of his family, but also shaped by the individual capacities, dreams, needs and aspirations of the boy.

Accordingly, Phebe Cramer writes: 'Stories do not reflect historical truth; they provide a version of the underlying narrative, and they present the storyteller's reworking of experience into patterns, or storylines, that serve to make experience comprehensible and meaningful' (Cramer 2004: 28). In this way, children (like the child who wrote the said story) as storytellers construct their world, and this construction is used to both explain their experience and help them deal with those experiences (Morgan & Murray 1935). Children's experiences consist not merely of 'biographical facts'. Instead, it is the way in which these facts are interwoven, the context in which they are placed, and the interlacing of cause and effect that provides a distinctive construction to each individual life. Hence, each life is a constructed story, not diminished to historical facts.

As Susan Engel argues: 'Storytelling is a deeply social activity, but an equally powerful private activity. Children tell stories when alone, they tell stories that have private meanings, and they use stories as much for internal thoughts and feelings as they do to communicate and to think' (Engel 2005: 208). In this way, stories help children to think and help them to organise and articulate their experience. So, as Engel expresses: 'Children use narratives to achieve a whole host of important tasks in the process of development. Like language in general, narratives have the power to be about something, at the same time that they do something' (Engel 1999: 57).

Nevertheless, children's fictional stories, while unique and individual, are intertwined in a mesh of meanings and relations within the complex process of social production of the city. As the aforesaid story shows, both the importance of the house as a satisfier of the socio-economic needs and the explicit location of this in a gated-community as a symbol of wealth, demonstrate that while unique, the story is situated within the society that have assigned those meanings to the house, for instance.

Therefore, stories are not only about the objective aspect of experience. Children never just tell the story of their own experience, nor do they project simply in terms of themselves. That is, every urban experience is embedded in the social, there is no individual without the social. So, I consider stories not just as accounts of the single experience of the self, but as representations of how lives

and the social intersect. Furthermore, this socially formed experience also involves emotional processes, which include conscious and unconscious fantasies, and recognition of complex social and personal aspects. This is well exemplified in the said story with the boy's need to improve his socio-economic conditions, his deep-rooted family relations, and the portrayal of the boy's dream of becoming a professional football player. Fictional stories, then, like the experience, are also determined by social deprivations, by love, by affection, by bonds, and so on.

From this angle, fictional stories provide abundant material for studying children's experience of the city. They allow us to enter into the complex patterns, textures, digressions, and paths that constitute their experience and self in a socially constructed urban environment. The exploration of children's urban imaginaries through fictional stories offers a window into the meanings children confer onto places, everyday practices and the spatial experience, as well as onto the social weave of meanings in an integral way. Therefore, I observe that through the exploration of children's fictional stories I address some of the limitations of previous approaches to the study of children's urban experience.

Hence, as I will show through the analysis of children's narratives, I maintain that children's fictional stories of the city are a rich source of knowledge: they allow us to understand the way children perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment, they help us to examine the relationships and tensions between children and other urban actors, they permit us to reflect on the urban space from a different perspective and agenda from that of adults; they reveal what it means to be an urban child today, while leading us to make a critique of the contemporary city; they enable us to think about the ways children engage with urban spaces at the levels of perception, corporeality and agency; they unveil the processes that take place in the city and how the city takes shape in the urban imaginary of children; they offer a way to relate issues of urban childhood to wider debates within the social theory and analysis; and they provide a way to pursue further questions regarding the importance of writing, subjectivity and imaginaries for the study of cities.

Children's narratives of the city

In the previous section I showed that fictional stories are an important source for the understanding of children's urban experience. The relationship of children and the city, thus, is thought-out in relation to their own narratives, that is, in relation to the way they construct the city in their imagination, the way they experience the city in their everyday life and the way the city gives meaning to them. This project is therefore based on the idea that children make sense of the urban environment through stories. We begin from the notion that people tend to think in narrative mode, in events unfolding in time, rather than in static images.

At the outset, I shall make the semantic distinction between fiction, short-stories, storytelling and narratives that will appear throughout this work. I refer to 'fiction' as the general term for 'invented' stories, not to be confused with 'fiction' as often used as synonymous with the novel. The 'fictional' character of the analysed short-stories is given to emphasise the imaginative nature of the process of making up stories. However, as I further explain later in Chapter 1, where I will discuss the methodologies used in this research for the data collection and for the analysis of the material, children's stories were constructed with a focus on the creative imagination, to facilitate children's projection of their urban needs, motives, wishes and anxieties onto their narratives.

As 'short-story', I identify a 'fictional prose tale of no specified length, but too short to be published as a volume on its own' (Baldick 2001: 236). A short-story will generally focus on a single event more economically than a novel's prolonged exploration of a social background (236). When I mention short-stories, I specifically allude to the short fictional texts written by children within *The Great Book* workshops.

'Storytelling' here is identified as the act of narrating, whether orally or written. I conceive storytelling as a means of understanding the world and constructing a narrative in response. Therefore, in any attempt to understand the subjectivity of children's urban experience we must necessitate storytelling. Storytelling is certainly a straightforward and familiar task. We are all used to not only telling stories, but also to comparing them, accepting them or refusing them. It is then a task that we all know how to employ. This unique aspect of humanity helps children to construct their own realities and communicate them to others. In this sense, storytelling is the tool used to explore children's experience of the city.

The concept of 'narrative', to which the title of the thesis refers, is what Bruner defines as narrative thought: the thought process involved in creating a story; events and experiences are organised into plotted structures (Bruner 1990: 43). Bruner proposes that there are two basic modes of thought: both are complementary but irreducible between them (Bruner 1986: 9). That is to say, the understanding of one mode of thought does not authorise us to understand the functionality of the other mode of thought and does not allow us to understand the human thought as a whole: 'each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality' (11). Bruner calls one the 'logico-scientific mode', and the other the 'narrative mode' (13).

Therefore, the concept of narrative thought relies on a contention that it is an important instrument of human knowledge for making sense of experience and of the world (Bruner 1986, 1996, 1991). With the aid of characters and a plot, surroundings and actions are linked to each other (Bruner 1986). The term 'narrative' may be used in different ways throughout this work. It can either refer to the product or to the process involved in creating the product, given that the short fictional stories to be analysed here belong to the realm of narrative thought.

As said earlier, the central thesis of this work is that urban experience is subjective, and the construction of urban space is socially formed and involves emotional processes. Moreover, it is through stories that children make sense of the world and give meaning to their urban experience. Children's narratives of the city not only allow us to access children's experiences of the city, but also their imaginaries and the meanings they invest in it. Therefore, fictional narratives offer access into the subjective aspect of children's experience. Children's urban imaginaries, so difficult to grasp, are projected into their short fictional stories. The narrative approach I am proposing here is certainly new, but based on sound research. This approach can contribute to the subjective dimensions of the city, and particularly to the deciphering of the formation of urban imaginaries, which are an undeniable force in the production of urban space. By looking at children's narratives of the city we will access children's urban imaginaries, and in consequence we will be able to reveal children's own perception and experience of the city, with a fascinating reading of their needs, motives, wishes and anxieties regarding their urban experience.

The intention of this research, however, is not to look at the individual children's narratives to explain each individual experience. Rather, my aim is to look at the individual narratives to explain the collective experience of children. If urban imaginaries were only the product of individual imagination, we would be facing an object impossible to grasp: a complexity that no discipline of knowledge would be able to number. As mentioned earlier, to organise imaginaries entails the understanding of their 'social' character, that is to say, how they can express certain forms of active, collective imagination, which gathers and transcends the individual imagination. In other words, it is through two mechanisms that imaginaries are constructed: on the one hand, through the institutional pressures, and conversely, through the subjective exercise that concedes to the human experience a collective meaning.

This social constructed imaginary is what makes this work possible. Although the city is the place par excellence for the collective experience, each individual experience takes place in a determined space and at a precise time; the individual experience is therefore unrepeatable in space and time. Yet the work of imagination allows us to separate those urban experiences into the one or two imaginaries that are shared and assumed by the children of a specific group.

It is important to highlight that the imaginary's bases are subjectivity and symbolic construction; therefore, the value of this concept relies on its potential to reconfigure the urban reality. It is in this reconfigured reality (the urban imaginaries) that children carry out their everyday practices, as they form part of their 'reality'. The images, imaginations and modes of life in cities (as security, public action, housing strategies, notions about other inhabitants, etc.) are shaped from specific ways that combine information, experiences, needs and fantasies, and that cannot be understood from merely objective, rationalist, or totalising perspectives. As Lefebvre argues, an engagement with the material space is articulated through the subjective and imaginary experience, so the

way children make sense of the city is reliant on the social practices they encounter.

Given the nature of children's narratives as constitutive parts of the mesh of meanings of the urban society in which they are immersed, the city is understood as a complex dynamic weave of endless and diverse narratives that are constantly (re)interpreted and (re)written. Children make sense of the city by telling stories, by narrating their path through it, and also the stories told by others help them to organise their ideas of urban culture. They remember their experiences; they confront and project their ideas of space by reading books, by watching movies, and so on. All this together shapes the way children give meaning to their urban experience. Since children's urban narratives create storied routes to live by, by exploring such narratives we can move towards an approach to the city as an interweave of stories. Urban narratives make places believable and habitable, they evoke and produce imaginaries and they organise the impalpable meanings of the city.

By referring to a series of short fictional stories that were produced by children within *The Great Book* workshops, a series of workshops designed and carried out specifically for this research, this thesis approaches the city as a book made of interwoven stories, and thereby contests the idea that the city is mainly constituted by physical structures. I contend that children make sense of the urban environment through stories, and argue that their narratives are the place where they project their urban imaginaries. Narratives are also a tool for understanding the particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the city.

Here it is important to note that I am not particularly concerned with the specificities of the Mexican urban experience in this work, so I will not delve into the local particularities of the context of the analysed stories, unless and when it proves to be relevant for the discussion. While the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops provide ample and rich material for a reading of the Mexican (from Guadalajara, to be more precise) children's urban experience, the central aim of this work is rather to provide the theoretical and methodological support for the use of fictional narratives to capture the subjective aspect of children's urban experience. Whereas I will provide a reading of children's needs, motives, wishes and anxieties regarding their experience of the city, this will be done in order to advance my argument that children's fictional narratives are conducive to studying the relationship between the child and the city.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that most of the relevant literature has been largely produced in North America and Europe, thus, the decision to anchor this work in this literature responds to the lack of significant literature produced in Mexico or Latin America. Consequently, the fact that I include little or no literature that discuss Mexican children's urban experience explicitly stems from the availability of literature about children's geographies, and not because I will not analyse the local particularities of Mexican urban childhood.

This work is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the methodology used for the data collection and for the analysis of the material. In Chapter 2 my aim is to show that by understanding the city as a book, made of interrelated stories, we may contest the idea that the city is not only composed of physical structures, but also constructed by the intersecting lives, narratives, imaginaries, meanings and experience of those who live there. If we understand the city as a book, it must be made of stories, so in this chapter I argue that since children make sense of the urban environment through stories, children's narratives of the city become both the place onto which children project their urban imaginaries and the tool for our understanding of the particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment.

The rest of the thesis comprises three themed chapters that correspond to a specific childhood everyday urban practice: moving, playing and dwelling. I chose these everyday practices because their different particularities allow me to advance the argument that children's experience of the city is subjective. At the same time, they allow me to show that children, as subjects and as actors, construct the city spaces and places day by day, in a constant interaction with the material environment and with the different social actors, and through the constant negotiation and imagination of what happens in the city. What the children's narratives show collectively is that when speaking of the relationship between the child and the city we ought to think about children's social reality and the way this reality is mediated through the subjective and imaginary experience.

As discussed above, the everyday practices shape, define and structure children's lives. Sarah L. Holloway & Gill Valentine claim that to think about spatiality and childhood, we need to 'focus on those everyday spaces in and through which children's identities are made and remade' (Holloway & Valentine 2000: 9): 'the street, the playground, the school and the home' (9). These four everyday spaces mark most of the agenda regarding the study of children's relationships with the city. They define their lives, their concerns, their dreams, their experiences and their stories. I concur with Holloway & Valentine that children's urban experience is defined by those spaces. The street, the playground, the school and the home organise and shape children's daily life, time and development. They are interrelated, they are closely intertwined and they define each other.

I chose three of these main everyday children's spaces, or rather three main everyday practices that children perform and that define their urban experiences: moving (the street), playing (the playground) and dwelling (the home). I intentionally decided to leave the school out, although many of *The Great Book* workshops took place in schools and that the spaces of learning are vital sites of interaction in children's urban everyday lives, because I consider that learning spaces are predominantly defined by the ways in which education is shaped by wider social-economic-political processes that are too ample and complex for a study of urban life.

Additionally, since the designation of spaces for certain practices is (generally) defined by adults,

and since one of the central questions of this work is how children deal with the adult-based intentions and interpretations of the environment, my focus is placed on the practices (moving, playing, dwelling), rather than on the spaces (the street, the playground, the home). I am certainly interested in the significance of these spaces for children's urban experience, but I am more interested in children's attitudes towards the definition and demarcation of spaces – that is, it is my intention to reveal how and where children move, play and dwell, and why they do or do not perform those practices in the designated spaces.

The children's everyday experiences I selected are produced through their mesh of relations within the broader social urban processes. Therefore, by accessing these practices, we will get an overview of children's integral urban experience. Children's everyday practices are important because these are not merely determined by their material realities, but they are also defined by the children's own needs, desires, capacities, possibilities, points of view, ideas, knowledge, emotions, feelings, memories, aspirations and fears, and influenced by the real and imaginary constructions of childhood and by the boundaries and restrictions they are subjected to. That is, children's everyday urban narratives reveal the city as it is lived, perceived, experienced and imagined by children.

In exploring these children's everyday practices throughout this thesis, my aim is also to articulate the essential elements that form part of the construction of *The Great Book*: 1. the city in dialectic interaction between its spatial form and its meanings - that is, the city as both 'real' and 'imaginary', because children's engagement with the material city is articulated by children (as social subjects and as a group) through their imaginary experience, and at the same time, the physical aspect of the urban environment is the result of the feelings, perception and conception of the material forms of the social subjects that define it, plan it, regulate it and control it; 2. the city in direct relation with space and society and with the networks that articulate it - that is, the urban space as a producer of society and, at the same time, as a social product; in this way, the city is the result of the continual interaction between children (as subjects) that construct space and the space that shapes the social life of children; and 3. the city seen through the eyes of the child as a situated embodied subject, standing and acting in an urban setting. Furthermore, I advance my argument by moving from the conception of children as a group with shared circumstances that produces shared imaginaries, to the conception of children situated in a social city that aims to define them, regulate them and control them, and finally, to the conception of the child as an individual situated subject with particular circumstances, points of view, beliefs, desires, needs, affectivity, emotions, corporeality, agency, and so on. This means that he/she establishes a distinct relationship with himself/herself, with others and with the environment, and, in consequence, that the way he/she lives, internalises, perceives, experiences and imagines the city is partial, individual, personal and intimate.

In Chapter 3, I will look at the short fictional stories about the practices of moving. The narratives

of the practices of moving show that children's experience of the city is a process that involves their engagement with the physical city mediated through the subjective and imaginary experience. My contention is that the city is so complex and immense that children know it only in a fragmentary and partial manner, thus they imagine what they do not know or understand, what does not exist and what they wish existed.

In the narratives about practices of moving, the material city intersects with the imaginary constructions of the urban environment. In the narratives of the practices of moving, the car is not a material object, it defines children's imaginary urban geographies. Then, the tangible elements such as traffic, children's development and accident indicators (to mention some) intersect with the perception and imaginary constructions of risk and danger. Consequently, children's narratives about practices of moving reveal that children's encounters with the city are articulated in their imagination, that the city is not only the streets where children move and cars circulate; it is also the way children imagine those streets and their urban journeys, it is the meanings they invest in the street, in the urban landscape and in the physical spaces of the city, and it is the stories they use to make sense of their everyday practices of moving.

Furthermore, in this chapter, I sketch an imagined urban geography as presented in children's short fictional stories. This imagined urban geography is fundamental as it lays out children's ideas about the city in which their narratives about their everyday urban practices are inscribed. Thus, I must open the analysis of children's narratives with this imagined urban geography because, as we will see throughout this thesis, children's relationships with the urban environment is defined by this particular conception of the city.

In Chapter 4, I analyse children's short fictional stories about the playing practices. The narratives of the playing practices show that the way children make sense of their environment is both reliant on their encounter with the social city and on their internalisation of the cultural constructions of childhood. My interest in these narratives is to see how these real and imagined constructions of childhood converge with real and imagined urban spaces in the children's own conceptions of urban childhood, as this would reveal how the 'real' and 'imagined' are dialectically linked together in the continuing (re)production and (re)construction of children's experiences and perceptions of the city.

In the narratives of the playing practices, children's identity is profoundly intertwined with their physical and social environments. In the lives of children, influences such as dependency, control or care, and the symbolic representations of childhood, have a significant impact on their construction of identity and influence how they perceive and experience their urban childhoods. So children's experiences and perceptions of their playing practices are affected by their internalisation of the real and/or imagined constructions of childhood, and their playing practices are influenced and shaped by the discourses of 'protection', 'control' and 'domesticity'.

In Chapter 5, I analyse the short fictional stories about the dwelling practices. The narratives of the dwelling practices reveal that children's experience of the city is partial, individual, personal and intimate, since the urban space is fragmented and subject to change, and also because it involves their engagement with their urban environment at levels of perception, corporeality and agency. In the narratives of dwelling practices children engage with the urban reality through their partial perception of the city, through their particular corporeality, affectivity and emotions, and through their agency influenced by their particular necessities and by the social city, and made possible by their emotions, their corporeality, their wishes and their imagination. The narratives of dwelling practices show that children's relationship with the city is rooted in their personal relationship with the house and in the meanings they invest in it.

Here I argue that the house is where children begin to negotiate their spatial and social realities, where their initial efforts to define their personal identities take place, and there they learn to communicate those realities and identities. Then, the personal circumstances of children define the way they perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about home. I sustain that the children's dwelling experience is constructed in time, by a concrete, situated child, in a fragmented way, and affected, altered and informed by the external elements and information, and (re)constructed in the imagination, and ultimately (re)defined and written in children's short fictional stories.

Finally, I conclude that it is through urban narratives that children not only project and make sense of their urban experience, but also construct, imagine and contest their material realities. Given that reality is most of the time crude and monotonous, and that the city is rigid, narratives, like children's everyday tactics of resistance, allow them to construct a reality that they can enjoy, that challenge them, full of possibilities, that it is personal, distinct, subjective. As Toni Morrison notes: 'Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created' (Quoted in Ochs & Capps 1996: 22).

Children's narratives of the city are made of many stories. In *The Great Book* the quotidian stories of children intertwine, feeding each other, constructing a complex urban reality that resembles the urban reality as it is perceived, experienced and imagined by children. *The Great Book* is constructed in time, in the everyday routine, fashioned by fragments of other stories, by finding the most enjoyable route, encountering shortcuts, (re)discovering spaces, imagining and (re)constructing the material reality, superimposing this reality with fantasy, and forming a never-ending weave of stories.

1. *The Great Book* Workshops:
Research Design and Methodology

One day, four years after I started thinking about my brothers' childhood practices, I was standing in a workshop in front of a group of children about to get answers to the questions that my brothers' practices brought up: What stories would children tell about their childhood practices? What can those stories tell us about children's relationships with the city? How do children interpret and deal with adult-based intentions and interpretations of the urban environment? What role does the subjective aspect of the city (namely, the urban imaginaries) play in children's experience of the city?

This was the first of many groups of children that took part in *The Great Book* workshops. The workshops took place between 2009 and 2012 in Guadalajara, Mexico (*FIL Children* 2009, *Schools* 2011, and *Schools* 2012) (see *Spaces for the workshops* - Appendix 6), and the participants were children between seven and fourteen years old of both sexes and from diverse backgrounds (no street children[6]). The result of all these workshops is a collection of short fictional stories on three main themes: moving, playing and dwelling. *The Great Book* workshops were created under the rationale that children make sense of the urban environment through stories, and that their narratives are the place where they project their urban imaginaries. Thus, the production of the short fictional stories within those workshops was instigated so as to explore what those stories can tell us about children's relationships with the city. Using the material created within *The Great Book* workshops, this research examines by means of their own narratives the particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the city.

Before I proceed to the exploration and analysis of the children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, here I will discuss the methodologies used in this research for the data collection and for the analysis of the material.

To answer my research questions, I drew initially on secondary data (i.e. reports, existing literature and literature for children), which provided me with the background to carry out the children's workshops. Furthermore, as the material necessary for this study (children's short fictional stories) did not exist, it had to be produced. Therefore, *The Great Book* workshops were designed and carried out specifically to foster the creation of children's fictional narratives.

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[6] As 'street children' I refer to UNICEF's concept of 'any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wastelands, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults' (UNICEF 2001: 89). Thus, this research does not consider street children because *The Great Book* workshops' scope was limited to established environments that did not reach to this particular group of children; and that the intricacies in the analysis of their complex situation within the urban environment are significant enough for a single research.

At the beginning of the workshop, the group of children, like each of the subsequent groups, seated and attentive, listened to my storytelling of *The Great Book*, a short fictional story that served as a preamble for the workshop activities:

Many, many, many years ago there was a grand, precious and special book in this city, it was called *The Great Book of the City*. Everything that happened in the city was written in that book, from the most extraordinary events: the birth of a baby, the erection of a bridge, a catastrophe, and so on, to the most trivial aspects of city-life: an individual journey to school, a family moving house, a girl playing football in her backyard, and so on. But also, everything the people wanted to happen and everything they imagined the city could be was written in the book. The book liked it when citizens wrote in its pages the life of the city, stories of the shapes of the city, of its changes, of its passing of time, of its people, their wishes, their dreams …

The Great Book was glorious; it lived in the palace of the libraries where people from all around the city wrote in it and read it. People queued for hours just to be able to write their stories. So, the book was always full of new tales that were born at the origin of the new shapes of the city. And the letters and the pages in the book were always shifting and changing as the city, the people and its stories changed. *The Great Book* was so full of life like the city itself.

However, with the passing of time, the city started mutating in a strange way, people became more hurried and *The Great Book* was soon forgotten. *The Great Book* that once was so alive now was dying. As the written words did no longer correlate to the city they started to fall off the book. A book that once was great and wondrous was now old, discarded, irrelevant and suffering from amnesia. All of its stories disappeared and its pages were left blank. And, finally one day, the palace of the libraries was destroyed and replaced by a different building.

When I heard the story about *The Great Book* I felt heartbroken and curious at the same time. I wondered where it might be. I looked for the book everywhere, until one day many years later I found it on the corner of the sidewalk outside my house. But when I was about to grab it, it slipped out of my hands and started sliding down the street. I kept chasing it and trying to grab it, but each time it slipped out of my hands. I became exasperated, so, I yelled: '¡Stop!' And the book suddenly stopped sliding. It seemed as though it could see and hear me. The book opened and some letters started to appear on a blank page: 'I need your help.' I was speechless. I started wondering if the book was speaking to me, but I hadn't spoken a word aloud, when the letters on the page suddenly changed and I could read: 'Yes, I am talking to you.' I was shocked! I almost fainted.

I could not believe it; a book was talking through its pages to me! I calmed myself, and when I was calmer, I started to ask more and more questions to the book. It told me its story. The book told me that, once, everyone could write on its pages, but one day people started to forget to write and the stories were less and less interesting with time, so people did not come to read them either. With the passing of time and fewer people writing in it, the book felt weak, ill. And when the palace of the libraries was destroyed, it found a hidden shelf in an old library and stayed there for years.

One day, *The Great Book* saw me at the library and noticed that I was interested in finding *The Great Book*, so it started to follow me. It thought I could be its salvation, but the book wanted to make sure I was trustworthy. Finally, the day I found the book on the sidewalk, it decided to make an appearance so I could see it. While the book was telling me its story, for a minute I thought it

wanted me to write the stories of the city. But, no, the book told me that it had decided that only children would write in it. It showed me in its pages how different the city is now from when I started looking for the book. I saw the way I saw the city when I was a little girl, so much interesting, brighter, more fun and full of possibilities. It told me: 'children have a more curious, observant and creative mind. You are now, like most adults, mostly concerned with what is "right".' It was so right!

Thus, I decided to help *The Great Book* to find its new writers, so, unlike how it was done before, this time *The Great Book* would be written by children…by you. I can tell you that the book is so happy that you are here to help him. Every story will help him to grow and glow; the book will be even greater than before. I am sure that you kids will not forget it. I believe children are not in a hurry as we adults are, and you won't stop writing in *The Great Book* but will fill it up with new stories: stories of the city as it is, stories of the city as it could be, stories of the city as you wish it to be. You can go to it every time you want to write in it or read it. And *The Great Book* will live happily ever after…and it will never end.

This fictional story allowed me to project to children the ideas that structure and support this work. It was fundamental for the outcome of the workshops that children were fully engaged, so the aforementioned fictional story of *The Great Book* served in that way. The notion of the city as an interweave of narratives is a complex one for children to understand. Thus, the magical aspect of the story helped me to illustrate this notion in an approach that corresponds to the way children think and experience the world, as children understand things through what they know and feel, and not through objective thinking. Bruno Bettelheim, in his book about the significance and meaning of fairy tales, sustains that 'realistic explanations are usually incomprehensible to children, because they lack the abstract understanding required to make sense of them' (Bettelheim 2010: 45-46). Also, children think in animistic terms, namely, inanimate objects have life or a spirit in them (43-45). Therefore, the story of a magic, living book comprising stories, which interweaves and changes continuously but that starts to die because people no longer write in it is easier for children to grasp than any logical explanation of the same matter.

However, besides serving as a way to explain the notion of the city as an interweave of narratives, the idea that only children could write in *The Great Book* gave children a sense of worth (an idea that was reinforced within the workshops by giving a pin button to all the attending children that said: 'I am a writer of The Great Book of the City'– for the design of this pin, see *Badge design -* Appendix 10). Additionally, the way the workshops were designed allowed children to have a space where they felt listened to and included within the urban discussion. *The Great Book* as an imaginary book written by children promotes the inclusion and expression of children in urban matters. Besides its main intention, this research wants to further the belief that children play an essential role in defining the city, they are active citizens and their voices, stories and imaginaries should be considered in any attempt to conceptualise, understand and (re)configure city-space.

Children live in different degrees of compromise with the reality that surrounds them. Namely, they do not form a great-underdifferentiated category, but, like their families, they belong to

diverse social classes. The way in which children consume the city is not uniform, and thus it is expected that the way they live, internalise, perceive, experience and imagine the city can be equally varied. This impossibility to generalise a 'global' childhood obliges me to locate this work within that social and cultural spectrum: 1. the studied children are from a Latin American city (Guadalajara, Mexico); 2. although their socio-economic classes vary, since *The Great Book* workshops were developed in a book-fair and in schools, they do not belong to the lower socio-economic classes that have no access to education or cultural events; and 3. this study does not include street children nor the intricacies of child labour. Thus, although the particular relationship with the city varies depending on the children's particular circumstances and background, I argue that within a single community, children from not-too-extreme backgrounds have certain shared perceptions and experiences of the city because these are shaped by the same material city (both in its physical configuration and in its access and forms of regulations and control), by the same dominant social imaginaries of the community, by the same sociocultural constructions and symbolical representations of childhood, and by similar ideologies.

Guadalajara, the chosen setting for the development of *The Great Book* workshops, may be defined as an average Latin American city. It is a major city in Mexico (the largest city of the Mexican state of Jalisco, and the second largest in the country after Greater Mexico City), but it is not a megalopolis (or megacity). Its metropolitan area (Guadalajara Metropolitan Area, officially, in Spanish: *Zona Metropolitana de Guadalajara*)[7] has approximately 4.5 million inhabitants.[8] It has complex systems of transportation, communications, housing, land-use, natural resources and infrastructure, and it faces the most common urban problems (i.e. urban decay, housing problems, squatter settlements, decayed public housing, public transport deficiency, traffic congestion, urban sprawl, pollution). Regarding infrastructure, services, and general urban problems, Guadalajara is no different from the majority of cities all over the world, and nor does it not have an exceptional or intricate geography. Although every city presents different and specific problems, they also share common urban realities. Moreover, Guadalajara does not stand out in terms of planning regarding children, the elderly or the disabled, and nor does it regarding sustainable planning development or in the implementation of any alternative or progressive urban policies. From all this, we can say that Guadalajara is an average city. This is why I considered it an appropriate choice of urban setting for the study of children's urban narratives of the city.

However, my decision to draw on Mexican children from Guadalajara as my focal objects of study rather than children from any other city also stems from practical matters. Over the years

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[7] The Guadalajara Metropolitan Area includes the main municipalities of Guadalajara, Zapopan, Tlaquepaque, Tonalá, Tlajomulco de Zúñiga, El Salto, Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos and Juanacatlán.

[8] According to the last census from 2010, the total population of the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara is 4,434,878 inhabitants (Gobierno del Estado de Jalisco 2015: n.p.).

I developed connections, both personal and professional, with child psychologists, schoolteachers and school directors, and with promoters of children's festivals and book-fairs. This was useful when I was carrying out the fieldwork in Guadalajara, especially in terms of gaining access to participants.

First of all, my mother is a retired child psychologist from the Special Education Department of the Secretariat of Education of the State Government of Jalisco, which allowed me, from an early age, to create links with some of my mother's colleagues, some of whom are still active child psychologists, schoolteachers and school directors. Secondly, between 2001 and 2006 (and later on, in the summer of 2008), I worked in an inclusive primary school in Guadalajara ('Aprender a Ser' School) assisting and helping in the design of workshops and activities on the summer courses that the school offered. This work provided me with the motivation, tools and training to work with children. Furthermore, these personal and professional connections with schoolteachers and school directors, and with promoters of children's festivals and book-fairs, allowed me to gain access to participants in different spaces (schools and book-fairs) and to obtain the sponsorship for the development and production of the workshops.

The first workshops series took place in December 2009 at the Guadalajara International Book Fair (*FIL*) in *FIL Children* (*FIL Niños*), the area specifically intended for children at the book-fair, at a stand sponsored by Pinturas Prisa (paint manufacturer) and purposely designed and assigned for *The Great Book* workshops. The second workshops series, under the name 'The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones…in the Schools' was completed in February 2011 within the classrooms of the chosen grades at five schools in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area: 'Ricardo Flores Magón' Primary School (Zapopan), 'Elías Nandino Vallarta' Primary School (Tlajomulco de Zúñiga), 'José Vasconcelos' Primary School (Zapopan), 'José Martiniano Hernández' Primary School (Zapopan), and 'Aprender a Ser' School (Guadalajara). And the third workshops series, also under the name 'The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones…in the Schools', was completed in January 2012 within the classrooms of the chosen grades in 'Aprender a Ser' School (Guadalajara).[9]

FIL Children is a space specifically designed for workshops and children's activities; it allowed me access to a diverse range of children (different ages, backgrounds and sexes) that enriches this research. However, the workshop attendance was elective, namely, children decided if *The Great Book* workshop appealed to them. Conversely, the workshops at the schools allowed me to have a specific range of children with similar backgrounds (accordant with each school) and age in an established environment, and, in this case, the participation was obligatory (unless the children's parents/guardians restricted their attendance - see *Authorisation letter from head*

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[9] For the specific details about the workshops' dates, attendance and total of stories produced, see *Workshops' dates, attendance and total of short fictional stories produced* – Appendix 7.

of schools - Appendix 4, and *Letter for school parents* - Appendix 5), so the appeal factor was not at play. Hence the diversity of the sample permitted me access to fertile and diverse material for this research.

The workshops at the book-fair were open to the public free of charge every hour for children between seven and fourteen years old. Children arrived and left the workshop escorted by their parents/guardians/teachers. Conversely, the workshops at the schools, also free of charge, were discussed and authorised by the schools' directors and the class teachers (see *Authorisation letter from head of schools* - Appendix 4), and the selected grades, dates and time were determined with them according to the research needs and their availability. In every case, I informed the children and the children's parents/guardians/teachers, via a disclaimer (in the workshops at the book-fair) (see *Disclaimer book-fair* - Appendix 3), through a letter sent in advance to the parents/guardians (in the workshops at the schools) (see *Letter for school parents* - Appendix 5), and at the beginning of each workshop of my status as a researcher and the objectives and intended use of the material produced within the workshops. Additionally, *The Great Book* workshops project was approved by the Goldsmiths Research Ethics Sub-Committee (see *Ethics approval* - Appendix 2).

In order to conduct the workshops, I had a set of structured activities and specific topics to be covered, but I retained the freedom to adapt them depending on the children's reactions and responses to the tasks and their resultant fictional narratives.[10] The data produced within *The Great Book* workshops is important for the understanding of the particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the city. Since my main interest lies in the role that urban imaginaries play in children's experiences of the city, the relatively free and structured nature of children's narratives is particularly useful as a means of providing insight into childhood everyday practices without limiting their responses to 'actual facts'.

Additionally, the workshops' activities were performed in a playful way, and this assisted in motivating the children to participate, act and write about the city. Having a space and time specifically allocated to the production and writing of the short fictional stories, and having writing prompts and a plan for the workshops, allowed me to maintain a certain degree of control over the narratives' themes. The fact that children's fictional narratives are written facilitated the translation, coding and analysis of the information gathered during the workshops.

The main activity of the workshops was the writing of a short fictional story. After a series of activities (see *Chronology of The Great Book workshops' activities* - Appendix 8), there was a brief explanation of the writing task, and a reflection on the process of writing and on the

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[10] The complete series of activities performed within the workshops are fully explained in the chronology, see *Chronology of The Great Book workshops' activities* – Appendix 9.

importance of narratives in relation to the city. In direct relation to the selected theme of each workshop (moving, playing and dwelling), each child received a page (or more, if requested), on which they wrote and illustrated a short fictional story. During this activity, children were guided and supported, to make them feel comfortable in the writing process, so they would be able to produce good stories.

In the workshops, children were asked to 'invent' stories following three rules: 1. their stories had to respond to the specific writing prompt stated in the writing page, such as: 'Write a story about the saddest house in the city', 'The main character of this story is bored in the city', 'This story happens in a traffic jam', 'In this story, the city is like a labyrinth'; 2. the story must take place within an urban context; and 3. the story must include human (somehow realistic) characters. Following these rules, children were encouraged to be as creative as possible. The choosing of the prompts arose from the need to include a diversity of aspects about the selected urban practices (moving, playing and dwelling) that would allow me to have a broader overview of children's urban experience. The variety of aspects were decided by the main concerns regarding the selected urban practices found within the literature of children's geographies, such as: children's relationships with road traffic, children's independent travel, children's relationships with their community and neighbourhood, children's relationships with their house and children's games and places for play, to mention a few. In developing these prompts, I tried to be as ambiguous as possible, not only to facilitate children's projection of their urban needs, motives, wishes and anxieties onto their narratives, but also because I did not want to influence children's points of view regarding their practices and those selected aspects. Originally, *The Great Book* workshops series was organised into six categories defined by practices (1. moving, 2. playing, 3. dwelling) and senses (4. smell, 5. observation and 6. hearing). However, as an experimental project, the workshops were continuously adjusted and implemented to attain richer stories. So, after the first workshops of the initial series (*FIL Children* 2009), the senses categories were discarded (smell, observation and hearing) as they did not produce what we might call 'stories', rather enumerations and urban descriptions. Thus, for the rest of the initial workshop series (*FIL Children 2009*), the second (*Schools* 2011) and third (*Schools* 2012) workshops series, only the practices themes (moving, playing and dwelling) were developed. Hence, in this thesis I deliberately used only the children's short fictional stories pertaining to the moving, playing and dwelling practices.

This was a significant point that contributed to the conceptualisation of the city as a socially constructed space. In the same way that the questionnaires and surveys in which people were asked to capture information about qualitative aspects (for example, what are the colours or flavours attributed to the streets of a city), the senses categories used in the workshops, although they did express sensations or feelings that the city provokes (through enumerations and city descriptions), they gave little (or no) information about the conceptualisation of the city. This

showed that it is immaterial for the aim of this work to explore extremely qualitative or mere aesthetic aspects of the city.

Furthermore, the illustration aspect of the workshops was mainly incorporated because the sponsor of *The Great Book* workshops, Pinturas Prisa, is a paint manufacturer, and the only request they made was that I included an activity in which children used their paints. So, although children illustrated their short fictional stories, for the purposes of this work, during the workshops the emphasis was put on the writing process. Most of the time, children did not in fact have enough time to illustrate their stories or to produce good illustrations. For these reasons, the illustrations do not play a significant role in the analysis of the short fictional stories and in this work as a whole.

Before advancing, here it is important to comment about ethical issues and the anonymity of children in the development of *The Great Book* workshops. First, the procedures or activities at the workshops were harmless. There were no adverse consequences. The activities (constructing stories, writing, painting and reading) performed within the workshops are frequent occurrences in any school class, and the themes discussed in the activities were topics of daily life that were intended to be inoffensive and untroubling. Secondly, the material that was produced in the workshops consists of short fictional stories, and in using and divulging this material I am suppressing any personal information about those involved. Thus, any personal information revealed within the workshops has and will not be disclosed. The short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops included the personal details (name) of each child. This information was blurred, and an inscription was placed on it. Prior to the blurring of the personal details, the sex of the child was included in the document for classification purposes only (this information was not originally included in the material). The original short fictional stories produced within the workshops at the book-fair were destroyed after digitalisation. The original short fictional stories produced within the workshops at the schools were returned after digitalisation to each school library concerned, and they were collected as a big book with the appropriate disclaimer (see *Disclaimer in book for schools* - Appendix 11).

Third, in both cases (workshops at book-fair and workshops at schools), the children's parents/guardians/teachers were fully informed (see *Disclaimer book-fair* – Appendix 3, and *Letter for school parents* – Appendix 5) about the nature of the workshops, the activities that were performed within the workshops, and the research purposes and the ends of the material produced within them, and of my status as a researcher. In both cases the consent for the participation and use of the material in the research was given by way of attendance at the workshop, as established in the disclaimer at the book-fair workshops (see *Disclaimer book-fair* – Appendix 3) and in the letter addressed to the parents/guardians at the school workshops (see *Letter for school parents* – Appendix 5). However, as they were informed of the purposes of the

workshops and the ends of the material produced within the workshops, the parents/guardians might restrict, on request, the use of the material produced within the workshop. There were no requests in this regard.

And, lastly, the concerned parties were informed that any personal information would be treated confidentially (see *Disclaimer book-fair* – Appendix 3, and *Letter for school parents* – Appendix 5). Although it was unlikely that within the workshops any information regarding sensitive matters (i.e. child sexual abuse or neglect) would be disclosed, the concerned parties were previously informed (see *Disclaimer book-fair* – Appendix 3, and *Letter for school parents* – Appendix 5) that any sensitive information would not be used. If such a thing had occurred, I would have informed the relevant authorities. However, no information in this regard was ever disclosed.

The children's short fictional stories were written in Spanish, given that Mexican children wrote them. Almost 600 short fictional stories were produced within *The Great Book* workshops (for the specific details of the total of short fictional stories produced, see *Workshops' dates, attendance and total of short fictional stories produced* – Appendix 7), so translating all them may represent a titanic task. For this reason, I only translated the fragments included within the body of this thesis. In this sense, as a translator, I essentially act as an interpreter by processing the vocabulary and grammatical structure of the fragments or stories while maintaining the individual circumstances and the overall cultural context. As a native speaker of Spanish (Mexican Spanish more specifically) myself, I understand the subtle issues of the connotation and meaning of the language.

The children's short fictional stories, in their original form, employ (to put it in general terms): basic use of the Spanish language, with many problems in the use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Therefore, the result of direct translation is problematic. Although I acknowledge the importance of the correct use of language, this work is not about it, so I will not be addressing these issues throughout the translation unless and wherever it proves to be necessary for the purposes of this research. Conversely, I act (wherever possible and necessary) as an editor as I translate, albeit always with paramount attention to producing accurate and meaningful data through the translation process. Moreover, as some of the employed words and phrases have evocative meanings in (Mexican) Spanish, they do not translate easily into English; in these cases, I may include an explanatory note and/or the word in its original language. Nevertheless, for this I subscribe to what Roland Barthes states about translation: 'narrative…is translatable without fundamental damage' (Quoted in White 1981: 2), in a way that a poem or a philosophical discourse is not, and therefore, in this case the result of the translation should not affect the outcome of the research.

During *The Great Book* workshops, I considered myself a participant observer. I participated in activities in which I was inquiring into children's responses to urban issues within the workshops,

at the same time that I observed these activities by establishing relationships with the attending children. Also, when children were engaged in group activities and discussions with the other participants, I nevertheless considered myself a participant, as I had introduced the activity.

My participation went as far as asking questions and starting activities and offering my own views and experiences about some aspects of the urban issues to be discussed and explored. Additionally, I made observations of children's reactions and responses about the city in a diary that I kept during all the workshops. As a result of the workshops I obtained a collection of different material: drawings (for some examples of these drawings, see *Children's drawings* – Appendix 12), short fictional stories and their illustrations on three main everyday urban practices: moving, playing and dwelling, and photos (see *Photos of the workshops* – Appendix 13) and notes from the workshops. To analyse the material I use an interdisciplinary qualitative method based on narrative analysis supported in the principles of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

In this research I look to a particular kind of storytelling: children's short fictional stories about everyday urban practices produced within *The Great Book* workshops. My approach to these narratives is based on the evidence established by Christiana D. Morgan & Henry A. Murray that asseverates that: 1. when a person 'attempts to interpret a complex social situation he is apt to tell as much about himself as he is about the phenomenon on which attention is focused', and 2. 'a great deal of written fiction is the conscious or unconscious expression of the authors' (Morgan & Murray 1935: 289). According to these authors, the mechanism that accounts for these two facts is projection. These principles are used for the development of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). In psychology, 'apperception' is 'the mental process by which a person makes sense of an idea by assimilating it into the body of ideas he or she already possesses' (Stevenson 2010: 75), in this way, the TAT is subscribed to the constructivist approach to narrative of this study. Thus, I consider the rationale behind the TAT technique useful to understand the way children perceive, experience and imagine the city.

The TAT is a narrative method, in which the subject tells/writes a story when given a small set of black-and-white pictures. So, the narratives become the result of the test protocol. These narratives convey each subject's construction of reality, and the examiner interprets their meanings (Cramer 2004, Morgan & Murray 1935). Many authors consider that a person's responses uncover underlying motives, concerns, and the way in which they see and understand the world through the stories they compose (Bellak 1954, Holt 1951, Stein 1955, Shneidman 1951). Historically, the TAT is amid the most extensively studied, taught and used of such tests (Cramer 2004: 16-17).

Although I am not going as far as to establish that this study can be measured against the TAT, I consider that the 'apperception' element of the TAT (namely, the projective element), which takes into account that an individual does not only perceive what is happening in the drawing,

but he or she constructs stories that reflect individual personalities and experiences, can be applied to the interpretation of *The Great Book* narratives. The rationale behind this method is that people tend to interpret vague situations with their own current motivations and former experiences, in a conscious or unconscious process (Morgan & Murray 1935).

Within *The Great Book* workshops, children responded to ambiguous stimuli (writing prompts) and exposed their hidden emotions and inner conflicts regarding their urban experience. Without knowing the specifics of the methodology of the study in which they were actively participating, children lowered their defences to the examiner (me) as they did not realise the sensitive personal material they were revealing by creating a 'fictional' narrative. In this process, projection is used as an apparatus of thought organisation in which the private world of the child is projected onto the external reality (Rapaport 1951: 388). By using this method, the child is oblivious to the revealing of substantially personal material via the writing prompt presented on the page.

There are two important aspects of the test situation suggested by Morgan & Murray, applied within *The Great Book* workshops that encouraged projection. First, the concentration point in the workshops was on the stimulus pages (writing prompt) – something outside the child, provided by the examiner (me), for which the child was not responsible. According to Morgan & Murray, this exterior focus encourages the propensity to externalise, which in turn facilitates the use of projection (Morgan & Murray 1935). The second aspect of *The Great Book* workshops that encouraged projection were the instructions to the child that tend to divert attention from the child's personal concerns (needs, motives, wishes, anxieties, etc.). Rather, within *The Great Book* workshops the more abstract ambit of creative imagination was emphasised. This way, as Morgan & Murray suggest, children's stories are fulfilling the external request for demonstrating creative imagination, without perceiving that the story is about the children's own selves (Morgan & Murray 1935).

Thus, the TAT technique is the basis for the methodology used in this research. To analyse the material, I use an interdisciplinary qualitative method based on narrative analysis with a sociological approach, and thereby focus on the content of the material. I contrast the children's fictional narratives with the existing literature about the relationship between the child and the city, and with literature for children. As for the analysis of the short fictional stories, I started the exploration of children's narratives by identifying individual concerns about their everyday urban practices (moving, playing and dwelling) and about the spatial environment in the individual stories, and then I moved to identify broader patterns in the collection of stories, including about the children's everyday urban practices and their spatial environment. With these in mind, I again went back to the individual stories to understand how these broader patterns played a role in their individual concerns.

In studying children's everyday practices (moving, playing and dwelling) my intention is to articulate the fundamental elements that form part of the construction of *The Great Book*: 1. the city in dialectic interaction between its spatial form and its meanings, 2. the city in direct relation with space and society and with the networks that articulate it, and 3. the city seen through the eyes of the child as a situated embodied subject, standing and acting in an urban setting. I develop my argument by moving from the conception of children as a group with shared conditions that produce shared imaginaries in consequence, to the conception of children situated in a social city that attempts to define them, regulate them and control them, and lastly, to the conception of the child as a situated subject with particular circumstances, with his/her individual and partial point of view, beliefs, desires, needs, affectivity, emotions, corporeality, agency and so on – namely, the child as a subject that establishes a distinct relationship with himself/herself, with others and with the environment, and, accordingly, that the way he/she lives, internalises, perceives, experiences and imagines the city is partial, individual, personal and intimate.

This thesis is submitted as a hard copy and the whole collection of the digitalised versions of the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops are presented electronically in a CD (for the specific contents of the CD, see *Contents of the attached CD* – Appendix 1). As I explained earlier, although there were produced a total of 577 short fictional stories within the whole series of workshops, for this work I deliberately used only the short fictional stories pertaining to the moving, playing and dwelling practices.[11] Thus, when I refer to the whole collection I mean the 419 children's fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops about the moving, playing and dwelling practices. Thus, the enclosed CD only contains the 419 digitalised versions of the said stories.

Within the body of this thesis I include translated fragments of some of these stories, and references to some other stories; for this I developed a referencing system (in-text references) which relates to the classification number of each short fictional story's electronic file. That is, each electronic file (each short fictional story) is assigned a classification number that includes a code for the theme of the short fictional stories (practices of moving: MOV; playing practices: PLY; and dwelling practices: DWL), a sequential number, and a code for the place and group where the story was produced (*FIL Children*: FILN; 'Elías Nandino Vallarta' Primary School: ENV; 'Ricardo Flores Magón' Primary School: FM; 'José Martiniano Hernández' Primary School: JM; 'José Vasconcelos' Primary School: JV; and 'Aprender a Ser' School: EDA). Finally, throughout this work I include children's novels and picture books that are written and published for children (to avoid confusion, from now on I will refer to this material as literature for children) about the city or that

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[11] As I explained earlier, as an experimental project, the workshops were continuously adjusted and implemented to attain richer stories. So, after the first workshops of the initial series (*FIL Children* 2009), the senses categories were discarded (smell, observation and hearing) as they did not produce what we might call 'stories', rather enumerations and urban descriptions.

relate to some urban issues within the discussion. I use them for different purposes, for example: to illustrate an idea (see *The social construction of urban space* – Chapter 2), to confront children's points of view vs adults' points of view (see *Girl's tales of play: gender stereotypes and symbolic boundaries* – Chapter 4) or to explore symbolic representations of childhood (see *'Don't get run over': The street as the imagined edge of children's safe territories* – Chapter 3).

Margaret Meek affirms that it is through the stories we hear as children that we acquire the manner in which 'we talk about how we feel, the values which we hold to be important, and what we regard as truth' (Meek 1992: 103). We also 'discover in stories ways of saying and telling that let us know who we are' (103). So, before children can start to read, they listened and told many stories that are more than just stories. One way children confront and project their ideas of urban space is by listening to stories and by reading literature for children. While this is not a study of literature for children, and I do not attempt to analyse literature for children nor to evaluate the children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops for their literary value, I consider that literature for children has a role in the way children confront and project their ideas of urban space. However, I argue that the literature produced by adults for children does not represent children's way of perceiving, experiencing and imagining the urban environment, instead, it presents adults' accounts of the city, which, at the most, may overlap with children's own understanding of the city. And, simultaneously, the literature for children organises, categorises, romanticises, and intends to educate this understanding.

As I will discuss further in Chapter 4, where I examine the role that symbolic representations of childhood play in children's construction of identity and in the way they perceive, experience and imagine their urban childhoods, the problem with literature for children in relation to the children's urban experience is not only the fact that adults write these books, but also that they are evaluated, selected and bought by adults (i.e. parents, teachers, critics, editors) from an adult-centred perspective. As I mentioned at the beginning of this work, there are deep differences between the world of the child and the world of the adult that cannot be fully bridged (Jones 2001: 176). The stories portrayed in these books, mostly those involving child characters or situations, are transmitted from the adult's perspective of what it means to be a child in the city, which hardly coincides with the actual perspective and experience of children, as adults are so far detached from the experience of being children that it is problematic to empathise (Aitken 1994: 30).

Jenny Bavidge argues that to address the issue of children's geographies in literature, we have to 'start from the basic point that the literature for children does not, of course, represent a child's view of the world at all' (Bavidge 2006: 321), but, '[w]hat it does represent is a privileged space in which we witness the operations of adult dialogues with children, "our" attempts to negotiate "their" "irrational" [...] take on the worlds they find themselves in' (321). Similarly, Jacqueline Rose, in *The Case for Peter Pan*, maintains that literature for children is infeasible because it

always includes an adult speaking to and writing for children, and critically luring the child into an adult world. For Rose, literature for children speaks of adult's desires as it 'draws in the child, it secures, places and frames the child' (Rose 1993: 2). Rose argues that literature for children categorises and determines children's identities according to adult conceptions and demarcations of affective and social spheres. This means that literature for children about the city is constructed according to adult understandings and definitions of the urban environment.

The problem lies in the fact that these adult interpretations of the urban environment do not necessarily correspond with the children's own way of perceiving and experiencing the urban environment. Therefore, I want to use some of these works of literature for children to confront children's own perspectives of the city, as presented in their own narratives, with the adult's portrayal of children in the city, as presented in the literature for children, to see if and how the latter define, influence and structure children's ideas of the city and of their urban experience.

Here, I presented the methodology used for the data collection and for the analysis of the material. *The Great Book* workshops were developed based on the underlying idea that children make sense of the urban environment through stories, so, before advancing to the analysis of children's narratives, I will explore the theoretical background that supports the development of the workshops and this thesis as a whole. My aim in the following chapter is to show that children's urban narratives are the place where children project their urban imaginaries and are the tool for our understanding of the particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment. The analysis of the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops will be twofold: on the one hand, I will examine the particular characteristics of the fictional narratives that allow us to capture the subjective aspect of children's urban experience, and conversely, I will provide a reading of children's needs, motives, wishes and anxieties regarding their experience of the city.

2. 'The Great Book of the City':
Narrative and the Everyday Lives of Children

Before advancing to the analysis of the children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, let us pause to discuss how I conceive the city in this thesis. This work develops from the broad understanding that the city, as a human reality, is not an a priori truth that occurs independently from the people that are born, grow, live, enjoy, suffer, fantasise, reproduce and die in it. There is no question that the social practices, the people's routines and the rituals associated with the basic functions of the city and its institutions, such as work/produce, administration, legislating/planning, educating, consuming, dwelling, hating, loving, moving, reproducing, playing, healing, protecting, safeguarding, excluding, restricting, etc. are constituent elements of the materiality of the city, since these are the vital flux, the forces that drive and determine the characteristics of any given city.

However, this thesis considers that what characterises, permeates and defines the shifting and changing shape of the dynamic mesh formed by the physical urban environment and by the social practices are narratives – namely, the narratives that are constructed by individuals to make sense of their urban experience. According to Bruner, people organise their experience, knowledge and relations with the social world through narrative. For Bruner, narrative is not a mere didactic approach or an educative tool or aid; on the contrary, he sees narrative 'as a mode of thinking, as a structure for organizing our knowledge' (Bruner 1996: 119), and, in this sense, narrative has 'the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very "events" of a life' (Bruner 2004: 694).

Bruner proposes that narrative has four main features: sequentiality, it can be real or imaginary, it forms links between the exceptional and the ordinary, and it has a dramatic quality (Bruner 1990: 43-52). Additionally, Bruner argues that narrative is mediated by the acquisition of language and by the process of socialisation. Narrative includes the social reality and it acquires meaning through the agents, characters, environments, scenarios, intentionality, relations and actions. It is through the narrative thought that the child assigns meaning to his/her own existence, because 'narrative mediates between the canonical world of culture' and his/her own beliefs, desires and wishes (52).

Generally speaking, narrative thought is vital because it permits children a better interpretation of human social interaction. Children's narratives do not produce unique explanations; they can construct diverse stories about the same event and their heterogeneity enables the formation of multiple meanings. Narrative is inherent to the human condition. Thus, narrative language allows

the continuous process of negotiation between everyday knowledge and systematic knowledge,[12] and it organises events and happenings into personal appropriation and frames of meaning.

In this thesis, then, I maintain that children make sense of the urban world through narrative, namely, it is through narrative that children organise, comprehend and appropriate their urban experience. But, as *The Great Book* proposes, narratives of the city are enmeshed in an endless and dynamic urban fabric, because children do not produce narratives from nothing, they construct their understanding of the urban environment based on the narratives that are already constructed about it. My approach on the matter is based on Bruner's constructivist theory of narrative, which states that the world is not independent from the versions that are constructed around it, versions that are produced by the work of thought. The 'creations' about the world (whether scientific or quotidian) are produced not from pristine conceptions, but from previously constructed worlds (Bruner 1986, 1990, 1991, 1996, 2003, 2004).

Consequently, we ought to think about children regarding their social reality and the way this reality is mediated, as I have reiterated, through the subjective and imaginary experience. Hence, children are introduced into urban reality through socialising agents, i.e. family, school, books, media. But, as social individuals, children enter the urban reality through language. In this sense, language allows them to appropriate their everyday reality and experiences, to organise them and to classify them. When children share their experience and perception of the urban environment with others, it is through language (narrative, more specifically) that they materialise their identities and that their 'social self'[13] takes shape. In this sense, narrative not only refers to a literary category or to the transmission of an event from mouth to mouth; rather it fashions a distinctive epistemological way to approach the city.

The underlying approach is simple: the city does not exist if nobody experiences it, thinks it, speaks it, recounts it and shares it with others who also elaborate their own stories, tales, anecdotes, rumours, myths, and so on, about the city and their urban lives. At the same time, within the social city a number of narratives are produced about the values and ideals, about the how, when, with whom and where children should walk, eat, dress, play, etc., about the rules of use that, with time, become civic norms or the moral or ethical values of a group that identifies itself in shared codes and symbols.

All these narratives circulate and flow in different ways depending on their cause, character and

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[12] In the quotidian experience, the activity of cognitive processing happens on the exterior of awareness, namely, it happens within the experiential system (as contrasting with the rational system). The cognitive process does not merely process passively the acquired information; instead it is guided by the prime focus on those features of the world that are of concern to the children's (and individual's) needs and desires. Then, when the child encounters events that cannot be assimilated by its own stock of frames, the rational system is employed to aid in the framing activity (Straub 2005).

[13] In psychology, the 'social self' refers to the recognition that the individuals get from their social environment. That is, the individuals' way of relying on their environment and their social relations; thus, an individual has as many social selves as the many social groups he/she belongs to (James 1950: 293-96).

intention (even when most of the time these narratives are anonymous); these narratives then permeate the physical city and penetrate the public and private spaces where life occurs to be enriched, reinterpreted, distorted, reinvented and imagined by people, and thus invested with different connotations and meanings based on the place or social position in which they are elaborated. This dynamic interweave of narratives that forms the city is the basis of this research and of *The Great Book of the City*.

This understanding of the city as an interweave of narratives prompted the conception of the city as a book presented in this work. Therefore, in this chapter, I show that by approaching the city as a book, we may challenge the idea that the city is not only defined by built forms, by demographic facts or by any totalising logic, but that it is also composed of the intersecting lives, narratives, imaginaries, meanings and experiences of those who live in the city. My aim here is to demonstrate that since children make sense of the urban environment through stories, children's narratives of the city are the place upon which children project their urban imaginaries and the tool for our understanding of the particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the city.

This chapter is organised in four sections. In the first part, drawing on de Certeau's spatial stories and on Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, I maintain that space is a social construction. This understanding of space is articulated through five fundamental elements: the subject, the spatial practices, the society, the spatial form and the meanings. A constructivist approach to space considers that the experience of the child (as a subject) situated in place, standing in an urban setting, is crucial to approaching and reconstructing the spatial practices and the spatiality that children (as subjects) are able to perceive, experience and imagine from their own place, from their own perspective of the urban world. And, at the same time, this approach to space considers that the city is not merely the 'bricks and mortar', as B.T. Robson suggests (Robson 1975: 184); it is the space where children are confronted within real and imagined spatial structures and realities. Therefore, in the first section, I maintain that the social construction of the city is an incessant process of production of space that children make in interaction with other actors, by positioning their spatial practices through the mesh of meanings, that is, the urban imaginaries, that the society constantly constructs and reconstructs.

Then, since the space is understood as a social construction, I use the second section of this chapter to explore the role that narrative thought plays in children's experience of urban space. Here I argue that children make sense of the urban environment through narrative – namely, it is through narrative that children organise, comprehend and appropriate their urban experience. I propose that we look at narrative as the vehicle that children use to shape their everyday experience. This constructivist understanding of narrative, then, means that children's urban narratives are enmeshed in an endless and dynamic urban fabric, because children construct their understanding of the urban environment based on the narratives that are already constructed about it.

In the third part, my intention is to show that by understanding the city as a book, made of interrelated stories, we may argue for the idea that the city is not only composed of physical structures, but is also constructed by the intersecting lives, narratives, meanings, imaginaries and experiences of those who live in it. Here I propose *The Great Book* as a conception and representation of the city, and as the physical document that contains the children's narratives produced within the workshops and that will allow us to respond to the questions set out at the beginning of this work and that guide this work.

Finally, in the last section, I argue that by accessing children's everyday practices, we will get an overview of children's integral urban experience. Here I maintain that children's everyday practices are important because these are not merely determined by their material realities, but they are also defined by the children's own needs, desires, capacities, possibilities, points of view, ideas, knowledge, emotions, feelings, memories, aspirations and fears, and influenced by the real and imaginary constructions of childhood and by the boundaries and regulations children are subjected to. It is through urban narratives that children not only project and make sense of their urban experience, but also construct, imagine and contest their material realities. I conclude that narrative is not only the way in which children organise, comprehend and appropriate their urban experience; it also allows us an understanding of the city – namely, narrative is both the means by which children make sense of their urban experience and the tool to access that experience.

The social construction of urban space

As discussed in the Introduction, the study of the relationship between the child and the city poses the issue of how to approach and conceptualise urban space. Traditionally, urban space was explored from diverse objective perspectives in their four fundamental dimensions: the physical construction of the city (an approach with an emphasis on the urban), the distribution of the population within the city (an approach of a demographic nature), the distribution of distinct social groups and their diverse actions in the city (an approach with a sociological undertone), and the production of wealth in the city through the diverse economic activities (an approach with an accent on urban economy). Certainly, these dimensions were and are relevant to understanding the complex and multidimensional space of the city. Nevertheless, these biases avoid other constitutive dimensions of the city and of its social life, such as the subjective aspect of urban space, that is, the way the urban environment is articulated in the imagination by the subject, and the shared subjectivities, the urban imaginaries. Hence, the underlying aim of this work is to reflect on the possibility of thinking about and approaching the city through children's urban imaginaries as a permanent process of social construction. To

approach the understanding of the city from this perspective allows us to confer intelligibility upon the city and to make visible certain urban processes and phenomena that the previous approaches overlooked or directly dismissed.

In order to develop this approach, I will begin by exploring the conception of urban space as a social product. Many theorists provided their definitions and theories of space: Michel Foucault (1995, 2002), Edward W. Soja (1989, 1996), Michel de Certeau (1988), Henri Lefebvre (1991). Despite their significant differences and approaches, we can identify a common interest: the conception of space as a social product. This is the idea of space that matters to us. So, to understand urban space as a social entity with distinct and located meanings, we need to start from the demystification of space as 'natural' or 'transparent'. Accordingly, Foucault suggests that space originates not from a void but from a complex network of social relations (Foucault 2002). His definition parallels Lefebvre's argument regarding social space as they both think of space as a product of social relations:

> A social space cannot be adequately accounted for either by nature (climate, site) or by its previous history. Nor does the growth of the forces of production give rise in any direct casual fashion to a particular space or a particular time. Mediations, and mediators, have to be taken into consideration: the action of groups, factors within knowledge, within ideology, or within the domain of representations. Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information. Such 'objects' are thus not only things but also relations. As objects, they possess discernible peculiarities, contour and form. Social labour transforms them, rearranging their positions within spatio-temporal configurations without necessarily affecting their materiality, their natural state (as in the case, for instance, of an island, gulf, river or mountain). (Lefebvre 1991: 77)

What Lefebvre proposes is that space is not only a parameter or a stage in the relations and social actions, but that it is operant in the 'connection' between them. He argues that the traditional dichotomies of material space and mental space are connected by the processes of the production of space, mainly since they are defined by the spatial practices that he establishes in the material experience of the social relations of daily life (Lefebvre 1991). As Italo Calvino writes: 'A city is a combination of many things: memory, desires, signs of a language; it is the place of exchange, as any textbook of economic history will tell you – only, these exchanges are not just trade in goods, they also involve words, desires and memories' (Calvino 1983: 42).

As mentioned at the beginning of this work, and as I will expand upon here, Lefebvre advances a theory of space that includes three interdependent moments (or dimensions) of the production of space. He alludes to these dimensions as: 'spatial practice' (the perceived), 'representations of space' (the conceived), and 'representational spaces' (the lived) (Lefebvre 1991: 38-39). Then, spatial practice (the perceived) is the concrete, the observable and the physical (38). Hence, this is the level of spatial practices. Lefebvre seems to suggest that our spatial practices are something

that we do not fully control, rather that we operate upon the signals delivered to us by our senses shaped by our environment in an almost deterministic way, before we ever start to plan our environments in a rational way (Lefebvre 1991: 38).

The second moment in Lefebvre's triad, representations of space (the conceived), is the conceptualised space, the mental, the abstract and the geometric. For Lefebvre, the category of representations of space is the category of the official order (Prieto 2012: 92). Representations of space are mainly conceptual and abstract in essence, and thus disconnected from spatial practice as something that comprises the actions and perceptions of individual bodies (Lefebvre 1991: 39). It includes, as Eric Prieto states, 'the social order's ability to regulate behavior by imposing on us a representational framework that both explains and constrains our daily practices, despite the fact that such conceptual abstractions are by definition inadequate to the bodily practices and perceptions they are meant to regulate' (Prieto 2012: 92).

Then, in connection to spatial practice and representations of space, it is the representational space, a space of utter subjectivity, of people's experiences, it is symbolic meanings embodied in a spatial form (Lefebvre 1991: 39). In this way, representational space (the lived) is 'directly experienced' social space (121); it is subjective, it is the space of the 'affective, bodily lived experience' (39, 224). The aim of this third category is not to offer a universally acceptable definition or explanation, rather to construct 'a representation that will make the individual's experience meaningful to him or her' (Prieto 2012: 93). Lefebvre's representational space has a critical role as it provides a potential 'base of resistance against the hegemonic representations imposed on us from above by the representatives of the state and its power', that is, by the official order (93).

For Lefebvre, representational space (the lived) is linked to memory and articulated through intimate sites. He understands space as being both material and imagined. What Lefebvre maintains is that an engagement with the material space is negotiated through the subjective and imaginary experience, and that the way children make sense of the city is reliant on the social practices they encounter. In this regard, Lefebvre's triad also implies an incessantly evolving and dynamic construct of social relations that informs and constitutes social space. Nevertheless, the production of social and spatial relations does not aim to totalise nor to determine the complexity of space; on the contrary, it only strives to engage with the interdependent relations that produce it. Lefebvre's claim also indicates that concrete spaces (e.g. streets, buildings, etc.) are superimposed by the work of thought, implying that the urban structures are made not only out of bricks and mortar, but also out of symbols, language and meanings.

Lefebvre's triad is relevant because it permits us to understand that there is an aspect of urban experience that is subjective, an aspect that takes place in the imaginary constructions children (both as individuals and as a group) make to articulate their experiences. Lefebvre, then, provides us with an understanding of urban space as 'real-and-imagined', as Soja subsequently called it

(Soja 1996: 11). Lefebvre proposes that the relations between the perceived, the conceived and the lived are more dialectical than causally determined – that is, that they all shape each other. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of '*habitus*' (Bourdieu 1977, Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) contributes to understanding and developing Lefebvre's argument. Here, *habitus* is understood as the modes of thinking and acting, feeling and perceiving that are part of children according to their specific circumstances (Bourdieu 1977, Bourdieu & Passeron 1977). *Habitus* has two facets, one objective (structure) and one subjective (perception, classification and evaluation); thus, *habitus* is 'the site of internalization of reality and the externalization of internality' (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977: 205). *Habitus* produces individual and collective practices as it unconsciously inscribes in children the values and rules of society and of the group to which they belong. Therefore, children appear to act according to what they deem natural, evident and instituted, when actually they act according to a socially constructed *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977: 54, 83).

Using Bourdieu's concept to elaborate Lefebvre's argument, it may be said that for Lefebvre each social group originates from and relates to its urban space in a dialectical form, putting into practice its *habitus* in the production of space, and, at the same time, it is profoundly impacted by the *habitus* that in turn produced it. This means that when studying the relationship between the child and the city we ought to take into account the two factors of social space: the objective element, that is, the spatial framework within which children live – children as a group whose social organisation and structure are conditioned by environmental and cultural factors – and the subjective element, that is, the space as perceived and imagined by children. Then, every specific age group, social class or any particular group, when experiencing space in determined time, produce certain meanings – that is, the perception of space, the symbolic meanings attached to it, and the associated everyday use will differ from class to class, for example.

This clarification is pertinent because in Lefebvre's theory of production of space, while children's (as a social group) urban experience is informed by their *habitus*, there is an aspect of urban experience that is constructed in time by a concrete, situated subject, in a fragmented way, and affected, altered and informed by the external elements and information, and reconstructed in the imagination. In other words, there is an aspect of urban experience that is not necessarily predetermined by the social circumstances of children, but that is in fact spontaneous, private and intimate. Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, through his triad, allows us to understand that urban space cannot be explained through any totalising logic, because children's urban experience involves not only their encounter with the material city and the social city, but it also involves the constructions they make in their imagination to make their urban experience meaningful to them.

Consequently, the everyday lived experience of the child (as a subject) is central for my understanding of urban space. De Certeau's notion of 'spatial stories' offers a valuable point to

push further Lefebvre's understanding of the perceptual and lived experience of urban space (de Certeau 1988: 115-30). De Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, offers the idea of spatial stories which states that, as Fran Tonkiss writes: 'At the mundane and barely visible level of everyday practice, people trace their private maps in ways which are known only to themselves – and even then only sketchily […] in an unsigned gesture of refusal in the face of the official city, with its logic of planning, surveillance and spatial order' (Tonkiss 2014: 114). Although they are extremely personal, de Certeau believes that these itineraries 'secretly structure the determining conditions of social life' (de Certeau 1988: 96). De Certeau's notion of spatial stories offers a way of understanding the urban fabric in terms of the relationship between material and metaphoric places, between space and subjectivity. De Certeau claims that this meaning can be expressed to others through writing. Thus, the concept of spatial stories renders the correlation between language and practice by maintaining that 'every story is a travel story – a spatial practice' (115); they 'traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them' (115).

De Certeau thinks about the physical city in relation to the sensory or imaginative responses it produces in the subject. In his work, he offers a significant basis upon which to comprehend the production of urban space and the way the urban space is experienced (and 'written') by the city's dwellers through their everyday practices. He believes that the routes people take through the city can be compared to stories they tell as they go. De Certeau, in a well-known passage of his book, portrays his view of Manhattan from the top of the World Trade Center. This panoptic gaze could be conceived as a map of the city. The urban object, seen from up above, is a 'fiction of knowledge' (92), a 'visual simulacrum' (93), since the voyeur needs to distance and alienate himself from the everyday weave to observe it in this way. The city, from this perspective, is laid-out, legible, resolved. It is only up there, where only order and immobility is perceived, that the complexity of the city is readable.

This view does not correspond to the actual lived experience of the city. Take London from the perspective of Christopher John Francis Boone, the fictional fifteen-year-old boy with Asperger's syndrome from *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, for example. London produces innumerable maps that attempt to 'know' the city, maybe in different ways, but all with the idea of organising and totalising the urban object. In the book, Christopher knew from a map of England, Scotland and Wales where London was in relation to Swindon, his hometown (Haddon 2003: 166). The map at Christopher's school was probably a political map used as reference material for students, which is unlikely to include much detail of London, yet it provided certain information about London's geopolitical situation. Once in London, Christopher reads another map of London (or, more accurately, of a part of London), a 'map' of the Bakerloo Line of the London Underground, which is presented as a schematic diagram that does not show the geographic locations of the stations but rather the illustrative route of the line. Still, Christopher

interprets that map as an accurate geographical representation of that part of London (Haddon 2003: 174-75). And, then, there is the 'London A-Z' that he later buys and consults (186-89), a respected book that attempts to show every street, avenue, square, passageway, and so on with its correct name and designation indexed and marked by points on a grid.

All these maps are well-laid-out, legible and resolved, as is the perspective of Manhattan from the top of the World Trade Center. They suggest a particular logic of seeing in the city, a rationality of urban order that is subjected to the plan. Christopher uses maps (among other things) to organise his thinking and to navigate the world when he encounters new information that he does not completely process or when he experiences a particularly confusing or disturbing event. For Christopher (or any other child), maps proffer the aspect of the city that is ordered and logical. However, his experience of London is not as straightforward as the maps he comes across. The rationality of maps is far-removed from the variety of moves that constitute everyday spatial practice. Christopher uses the same unaltered maps that many others used; however, his routes around London, his experience of the city, is so specific and distinct from that of others. To de Certeau, these trivial routes through the city represent one of the minor liberties of urban life, a sense in which the everyday escapes from any panoptic perspective, of order, of design. Hence, de Certeau marks a key distinction between the city itself as a static representation produced and imposed from above by the panoptic view of the cartographer, the planner or the 'official' city, and the 'ordinary practitioners of the city' (de Certeau 1988: 93).

For de Certeau, the ordinary citizens live 'below the thresholds at which visibility begins' (93). Walking is the practice that produces real 'maps' of London, or of any city; walking is 'an elementary form of this experience of the city' (93). The act of walking in the city is crucial to de Certeau's conception of the subject in space, and by using walking as a model of everyday practice, he contests the idea that the ordinary citizen is a simple consumer of urban space. Pedestrians 'write' their own spatial stories through their actions. A cornucopia of entwined routes and diversions entwine the urban mesh. No two citizens could tell the same spatial story; as no other boy could live the same experience as Christopher.

In de Certeau's theory, then, the experience of the subject takes a central role in the understanding of urban space. The process of appropriation of the everyday urban reality demands the presence of an actor who interacts, in a direct, sensory way, and experiences such reality, and then (re)constructs it in his/her imagination. Thus, the presence of this 'actor' (the child, in this case) and his/her practices demonstrates that urban reality is not independent from the one who observes it, lives it, perceives it and experiences it, and that its construction is produced in a vital connection with his/her own meanings, narratives and imaginaries.

Nonetheless, as Lefebvre suggests, in the urban experience of this subject (the child, in this case) many actors intervene, because the child's urban experience always implies a previous

experience of space, since the experience begins from the recognition of the experience of the other. In Lefebvre's understanding, although a child makes an individual act, such as walking to school by himself/herself, he/she produces the space in a collective manner, because through this practice he/she integrates himself/herself into the collective knowledge of the society that precedes him/her and which suggests to him/her that he/she has to realise this practice according to certain norms that respond to the acquired experience of those who precede him/her. For example, the modes of transport children use or the routes children take on their walk to school are recognised as certain patterns that were instituted in the (near or distant) past, and that have been validated. In these practices, the objective discourse that would allow the rectifying of certain aspects of the model and the guiding towards an innovation does not intervene as much as the assimilation beyond dispute of the validity of the previous models. In this constructivist reading of Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, the imaginaries play a fundamental role in the understanding of the social and spatial processes of the city.

Before advancing, let me clarify exactly what is meant by imaginaries in this thesis. Manuel Antonio Baeza defines social imaginaries as 'multiple and varied mental constructions (ideations) socially shared and of practical significance, broadly speaking, destined to the conferring of existential meaning' (Baeza 2003: 12, own translation). That is, the social reality and the society itself are articulated in the social imagination in the society's own manner, style, way of thinking and acting, and in a particular way to make judgements of value. Thus a social imaginary is a matrix of meanings attributed to what is considered the 'reality' and that contributes to the understanding of that reality.

Nevertheless, each child also creates personal imaginaries from the moment he/she assigns meaning to the city from his/her own experience of it and from the practices he/she makes in and through the urban space he/she inhabits in his/her everyday life. In this way, the child constructs his/her own imaginaries from his/her unique and unrepeatable experiences, from his/her own peculiar way of assuming the pressure from social institutions, and from his/her stocks of knowledge. Therefore, while the social imaginaries are produced by the society, these are also simultaneously nourished, constructed and reconstructed at the individual level. This is what constitutes the imaginary; a dynamic ensemble of meanings mobilised and modified by the child (as a subject) during his/her practices. This ensemble is the result of the imaginative capacity of the child and cannot be considered as something static a priori. It must be understood as the way in which the child (as a subject) articulates his/her encounter with the urban space.

Thus, imaginaries are social (or collective), and at the same time are 'singular' (Lindón 2012: 79). The singularity or individuality of imaginaries is a sort of intersection between the uniqueness that characterises the child (as an individual) (his/her subjectivity) and the social character he/she is inevitably part of. Hence, the singularity has a direct relationship with the

child's own circumstances and point of view, but integrated in a collective or social world which is experienced by the child in his/her own particular way according to his/her circumstances and point of view, and which at the same time configures him/her. Therefore, imaginaries do not own a life of their own independently from the child (as a subject). Rather, every time a child (as a subject) appropriates the social imaginaries, these are integrated into his/her particular lifetime, and there they are articulated, reconfigured and moulded in the everyday life of the child.

Hence, imaginaries are a vital element of the process of production through the transformations of urban space. For example, as I will show in Chapter 4, an understanding of the imaginary constructions of the street as a hostile environment allows us to observe that the urban infrastructure and planning of the city in favour of automobility does not depend solely upon the objective reality of the city itself, but it is also marked by the subjective aspects of the narratives of fear that are part of the urban texture.

Consequently, the importance of exploring imaginaries lies in the possible and multiple applications of imaginaries to the social life, to the spatial and to the urban. In other words, the city is constructed from a sum of territories, and these spaces are lived, sensed, perceived, experienced, valued and imagined in diverse ways by all its inhabitants in both an individual and a collective manner. Lefebvre's conception of space also involves the symbolic construction of reality. For Lefebvre, urban representations (imaginaries) are constituted by a combination of ideology and knowledge, and given that representations tend to offer coherent narratives about reality, they rely on and are influenced by sociocultural constructions and symbolical representations. Nevertheless, imaginaries with their norms and values make a process of qualification, through the meanings, of the materiality of the urban world. Thus, since imaginaries are constituted as a weave of meanings, they cannot be reduced to the meaning that is given to an element or object. Certainly, imaginaries are not configured outside of the context and historic processes, but within them. Space is constructed by meaning and, simultaneously, by the social experience. However, all these processes of qualification of a place are exerted by the distinct social subjects by using this weave of meanings (the urban imaginaries) in their everyday practices, that they (as individuals and as a society) construct and reconstruct.

In this context, the process of production of space is not a fixed process firmly instituted in a world without faults. On the contrary, it is a process defined by every form of subjectivity: the emotional, the individual perception, the experience, the social imaginaries, the symbolic constructions, and so on. Thus, as Lefebvre suggests, the production of space is simultaneously individual and collective. Therefore, the interconnection between the social structures and the individual and the collective imaginaries results in a constructivist conception of space. This understanding of space is articulated, then, through five concepts: the subject, the spatial practices, the society, the spatial form and the meanings. The convergence of these elements is

dynamic: the space has an influence on the child (the subject) and on his/her practices, and the child and his/her practices, in turn, shape the space. The society also has an influence on the child (the subject) and on his/her practices, and the child (the subject) and his/her practices, in turn, shape the society. Thus, this play of reciprocal interactions highlights the importance of the subjective with the objective, the real and the imaginary, the material and the immaterial, the individual, the social and the spatial.

Accordingly, the city is not merely the spatial form; the spaces of the city are veiled by memory, by spontaneous associations, by conscious or unconscious manoeuvres, and at the same time, the city is the space where children are confronted and contained within real and imagined spatial structures and realities. It is also a site of perception, an agent of memory, a store of meanings, a site of agency, and a place of experience. The social construction of the city is a continual process of production of space that children make in interaction with other actors, and by orientating their spatial practices through the weave of meanings (the urban imaginaries) that the society continually constructs and reconstructs.

The narrative construction of urban experience

As discussed earlier, in this thesis I argue that the subjective dimension of urban experience can be approached through the study of the interconnection between the urban imaginaries and narrative – both narrative as a social process and as the production of everyday narratives through which the child (as a subject) makes sense of his/her urban experience. In this interconnection, the correlation between the spatial practices and the imaginaries play a fundamental role in the conception of the imaginary as a dimension of the everyday life, because urban imaginaries are part of that interior world that guides the child, in every circumstance, to act in a certain way and not in another. Although the imaginaries are fashioned in the everyday life, they exist in the child as a priori to the action, because they are part of the social world in which the child is situated. While the meanings are constructed in the making of the practices, in essence these meanings are constructed once the child thinks or articulates the practice he/she already made, that is, the meanings are constructed a posteriori to the action. Nevertheless, despite the centrality of the relationship between the imaginaries and the practices, this relationship is necessarily partial if we do not consider the narrative dimension.

Narrative is a practice mediated and articulated through language. In this way, while the urban imaginary is configured through the capacity of the child (as a subject) to think in images (that is, to imagine) (at the same time are fed by the perceptions of the environment), and it emerges in the practices, the child's urban imaginary is also nourished by his/her own everyday narratives

and by the narratives produced by others (social imaginaries, official narratives of the city, objective narratives of the city, objective reports, stories people tell about their everyday practices, opinions, memories, the stories told in the media, books, television and movies, rumours, stereotypes, meanings, ideologies, symbolic representations, dreams, wishes, imaginaries, and so on). For this reason, it is important that, before advancing, I pause to explore the role that narrative plays in children's construction of urban experience. Thus, this section is used as an explanation of the approach to narrative I outlined in the Introduction, before I enter into my discussion about how children's narratives are conducive to studying the relationship between the child and the city.

As discussed in the previous section, this work begins from an understanding of space as socially constructed. In this conception of space, the experience of a subject (the child) situated in place, standing in an urban setting, is paramount to approaching and reconstructing the spatiality that children (as subjects) are able to perceive, experience and imagine from their own place, from their own perspective of the urban world. I argue that children make sense of the urban environment and of their urban experience through narrative. Accordingly, the narrative construction of urban experience, as I will explore here, means that the events (the life as lived – that is, the factual component) are articulated in the narrative with fragments from a web of meanings that have value for the child and that are part of the mesh of meanings of the society or social group to which he/she belongs and that constitutes an element of the filter through which the child sees and evaluates the world, and acts in it.

Hence, narrative is the privileged human vehicle that children use to shape their everyday experience. It is through narrative that experience becomes experience: because it is *told*, and when a story of experience is produced it acquires human meaning. So, when children *tell* their experience it becomes human, because it enters into the symbolic world in which the human beings move and understand each other. It is only there, in the *telling* of their experience, where the multiple meanings emerged from the factual reality are condensed. Then, narrative allows the experience to become a 'storied event'. Thus, the life of a child is a story. It is through narrative that children give life to their daily events. Namely, on account of communication, those events go from being 'mere facts' to being part of everyday life. Think about it: when a boy tells a friend what he did over the weekend, or when a girl expresses to her mother her problems at school, or even when a child remembers the subjects that were taught at school, what children are doing is giving life to those actions or events by sharing and situating them within a context of preceding and subsequent events (Gergen 1997: 187).

In this conception of the life of the child as a story, the child is understood above all as an experiential being, for whom his/her existence in the world is presented as a unique and exclusive (that is, that it does not exist outside of the child as a subject) adventure. Nevertheless,

this experiential being does not emerge from nothing because he/she has to live his/her experience in a certain space and time – namely, in the social city. As Alfred Schutz writes:

> […] the social world into which man is born and within which he has to find his bearings is experienced by him as a tight knit web of social relationships, of systems of signs and symbols with their particular meaning structure, of institutionalized forms of social organization, of systems of status and prestige, etc. The meaning of all these elements of the social world in all its diversity and stratification, as well as the pattern of its texture itself, is by those living within it just taken for granted. (Schutz 1970: 80)

Thus, the pre-existent social structures cannot but be decidedly 'experienced' (which includes, implicitly, varied and original (re)processes and (re)constructions) through the subjectivity of each child and each social group. In this way, as I propose in this thesis, narrative is a suitable approach to access the subjective aspect of children's urban experience. However, here narrative is not merely understood as a methodological resource to enter into children's imaginaries. I maintain that narrative also configures them, it outlines them and it puts them in movement by associating them with the spatial practices or with the world of making or doing. Narrative configures and organises the imaginary constructions children make to articulate their urban experience. And at the same time, as de Certeau so suggestively proposes with his spatial stories, children, through the making of their everyday practices, configure with their bodies and actions their urban experience in a direct relationship with both the narratives that are part of the social city to which children belong and with the narratives that configure and organise their subjective and imaginary experience.

Therefore, when a child tells a story, the social imaginaries emerge interwoven with his/her spatial experience (composed by his/her encounter with the urban environment and his/her preceding urban experiences or memories of his/her lived life). For example, as the following short-stories produced within *The Great Book* show, in the children's way of articulating their urban experience through narrative, is woven their will to reproduce what they have lived and, simultaneously, their disposition to exert their imaginative capacity:

> One day, when a group of boys were playing football it started to rain, thus, the children decided to play in the rain. When they were soaked, they decided to wait to play until the rain stopped. But, one boy didn't want to stop, he wanted to play in the rain. When the people from the neighbourhood saw the boy so happy playing in the rain, they started to go outside their houses to enjoy the rain. But, it started to rain heavier, so the people had to go back inside their houses. The same boy who wanted to play in the rain, stayed outside his house getting wet because he wanted to keep playing in the rain. However, nobody will leave their houses. So, the boy had no choice but to play alone. But, he couldn't play alone, so he invented an imaginary friend, and he was finally happy playing with his new friend. (PLY040-FILN)

> My dear [dog] Fluke is bored and I don't know what to do. He has lost his ball and he doesn't have any other toy. But, I have invented him a new ball that cannot get lost. And, now he is happy again. (PLY028-FILN)

In these examples, the children's use of space and their playing practices, as well as their preceding memories and experiences (i.e. their use and encounter with the street, their encounter with the neighbourhood, their understanding of the natural phenomena, their playing practices, their social relations, their personal feelings, likes and dislikes, to mention some), are intertwined with the social construction, for instance, that a boy should not play in the rain, or that a dog 'gets bored'. And, at the same time, given that these are 'fictional' narratives, children make use of their imaginative capacity to construct an alternate version of their practices. This is necessarily activated in the moment of remembering what they have lived, putting it into words, and, in this way, evaluating it from the present perspective of a child (as a subject who articulates the narrative) with particular needs, capacities, possibilities, points of view, ideas, knowledge, emotions, feelings and fears, and complementing this perspective with his/her desires, aspirations and wishes. In their short fictional stories, thus, children project what they know, but also what they wish, filtered by their own specific point of view and particular ideas.

Therefore, the interesting thing about children's fictional narratives is what imagination can produce. In these examples, like in the rest of the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, the spatial practices are not only framed by the society in which they are immersed, they are also shaped by the child's own perception, his/her particular corporeality and his/her agency. Thus, what both the imaginary ball and friend suggest is each child's personal understanding of his/her reality and of his/her practices, as well as his/her active exercise of (re)appropriation of a space, through minuscule and creative actions that alter their circumstances. In this way, narrative functions not only as a means that carries mere individual ideas, concepts and meanings, but it also contributes to the reproduction and (eventual) transformation of urban social relations.

Here it is important to clarify the difference between a *life as lived*, a *life as experienced* and a *life as told*, as suggested by Edward Bruner: 'A life lived is what actually happens. A life as experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts, and meanings known to the person whose life it is. […] A life as told, a life history, is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of the telling, by the audience, and by the social context' (Bruner 1984: 7). However, it is important to understand that the child does not make those distinctions. Children when narrating generally deem that they are telling the way life *is* really lived; they usually do not think they are only presenting a culturally and socially fashioned subjective story about life. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this work, I am mostly concerned with life as experienced and told, because life as lived is the mere objective explanation of events, and this work is concerned with the imaginary experience which is part of life as experienced and life as told. In this sense, as de Certeau proposes, cities become meaningful and habitable through stories, because as I have reiterated, urban experience is not ordered and perfectly planned. It is not objective; it is constructed in time by a concrete, situated subject, in a fragmented way, and affected, altered

and informed by the sociocultural reality, and reconstructed in the imagination. So, narrative is the creative method which children use to articulate their urban experience in a way that is closer to a life as experienced than a life as lived.

Therefore, what children narrate is an interpreted version of their life as lived. This is because the experience when told, narrated or put into words is shaped by words. Words will always omit certain aspects that language cannot capture, while other aspects can be exalted. So, the version lived is never (and will never be) the same as the version told. Remember that one of the central premises of constructivism in general, is that what we know and believe is the result of the language with which we understand and communicate our perception of the world. This notion proposes, then, that when children narrate (in a world always shared with others), they create the reality, because their words (the pieces of a language socially constructed and shared) give meanings, identify certain elements and exclude other elements of the external world. Thus, the only version of life that can be socially communicated and constructed is the life as told, because words are a collective means, the basic instrument of construction of the social interaction.

As the abovementioned stories show, children experience the urban space through their bodies situated in space, and they organise it according to their biological needs and through the social relations they establish. As argued before, space has an effect on the child, on his/her practices and on society. And, at the same time, in space the social order is expressed, and the social roles and social relations are defined. That is, children's urban experience includes both the objectivation (that is, the orientation of action towards a reality that exists independently of the child – through the established relationship between the child and the urban environment) and the material and symbolic realities, within the everyday practices constructed through time and accumulated in the experience.

This constructivist conception of urban experience assumes that the subject (the child) constructs the city spaces and places day by day. Nevertheless, these spaces and places also reconfigure the identities of the subject (the child) that inhabits them. Hence, each place and space is the result of the actions of the subject (the child) on the external world (the urban environment, the city), and it is contingent as much in the characteristics of the subject (the child) as in the environment in which the action is exerted. In turn, the actions of the subject (the child) are configured within a shared and continuously reconstructed logic. And, at the same time, those spaces and places constructed in this way shape these weave of meanings and the actions that are concreted in those spaces and places. In this sense, urban reality can never be known without the participation of an actor, who with his/her actions or thoughts creates meaningful experiences of that reality. This means that the same urban phenomenon, the same fragment of the city, the same urban reality, can be constructed in different ways according to the distinct points of view and according to the different ways of communicating it.

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As children narrate, they objectivate their personal appropriation of reality, and construct their truths and their doubts of the present, the past and the future. Children elaborate narratives that become part of the physical reality, and this reality is closer to what it is *considered* real, than to what is real in the strict sense (Van den Bulck 1999: 6). Actually, individuals grant functions to reality that are never intrinsic and that entail a 'collective intentionality' embedded in every actor (Searle 1995: 23). It is by means of these functions that children share the beliefs, wishes, motivations and intentions of reality that, without a doubt, determine their relationships with themselves, with others and with their environment.

This perspective allows us to approach the way in which children appropriate the socially constructed urban reality: through narrative. This process, as I have reiterated, is subjective. Hence, children's lived urban reality is contingent upon the explanations they accept, and these, in turn, respond to the emotional domain in which children are located at the time of the explanations. From this perspective, everyday reality, apart from being socially determined, is narratively and psychologically constructed. On the one hand, everyday reality is projected and externalised, and, conversely, it is perceived and internalised, and thus it is necessarily mediated. While it is evident that there is no total or definitive access to what happens in everyday urban life, given that every perception is perspectivist, every experience is real as long as it is lived and narrated.

Children construct subjectivity, objectivity, reality and fiction by their use of narrative. As George S. Howard says: 'A life becomes meaningful when one sees himself or herself as an actor within the context of a story' (Howard 1991: 196). That is, 'narrative implies a knowledge acquired through action and the contingencies of lived experience' (Potteiger & Purington 1998: 3). The urban world does not have a meaning merely based on its configuration or because of its nature. On the contrary, when children narrate events, they signify objects, subjects, space and time in a specific way. In this way children act as authors of a book, as de Certeau proposes, and their lives are the stories they write every day.

'The Great Book of the City':
The city is made of stories, not of buildings

At the beginning of every workshop I carried out, the attending children, seated and attentive, listened to my storytelling of *The Great Book*, the fictional story referred to in Chapter 1 that served as a preamble for the workshop activities. This fictional story helped me project to children the ideas that structure and support this work. 'The Great Book of the City' name originates in the idea of a unique and incommensurable book that grows endlessly and shifts continuously in which all the stories (both objective and subjective, real and imaginary) of the

city could fit. Therefore, *The Great Book* is the city itself and it is an imaginary book that would contain, if they were ever to be written, all the interwoven stories of those who live in the city.

In this section, my aim is to show that the city is not only composed of physical structures, but also by the intersecting lives, experiences, narratives, imaginaries and meanings of those who live in the city. Here I propose that we look at the city as a book constructed as an interweave of narratives, affected both by reality and by imagination, by perception and by experience. In this sense, children project what they know, but also what they wish, filtered by their own specific point of view and particular ideas. So, *The Great Book* is both a compilation of endless stories of diverse themes that may coincide or not, and a representation of the city. Thus, children wrote short fictional stories during *The Great Book* workshops to fill this imaginary book while they embraced the idea that the city is not only composed of buildings, but also of the lives and experiences of those who live in the city.

As discussed above, the city represents a complex material and symbolic mesh that is in continual (re)construction, and whose urban dynamic is constantly (re)interpreted from different perspectives. Cities are built indeed with blueprints, streets, houses, parks, and so on, but also with the multiplicity and diverse modes of inhabiting. Therefore, as children establish relations with the urban environment through their historic, symbolic, affective and perceptive processes, the city is overflown with endless heterogeneous trajectories, that is, with endless lives, practices, experiences, meanings, narratives and imaginaries. It is crucial that any understanding of the city considers the heterogeneous, multiple and dynamic character of urban space. The city as a book accepts such understanding – namely, the pages of *The Great Book*, this unique, incommensurable, endless and shifting book, admits all the interconnecting, dynamic, heterogeneous and diverse lives, practices, experiences, meanings, narratives and imaginaries that the city produces. The idea of representing the city as an imaginary book crowded with stories comes, then, in the first place, from what Salman Rushdie says about his novel *Midnight's Children* (1981):

> One of the things I think about a great city – a city like New York, or where I started out, a city like Bombay, which are remarkably similar by the way – is that in a city like this, there is a crowd of stories jostling on the street every day. There are all kinds of narratives from all over the place intersecting, bumping into each other, stepping over each other, having fights with each other, falling in love with each other. All these stories from everywhere crowd in our streets.

> So, it seems that one way of representing the city, one way of representing urban life, is to deliberately tell a crowd of stories, too many stories. The idea of being prolific, of the cornucopia, has a lot to do of what it's like to live in a great city like this. (Quoted in Franklin 2015: n.p.)

What is noteworthy in Rushdie's argument is his conveyance of the idea that the city cannot be portrayed in a singular speech, but it needs a plurality of voices, points of view and stories. This cornucopia of stories is what marks my conception of *The Great Book*. The utter quantity of

possible interactions means that the city becomes a place for all sorts of stories, both real and imaginary. I sustain that the city, like no other place, brings people into a narrative that is at the same time personal and social. Thus, the city cannot be completely comprehended if trust is placed solely on economic explicatory models or quantitative data; to achieve a well-rounded understanding of the city it is essential to consider these urban stories, both personal and social, and both real and imaginary. This renders the idea that the city cannot be completely captured or rationalised by the 'bird's eye view' ratiocination of mapping, planning, control, quantitative studies, or any other totalising logic. Rather, the stories of the city are heterogeneous, and as de Certeau says, they are 'makeshift things. They are composed with the world's debris […] by the fragments of scattered semantic places' (de Certeau 1988: 107). So, if we aim to study the way children experience the city, we need to do so by acknowledging not only the dynamic character of the city, but also by exploring the interconnecting, heterogeneous and diverse lives, experiences, modes of inhabiting, itineraries, practices, meanings and imaginaries that the city produces.

This work aims to reconstruct the way in which children construct the city every day: through stories. As Frank Smith writes: 'Most of the beliefs we have about the world and our place in it come in the form of stories. Most of the beliefs we have about other people, and the way we regard and treat them, are in the form of stories. Stories are the mortar that holds thought together, the grist of all our explanations, rationales, and values' (Smith 1992: 114). Then, as discussed above, children make sense of the city by telling stories, by narrating their path through it, and also the stories told by others help them structure their ideas of urban culture. As Jerome Bruner says, everyday reality is structured in narrative form (Bruner 1991). They remember their experiences; they confront and project their ideas of space by reading books, by watching movies, and so on. All this together shapes the way children give meaning to their urban experience. Hence, this work accepts that, paraphrasing the poet Muriel Rukeyser, the city is made of stories, not of buildings (Rukeyser 2000: 135). Buildings do matter, of course. But, a city made of stories suggests that there is something else more than the straightforward conception of the city as defined by built forms, by demographic facts or by any totalising logic. Children give the city meaning based on how they learn to perceive it. And they learn how to perceive the city, many times unconsciously, through stories. A city made of stories considers that children engage with urban spaces at the levels of perception, corporeality and agency, and that the city may be conceived in terms of experience. A city made of stories considers that the imaginary is key to children's experience of the city.

A city made of stories means an approach to urban space as lived, experienced, represented, and, thus, socially constructed. A city made of stories, then, aims to articulate both the material and the immaterial aspects of urban space, that is, the 'real' and the 'imaginary'. Therefore, I propose that an approach to the city as a book made of interwoven stories may argue for the idea that the city is not only composed of physical structures, but also constructed from the

intersecting lives, narratives, imaginaries, meanings and experience of those who live in the city.

John Milton's conception of the book as formulated in *Areopagitica* offers a suggestive metaphor for my conception of the city as a book (Milton 2008). In 1644, he wrote: 'For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them' (11-12). A book is, without a doubt, a material object. Nonetheless, as Milton suggests, a book also means something abstract: the words, the ideas and the meanings compiled within it. Therefore, a book is simultaneously more and less than its contents alone. A book is a synecdoche for the words that we read or for the thoughts that we have as we read them. Like every object, a book assumes the impression of its producer and its users. And, at the same time, the book contains both its author and its reader. Thus, the book transforms what appears to be merely the conceptual and impalpable into something with a material form – as Milton more poetically suggests, a book is 'a life beyond life' (12). Then, as Milton writes, destroying a book is 'a kind of homicide' (12) – actually, it is worse than that, because a book encompasses the life of more than one person and endures in more than one time. Nevertheless, as Milton implies, irrespective of the physical subsistence of a material copy, a book is, paradoxically, indestructible and immortal.

Milton's conception of the book is provoked by his take on censorship and licensing. However, I find in his notion a pertinent metaphor by which to understand and to approach the city. In this work, the city is conceived as a book made of interwoven stories: *The Great Book of the City*. Accordingly, *The Great Book* is a material object, but at the same time it is something beyond the concrete; it is the words, the stories, the meanings and the imaginaries that the city produces. Thus, *The Great Book* is both the material city and the immaterial city. *The Great Book*, then, is a synecdoche for the material city, for the urban spaces that children 'write' and 'read' with their spatial practices, and for the stories children tell and use as they 'write' and 'read' those spaces. And, at the same time, *The Great Book* is a compilation of all the intertwined narratives that circulate in the city: official narratives of the city (e.g. historical documents), objective narratives of the city (e.g. statistics, objective reports), stories people tell about their everyday practices, opinions, memories, the stories told in the media, books, television and movies, rumours, stereotypes, meanings, ideologies, symbolic representations, dreams, wishes, imaginaries, and so on.

The conception of the city, like *The Great Book*, assumes that the city is not only a sum of lives and narratives, rather, that the city is a complex mesh of endless and diverse narratives (or discourses) that are continuously (re)interpreted and (re)written. This understanding of the city implies a fragmented and dynamic character of urban space. There is no whole picture that can be "filled in" since the perception and filling of a gap lead to the awareness of other gaps' (Shields 2013: 18). It is impossible for children (and the inhabitants of the city) to have a totalised

perception of the city as a whole due to its complexity and dynamic character. Children (and the inhabitants of the city) imagine what they do not know or understand, what does not exist and what they wish existed, and this causes them to construct an imagined version of what they are perceiving and experiencing. This suggests that the narratives and meanings (and discourses) produced in the city are dynamic (instead of static) and subject to change. For example, I set out in the Introduction the variances between the city I experienced as a child (and my childhood practices) and the city my brothers experienced (and their childhood practices) although that such city is the same (regarding its geopolitical definition).

Therefore, as a sociocultural phenomenon, the city demands not only that we recognise that children's (and the inhabitants') conceptions of urban reality are continually reworked, but it also entails an appropriation of its symbolic and material reality through the spatial practices. These practices are defined by a series of mediations exerted by institutions (in the case of children's lives, such as family or school). And, the city as the social space of cultural transformation has in the individual its main subject, because it is in the individual where the exercise of appropriation and production of the physical, symbolic and imaginary space is consolidated. Accordingly, de Certeau's theory of the textuality of urban experience and storytelling as a form of spatial practice recognises the role that the spatial practices play in the understanding of the city. De Certeau's approach to spatial practices proves to be particularly emblematic for this work as his understanding of the experience of the city benefits the conception of the city as a book made of interwoven stories that I propose here.

In de Certeau's theory, children's individual storied routes exist someplace between the domain of material space and the subjective domain of children's conception and experience of that space. They connect children to specific places and makes places tangible and habitable. These stories contribute to the manner in which children make sense of their urban experience. As de Certeau claims:

> These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. (de Certeau 1988: 93)

De Certeau's idea contributes to configuring the figure of the spatial subject as the motor of social life. This spatial subject is one of the main axes that outlines *The Great Book* conception of the city, that is, the child (as a subject – a person that acts) is the centre of the spatial practices that

take place in the spatial environment, and that shape and are shaped by society. Remember that, as I discussed earlier, the conception of space presented here is articulated through five main axes: the subject, the spatial practices, the society, the spatial form and the meanings.

While in de Certeau's theory of the city, the subject is a central figure, in the constructivist conception of urban space outlined in this work, what is paramount is the interconnection between these five elements. In *The Great Book*, space is more than the mere container or passive receptacle of social relations; it is the sociocultural constructed entity, the product of interrelations. *The Great Book*, then, as Doreen Massey proposes, 'is constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny' (Massey 1999: 2). To give an example from Chapter 4, girls' identities are inherently spatial in that they are contingent on particular spaces for their construction. For instance, the patriarchal image of the girl as a 'little woman' constructs girls as vulnerable bodies. And, in turn, the resulting fears and anxieties of this image subject girls to a series of boundaries and bodily regulations that not only impede their participation in public space, but also define their identities. This example suggests that space and society do not simply interact with or reproduce each other, but rather are mutually constituted. So, in *The Great Book*, all the elements of the city are interlinked, correlated and woven into a mesh whose metaphoric foci define both the children's perception, experience and imaginaries of the urban environment, and the way that the city is shaped by children's activities and by the need to reflect their presence in the social organisation of urban life.

The Great Book considers that narration is intrinsically spatial. The city becomes habitable and meaningful through the narratives, memories, myths, dreams and stories that compose the urban mesh. Thus, *The Great Book* associates storytelling and narrative with space and the everyday spatial practices, similar to de Certeau's poetics of urban space, which proposes a reciprocal connection amid using urban space, exemplified as 'walking', and telling urban stories: both write and read the other. Consequently, children's narratives are studied unequivocally as spatial practices. Children's narratives as spatial practices demarcate and invest the urban spatial form with meaning; they activate the spaces of everyday urban experience and insert children's bodies into the text of *The Great Book*. Accordingly, stories are organised by the experience of embodied children (as subjects) in space and by the children's individual sense of here and there, of familiarity and distinction. Therefore, children's narratives enliven the city, making it habitable and real.

In *The Great Book*, every story (that is, every life as experienced and as told) (the fragments of a book) contains subjective and partial information about the book (the city) as a whole. Thus, *The Great Book* (the conception of the city) can evoke the socially constructed urban space, and at the same time, *The Great Book* (the tool with which to approach the subjective aspect of children's urban experience) can transform what appears to be merely impalpable (the subjective aspect of children's urban experience – children's urban imaginaries) into something with a

material form (the book and its fragments). *The Great Book* embodies the material form (the book – the spatial form – the material city), the stories (the fragments of a book – the spatial practices – the imaginaries – the life as experienced and as told), the author (children as individuals and as a group – the subject – the society) and the reader (the reader of the material book and its fragments – the child – the subject). Consequently, in this never-ending interaction of practices, meanings and narratives, the stories are infinite, so any book that could represent and conceive the city ought to be immense and dynamic; in other words, it ought to be great.

Children and their everyday urban narratives

In the previous section, I urged that to study the ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the city, we must look at them as a book made of narratives. The conception of *The Great Book* proposes that the city is not only composed of physical structures, but also from the intersecting lives, narratives, imaginaries, meanings and experiences of those who live in it. Hence, the relationship between the child and the city is thought out in relation to their own narratives, that is, regarding the way they construct the city in their imagination, the way they experience the city in their everyday life, and the way the city gives meaning to them: through stories. This work sets out from the notion stated earlier, that children tend to think in narrative mode, 'in events that unfold in time (drama)', rather than in static pictures (Tuan 1979: 391, Bruner 1986, Cramer 2004).

Children find out about the world through stories. In *On Being Literate*, Meek stresses this point as she recounts a children's role-play scenario she witnessed for three months in which two girls participated in a game they called 'going to the cimtry' (sic) (Meek 1992: 109). In the game, the two girls dressed up as adult and child, and, carrying picnic baskets and dolls (simulating other children), they pretended to travel on three buses to the cemetery to visit the older brother of one of the girls. This episode was in fact a routine event of the real life for the older girl. So, this game was a recapitulation and exploration of an event that was incomprehensible for the girl. For her, the unknown and absent brother was a character of the story (109-10). In this sense, the life of the girl became meaningful as she saw 'herself as an actor within the context of a story' (Howard 1991: 196). Freud claims that children in their world of play like to connect their 'imagined objects and situations to the tangible and visible things of the real world' (Freud 2013: 4). Through the construction of this imaginative play story, the girls not only tried to make sense of the older girl's quotidian journey to the cemetery, but they also tried to understand loss, separation, existence and death.

As the analysis of the short fictional stories constructed within *The Great Book* workshops will

show in the following chapters of this work, as the example stated above also shows, it is through narrative that children make sense of their everyday urban experience – that is, it is through narrative that children confront their identities with their real and imagined spatial realities, and negotiate those spatial and social realities. So, since children perceive and internalise their spatial and social realities through narratives, at the same time that their everyday reality is projected and externalised through narratives, so can narrative serve as a tool to access the way children perceive, experience and imagine the city.

In this section, I propose that by accessing children's everyday practices through narrative, we will gain an overview of children's integral urban experience. I maintain that it is through urban narratives that children not only project and make sense of their urban experience, but also construct, imagine and contest their social and spatial realities. Children's everyday practices are important because these are not merely determined by their material or spatial realities, but they are also defined by the children's own needs, desires, capacities, possibilities, points of view, ideas, knowledge, emotions, feelings, memories, aspirations and fears, and influenced by the real and imaginary constructions of childhood and by the boundaries and regulations they are subjected to. Therefore, here I argue that narrative is not only the means by which children make sense of their urban experience and the tool to access that experience, but also the means through which children contest and challenge their spatial and social realities. Children's urban narratives are a powerful tool to access not only the city as children perceive it and experience it, but also as they imagine it.

Accordingly, narrative as a tool is possible, given its characteristics: like narrative, the experience of the city is also sequential, it is developed through time and space, it is constructed in both the physical environment and within the imaginary, it can be translated into an intelligible form (i.e. language), it has a personal perspective, and the everyday urban life is directly related to drama. Chris Philo in his critique of Gaston Bachelard's trust in the power of poets to create genuine conceptions of childhood, proposes that children's own storytelling could allow access to the children's worlds and geographies, particularly the 'mundane reveries of children' (Philo 2003: 17). Narrative, like the urban experience, is made of gestures, itineraries, body and memory, symbols and meanings, contradictions and conflicts between desires and necessities. Also, narrative, like the urban experience, is a continual and unfinished process, since individuals maintain different relationships with themselves, with others and with their environment, that are expressed daily in the way they establish their relationships, modify them and give meaning to them.

However, stories need to meet certain requirements so as to be accepted by the interlocutors. Children learn to tell a story following cultural parameters and requirements. Stories have to be well narrated, not in terms of literary value, but in terms of their validity, conceivableness and intelligibleness, regardless of their veracity, and this obviously defines the manner in which

events are constructed and signified; to tell a story in a valid, conceivable and intelligible way, for instance, children have to establish a valued endpoint, to select events relevant to the endpoint, to place the events in an ordered arrangement, and to employ signals to indicate the beginning and the end (Gergen 1997: 190-93).

The sequential organisation of events is produced by a language need. Children's urban experience does not have the linearity required for the construction of a story. The process of putting into words a short fictional story, which involves children's experiences and memories of the urban environment (although the fictional character implies the event portrayed in the short-story not necessarily has happened), implies giving a sequential order to that which does not necessarily have such an order. Many events, actions or practices that are told in a lineal manner, in a child's life (and in the way he/she articulates his/her life) usually involve a series of practices that occurred simultaneously. Nevertheless, language cannot recreate that simultaneousness. The story, as a form of communication, has to tell something and then another thing, because language is sequential. In this way, children, whether when writing a short fictional story or when telling a story or remembering something that happened, place one event after another, articulating the experience as a lineal series of events. This process, which is evident in the short fictional stories, also occurs in children's everyday lives, for example, when a child is telling his/her parents what happened in school, when he/she is narrating what he/she did on holiday or when he/she is explaining a game, because, to communicate, children resort to the narrative mode of thought.

Time (at least the one that is measured) also shares this characteristic of language, and the same happens with space (when it is considered as an extension). In this way, the spatial extension allows children to recognise successive places and organise them as a sequence, for example, the way in which the stations of the underground or a series of towns located down a road are organised. This sequentiality in which space can be moulded is similar to the way the contiguity is conceived. For this reason, more often than not, the spatio-temporal order is the most natural way to organise the simultaneousness of the life as lived that language forces children to organise in a lineal manner. In this way, the sequence of contiguous places and the chronology of the events are the most frequent patterns of lineal order in which children's 'real' experiences are narrated. Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that the narrated space is not only ordered through contiguity. Children also often construct narratives about a particular place, that is, without reconstructing a displacement line.

All these complex processes of memory, language and life lived result in the impossibility of children communicating their spatial experience to each other. As said earlier, what children can communicate, through narrative, is an interpreted version of their life as lived, because when the experience is told or narrated, it is shaped by words. Therefore, words will always leave out certain

aspects that language cannot capture, while other aspects may be highlighted. So, the children's lived version is never (and can never be) the same as the version told. The only version of life that can be socially communicated and constructed is the life as told, including its sequential organisation, because words are the collective means through which children socially interact.

In consequence, while the sequentiality of events does not necessarily reflect children's 'actual' lives, children not only articulate their understanding of this life lived in a sequential manner, but this sequentiality is produced by the necessity of a language that is socially shared and that allows children to communicate their life as experienced. It allows us to read in their everyday narratives and in their short fictional stories their life as experienced, which ultimately is the one that is meaningful to them.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that children as storytellers act in an authoritarian manner, nor that the story is individually configured. Children define their identities from the way they contextualise and construct their stories in relation to their environment and to others, which echoes my previous discussion based on Lefebvre, about how children define their identities in terms of their social reality and the way this reality is mediated through the subjective and imaginary experience. Thus, as Bruner writes: 'Selves are not isolated nuclei of consciousness locked in the head, but are "distributed" interpersonally. Nor do Selves arise rootlessly in response only to the present; they take meaning as well from the historical circumstances that gave shape to the culture of which they are an expression' (Bruner 1990: 138). Therefore, stories do not only depend on the child as a storyteller; they are also collectively and culturally constructed. In this sense, the sociocultural context is not only crucial for children's urban experience; it is also key to the process of narrative, both when a child (as an individual) constructs a meaningful story and in the way others understand and retell that story.

This creative aspect is what makes narratives more interesting in terms of their possibilities; to begin with, they accommodate a more dynamic outlook of the child as a subject that acts in the city and reflects on that action. Hence, narratives as representations, rather than documentations of reality, also offer the possibility to capture the interaction between the child and society. Therefore, stories can reveal something regarding how children as social actors, from their specific cultural point of view and social position make sense of the city. In this sense, since narratives are not precise renderings of reality, we must relate the stories children tell to the social context that define the circumstances of their lives. Then, narratives connect everyday social life with the larger social and urban realities. That is to say, the stories children tell about themselves, about others and about their environment both construe and constitute their everyday lives, because stories depict the urban world as it is perceived, experienced and imagined by children as storytellers.

Everyday practices shape, define and structure children's lives. Based on de Certeau's (de Certeau 1988, de Certeau, Giard & Mayol 1998) and Lefebvre's (Lefebvre 2014) notions, I define

the everyday spatial practices as all sort of everyday and extraordinary activities that construct, structure and transform spaces both in their material forms and in the individual and collective imaginaries. In social terms, everyday life is understood as the sphere of the individual self-fulfilment. Agnes Heller defines the everyday life as a product of the interrelation of three main spheres: the individual, the social and the universal, that is, everyday life is the result of the relationships children establish with themselves, with others, and with their environment (Heller 1984). Then, to analyse the relationship between the child and the city, we need to take into account their everyday life, that is, their daily lives from the internalisation of the relations they establish with themselves, with their families and others, and with their material and sociocultural environment.

So, what Lefebvre proposes is that meaning does not occur nor is determined by objective economic structures but from the use of the city in the course of everyday life (Lefebvre 2014). In his conception of the everyday, there is a clear tendency to emphasise that daily life is not in itself the practices, not even the meaningful practices, but that daily life is the interlinks and groups that form it, which allow its repetition: '"daily" [life] refers to the set of everyday acts, and especially the fact that they are interlinked, that they form a whole' (introduction volume III, para. 8). Hence, daily life is not reduced to the sum of isolated acts, like eating, playing, walking, sleeping, and so on. It is essential to attend to their context, 'the social relations within which they occur', mainly, 'because their sequence unfolds in a social space and time bound up with production' (introduction volume III, para. 8). These interlinks and the whole they form are a deep structure. These characteristics of daily life present a similarity between daily life and language: both have apparent forms and deep structures.

Consequently, children's daily life is not the fragmented spheres of life; the everyday is all them. It is the life of children, from school to family, to leisure, and to other spheres; the everyday is what is done and redone in each and every one of those spheres. Daily life is not only the specialised activities of those spheres, but also the desires, the capacities, and the possibilities of children regarding those areas, their relationship to goods, their relationship with others, their particular rhythms, their time and space, and their conflicts. Then, everyday life is the life of children unfolded in a multiplicity of meanings and symbolisms, and in spaces that define children and that are defined by them within the continual flux of life throughout time. Children's everyday practices are produced through their mesh of interconnections within wider sociocultural urban processes. For example, as I will further examine in Chapter 4, children's everyday playing practices are intertwined in a mesh that includes children's encounters with the material city and the social city, as well as their internalisation of the cultural constructions of childhood. In this sense, children's everyday practices understood as stories demarcate and invest the urban places with meaning in a reciprocal relationship between the use of urban space and the making sense of that space through narrative (de Certeau 1988). Thereby, children's

everyday practices in all their complexity, which includes the interconnecting, heterogeneous and diverse experiences, modes of inhabiting, itineraries and imaginaries, all intertwined within the wider sociocultural urban processes, compose *The Great Book of the City*.

Nevertheless, the everyday practices are at the same time individually and socially configured. Since the moment children are born, they perceive and establish relations with their material and social environment. Then, they construct their personal realities based on those relationships they establish in every stage of their lives. This results in every child having a different point of view of the city and its phenomena, and a particular explanation and comprehension of each of them. As time passes, and according to the historical, social and physical contexts in which children are immersed, they create mental representations (imaginaries) of every experience, which result in the formation of concepts that will later define their particular realities. Thus, urban imaginaries are constructed around everyday life, and the role of everyday life in the creation of imaginaries is relevant since the construction of the social reality of children relies on it. Every point of view and every mode of thought shape the social imaginary in relation to each phenomenon within a society. Accordingly, as I stated before and as I will explore further in Chapter 4, Rob Shields proposes the conception of 'social spatialisation' to define continual social construction of space at the level of the collective social imaginary (i.e. collective conceptions of urban childhood) together with the interventions in the landscape (i.e. the built environment) (Shields 2013).

The urban experience incorporates the direct relationship with space, as well as objectivation, socialisation, ideology and identity. Additionally, the urban experience allows a practice that is objectified in the spatiotemporal reality of children in direct relation to their specific modes of being and inhabiting the city, that is, in their specific subjectivity. By this means, children's everyday practices include a plurality of practices that are produced in a multiplicity of spaces and times of the city, in a reciprocal process between the child and the city, and that process produces the diverse, distinct and endless modes of being and inhabiting. Therefore, the study of the child in the city demands that we understand that the children's urban experience comprises not only their direct relationship to space and their everyday practices, but also the social relations within which they occur, as well as their processes of objectivation, their physical and symbolic realities, the material, conceptual and moral boundaries and regulations they are subjected to, the children's individual and collective identity influenced by the real and imagined constructions of childhood, and their subjective experience, that is, their urban imaginaries.

Thereupon, since children make sense of the urban world through narratives, their everyday practices are revealed in the form of stories. In these stories children project their urban reality, a narrative reality that is an interpretation of their 'actual' (yet subjective and imaginary) reality in the strict sense (the life as told). Children narrate to make sense of the world, and in doing so they

not only unveil their internalisations and projections, but their narratives also provide an account of the ways in which they appropriate the social city, in which they make it their own with their own imaginaries, subjectivity, actions, and their personal and intimate experience. Children's everyday urban narratives are the projection of the city in which they live, the challenges they face, the way they resolve them, and the way they live, internalise, learn and contest their reality.

As the following chapters will show, the short fictional stories constructed within *The Great Book* reveal the children's reality as defined by their sociocultural context, by the constructions of childhood, and by their unique way they appropriate the urban environment and (re)construct it in their imagination. In this manner, while the children's short fictional stories confirm the social asymmetry and inequality defined by the adult-centred discourses of childhood, children challenge (from their place of disadvantage) this asymmetry through their everyday practices without necessarily subverting it. These practices are what de Certeau calls tactics of resistance (de Certeau 1988). Narrative, in this way, serves not only as a vehicle that transports mere individual ideas, concepts and meanings, but it also assists in the reproduction and (eventual) transformation of urban social relations.

For de Certeau, 'tactics' relate to children's everyday practices and operations that bring into play a logic of resistance. While these practices are circumscribed into the actual order of things, which does not necessarily imply a rejection or transformation of such order, they allow the deployment of ruses, ways of operating or employing the imposed representations, putting them to 'the service of rules, customs or convictions foreign to the colonization which they could not escape. They metaphorized the dominant order: they made it function in another register' (de Certeau 1988: 32). Therefore, tactics involve an active exercise of (re)appropriation of a space organised by others (by those who have the power to organise it, as in this case, by adults), through minuscule and quotidian actions that reproduce and at the same time alter the dominant order. These actions show the incompleteness of any normative order or domination regime.

The concept that stresses the active character of everyday practices is resistance. The notion of resistance evidences the active and conflictive character of certain quotidian practices that are not (necessarily) at the service of a strategic scheming to attain power or to establish a new order. The notion of tactics allows us to understand some everyday practices and operations that, without involving confrontation nor speculation about power, play a significant role in the (re)definition of the urban experience (de Certeau 1988). De Certeau's thinking regarding everyday practices becomes relevant because it lets us analyse the connections between the public sphere (the 'strategies' of the system) and the private sphere (the 'tactics' of everyday life), that is, between the established order of the city and children's everyday urban practices.

De Certeau's argument suggests that children are not akin to machines that go through the city only following the rules, codes and determined paths, but that they have an enjoyable relation to

ordinary spaces. As the short fictional stories will show, children actively contest the determined paths and the imposed codes, boundaries and rules by finding pleasurable acts in their relation with their physical environment. For example, as I will discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, in one story, a boy attempts to run away from home since his parents do not allow him to play outside, but when he can run away, he confronts his parents and, in this sense, he redefines his spatial boundaries at home (LSR061-EDA4). In another story, a girl also contests the parentally imposed restrictions to play outside by escaping from home, and she builds a tree house where she lives for a while (LSR047-FILN). In another story, a group of girls, who are harassed by a neighbour whenever they play in the park, deal with the situation by discussing it with their parents, and their parents decide to fence the park so the woman can no longer intimidate the girls (LSR010-FILN). And, in another story, a couple of boys escape from the store manager of a skate shop, who tries to restrain them, and the boys in their escape have an exciting adventure (LSR062-EDA4). These examples are fictional, but as narratives, they show that the tactics proposed by de Certeau are not some grandiose gestures, but minor acts that make children feel at ease in the city in the monotonous experience of everyday life, creating their own version of the city.

For de Certeau, spatial tactics happen in the ordinary routines of walking, moving, playing, dwelling, and, I will add, narrating in space. This is how children occupy space, accommodate themselves in the city, make the city their own, appropriate space and time to their desires and intentions, experience the city as a subjective space, and by doing so, they invest meaning into their experience. De Certeau's concept of tactics permits us to recognise children as agents that, from their place of subordination and through their everyday practices, manage to position themselves not only as competent beings when making decisions, expressing their ideas and having a perspective upon the social world they reproduce and are part of, but also as an active part of urban transformations and social changes (James & Prout 1997). In other words, de Certeau's notion of tactic allows us to understand that the place of subordination, domination, or minority of children under the guardianship of adults, does not automatically entail the children's passivity and discipline.

What matters for this work are the everyday narratives children construct to understand their place in the city, the city itself, and their relationship with others in their everyday urban life – that is, their narratives of their everyday spatial tactics, the narratives of their 'own' city. Children's everyday practices are important because these are not merely determined by their material realities, but they are also defined by the children's own needs, desires, capacities, possibilities, points of view, ideas, knowledge, emotions, feelings, memories, aspirations and fears, and influenced by the real and imaginary constructions of childhood and by the boundaries and regulations they are subjected to.

Thereby, as de Certeau writes: 'Stories thus carry out a labor that constantly transforms places

into spaces or spaces into places' (de Certeau 1988: 118). Urban stories have the power to reveal the many ways and possibilities of the established order: they are made up by fragments of other stories and handcrafted together. Then, where the map cuts, the story goes through,

> […] the story is delinquent. Social delinquency consists in taking the story literally, in making it the principle of physical existence where a society no longer offers to subjects or groups symbolic outlets and expectation of spaces […] Inversely, the story is sort of a delinquency in reserve, maintained, but itself displaced and consistent, in traditional societies […], with an order that is firmly established but flexible enough to allow the proliferation of this challenging mobility that does not respect places, is alternately playful and threatening, and extends from the microbe-like forms of everyday narration to the carnivalesque celebrations of earlier days. (130)

It is through urban narratives that children not only project and make sense of their urban experience, but also construct, imagine and contest their material and social realities.

3. 'In the City We Move':
The Imagined City in Children's Narratives
of their Everyday Practices of Moving

As I stated in the Introduction of this work, over the past forty years there is an increased attention from writers in the disciplines of geography, sociology, urban studies and planning on how the contemporary city is actually experienced by children, and what role urban design and urban policies play in improving the quality of urban environments to become more adequate places for children to live in. The topic of mobility is a special concern of these studies, specifically the issue of children's independent mobility (for example, Shaw et al. 2015, Thomsen 2005, Fotel & Thomsen 2004, Hillman, Adams & Whitelegg 1990, Prezza et al. 2001, Tonucci & Rissotto 2002, Tonucci n.d.). Nevertheless, there is little attention paid to the role that imaginaries play in children's practices of moving, since most of this literature is focused on the physical, mental and social development of children. So, the attention is predominantly placed on how to make the street a safer place for children rather than in considering how children perceive, experience and imagine their practices of moving. Thus, aside from these crucial developmental concerns, there is a lack of literature on the way children perceive, experience and imagine their everyday practices of moving – that is, how children articulate and imagine the city and their urban journeys.

In the previous chapter, following de Certeau's spatial stories and Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, I claimed that children create individual storied routes to live by in their everyday urban practices that are a combination of individual perceptions and spatial practices. That is, the way children experience the city is not only the result of the objective circumstances (i.e. the material environment), but also of the ways in which children imagine those circumstances and nourish them with the stories told by other people, and interpretations of books, television and the media. Then, it is important to understand the objective circumstances of cities as much as the way children perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about those circumstances. This means that when studying the child in the city, we must take into account the two factors of social space: the objective element, that is, the spatial framework within which children live – children as a group whose social organisation and structure are conditioned by environmental and cultural factors, and the subjective element, that is, the space as perceived, experienced and imagined by children.

In this chapter I open the analysis of children's narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops. My aim is to show that children's experience of the city is a process that involves their engagement with the physical city mediated through the subjective and imaginary experience. My contention is that the city is so complex and immense that children know it only

in a fragmentary and partial manner, thus, they imagine what they do not know or understand, what does not exist and what they wish existed.

Here, I examine children's oral collective stories and short fictional stories about practices of moving produced within *The Great Book* workshops. In these narratives, the material city intersects with the imaginary constructions of the urban environment. Children's narratives about practices of moving reveal that children's encounters with the city is articulated in their imagination, that the city is not only the streets where children move and cars circulate; it is the way children imagine those streets and their urban journeys, it is the meanings they invest in the street, in the urban landscape and in the physical spaces of the city, and it is the stories they use to make sense of their everyday practices of moving.

This chapter is divided into four parts. In the first part, I explore the conception of imagined geography and the role that imaginaries play in children's encounters with the physical urban environment. I argue that children's urban experience is fragmented and children never have a totalised perception of the city as a whole, thus, there is an aspect of the urban environment that children do not know or do not (fully) understand, and, in this way, each child constructs his/her idea of the city with his/her own fragments, making his/her own connections, rearranging the pieces to his/her own references, and highlighting what is important for him/her, and then reconstructing it in his/her imagination in a fragmented, spontaneous and discontinuous way.

In the second part, I outline an imagined urban geography as presented in children's short fictional stories. This imagined urban geography is fundamental as it lays out children's ideas about the city in which their narratives about their everyday urban practices are inscribed. Thus, it becomes crucial to open the analysis of children's narratives with this imagined urban geography because, as we will see throughout this work, children's relationships with the urban environment are defined by this particular conception of the city. In this imagined geography, although children associate cars with traffic, accidents and exhaustion, for them car mobility is a given, a necessity and an aspiration. In children's short fictional stories, not only are children accustomed to relying on automobiles for their transportation, but the car structures and organises children's everyday lives; car mobility is normalised and the urban landscape is automobile-dominated. What these stories reveal is that for children the car is not only a material object: automobility delineates children's understanding of urban mobility and urban planning, that is, the car defines children's imaginary urban geographies.

In the third part, tangible elements such as road traffic, urban infrastructure, and children's development and accident indicators, intersect with children's imaginary constructions of risk and danger. Here, I explore the children's imaginaries of road traffic risk revealed in children's oral collective stories and short fictional stories about practices of moving produced within *The Great Book* workshops. My contention is that children in their imagined urban geography

construct an idea of the street/road as a hostile environment where they do not belong. Thus, for children, the street/road is not (merely) a physical space; it is a symbolical dangerous frontier that must not be crossed to assure their own safety.

And, in the last part, I conclude that children's urban imaginaries are continuously shifting and changing, thus it is critical that we attend the context in which the imaginaries are constructed. As children's urban imagined geography and their imaginaries of road traffic risk are constructed within the socio-spatial framework in which children live, they are actually an element that structures and organises the everyday lives of children in the city. So, the children's urban imagined geography and their imaginaries of road traffic risk revealed in the children's narratives about practices of moving, produced within *The Great Book* workshops, are the symbolic operators that reconfigure children's everyday practices of moving and the use of urban space.

Imagined geographies and urban imaginaries

The notion of 'imagined geography' burst into the history of geography hand in hand with the contribution of humanistic geography, a phenomenological perspective of analysis that takes into account subjectivity in the understanding of the environment, and that acknowledges the proximity between geography and art and poetry. Humanistic geography intended to underline the importance of the subject in a time of hegemony of economic and quantitative rationality in the discipline. It is in this time that John Kirtland Wright introduces the idea of imagination in relation to geography in '*Terrae Incognitae*: The Place of the Imagination in Geography' (Wright 1947). In this work, Wright studied numerous ideas: landscape perception, the appeal of the unknown, and the influence of imagination on the creation of geographical knowledge.

Wright proposes that, regardless of geographical proficiency, we all harbour personal *terrae incognitae* (unknown territories) – that is, geographic spaces of which we have no direct experience and in terms of which our knowledge and understanding is constructed from the accounts of geographers and supplemented and expanded by our own imaginings. For Wright, the *terrae incognitae* are not merely personal notions, but are also culturally precise. For example, he suggests that the unexplored territories of the Europeans in the sixteenth century were not the same for the Americans. Wright acknowledges not only other forms of knowledge and understanding of geography differentiated from the Eurocentric scientific knowledge, but he also recognises that every culture and social group have their distinctive understanding of geography, and at the same time, that within the same spatial, temporal and cultural context, the nature of individual geographical concepts are distinct and personal. It is in these epistemological premises that he supports his neologism of 'geosophy' ('geo': earth, 'sophia':

knowledge) as 'the study of geographical knowledge from any or all points of view' (Wright 1947: 12). Because the *terrae incognitae* vary between social groups, geosophy aims to render the account of every point of view, of all 'the geographical ideas, both true and false, of all manner of people – not only geographers, but farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots' (12). For Wright, every single person approaches the unknown scopes of geography through their imaginaries, articulated through the personal and collective experience of the real world.

I brought up Wright's work here, because I want to open the analysis of the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops by addressing the imaginary urban landscape as portrayed by children in their narratives about practices of moving. It is not my aim in this section (nor in this thesis as a whole) to offer an historical account of the development of the notion of imagination in geography, or to engage in a discussion about the different theoretical approaches to the notion of imagined geography. Thus, I will not delve into these themes in any major depth. My interest on the subject merely lies in the role that imaginaries play in children's encounter with the physical (geographical) urban environment.

Therefore, for this study it is important to acknowledge that children, to experience the city, to move around it, have a spatial understanding that can be equated to the geographical knowledge that Wright proposes. Not in terms of ways of navigating the city (i.e. cognitive maps), but regarding the understanding of urban geography – that is, how children imagine the geography of the city, from the spatial distribution of the city and the patterns of movement and flows that connect them across space to the patterns of distribution and interaction of people within the city. Of course, cognitive maps are also important in children's encounters with the city, as these organise children's urban experience. However, before examining children's spatial experience, a discussion I will make in Chapter 5, I want to lay out a primary overview of how children imagine the city. And, in this sense, Wright's approach, in which geography is seen as something not demarcated by profession, discipline or method, rather as something made evident by the mere act of thinking geographically – a common and egalitarian act manifest from geographers to lay people – offers the potential to think of children's short fictional stories as imagined geographies.

Geosophy, as 'the study of the world as people conceive of and imagine it' (Keighren 2005: 546), is close to Lefebvre's representational spaces, as both consider space as both real and imagined. Children move around the city. It is a necessary and a natural activity that children perform accompanied or by themselves either without any evident destination or to go from one place to another, whether by foot, by car, by bus, by bike or by any other means of transportation. And, in doing so, they shape random or predictable pathways across areas and neighbourhoods. But, when children move around the city, they do not merely or automatically go from one place to another; they articulate their surroundings in their imagination in an effort to interpret or

understand their practices of moving and the urban landscape as they perceive and experience it. This coincides with the Situationists' notion of the construction and perception of urban space.

Accordingly, in 1957, Guy Debord published a singularly unusual map of Paris called *The Naked City*. The map worked as a compendium of many of the concerns of the Situationists regarding the idea of the construction and perception of urban space. These concerns were summarised in the method of urban research they called 'psychogeography', which was defined by Debord as the 'study of the exact laws and precise effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, acting directly on the affective deportment of individuals' (Quoted in McDonough 2002: 45).

For the Situationists it was essential to reinvent everyday life through the constructions of 'situations'. They understood these 'situations' as 'collective environments, ensembles of impressions determining the quality of a movement' (McDonough 2002: 47). The Situationists invented the figures of '*dèrive*' and '*dètournement*' as strategies of action. The first concept alludes to the act of drifting through the city looking for surprise elements. In terms of the experience of the environment, the idea was to choose routes through the city on the basis of the impulses that the material city provoked, and to consider the subjective effects produced by different aspects of the urban environment. Conversely, '*dètournement*' is defined as the deviation of the use of some cultural element to be applied differently from the established or expected way. One of the most important *dètournements* is *The Naked City*, a map made up of nineteen fragments of an existing map (the *Plan of Paris*) rearranged to produce new meanings (Sadler 1998).

Here, I am not particularly interested in psychogeography; rather, the significance of *The Naked City* for this work is based on three main points: 1. in the acknowledgement of the indivisibility of urban space and social relations; 2. in its critique of the omnipresent character of maps – which was also later criticised by de Certeau (de Certeau 1988: 92-93); and 3. in the idea that the urban experience is constructed in time by a concrete, situated subject, in a fragmented way, and affected, altered and informed by the external elements and information, and reconstructed in the imagination.

The Naked City furthers my discussion regarding the critique of the omnipresent character of maps (set out in Chapter 2 of this work) by proposing that the urban experience is fragmented and that children never have a totalised perception of the city as a whole. Children's urban experience, as *The Naked City* proposes, is not logical; it does not coincide with any rational measurements or data. Fredric Jameson argues that the fragmented experience of urban space provoked the need for maps, as they would 'enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unpresentable totality which is the ensemble of the city's structure as a whole' (Jameson 1991: 51). Then, these maps would result in their users

'again begging to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion' (Jameson 1991: 54). Then, what Debord's map proposes is that children drift from one 'unity of atmosphere' to another without grasping how these city fragments interconnect or how these fragments by themselves could offer an illusion of the city as a totality. Therefore, the idea proposed by *The Naked City* that each child constructs his/her idea of the city with his/her own fragments, making his/her own connections, rearranging the pieces to his/her own references, and highlighting what is important to him/her, and then reconstructing it in his/her imagination in a fragmented, spontaneous and discontinuous way, is close to Wright's notion that every child harbour his/her personal *terrae incognitae* – that is, the idea that geographical understanding is not exclusive to geographers, rather that each child approaches the urban geography through their imaginaries articulated through the personal and collective experience of the physical urban environment. In this sense, while much of children's understanding of urban geography comes from personal experience and from the scientific knowledge produced by geographers and passed on to them through school, books, maps and adults' explanations, there is an aspect of the urban environment that children do not know or do not (fully) understand, and, in this way, imaginaries complement, supplement and occupy the fractures or gaps in what children (can) actually know or understand about the city (Lindón 2007a: 89-91).

Although the city has a measurable and quantifiable geography (i.e. population, density, spatial distribution, patterns of movement, distribution of people), the way children imagine the urban geography is not merely based on the objective information. The city in the objective data is ordered and logical, but as de Certeau proposes, there are always ways to transgress and contest the determined paths and the imposed codes, boundaries and rules that the physical city offers. And, imaginaries, in this sense, as the free and autonomous compositions they are, find a way to overflow with fantasies this rigid weave. That is, urban geography, albeit it can be interpreted in maps, statistics and objective figures, is also constructed in the imagination of children. Children have their particular way of imagining the urban geography, an urban geography that may or may not coincide with the objective information, but that, nonetheless, has the power to influence and inform children's urban practices.

Furthermore, what is also significant here, is that the phenomenological stance represented in the perspective of Wright identifies the geographical imagination as an 'aesthetic sensitivity to the impressions of mountain, desert, or city' (Wright 1947: 9), that assists as much as to understand the unknown as to share and communicate to others the diverse experiences about places. What Wright proposes is that, as a psychological function, imagination goes hand in hand with rationality in the construction of geographical knowledge. What Wright suggests is that if the geographer does not possess the imaginative capacity of art and poetry, for example, he/she can turn to borrowed imaginative impressions from those disciplines or to the points of

view of the traveller or the lay people who demonstrate a sensibility in capturing the specifics of the relationship between the environment and society to access this imaginary aspect of geography. This kind of imagination, which Wright identifies as 'aesthetic subjectivity' (Wright 1947: 7-10), guarantees the empathy and clarity between the geographer and the reader, and 'enables us to share with him the impressions that place or circumstance have made upon us – to bring him down to earth from the lofty observation point of the objective and make him see and feel through our eyes and feelings' (9). That is, these imaginative impressions produced outside the geographer's realm enable the capture and communication of an aspect of geography that is subjective, that cannot be captured in objective information, but in a manner that is closer to the way by which geography is actually experienced.

This idea is particularly relevant for this study as we are dealing with short fictional stories about the city. That is, in the narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops, children are portraying fictitious urban landscapes, that while they are based on their real experiences and understanding of the city, their main goal is not to present an objective perspective of the city, but to convey to the reader their point of view, the way they imagine the city as it is, as it could be and as they wish it to be. Therefore, children, incited by the physical urban environment, condense in their short fictional stories the aspects of the urban reality that pique their imagination. Their narratives about practices of moving are filled with geographical information about how they perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment: notions of urban planning, demography, urban mobility, spatial distribution, patterns of movement and urban problems (traffic congestion, public transport deficiencies, traffic accidents and pollution). Thus, children, in essence, attempt to understand the 'real' urban environment through narrative by projecting it onto an imagined geography in their short fictional stories. And, thus, as Wright suggests, we can turn to these imagined geographies to borrow their imaginative impressions to capture some of the specifics of children's relationship with the urban environment that escape to geographers, urban planners and to the adult point of view.

The city of the car:
Children's imagined geographies of automobility

In the previous section I explored the conception of imagined geography and the role that imaginaries play in children's encounters with the physical urban environment. These notions are crucial, because this works maintains, as Lefebvre proposes, that children's engagement with the material space is negotiated through the subjective and imaginary experience. I argued that children's urban experience is fragmented and children never have a totalised perception of the city as a whole, thus there is an aspect of the urban environment that children do not know or

do not (fully) understand, and, in this way, each child constructs his/her idea of the city with his/her own fragments, making his/her own connections, rearranging the pieces to his/her own references, and highlighting what is important for him/her, and then reconstructing it in his/her imagination in a fragmented, spontaneous and discontinuous way.

Therefore, my aim in this section is to delineate an imagined geography of the city as portrayed in children's narratives about practices of moving. My contention is that children's perception and experience of the urban environment is articulated in their imagination in a process that includes what they (actually) know or understand about the city, their encounter with the material city, and the information they receive from books, movies, television and the media, and the stories told by other people. This imagined urban geography is not an accurate rendering of reality: children project into their narratives what they know or understand, but also what they wish, filtered by their own specific point of view and particular ideas. Thus, the imagined urban geography depicted in children's short fictional stories about practices of moving show the city as it is, as it could be and as children wish it to be.

García Canclini, in his aforementioned study about urban travel, introduces the idea of travel (mobility) as a key element in the relationship of urban dwellers with the contemporary city, and in the construction of urban imaginaries (García Canclini, Castellanos & Rosas Mantecón 2013). García Canclini makes a recount of the characteristics that he deems define a city:[14] acceleration, unfathomableness, delayed communications and congestion-fragmentation (57-66). He believes that urban travel can reveal the way in which the city changes through time, and how urban life is organised and disorganised. He notes that as cities grow, both the urban sprawl and the intensification of the physical communications and messages hastily disperses, while the density generated by the increase in population, goods and communications in the city results in congestion of people, goods and information. The accumulation of crowds, the proliferation of street commerce and markets, and the increase in information and entertaining sources do not lead to an integral view of the city, but to a fragmented and discontinuous vision. This partial view of the city means that the common urban dweller constructs an imagined version of what they are experiencing and perceiving on their urban journeys. In line with Lefebvre's ideas, as it becomes impossible for children to have a complete notion of the whole fabric of neighbourhoods, forms of travel, urban practices and experiences that compose the city, what García Canclini proposes is that the representational space becomes children's main experience of the environment through which they travel, as they imagine it through symbols and images.

In this study, García Canclini and his research group used photos of the city to provoke a discussion about the experiences of urban travel for different people. The analysis is remarkable;

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[14] García Canclini writes specifically about Mexico City. However, I maintain that these characteristics are shared by most of the major Latin American cities.

his novel approach showed that the experiences of the 'metropolitan travellers' are chaotic, fragmented, disorganised and congested: the loneliness within the crowd. The study also recalls Wright's idea that scholars can turn to the points of view of the common urban travellers to capture their distinct aspects of their relationship with the urban environment. Nevertheless, García Canclini chooses to study the accounts of traffic police officers, delivery men/women, students, housewives, street vendors, bus drivers, taxi drivers and academics. There is no single sign of interest in the accounts of children. How is it possible that a well-reputed academic deliberately does not take into account children?[15] Can this chaotic, fragmented and disorganised perspective of the city be shared by children?

In fact, the children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops show a rather distinct overview of children's practices of moving. Unlike García Canclini's study, their narratives portray children's urban travels as a car-fortress-based practice, as the following short fictional story shows:

> Once upon a time, a girl was having breakfast when her mum told her that it was time to leave for school. They got into the car and drove to school, but there was so much traffic congestion that the girl thought she would be late. Her mother told her not to worry, that they would be there on time. But, suddenly, there was a diversion sign on the road. Thus, they had to cross a small town and then go back to the city. Her mum told the girl that they were close to school. But, then, there was a big car crash on the road, so they had to wait for an hour until the road was clear. And, once they started moving again, there was a sign that announced the end of the road. So, they had to take a different route; they had to drive through a very dangerous curve with many signs to avoid danger. Then, before half an hour before school started, they stopped at a traffic light that lasted for fifteen minutes. Finally, they made it to school, and the girl could get into class just in time before the school door was closed. (MOV061-ENV5)

The above cited short fictional story portrays a girl's quotidian car journey to school. This storyline of a quotidian car journey is one of the most reoccurring in the narratives about practices of moving. The story, like several short fictional stories that have similar plots (e.g. MOV047-ENV5, MOV048-ENV5, MOV084-FM5A, MOV004-FILN), reveals that children's practices of moving are isolated and routine. For children, when in the car, road traffic and its consequences is a mere inconvenience; they are accustomed to it, it is inherent to their everyday travels. This sheltered experience results in children's disassociation between transportation and independent mobility; for children urban mobility means that someone takes care of their transportation, which they do not correlate to their ability (if granted – assuming that adults are in control, as I will discuss further in the next chapter) to walk by themselves to the park, for example. Children's narratives reveal that children's practices of moving are dictated by

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[15] It is significant that García Canclini's study only took into account 'productive' people, as not only did it not include children, but neither did it include the elderly nor people with disabilities.

automobiles[16] (regardless of their economic or social background[17]), and that there is a manifest dependence on adults for their transportation. Thus, there is a clear correlation between transportation and car-based mobility.

This emphasis on car-based mobility is also evident as children, in their short fictional stories about practices of moving, only refer to other means of transportation (other than automobility) and to non-motorised vehicles when the writing prompt requested it.[18] Also, in several short fictional stories about practices of moving, even when the writing prompt is not about automobiles, or road traffic specifically, there are also cars (e.g. MOV074-FM5A, MOV109-JM5B, MOV012-FILN, MOV024-FILN, MOV087-FM5A, MOV089-FM5A, MOV092-FM5A). Plus, in most of the children's drawings that illustrate their fictional narratives about practices of moving there are also cars (e.g. MOV098-JM5B, MOV047-ENV5, MOV012-FILN, MOV100-JM5B, MOV109-JM5B). It seems, then, that the automobile is ubiquitous in children's imaginaries about practices of moving.

Here is what the objective information about the place of automobiles in urban life indicates; according to recent statistics: there are approximately over 1,000 million automobiles on the streets of the world.[19] In other words, there is one car per seven people in the world. And it is expected that the number of automobiles of the world will double by 2040. In the United States, the world's leader in automobiles per capita, there are almost as many cars as people – approximately 765 automobiles per 1,000 people. Following the United States in the ranking are Luxemburg, Iceland and Australia, with over 600 automobiles per 1,000 people. In the United Kingdom there are almost 500 automobiles per 1,000 people. In Latin America, Mexico is at the top of the list with almost 300 automobiles per 1,000 people, followed by Brazil with 250 automobiles per 1,000 people. And, in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area, there are over 400 automobiles per 1,000 people, more than in Greater Mexico City (officially called Valley of Mexico Metropolitan Area), one of the ten most populated cities of the world, where there are over 350 automobiles per 1,000 people. According to *The Times* magazine, São Paulo, one of the ten most populated cities of the world, is the city with the world's worst traffic jams (Downie

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[16] I use the terms 'automobile' and 'car' indistinctly to refer to a passenger wheeled motorised vehicle used for transportation.

[17] As stated in the Introduction of this work, the participants of the workshops were children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds (no street children). This was possible due to the selection of schools that took part in the study, and to the random attendance at the workshops at *FIL Children*. Although it is difficult to determine a pattern according to the social or economic background only through observation, as the social and economic background of each child is not recorded in the material collected from the workshops, the majority of the short fictional stories about practices of moving do reveal an analogous car-based mobility.

[18] Children wrote about different means of transportation (other than cars) and non-motorised vehicles, for example, as a response to the following writing prompts: 'In this story there is a bicycle ride in the city', 'This story happens in the *Vía RecreActiva* (the organised and monitored traffic-free Sunday activity for cyclists that takes place on some major streets in Guadalajara)', 'In this story the main character travels around the city in a wheelchair', 'In this story the main character uses five different means of transportation'.

[19] All figures include cars, SUVs, vans, and commercial vehicles intended for the transportation of passengers, and exclude off-road vehicles and heavy construction equipment. All this data is derived from various official statistical sources.

2008), where there are around 370 automobiles per 1,000 people.

Although the number of automobiles in Mexico is considerable lower than in the economically developed countries, the proportion of automobile use in Mexico, and in Guadalajara specifically, increased significantly since 1990. A comprehensive report about automobile use in Mexico shows that between 1990 and 2010 there was a significant increase in the use of cars (Medina Ramírez 2012). Accordingly, the vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT)[20] tripled from 106 million VKT in 1990 to 339 million VKT in 2010 (15). The topmost total increase in VKT is that of Greater Mexico City, which surged from 30 million VKT in 1990 to 84 million VKT in 2010 (16). And, in Guadalajara the VKT almost quintupled from 4 million VKT in 1990 to 19 million VKT in 2010 (16).

Although there is no available information about the estimated number of car trips children make or a comparison of the specific modes of transport that children use (i.e. the averages of car trips against the averages of walk trips, cycle trips and public transport trips), what the objective information tells us is that, although automobile use in Mexico surged in recent years, at least two-thirds of the population does not own a car. Nevertheless, in children's narratives, while other modes of transport emerge, the imaginary urban landscape is dominated by automobility. So, this is the first indication that the way children understand the urban geography is not merely based on objective information; rather that it is affected, altered and informed by external elements and information, and reconstructed in the imagination. While the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops do not offer a perfect rendering of children's urban reality, they do offer access into the way children not only imagine the urban geography, but also their everyday practices of moving.

To begin with, in children's narratives we can identify a series of factors that contribute to their perception of the urban environment as automobile-dominated. For instance, there are a number of governmental policies that directly or indirectly incentivise car use in Mexico: gasoline subsidy, the elimination of the car ownership tax, the absence of mandatory national third party insurance policies,[21] open trade policies that facilitate the import of low-cost and used cars, easy automotive loan options that facilitate the acquisition of cars, the lack of efficient location mortgages for the acquisition of housing,[22] and the prioritisation of public funds towards

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[20] The vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) is a measure of traffic flow. It is the total kilometres travelled by motor vehicles on any given road or road system during a given period of time, namely, the VKT is 'a function of the number of trips observed and the distance of the same' (Medina Ramírez 2012: 16). The VKT offers significant information about vehicle traffic volume and its growth over time. Vehicle kilometres travelled by passenger automobiles is an essential variable for the assessment of traffic impact, fuel efficiency and consumption, road safety, environmental quality and estimation of traffic emissions.

[21] Since this report was produced, many states implemented policies for mandatory third party civil liability insurance. However, the policies are weak; for example, it is difficult for a traffic police officer to ratify if the insurance of any given vehicle is current, and the fine for not having third party civil liability insurance is lower than the cost of the insurance itself.

[22] The efficient location mortgages are home loans for the acquisition of housing that increase the amount of the loan by taking into account the savings derived from buying a house in an area that have services close by and easy access to public transportation.

infrastructure improvements and implementation that benefit private transport (i.e. roads) (Medina Ramírez 2012).

This last point is relevant to understanding children's perception and experience of their practices of moving. The prioritisation of public funds towards the infrastructure that benefits private car owners led to neglect of the improvement and expansion of public and non-motorised transport options in Mexican cities. This resulted in not only the generation of more car-based mobility and, thus more traffic congestion (Galindo, Heres & Sánchez 2006, Litman 2017), but also the deficiency of public transport, the lack of available non-motorised transport options, and the planning and design of cities that privileges automobiles over pedestrians. This idea of the city as planned and designed for automobiles is prevalent in children's short fictional stories, as the following fragments show:

> Once upon a time there was a girl that used to go to many places, her name was Rosi. In her journey to school, there were many traffic lights, speed bumps and lots of traffic congestion, so she was always late for class. Thus, her teacher gave her bad grades and didn't let her in. Rosi's mum grounded her and didn't allowed her to go out [to play] anymore, so Rosi felt awful. Thus, she decided to get up much earlier to get to school in time. (MOV012-FILN)

> [There was a couple stuck in a traffic jam] in a city crammed with cars, and they couldn't move. They felt like driving around the city, but they were stuck. The husband was very grouchy, and he got really mad because they couldn't move. So, the wife told him: Don't be so grouchy, because of your temper we could get into an accident, you should be more sensible and understand like everyone else does it. (MOV015-FILN)

> Once upon a time, a boy with his family went to a place called Kiroga. But, there were many traffic lights, so they had to stop every time they came to a traffic light. And, to go to [Kiroga], they went to many places first. Then, there was a car accident, so they had to stop for a long while. So, that's why it took them such a long time to get there. And, the same for the return journey; there was a lot of traffic, many traffic lights and traffic police officers. […] Everyone was so uncomfortable [due to the many hours spent in the car], until, finally, after a long journey they got back home. (MOV038-ENV5)

These narratives show that children perceive the urban environment as purposely designed and planned to house automobiles. The city, as depicted in these stories, is dominated by cars and their infrastructure (networks of roads, traffic lights and speed bumps), where traffic and its consequences are unavoidable. So, people have to accommodate themselves alongside the patterns and rhythms that automobility dictates and not the other way around: a girl *must* get up early to undergo a long and intricate journey to school and thus avoid scholastic repercussions, a man *needs* to change his behaviour to endure a traffic jam, and a family *has* to waste hours in the car to go somewhere. Consequently, it appears that the prioritisation of the automobile in public policies and urban planning provoked children's perception that, regardless of the burden it represents, the car is a familiar and indispensable tool for the organisation of everyday urban life.

As in the abovementioned stories, in the children's short fictional stories about practices of moving produced, traffic congestion appears to be the most problematic effect of automobility. Actually, traffic congestion is the only issue discussed in all the children's narratives that is consistently referred to with explicit feelings: anger (MOV015-FILN, MOV092-FM5A, MOV004-FILN), stress (MOV007-FILN), tiredness (MOV010-FILN), discomfort (MOV038-ENV5), worry (MOV071-FM5A, MOV139-JV4B) and impatience (MOV075-FM5A, MOV099-JM5B, MOV100-JM5B, MOV119-JM5B). In children's logic, as articulated in their stories, traffic accidents and road obstacles (traffic lights, potholes, speed bumps and pedestrians) cause traffic congestion, and this in turn, causes people to waste hours in the car, and even to be late for school and work. So, when there are no traffic accidents or obstacles on the road, in children's stories, cars circulate smoothly. Hence, while children see traffic congestion as a burden, it is an unavoidable consequence of automobility, one that they are accustomed to and that fits right into their everyday lives.

Then, in the children's short fictional stories, we can identify automobility and its consequences as part of a routine, a familiar event. For example, in one story, a woman drives to work and there is a lot of traffic congestion, so she arrives late (MOV004-FILN). In another story, on a hot day there is a traffic jam in the city caused by a traffic accident, all the people in their cars are tired because of the traffic congestion and the heat, but eventually the traffic police officers arrive and manage the situation, so everything goes back to normal (MOV010-FILN). Another story depicts the routine day of a woman: she drives to the shopping mall, then to pick up her children from school, then to the grocery store, and then to home where she cooks lunch for their children (MOV040-ENV5). In another story, a man sells his car because it is not fast enough, and he asks for a loan from his father to afford a better car (MOV046-ENV5). In another story, a man buys a car and drives his son to school, then he gets a flat tyre, so he fixes it, and then he picks his son up from school (MOV058-ENV5). And, in another story, a woman drives to go to the doctor, to take her children to school, to visit her mother, to do the dry cleaning, to the auto repair shop and to the grocery store; she walks the steps to her building and her office and she walks inside the grocery shop, and she takes a plane to go on vacations to the beach (MOV062-ENV5).

What all these stories reveal is that the car structures their everyday lives. That is, in children's imagined geographies, automobility shapes urban life, not only regarding ways of travelling, but also in terms of the distinct forms of dwelling and socialising in (and through) time-space. In this sense, in children's narratives, automobility is normalised, people travel long distances to go from home to school and to work, to visit relatives, to places of leisure and to do errands, and the patterns that car travel dictates organise their everyday schedules. Accordingly, Helga Zeiher argues that children's lives are more and more scattered, given that school, leisure and extracurricular activities are dispersed over a greater area of the city and not limited to the near surroundings of home. She suggests that children are commuted to and from these locations in

strongly organised schedules, making them to perceive automobility from the viewpoint of a routine activity (Zeiher 2003: 66-81).

Thus, as the short fictional stories show, the car configures children's practices of moving. Being/travelling in a car is normalised by children, and many aspects of the ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine their everyday urban life are fundamentally structured by the automobile. This scattered everyday reality, for instance, provoked a conceptualisation of urban space in children's imagination as fragmented, connected through the dynamic flows of road traffic (Kirsch 1995, Graham 1998). In this sense, car spaces are not just privatised or spatially segregated, but, as the children's short fictional stories show, rather connected to external environments. This understanding of spatial distribution portrayed in children's narratives coincides with a postmodern conceptualisation of space in which this is seen in association with dynamic flows and connections, which function to wear down the insularity, stability and disconnection of everyday spaces such as automobiles (Shields 2013, Kirsch 1995, Graham 1998). In this sense, Doreen Massey states: 'In place of an imagination of a world of bounded places we are now presented with a world of flows. Instead of isolated identities, an understanding of the spatial as relational through connections' (Massey 2008: 81). Therefore, as the narratives about practices of moving reveal, children perceive automobiles as paradoxical spaces which are private and sheltered spaces at the same time that they are 'spaces of flows' (Mol & van den Burg 2004: 319), which are somewhat connected to the exterior environment and have more than one point of access (i.e. technology) (Graham 1998). This particularity of automobility configures how children perceive and experience the urban environment, in contrast with other means of transportation, as John Urry describes:

> […] car drivers are located within a place of dwelling that insulates them from the environment that they pass through. The sights, sounds, tastes, temperatures and smells of the city and countryside are reduced to the two-dimensional view through the car windscreen, something prefigured by railway journeys of the nineteenth century. The environment beyond the windscreen is an alien other, to be kept at bay through the diverse privatising technologies which have been incorporated within the contemporary car. These technologies ensure a consistent temperature, large supplies of information, a relatively protected environment, high quality sounds and sophisticated systems of monitoring which enable the hybrid of the car driver to negotiate conditions of intense riskiness on especially high-speed roads. (Urry 2000: 63)

This insulation that automobility produces is clearer in the children's narratives in which the plot of the story takes place inside a car. In practically all these stories, aside from road traffic, its infrastructure and effects, children are absolutely oblivious of other modes of travel, of different urban realities, and, in general, of what is occurring in the immediate surroundings outside the car. In this sense, it is important to understand that the way children and adults experience cars is often different. As John Barker writes: 'children's experiences as passengers are distinct, since, unlike many other passengers, […] their experiences are always mediated and reconfigured by

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others, as they never have independent or autonomous access to cars' (Barker 2006: 200, 126), and since, I will add, they do not need to perform any essential task to arrive at their destination. This understanding is based on the idea that the field of vision from the interior of the automobile is the immediate required for the driving. Thus, for the non-driving passenger, there is nothing to see in the exterior. This provokes a more selective form of connection in which children, as passengers, choose to either pay attention to the external environment or to the people they are travelling with, or to connect with an external world through the available technology.

This is well exemplified in a story in which a man is listening music so he is unaware of the numerous potholes that are on the road that cause his car to get a flat tyre (MOV118-JM5B). In another story, a woman is late for an appointment due to traffic congestion, so she calls with her mobile phone to the office where she has to go, and she reschedule her appointment (MOV139-JV4B). These examples reiterate this characteristic of automobility, that for children travelling in the car there is no immediate surroundings to be seen or experienced, only near vehicles and traffic. Furthermore, this selective form of connection, that is, the freedom to choose to interact with the environment or not, means that, despite the unfavourable traffic consequences, children have a positive attitude towards cars. Children's narratives prove that, despite the undesirable effects of automobility shown in most of the short fictional stories about practices of moving (i.e. traffic congestion, pollution and accidents), children have a generally positive attitude towards cars, and the following fragments illustrate this:

> […] when he opened the door, the first thing he saw was the new car his dad bought. He was so excited that he asked his dad to drive him [in the new car] around the city. (MOV054-ENV5)

> Once upon a time there was a boy named Javier who was keen to turn 18 years old to get his driver's licence. So, when he finally turned 18 years old, he went to driving school – in just two months he would be able to get his driver's licence and a new car. After a month [in driving school], Javier was anxious to get his driver's licence. Two more weeks passed, and then two more, until the day finally arrived. He got his driver's licence, a new car and his car keys. He exited the driving school feeling happy. Now, he drives all around the city. He goes up and down, he comes and goes around the city. (MOV052-ENV5)

In these stories, cars provide a sense of satisfaction and freedom, and they are also aspirational. Children seem eager to become drivers. In a study carried out by Hazel Baslington about children's perceptions and attitudes about transportation modes, she notes that children were eager to answer when asked: 'Do you want to learn to drive (own) a car when you are older?' (Baslington 2009: 313). The results coincide with their enthusiasm: a high 89% of the children questioned wanted to learn to drive a car, while only 3% did not want to learn to drive a car and 8% did not know if they wanted to learn to drive a car (313). Therefore, as Baslington suggests, it is evident that children are aware of their probable imminent obligations and the role of cars in fulfilling them (313).

So, in the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, it is clear that children are 'car cultured' (Baslington 2009: 306) in their perceptions and attitudes. As most of the children's narratives about practices of moving reveal, children perceive automobility as a familiar, even exciting event. And, they identify the effects of automobility (i.e. traffic congestion, traffic accidents, pollution) as expected and inevitable. Their narratives show that children are habituated to experience the city by car, and this is highlighted by the dominant idea that every other means of transportation represents a risk. The positive image of the car is emphasised by the contrasting negative view of public transport portrayed in children's narratives about practices of moving. For example, in one story there is a journey on a light rail where the brakes fail and it causes the train to crash into a car, a building and some houses. A lot of people die. Then, an armed gang boards the train, kidnaps a girl and kills her parents (MOV136-JV4B). In another story, a man is travelling in a bus, and he is mugged leaving him without any money (MOV013-FILN). In another story, a man is walking in the street when a bus hits him, killing him instantaneously (MOV018-FILN). In another story, a woman, who is late for work, is waiting for a taxi to get to work, but decides to take the bus instead. The bus crashes and the woman arrives even later to work (MOV093-JM5B). In another story, a girl takes the bus to get home from school, but the bus has an accident, so she has to walk the rest of the journey (MOV023-FILN). And, in another story, a woman takes the light rail to get home from work, but the train breaks down, so she has to take a bus, and she gets mugged on the bus (MOV088-FM5A).

As all these stories illustrate, in children's imaginaries, that there is a common sense of insecurity related to public transport whether due to criminality or to traffic accidents. In Mexico, there is collective negative perception of public transport (regardless of age or socio-economic status) (Villoro 1995, 2005, Monsiváis 2006a, 2006b, ICESI 2005, Méndez 2003, El Universal 2016, El Poder del Consumidor 2013). As different studies show, one aspect of this pessimistic panorama is the poor, insufficient and inefficient quality of public transport in Mexico (Medina Ramírez 2012, El Poder del Consumidor 2013, El Universal 2016). A study carried out among public transport users in Guadalajara reveals that 77% of the inquired consider that public transport is unsafe because of delinquency, and 75% consider that the driving of the conductors is dangerous (El Poder del Consumidor 2013: n.p.). Although children do not write about the insufficiency or inefficiency of public transport per se, they do recognise that the driving of the conductors is poor, as in the children's narratives, exemplified in the above cited stories, public transport is one of the major causes of traffic accidents.

Another factor that contributes to children's perception of the urban environment as automobile-dominated, apart from prioritisation of automobiles in public policies and urban planning discussed earlier, is the role that the television and the media play in creating an antagonism between the car and public transport in Mexico, which is echoed in children's narratives about

practices of moving. On the one hand, *telenovelas*,[23] which are a significant source of influence in Mexican society, frequently define social identities by emphasising ethnic, gender and class tensions (Pearson 2005). In Mexican *telenovelas*, the clashing social classes travel by distinct means of transportation: the rich drive the latest model of car, while the poor ride buses and the metro, and they even work selling gum and cleaning windows for the car drivers. These portrayals help to promote and preserve the contrasting perception of automobiles as positive and public transport as negative that prevail in the social imaginary and that, as the narratives show, children accept and assume.

Conversely, crime has become a major theme in news media in Mexico, and the criminality reported on public transport as well as the accidents that public transport causes are an important part of it. A national survey in Mexico estimates that 59% of the population feel unsafe on public transport (ICESI 2005: 113). Another survey shows that 22% of the population of Mexico City do not use public transport because they deem it unsafe (El Universal 2016: n.p.). Accordingly, several academics concur that in recent years in Mexico there is a collective awareness of insecurity that creates an acute social perception that daily life is full of risks and dangers (Reguillo 2000, 2001, García Canclini 1997, Lindón 2006, 2007b, 2008b). The car, in this sense, helps to isolate the children from the dangers that public transport represents.

Children perceive cars as sheltered spaces, separated not only from the risk and dangers that public transport symbolises, but also from the undesirable aspects of the urban environment. Michael Bull identifies this emphasis on spatial separation as 'automobile sanctuary' (Bull 2001: 199). In most of the children's narratives, it seems like every space that is not the home is somewhat perceived as a hostile environment, whether public transport, the street or public spaces. For example, in one story, a boy walks to the store to buy a soda, and he has to cross a busy street, so he runs across it. He is unharmed, but he witnesses another child being hit by a car, and, shocked, he tells the story to his mum. His mother, worried, decides to move their family into a gated community (MOV113-JM5B). In another story, a boy crosses the street without paying attention and he gets hit by a bus. He is hospitalised for a few weeks, so he has to be in a wheelchair for a couple of months (MOV122-JV4B). In one story, a girl gets lost when walking home (MOV014-FILN). In another, a group of boys out walking are harassed by a gang, so they call their parents and they pick them up in a car (MOV073-FM5A). In another story, a man is walking down the street when, suddenly, a tyre shoots from a bus, hitting him (MOV016-FILN). And, in another story, a boy is not picked up on time by his mother from school, so he decides to walk home. He gets lost, so he promises his mother he will never walk by himself (MOV082-FM5A).

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[23] *Telenovelas* is a genre of serial fictional television drama produced and aired in Latin America.

As I will discuss further in the next section and in Chapter 4, the real and imaginary anxieties create the imaginary of public space as hazardous and unsafe, which is present in children's narratives. This imaginary construction of the urban environment as hostile restricts children to indoor spaces, where there is a perceived protection from a supposedly dangerous environment. The perception of the urban environment as hostile means that the child's appearance in the unfriendly environment (i.e. the street and the public space) occurs within short-lived and (essentially) sheltered circumstances. In this sense, the sheltered exposure to the urban environment is concretised in the automobile, as it forms a barrier that increasingly isolates the children from the exterior, and within this the children reconfigure their world. As I discussed earlier, in this reconfiguration, children travelling in a car do not have a city in front of them, but an immediate space for mobility.

In this understanding of the public space, as Lefebvre suggests, the home is for dwelling and the city is for circulating (Lefebvre 1971: 100-01) – that is, the hostility obliges the children to be confined to private and safe spaces, such as the home, the school and places for consumption, and the street and the public spaces function only as a network to connect those private and safe places. Therefore, in children's imagination, the car becomes a second home. Essentially, it assumes some of the attributes of the house: it is gradually better equipped, and it is also increasingly isolated from the exterior world.

This isolation from the exterior is not only produced by the car's 'security' features, but also accentuated by the conception of roads and neighbourhoods as intervened by a series of barriers that obstruct the visual aspect of the city (i.e. the fortification of gated communities, traffic lights, speed bumps). Furthermore, in children's narratives, there is also a disassociation with the exterior that is expressed in two levels: on the one hand, the disassociation with the exterior is expressed in the attention paid to the interior of the automobile, whether to the people that children travel with or, more frequently, in the attention paid to diverse objects (i.e. radio, mobile phones, media players, tablets) that are part of this refuge. Conversely, the disassociation with the exterior is also manifest in the disinterest in experiencing the automobile as a means for exploration, as a window to see the world. In fact, in the children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, car journeys – those sheltered appearances – are suffered and produce tiredness. For children, urban mobility has lost entirely its connotation of journey, as an exploration of an unknown territory. Instead, in children's narratives, their practices of moving are associated with exhaustion.

Nevertheless, despite the exhaustion car travel causes, the automobile sanctuary offers the possibility of distancing the dangers, insecurity and criminality that walking, cycling and public transport represents. That is, it appears that in children's narratives, the car is the only means of transport that can take them from one place to another unharmed. In this sense, regarding

mobility, in children's imaginaries what is at play is their own safety. Hence, automobility, although problematic, has a better value than any other means of transport. And, this value is reflected not only in the way they perceive and experience the urban environment, but also the way they imagine the geography of the city.

As the short fictional stories about practices of moving reveal, the car as the main character of children's narratives is not a mere object of the city. The car defines children's understanding of urban mobility and urban planning, it dictates the distinct forms of dwelling and socialising in the city, it organises children's everyday schedules, and it is an aspiration. Therefore, although children associate cars with traffic and exhaustion, for them automobility is a given, a necessity. And, as the following short fictional story illustrates, automobility is normalised, children are car-dependent; they not only are accustomed to relying on automobiles for their transportation, but in children's imaginaries, automobiles are also the only safe means of transportation:

> It was a normal day, my girlfriends and me were being driven to school via the ring road. There was such traffic congestion that there was no space even for walking on the sidewalk, it was complete chaos. My girlfriends and me were exasperated, well, only a little, we were getting used to it, and it was better to calm down, otherwise we would get mad. 'I want that cars did not exist', I made a wish on a shooting star that night. The next morning there was not a single car, it was striking. Everybody was riding bicycles or walking. Days passed and everything was fine, but on the fifth day it was worse than when there were cars, it was such chaos, it was horrible again. That night I looked for another shooting star to revert my wish, but there was no shooting star. I didn't even want to go to school the next morning. The next night my girlfriends and I had a sleepover, we played and chatted at the moonlight, and suddenly I saw another shooting star, so I wish cars came back. The following morning, there were cars again, the people were happy and so was I. Thank God everything was back to normal. (MOV075-FM5A)

This story serves to summarise the ideas I laid out throughout this section. As, I mentioned earlier, what John Kirtland Wright suggests helps us to approach children's narratives regarding an imagined geography. Children, in their narratives, show that they have an understanding of urban geography, that while it does not present a perfect rendering of reality, it informs and influences their everyday practices of moving. What children's narratives show is that their knowledge of urban geography is not (merely) based on the objective information about the city, rather it is constructed on the information they (actually) know about the city, complemented by their own perception and experience of the physical urban environment, and affected, altered and informed by external information (i.e. television, books, the media, stories told by other people, and as I will later discuss, the social imaginaries and the material, conceptual and moral boundaries children are subjected to) and reconstructed in the imagination.

In this sense, children construct an imagined geography dominated and structured by automobility. Accordingly, as the abovementioned story shows, in children's imaginaries the

spatial arrangement of the city is predominantly organised to accommodate cars. From inside the car and through the window, all children see are cars, its infrastructure and traffic. In children's imagined geography, the city is planned for navigation in automobiles; it is made of fragmented sheltered spaces (houses, school, work, and places for leisure and consumption) connected by a network of roads that house automobile sanctuaries. In their narratives, children do not belong in the street; in fact, walking and cycling are secondary to driving (or being driven). The street is a hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists, and there is a sense of risk associated with these practices. Every other means of transportation is also dangerous. Nevertheless, children need to go from one place to another, and to do so, they endure long car journeys. After all, as the above cited story illustrates, for children, a reality where there are no automobiles is an ordeal, a bad dream, because as far as they are inside the car, they are at home and they know they will arrive, exhausted, but safe at their destination.

This imagined urban geography, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is essential for this work as it lays out children's ideas about the city on which their narratives about their everyday urban practices are inscribed. As we will see throughout the analysis of children's narratives, children's relationships with the urban environment are defined by this particular conception of the city. Thus, the way in which children imagine the city is also the shared aspect of their urban experience because these experiences are shaped by the same material city (both in its physical configuration and in its access and forms of regulations and control) and by the same dominant social imaginaries of Guadalajara and Mexico. Thus they constitute one of the many narratives that inform children's urban experience and that converge in *The Great Book*.

'Don't get run over':
The street as the imagined edge of children's safe territories

The four Melendy children, Mona, Rush, Miranda and Oliver, the main characters from the children's novel *The Saturdays*, bored of spending their Saturdays doing nothing, decide to start the 'Independent Saturday Afternoon Adventure Club (I.S.A.A.C.)', a club in which they pool their weekly allowances to give each sibling the opportunity to explore the city solo (Enright 2008: 16). In the story, each child experiences the city for the first time by himself/herself, and thus, encourages the reader by proxy to enjoy the city. The story conveys the idea that the most significant trip to the city is the first one taken all by oneself, with the support and reassurance of parents, but ultimately alone.

The story implies that children long for some sort of urban freedom, thus, for the reader, the extraordinary independence of the adventures portrayed in *The Saturdays* becomes fascinating.

We (adults) may all remember the first time we were allowed to go out somewhere by ourselves; the feeling of the granted independence was exhilarating, we were in charge of our path, our bodies, our minds, and we felt in control (to a certain extent). A feeling that is shared by Randy (Miranda) in *The Saturdays* is when she says: 'being by yourself, all by yourself, in a big city for the first time is like the first time you find you can ride a bicycle or do the dog paddle. The sense of independence is intoxicating' (Enright 2008: 26). But, is this need for independence, this idea of the city as a place for journey and exploration as portrayed in *The Saturdays*, shared by the contemporary urban children?

Children's narratives about practices of moving produced within *The Great Book* workshops reveal that that independence, like in *The Saturdays*, is delineated by adult rules: 'Don't get run over', 'Look where you're going, and watch the lights when you cross the street', 'If you get lost or in trouble of any kind always look for a policeman', 'Don't talk to strangers', 'Be home no later than quarter to six' (20-21). So, children's urban independent travels are defined by adults' safety concerns. In fact, in *The Saturdays*, a novel whose apparent intention is to celebrate children's urban independence through individual exploration, there is a visible diminishment of childhood independence as the story advances, emphasising with that not only the idea that children belong in the house (an idea that I will explore further in Chapter 4 and 5), but also that the street is a dangerous place for children.

The idea of the street as an unsafe place for children is not only manifest in literature for children, but, as I started to explore in the previous section and I will show here, it is a recurrent imaginary in children's everyday urban narratives. In the previous section, I presented an overview of children's imagined urban geography. This imagined geography is fundamental not only to understanding the role that imaginaries have in children's perception and experience of the city, but mainly, because it sets out the grounds upon which children's imaginaries of their everyday urban practices, as presented in their narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops, are based.

Hence, the first approach to the children's relationships with the city, as I discussed earlier, is their understanding of the city as made of fragmented sheltered spaces (houses, school, work, and places for leisure and consumption) connected by a network of roads that house automobile sanctuaries. Automobility, thus, structures and organises urban life, not only in the forms of travelling, but also in the distinct forms of dwelling and socialising in the city. In this sense, the rhythms and patterns that this imagined urban geography dominated by automobility dictates define the way children perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about their everyday urban practices. Plus, what this imagined urban geography evidenced is that, regarding mobility, for children, their safety is crucial. And, in this sense, automobility functions as a means to go from one place to another safely. But, what happens when children walk or wander in the street? How is this imagined urban geography then perceived, experienced and imagined from the point

of view of the child, not as a car passenger, but as a pedestrian?

In this section, I explore the role that urban imaginaries play in the construction of children's narratives about their everyday practices of moving. I argue that children's narratives about practices of moving are not only defined by the material city (i.e. traffic density and infrastructure) and children's actual ability to negotiate the urban environment, but also by an imaginary construction of the street/road as the threshold of their safe territories. By exploring children's narratives about walking practices produced within *The Great Book* workshops, I contend that children do not think of the street in objective terms, but that they invest it with connotations of danger and risk – that is, for children, the street is not (merely) a physical space; rather it is a symbolical construction.

As I argued in the previous chapter, in children's imagined urban geography the street/road is a hostile environment. In children's stories, the city is for cars to circulate in. This conception of the street/road as a place where children do not belong is more evident in the oral collective stories and short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops where there are children walking or wandering in the street. In these stories, children perceive and imagine the street/road as a dangerous place: they fear getting lost or being hit and killed by a car.

As I mentioned before, independent mobility is one of the key issues discussed in the studies about the relationship of the child and the city. In these studies, there are three basic issues concerning the relationship between the child and the street that are widely explored: 1. the child's ability to survive, 2. the child's ability to travel effectively without becoming confused and/or lost, and, 3. the child's basic environmental understanding. And, in each of one of these three issues, the adult's feelings of responsibility for the child are predicated upon beliefs that the child's competence is less than that of the able-bodied adult. I will not make any argument regarding this responsibility, as it is not relevant for this study. Rather, I sustain that, as I will elaborate in the next chapter, the parental anxiety over children's safety and the parental and governmental sense of responsibility for children's actions define children's outlooks on the risks and dangers in the street. This is more evident as two out of the three issues (the child's ability to survive and the child's ability to travel effectively without becoming confused and/or lost) are not only constantly brought out in children's narratives about practices of moving, but also because, as their stories suggest, these issues represent a major source of children's fear and anxiety.

Accordingly, the first advice that the father of the Melendy children gives them before they can have their solo adventures in the city in *The Saturdays* is: 'Don't get run over' (Enright 2008: 20), revealing that the adult's main concern regarding children travelling, walking and wandering alone in the street pertains to road traffic and children's ability to survive it. And, as the following examples of children's short fictional stories evidence, children acquire these fears and made them their own:

There was a boy called Iván who went to the store to buy a soda for lunch. But Iván had to cross a very dangerous avenue to get to the store. There was so much traffic and the cars passed flying. Iván ran to cross the avenue, so he got into the store very agitated. (MOV113-JM5B)

Once upon a time, there were some children that were poor and alone, and they were always in danger to get to school, it was very difficult, they risked their lives every day crossing the streets by themselves. (MOV011-FILN)

As these stories exemplify, the clear relation between road traffic and danger revealed in children's narratives reinforces the idea that children are afflicted by the hegemony of the car. In *The Child in the City*, Ward states that: 'Traffic always has been a hazard for the urban child' (Ward 1978: 116), confirming the adult belief that children's prime enemy on the street is the car. And there is a certain logic in thinking that children are unable or should not be allowed to travel the streets by themselves. On the basis of developmental theories, for example, Stina Sandels, a pioneer and world authority on children's road behaviour, affirms that children under the age of ten do not have the natural capacity to perform safely on the road and nor can they be trained to behave appropriately, and that children cannot perform beyond the limitations imposed by their own maturational level (Sandels 1975). Sandels' work, in fact, laid the foundation for children's road safety in Sweden and in the rest of the world. In Germany, for example, children under the age of ten must ride their bicycles on the sidewalk due to Sandels' understanding of children's development-related limitations.

This understanding of children's limitations regarding their road behaviour are reinforced by the fact that, according to the World Health Organization, each year, more than 270,000 pedestrians die on the streets of the world, which means that pedestrians constitute 22% of all road deaths, and in Mexico official statistics suggest that pedestrians comprise around 29% of people killed in road traffic accidents (World Health Organization 2013: 9-11). Thus, if we consider that children are more vulnerable because of what the developmental theories tell us about their behaviour in relation to road traffic, the high numbers of pedestrian deaths in the world not only could ratify the parental fears over children's safety as portrayed in *The Saturdays*, but also the children's own fears over their risks as portrayed in their fictional narratives.

For instance, during the workshops, one of the first activities was to collectively construct an oral story based on sets of two photos. This activity, besides preparing the ground for the story writing, allowed me to get an initial sense of children's perception and imaginaries of the urban environment. In this activity, after I initiated it, each child made up a part of the story and then passed it on to another child to complete the next part of the story, based on what they interpreted from the images, until every child participated or the story reached an ending. The photos used depicted ambiguous situations and diverse urban settings according to the theme of each workshop; nevertheless, every time I started this activity, and regardless of the theme of the workshop, the story suddenly ended after only two or three children had partaken in it, and the

abrupt finale was always alike: a child hit and killed by a car while crossing the street.

This prevailing storyline reveals that children perceive the street as a place where they do not belong and where they are at constant risk. However, their fears over their own safety in the street are not assessed by children objectively – a merely objective discourse of children's dangers in the street using only actual information and statistics would say that the risk of a child pedestrian being hit and killed by a car is in fact low. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), in 2010 there were 792 road traffic deaths of children between 5 and 14 years old in Mexico (INEGI 2015: n.p.), of these, 29% involved pedestrians, so there were approximately 230 road traffic deaths of child pedestrians between 5 and 14 years old, and the remaining 562 road traffic deaths were children travelling in a car. In the same year in Mexico there were 21,987,474 children between 5 and 14 years old (INEGI 2016: n.p.). This means that the risk of a child pedestrian being killed by a car in Mexico is approximately 1 in 100,000, a percentage below the risk of the national median of 4.3 in 100,000.[24] This is lower than the percentage of the risk of a child being killed in a road traffic accident while travelling in a car, of 2.5 in 100,000. And, when in the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara the percentage of the risk of a child pedestrian being killed by a car increases to 2.1 in 100,000,[25] the percentage of the risk of a child being killed in a road traffic accident while travelling in a car in Guadalajara, of 6 in 100,000, is significantly higher. The fact is that the proportion of the risk of a child pedestrian being killed by a car in Mexico and in Guadalajara does not indicate that a child walking along the street would inevitably have a fateful end, like the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops suggest.

And, although there is no information that indicates if the high figures of road traffic deaths of children travelling in a car versus the lower figures of road traffic deaths of child pedestrians mirror children's modes of transportation or if they represent the actual risk regardless of children's modes of transportation, what the available objective information tells us is that it is more dangerous for a child to be travelling in a car than to be walking in the street, unlike that which the children's stories analysed in the previous section indicate. Thus, the fact that practically every child in *The Great Book* workshops constructed a narrative of the street as a dangerous place due to road traffic does not reflect an objective assessment of the actual information; rather it shows that there is an aspect of road traffic risk which is informed by social representations and is subjectively constructed.

Social imaginaries allow us to perceive, explain and intervene in what society considers reality.

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[24] In 2010, Mexico had a population of 112,336,553 (INEGI 2016: n.p.). There were a total of 16,552 road traffic deaths (INEGI 2015: n.p.).

[25] In 2010 in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area there were 847,011 children between 5 and 14 years old (INEGI 2016: n.p.). There were a total of 68 road traffic deaths of children between 5 and 14 years old (INEGI 2015: n.p.).

Thus, there is a distinction between the objective reality and the social representation of that reality, and as the portrayals of road traffic accidents and deaths presented in children's narratives show, in many contexts the latter has more weight. This is well exemplified in children's narratives of practices of moving, as they are more influenced by social imaginaries of road traffic risk than by the actual risk of a child pedestrian being killed in the street by a car. Hence, the representation of children's road traffic risk may not coincide with the objective indicators of children's risks, but this does not prevent the representations being expressed in a 'real and concrete way' through children's practices of moving as they are defined by these imaginaries of road traffic risk.

I will not expand now on the role that social constructions of childhood and risk play in the way children perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment, as I will explore this in the next chapter. Here, rather, I am interested in the way that risk and danger are constructed in children's narratives as both an objective and subjective reality, which coincides with Lefebvre's understanding of space. Lefebvre affirms that space is a symbolic construction, and thus, children's practices of moving entail symbolic processes in the street or public space, since space is not only material, but also representational. These practices of moving allow the construction of a multiplicity of meanings. These meanings are the making of the language used to describe and to interpret space in children's fictional stories, and as Lefebvre says, 'The manner of inhabiting, the mode or modalities of habitation, are expressed in language' (Lefebvre 2003: 125). Then, children, when travelling, walking and wandering through the city, produce certain meanings according to their own experience. That is, children's perception of space, the symbolic meanings they attach to it, and the associated everyday practices of moving are defined not only by the physicality of the city or by the objective information, but also by the subjective information children use to make sense of their practices of moving and to make their experiences meaningful to them.

While statistics affirm that it is unlikely for a child to be hit and killed by a car, what children's narratives reveal is that children feel vulnerable in the street, as the mere idea of walking alone in the street frightens them. It is evident that there is an aspect of the children's relationship with the street that is not objective. As Lefebvre suggests, children's perception and experience regarding the dangers and risks of the street are constructed from both the objective and subjective information children receive. The objective information includes the tangible elements such as the urban infrastructure, road traffic, and children's development and accident indicators. The subjective information includes the assorted representations that individuals and social groups construct about the dangers and risks of the street/road, their characteristics and their scope which comprise myths, beliefs and stereotypes, as well as real and unfounded fears. The way children perceive, experience and imagine the dangers and risk of the street refers to a social or spatial representation constructed from a variety of elements and phenomena that are

developed in the material and imagined space where they travel, walk and wander, and, as I will elaborate in Chapter 5 of this work, from their particular position and point of view. Nonetheless, these dangers, risks and fears are not restricted to the material urban spaces, because, as I have iterated, they are socially constructed.

Nevertheless, the subjective character of the dangers and risk of road traffic is 'objectively' manifested through the narratives constructed by people to communicate their opinions, beliefs, judgments and attitudes. As I have reiterated, in these narratives are intertwined the baggage of knowledge about the dangers and risks children face in the street fed by the real and imaginary, direct or indirect experiences. The subjective dimension of the dangers and risks of the street/road is not only associated with the statistics of road traffic accidents and deaths, and children's natural capacity to behave safely in the road, but also, with the imagined fears, that is, with the situations, spaces and subjects that produce anxiety, and whose basis is fear.

Fear is one of the most basic human emotions, and it is associated with other emotions such as anxiety, worry and stress. All these emotions take part in the diverse forms of fear that occurs in individuals, communities and societies. Anxiety can be defined as an anticipated fear; it is the experience associated to expectation, awareness or proximity of danger. Worry and stress are a kind of anxiety that is often accompanied by physical symptoms (e.g. muscle tension, headaches, stomach cramps). These emotions (worry, stress and anxiety) appear without any material source, danger is not yet existent, but nevertheless it produces fear. Fear and anxiety are not objective; they can appear in the complete absence of danger only by evoking or anticipating it. These definitions are relevant because the vulnerability that defines children's imaginaries about their walking practices is emphasised by the fear of road traffic projected onto their stories. Children could not produce a single oral collective story in which the domain of the street was their own, the mere idea of children travelling, walking or wandering in the street by themselves triggered their anxiety towards their common enemy: road traffic.

From the biological point of view, fear is adaptive and it constitutes a mechanism of survival and defence that allows children to respond rapidly and effectively to adverse situations. This defence mechanism may protect the child's life in a moment of danger, when there is a real risk that threatens his/her safety. This fear is innate; it is normal and beneficial for children. However, fear can also be learned, and in this way, children adopt other people's fears. This is what Jeffrey Alan Gray calls 'acquired fears' and which are constructed in the 'process of classical conditioning' (Gray 1987: 5-26). It is this process of classical conditioning by which parents transfer their fears to children, and children, in turn, make them their own. In this process, children may acquire unnecessary and irrational fears; these are socially constructed fears.

In her study about the social construction of fear, Rossana Reguillo argues that we may be completely safe and, yet, fall prey to profound fears in the face of the imagination of any evil.

And that imagination is part of the baggage of experiences shared by social groups. Reguillo suggests that 'fears are individually experienced, socially constructed and culturally shared' (Reguillo 2006: 32, own translation). Hence 'traffic environmental stress' (Björklid 1994, 1996) or 'subjective safety in traffic' (SWOV 2012), that is, the feeling of vulnerability in the street due to road traffic, is caused not (necessarily) by an imminent danger, but by personal experience, by the stories told by other people, and by the information gained from different sources: objective information, books, movies, television and the media.

As their stories suggest, the fears children acquire about road traffic are constructed, to begin with, by the idea that the street is full of dangers. As I argued earlier, children shape the conception of automobiles as the only safe means of transportation due to a series of factors that include the perception of automobiles as positive and aspirational, and the contrasting perception of public transport as unsafe due to criminality and traffic accidents. In this scenario, both public transport and the street are defined as unsafe in the media. Thus, the media plays a fundamental role in the construction of the social imaginaries of road traffic risk through the reproduction and diffusion of information about the road traffic accidents involving pedestrians saturated with explicit images and sensationalistic narratives. For example, during several years, an important local newspaper in Guadalajara presented every day, in a special section of the front page, the number of pedestrians hit by public transport in the year to date. Then, the people of Guadalajara adopted the expression '*matabus*' (a word that denotes a killer bus) to refer to the public transport, as a response to the increased number of traffic accidents in which public transportation in Guadalajara is involved. And, as the following examples of the short fictional stories about practices of moving show, this social conception of drivers as killer creatures that threated the wellbeing of pedestrians defines children's urban imaginaries:

> A man was walking in the street, and there was a traffic jam. A *matabus* that was travelling at high speed crashed into the cars and the man, instantaneously killing the man. (MOV018-FILN)

> Since the man was late for work […], he drove really fast running over some children that were walking to school. (MOV108-JM5B)

As the oral collective stories and these short fictional stories suggest, children's imaginaries are not only dominated by the idea that automobiles have the hegemony of the city, but also by the social construction that characterises automobiles as evil creatures that threaten children's (as pedestrians) wellbeing and safety. In this sense, what children's narratives propose is that, for automobiles, pedestrians are mere obstacles on the road that can be hit without threatening their dominion. Thus, as automobiles will not stop and they will travel as fast as they want, if children are travelling, walking or wandering in the street by themselves there is no escape: they will be hit no matter what. This representation of automobiles and road traffic as prime enemies of children (as pedestrians) embodies the fears produced by a conception of the city as dominated

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by automobility intertwined with the symbolic, cultural and ideological constructions of childhood and urban space that impede children's participation in public space, because as I have reiterated and as I will show in the next chapter, space is a symbolic and social construction.

Therefore, this image of the street as a hostile environment where children are vulnerable to the dangers of automobiles and road traffic means that they are increasingly being chauffeured or escorted everywhere. Hence, the fears children acquire about road traffic are constructed, in the second instance, by the prevalence of automobility in their everyday urban journeys. Accordingly, the most common indicator to measure the level of children's independent travel is the unaccompanied home–school journey. While there is no available information about the specific modes of transport children use, according to diverse studies, there is an increase in the percentages of children being chauffeured or escorted by an adult to school. For example, a study titled 'One False Move…' (Hillman, Adams & Whitelegg 1990, Hillman 1993) evidences, based on surveys made in 1971 and 1990, that there was a significant increase, over two decades, in the proportion of children being chauffeured to school (either in private cars or public transport) or escorted by an adult. Another research carried out in Italy about children's autonomy of movement shows that 70% of the children between 6 and 11 years old are chauffeured to school (Tonucci n.d.). Another study made in the United Kingdom shows that by 2002, 70% of children's journeys were made by car (Mackett 2002). Then, according to the local Ministry of Public Security, in Mexico City road traffic increases by 30-40% during school terms (Vargas Hernández 2013). And, according to the Secretary of Transportation of the State of Jalisco, in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area road traffic increases by 35-40% during school terms (Chávez Ogazón 2013).

While these figures show that there is in fact an increase in the children being chauffeured or escorted by an adult to/from school, as I mentioned in the previous section, at least two-thirds of the population of Mexico does not own a car, so, it is unlikely that all the children that attended *The Great Book* workshops are being chauffeured to/from school in private cars. Thus, the pervasiveness of automobility in the home–school journey illustrated in children's narratives about practices of moving is not an accurate rendering of reality; rather it shows the way children imagine that reality. This ubiquity of automobility in children's home–school journey is well-illustrated in children's narratives about practices of moving, as several stories, regardless of the social circumstances, depict children being chauffeured or escorted by an adult in their journey to/from school (e.g. MOV040-ENV5, MOV061-ENV5, MOV075-FM5A, MOV058-ENV5, MOV040-ENV5, MOV012-FILN), which contrasts with the few stories that relate to a children's independent home–school journey, and which always have fateful consequences, like the below examples show:

> One day, Claudia was walking down the street to school happily singing a song. She didn't know where her school was located, because it was a new school. After thirty minutes of walking, she turned in Sirlos Street, and she got very scared since she didn't know where she was. […] Claudia

scared started to cry. Time passed and Claudia got more and more scared when she realised it was 2pm already. Her cousin and father started to look for Claudia, until they found her crying in Brangas Street. So, they took her safely home. (MOV055-ENV5)

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Juanito whose mum used to take him to and from school. One day, Juanito's mum didn't arrive on time to pick him up from school, so he decided to go back home by himself. When his mother arrived at school and realised he wasn't there, she got really worried and called the police. Juanito didn't know the way home, so he got lost in the street. A man saw Juanito and asked him why he was crying; Juanito told him that he was lost. Fortunately, the man knew Juanito and took him home. When he arrived, his mum hugged him and he promised her never to walk home by himself. (MOV082-FM5A)

There was once a girl that had to take five different means of transportation to get to her house, but one day she got to a house that wasn't her house. She was lost, and couldn't find her house. But, one day in the afternoon, she saw some of her friends and asked them if she could come with them since she was lost, and they agreed. Finally, she met her parents and she was very happy, they hugged her, they were very glad to find her daughter since they thought she died. (MOV014-FILN)

These stories evidence that the mere idea of walking alone produces anxiety in children. This is obvious not only as children opted to write stories about this particular issue, but also since in the stories the main characters are explicitly afflicted with the stress and anxiety that the idea of being alone on the streets and responsible for their own paths provokes in them. The stories show that children are dependent on their parents for their mobility, and to get lost represents a rupture in their safety and comfort. It is evident that children consider that the dangers of the street could be avoided if they were escorted or chauffeured in their journeys. This is more patent in the story of Juanito where it emphasises that he will never walk alone again. Thus, as the children's narratives about practices of moving reveal, regarding their mobility there is no negotiation of agency; children accept without contestation their dependent condition, because, as I argued in the previous section, what is at play is their own safety.

In children's stories, when the fictional solo journeys of children imply that there could be threatening consequences to their safety and wellbeing, they resolve that to stroll in the city by themselves in not such a 'good idea'. In these stories, thus, there is a leaning towards the idea that children should not break the rules to avoid the dangers of the street. This emphasis on the rules is one of the central dimensions of the children's oral collective stories and short fictional stories about practices of moving produced within *The Great Book* workshops. In most of these stories, children refer to basic rules regarding the proper behaviour on the road, as in the following example:

Once upon a time, there were many cars passing in the street. A boy crossed the street without looking before crossing, and suddenly a bus passed really fast, and since the boy didn't look, the bus hit him. He was lucky because he didn't die; the bus only hit his foot. The ambulance and the police arrived. […] The doctors bandaged the boy's leg and put him in a wheelchair. […] The child now looks carefully before crossing the street. (MOV122-JV4B)

The story reveals that the most basic rule to avoid the dangers of the road is to look before crossing the street. But, as the story shows, and as all the oral collective stories and many of the short fictional stories implied, children easily get distracted and forget to look before crossing the street. Thus, children not just accept the dangers of road traffic as an unavoidable reality of urban life that they can manage and cope with by abstaining themselves from travelling, walking or wandering in the street by themselves and by observing certain rules. As children's narratives show, children tend to blame themselves or to place the blame on the pedestrians of the traffic accidents they may be involved in. Like in the above cited story, recurrent ideas of road traffic accidents due to distraction and panic appear in many of the children's narratives, as the subsequent examples evidence:

> Since [the girl] was very hysterical, she ran and got hit by a car. (MOV067-FM5A)

> Every day [the boy] passed through the same place, he stared at the beautiful view, the birds, the grass so green, […] he always enjoyed observing the pretty houses. He was in the middle of the road contemplating everything when a trailer-truck passed and ran over him. (MOV077-FM5A)

In all these stories, children never recognise that there are drivers involved in the accidents who, maybe, are not as cautious as they should be; children shoulder the whole blame for the accident. This internalisation of responsibility reveals the narrative of safety regarding road traffic embedded in children. The examples of self-blame are numerous within children's narratives. For example, in the oral collective stories, the commonplace was children getting hit by a car as a result of children being distracted or not observing some basic rules. That is, children recognise automobiles as threats that they may encounter, but if an accident happens, they believe they are the most prone to blame. This coincides with what Helen Roberts, Susan J. Smith & Carol Bryce say about the social perception of children's competences in the road: 'Whereas policies on child abuse are predicated on the assumption that the child is innocent, there is a very strongly child-blaming or child-responsible culture in relation to children's accidents' (Roberts, Smith & Bryce 1995: 3).

This indicates that children's perception of their competences are dominated by the social perception that children are unable to behave safely in the road/street. Thus, even when these are fictional stories, children assume and accept without hesitation that if they get lost or hit by a car, regardless of the circumstances, it is their fault. These scenarios reflect the rationalisation and internalisation of discipline that are part of the ideologies of control and care that children are subjected to, and that I will discuss in the following chapter. But, what is relevant here is that, unlike in the narratives about playing practices where children adopt a safety discourse, in the narratives about practices of moving, children not only adopt this same safety discourse, but also a permanent state of fear and anxiety regarding the risks and dangers of the road. So, this rationalisation and internalisation of discipline is so profound that children were unable to produce short fictional stories where they can venture into unknown territory or where they can

cross the street without fateful consequences. This indicates that children's actual competences, then, are overpowered by parental concerns.

As children and parents have no control over road traffic, the most common approach is aimed almost exclusively on removing children from the menace, as John Adams suggests: 'As road traffic and children do not mix safely, two distinct approaches can be taken to ensure children's safety. We can either withdraw children from the threat or withdraw the threat from children' (Hillman 1993: 87). And the removal of children from the street is assured by a promotion of 'protection' and 'control', a point that I will explore further in the following chapter, in this case through the narratives of fear.

Kwame Ampofo-Boateng & James A. Thomson, in their studies about children's perception of safety and danger on the street, emphasise that restrictions on children's autonomy in the street are due more to parents' fears than children's real (in)competences (Ampofo-Boateng & Thomson 1991, 1993). While I will not expand on the parental worries and perception regarding road traffic since they exceed this work, as it is evident that when children told and wrote their stories there was no imminent danger, the projected fear does not constitute a defence mechanism rather it appears to be an acquired fear constructed and influenced by the parental perception of risks and dangers. In fact, the children's recurrent fear and anxiety about their independent journeys that children projected in their narratives match research into parents' and children's perceived risk of the children's independent journey to school, in which parents consider road traffic accidents as the most probable and serious events (Lee & Rowe 1994). This confirms that children's fears and anxiety regarding road traffic are not based on an objective danger, but rather on a symbolic construction of danger and risk.

What the imagined urban geography revealed in children's short fictional stories about practices of moving presented at the beginning of this chapter suggests is that children's territories are circumscribed by the hegemony of the car. This is well exemplified in the following short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops:

> There was a girl named Blanca whose parents bought her a bicycle. She did not know how to ride a bicycle, but her friends taught her. One day, when she learned to ride, she went out to run some errands on her bike, and got hit by a car. (MOV080-FM5A)

> Once upon a time there was a girl named Sofía, and when she went to school, she always saw many cars going very fast. (MOV067-FM5A).

> Once upon a time, there was a boy and his sister who lived in a very busy street. For them, to get to school was really dangerous, every day they risked their lives crossing the street. (MOV006-FILN)

As we can see, children have to negotiate their use of urban space with automobiles. However, this negotiation is inequitable as road traffic imposes its rules. Thus, in children's imagined urban

geography, as these two cases show, children's territories are defined and limited by roads, which are dominated by the rights of automobiles. In this scenario, the car driver has a 'natural' domain to the street/road, while children, as the most vulnerable to automobiles, in contrast, pertain to the realm of the home (a point I will expand on in Chapters 4 and 5). Many studies argue that the city is adapted for the adult, male, working and car-driving citizen (Tonucci 2004b, Ward 1978), which coincides with the gendered interpretations of public space (the street) versus private space (the home) that are the centre of several discussions (Cunningham & Jones 1991, Matthews 1987, Thorne 1987, Harden 2000, Lever 1976). This gendered understanding of public space means, regarding the objective character of the city, that the urban infrastructure is tailored for its 'standard' citizen: the adult, male, working and card-driving citizen, thus putting aside the specific needs of children. For example, things like the timing of the traffic lights that regulate pedestrian crossings or the height of pedestrian signs are actually determined based on a 'standard' adult male (Tonucci 2004b). And, whether this is a response to children's vulnerability or whether it induces their vulnerability, the fact is that in their narratives, children do not have a place in the street; rather, as I discussed earlier, the street is for cars to circulate in.

Philippe Ariès argues that due to the modernisation process of the great urban settlements, children were displaced from the streets and placed within the private sphere of the house. Therefore, within the slow and gradual process of privatisation of the city, children were excluded from the public urban space. A space where the boundaries between the public and the private had previously been more or less blurred then became a space regulated by the transparent logic of circulation and security (Ariès 1996: 283). The fears provoked by a city defined by automobility implies, then, the essential sense of safeguarding children, as Sylvia Parusel & Arlene Tigar McLaren state: 'Safeguarding children's mobility is inherent to the system of automobility and auto-centered space' (Parusel & McLaren 2010: 132).

Correspondingly, Pia Björklid coined the concept 'traffic environmental stress' to summarise the fear and anxiety triggered by the effects of road traffic (Björklid 1994, 1996). According to Björklid, the increase in automobility and road traffic in cities provokes children's fear and anxiety towards the risk of traffic accidents, which in turn caused the circumscription of children's boundaries, the restriction of children's independent mobility, the seclusion from other children and adults, and the augmented need for parental control and supervision (Björklid 1996: 281). In a city defined by automobility, then, the road as a dangerous space becomes an imaginary barrier which circumscribes children's place in the city. Fear, thus, becomes the symbolic operator that, through the perception of the dangers and risks that the street and road traffic represents for children, configures the use of urban space.

The urban landscape saturated by automobiles and road traffic as portrayed in children's narratives evokes Le Corbusier's account of his walk on the Champs Élysées:

[…] the traffic was more furious than ever. Day by day the fury of traffic grew. To leave your house meant that once you have crossed your threshold you were a possible sacrifice to death in the shape of innumerable motors. […] Motors in all directions, going at all speeds. […] Its power is like a torrent swollen by storms; a destructive fury. […] The torrent can no longer keep to its bed. It is a kind of cataclysm. (Le Corbusier 2013: xxiii-xxiv)

In children's narratives about practices of moving, children live in fear of the destructive menace of road traffic. Outside their private and sheltered spaces, there is an incessant current of cars, and, to cross this current implies a threat to their safety and wellbeing. Beyond the current of cars, beyond this destructive fury, the city is confusing, puzzling, a disconcerting labyrinth that they do not know how to navigate without an adult. So, in children's imaginaries, there is no point in crossing the street and in exploring the street on their own. The mechanism of survival and defence adopted by children to avoid this danger, the evil creature that is road traffic, is to abstain themselves from leaving their sheltered territories. Unlike in *The Saturdays*, in children's narratives there is no celebration of children's urban independence, because they already assumed and accepted that they belong in the house. In children's narratives about practices of moving produced within *The Great Book* workshops, thus, the street is not (merely) a physical space: it is a symbolical construction. Hence, in children's stories, it appears that the traffic light they have to watch before crossing the street is permanently in amber flashing a warning signal. Children, in front of this warning signal, live in a permanent state of fear and anxiety, and they barricade themselves into their safe territories to protect themselves from the destructive menace of the current of cars.

Children's urban imaginaries as configurators of children's everyday practices of moving – Final remarks

In *The Child in the City*, Ward tells stories about nineteenth-century children having to be aware of horses and horse-propelled cars: 'One advantage of the horse-drawn city for the child was its pace' (Ward 1978: 116). Nevertheless, since the appearance of Ward's celebrated book in 1978, the relationship between the child and road traffic considerably changed. The contemporary city is larger, and to move around it there are faster and more convenient means of transport than horses and horse-propelled cars. However, as the children's narratives about practices of moving reveal, in the contemporary city there is also more traffic congestion, accidents and stress associated to road traffic.

The city, as imagined by children, is for cars to circulate in. Children in their imagined urban geography construct the city as made up of fragmented sheltered spaces (houses, school, work, and places for leisure and consumption) connected by a network of roads that accommodate

automobiles. In this imagined urban geography, the car is not (merely) a material object: automobility defines children's understanding of urban mobility and urban planning, it dominates the urban landscape, and the rhythms and patterns that automobility dictates structure and organise children's everyday lives. In children's narratives, while children associate automobiles with traffic congestion, accidents and exhaustion, children are accustomed to relying on them for their transportation. For children, then, automobility is a given, a necessity and an aspiration.

Children's narratives about practices of moving evidenced that to study the relationship between the child and the city we ought to consider that the urban space and children's urban experience is not (merely) based on the material urban environment; rather it is affected, altered and informed by the external elements and information, and reconstructed in the imagination. Correspondingly, the way children perceive, experience and imagine the street/road involves more than the numbers of automobiles that circulate, the average time it takes children to cross the street and the statistics about child pedestrian road traffic deaths. It is the way children articulate and make sense of all these numbers and figures, and the material environment to give meaning to their urban experience, in a process that also involves what they (actually) know or understand about the city, their encounter with the material city, and the information they receive from books, movies, television, the media, and the stories told by other people.

As I argued throughout this chapter, children's urban imaginaries allow us to recognise the complexity of the urban reality, because they refer more to the processes, practices and experiences than to situations or consequences. Thus, urban imaginaries can operate in children's experiences, at the same time that they configure the social and urban reality, and children's everyday urban practices. That is, urban imaginaries allow children to make sense of their encounters with the material city and of their urban practices in a way that is meaningful to them, and at the same time they inform the social and urban reality, tinting it with meanings that have value for the urban society and that eventually become reconfigurators of this reality. For example, the social city constructed a narrative (a social imaginary) in which the street/road is not safe for children based on children's natural capacities, official statistics, direct experiences, rumours, the state of insecurity in Mexico, the sensationalist information propagated by the media, and so on, which led to the restriction of children in the street/road. Children move from one place to another by different means (walking, public transport, private automobiles, etc.), but those journeys are informed not only by their actual practice of moving, but also by the objective statistics, by their competences and by those social imaginaries that prescribe it as dangerous for children to be in the street/road. Thus children, with all this information, articulate their experience and construct an imagined geography dominated by automobility and by a safety discourse that becomes their explanation of urban reality. It is fundamental to understand that urban imaginaries are not immutable constructions; on the contrary, they are continuously shifting and changing due to the constant transformations that take place in the urban society

and urban environment, meaning that every day children establish new relationships with themselves, with others and with their urban environment.

Therefore, as I started to explore here and I will explore further in the following chapter, it is essential to attend to the context, the spatial framework within which children live, in which children's imaginaries are constructed. So, the imaginaries produced by the nineteenth-century children referred to by Ward would not be the same as those of my younger brothers or the student in the concentration camp, or as those of the children that attended *The Great Book* workshops. The complexity of the state of social violence in Mexico, for instance, is inexorably related to children's practices of moving – that is, the social organisation and structure of children, as a group, are conditioned by environmental and cultural factors. For example, I carried out a workshop on February 2, 2011, in a school,[26] the morning after the first series of '*narcobloqueos*'[27] took place in Guadalajara. The word '*narcobloqueo*' was first used in 2010, but by the time of the workshop, these types of events had only happened five or six times in Mexico, so the term was relatively new and had not yet become widespread. Thus, that morning of February in the workshop, the news about the *narcobloqueos* that happened just the evening before, were emergent and everyone was talking about it. During the workshop, I did not bring up the news and I carried out the workshops as usual. However, both the oral and fictional stories produced that day were particularly violent. The oral story, for example, unlike any other from the series of workshops, not only included children being hit and killed by cars, but also children getting shot and killed by cartel members.

I will not delve into this violent story or the particular circumstances of the *narcobloqueos* and the state of social violence in Mexico in any major depth. I use this example because it is important to acknowledge that children's urban imaginaries constitute both individual and social constructions that are intertwined with children's understanding of their urban environment, their everyday urban practices, as well as with their sociocultural context. Thus, children's everyday practices of moving allow the elaboration of imaginaries that allude to pleasant or enjoyable experiences, to conflicts, dystopias or fears.

The fears and anxieties projected onto children's narratives about practices of moving are related to children's specific circumstances, spaces and subjects. So, children's urban imagined geography and their imaginaries of road traffic risk are not simply symbolic constructions through which children imagine or evoke the city. These imaginaries are actually an element that structures and organises the everyday lives of children in the city, for example, in the way that the

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[26] The workshop took place in School 'Ricardo Flores Magón'.

[27] A '*narcobloqueo*' is a coordinated cartel-related attack in which multiple heavily armed cartel squads hijack buses, trucks and large commercial vehicles in a city, park them on main strategic roads, and then set them on fire. Such strategies are aimed to disrupt normal traffic flow, confuse and embarrass local law enforcement authorities, and especially, to incite terror in the local population.

fear and anxiety produced by automobility means that children (and their parents and caretakers) select and find different routes or means of transportation. Therefore, the children's urban imagined geography and their imaginaries of road traffic risk revealed in the children's narratives about practices of moving, produced within *The Great Book* workshops, are the symbolic operators that configure children's everyday practices of moving and the use of urban space.

4. 'In the City We Play':
The Social City in Children's Narratives
of their Everyday Playing Practices

In the previous chapter, the children's narratives of practices of moving revealed that to study the relationship between the child and the city we ought to consider both the objective and the subjective aspects of social space. Hence, we ought to think about children's social reality and the way this reality is mediated through their subjective and imaginary experience. I claimed that the city is so complex and immense that children know it only in a fragmentary and partial manner, thus, they imagine what they do not know or understand, what does not exist and what they wish existed.

Nevertheless, urban life and society are not merely established in time and history; they are also situated, contextualised and reproduced in space (Soja 1989, Jameson 1991). We must explain childhood as a social space bounded with the complex, modern and global realities of urban society – an understanding of childhood as highly spatialised. The child in the city is thus confronted by and contained within spatial structures and realities. Therefore, my interest in children's narratives of play lie in the way that the real and imagined constructions of childhood intersect with real and imagined urban spaces in children's own conceptions of urban childhood, as this would reveal how the 'real' and 'imagined' are dialectically linked together in the continuing (re)production and (re)construction of children's experience and perception of the city.

In this chapter, then, I analyse children's short fictional stories about playing practices. The narratives of playing practices reveal that the way children make sense of the urban environment is both reliant on their encounter with the social city and on the internalisation of the cultural constructions of childhood. In the narratives of playing practices, a child's identity is profoundly intertwined with his/her physical and social environments. In the lives of children, influences such as power and control, and the symbolic representations of childhood, have a significant impact in their construction of identity, and thus influence how they perceive and experience their urban childhoods. Consequently, as the analysis of the short fictional stories will show, children's experiences and perceptions of their playing practices are affected by their internalisation of the real and imagined constructions of childhood, and their playing practices are influenced by urban cultural discourses of protection, control and domesticity.

This chapter is organised in the following way. In the first section, I explore the role that the cultural constructions of childhood play in the way children perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about their urban childhoods. I argue that there is a conflicting viewpoint of children being at risk and children becoming a threat, between safety and power, which defines

the urban boundaries that determine the place of the child in the city. By exploring the contrasting ideologies of control and care depicted in the children's narratives of play produced within *The Great Book* workshops, I contend that to understand the way children perceive and imagine their place in the city, we ought to take into consideration that children's urban experience is intertwined with the cultural and ideological constructions of childhood.

In the second part, I explore the role that symbolic representations have in the preservation of traditional sex-role divisions of urban space and in the construction of girls' identity, which ultimately influences how they perceive, experience, imagine and write about their playing practices. I maintain that there is a sociocultural assumption of girls as being unable to look after themselves that led to a series of stereotypes and symbolic representations that stigmatise girls as vulnerable, imprudent and naïve, and thus they need to be controlled and confined to ensure their safety and integrity. By exploring the girls' narratives of play produced within *The Great Book* workshops, I argue that girls are subjected to a series of boundaries and bodily regulations outlined by the patriarchal society through symbolic representations that not only impede their participation in public space, but also define their identities.

In the third part, I conclude that the study of the child in the city demands that we understand that children's urban experience comprises not only their direct relationship with space and their everyday practices, but also the social relations within which they occur, as well as their processes of objectivation, their physical and symbolic realities, the material, conceptual and moral boundaries they are subjected to, the children's individual and collective identity influenced by the real and imagined constructions of childhood, and their subjective experience, that is, their urban imaginaries.

A fence to protect children's play that protects *us* from children's play

As I stated in Chapter 3, there is a distinct parental anxiety over children's safety in the urban environment, which results in children's imaginary constructions of risk. But, at the same time, as I will argue here, there is also a parental and governmental sense of responsibility for children's actions, and a common adult fear *of* children. Thus, in this section, I will show that there is a conflicting standpoint of children being at risk and children becoming a threat, between safety and power. Through the analysis of the contrasting ideologies of control and care that emerged in the children's short fictional stories about playing practices produced within *The Great Book* workshops, my aim here is to show that the symbolic antagonistic constructions of childhood define the way they perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about their urban childhoods.

This work opened with an anecdote of my younger brothers playing in the sheltered space of our house. And, as I also recounted, this notably contrasted with my own childhood playing practices – I was allowed to ride my bicycle outside and they were not. There is a significant age gap between them and me, and thus, in all those years not only had the city considerably changed, but my family's economic situation had also improved and we moved houses. So, by the time my younger brothers were born, we lived in a different house on a busier street, and my parents faced their newer parenthood older, more preoccupied with work, but with better economic resources. Thus, they adopted the parenting ideology of control and care that came with their new socio-economic status. This meant that not only were my brothers not allowed to play outside, but, unlike me, they also spent much of their time in organised extracurricular activities, they were chauffeured everywhere, and they attended and had their birthday parties at 'commercial playgrounds'.[28] Albeit I will not delve into my memories of my brothers' urban experiences, because it is problematic to generalise on the basis of my own subjective experience, I use this example merely to show that children's playing practices are directly linked to the way they are brought up in the city. Therefore, there is an aspect of children's urban experience that is directly related to the way ideology subjectively informs and defines urban childhood.

Since this work conceives the city as an interweave of stories, the role of ideology is important because children's urban experience is intertwined with the social imaginaries and ideological narratives that define the city both objectively and subjectively. Thus, the child in the city is not merely an object in space. Children are social actors and agents living in a social world. And, as the children's narratives of playing practices here will show, as individuals living in an urban environment, children are exposed not only to an encounter with the concrete and physical city, but they are also subjected to social interaction, to a social mix, to a mesh of relations, lives, narratives, imaginaries and experiences, to social norms, to forms of organisation, to urban regulations, to different spatial, temporal, material and social realities, to relations of power, to conceptual abstractions, to social representations, to symbolic meanings, and to everything that comprises the social city.

Then, space originates not from a void but from a complex network of social relations. Lefebvre argues that space is not only a parameter or stage in the relations and social actions, but that it is operant in the connection between them. He maintains that the traditional dualities of physical space and mental space are connected by the processes of the production of space, mainly, since they are defined by the spatial practices that he establishes in the material experience of the social relations of daily life. Lefebvre's primary concern is with the production of space. This

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[28] Although 'commercial playgrounds' comprise a series of play environments, and the commercial element and the playground environment diverge significantly across points of views and genres, we use the general description stated by John H. McKendrick, Michael G. Bradford & Anna V. Fielder, which defines them as spaces that 'generate profits by offering opportunities for play in a designated and safety approved site' (McKendrick, Bradford & Fielder 2000b: 87).

process of the production of space establishes the nature of ideology. For Lefebvre, ideology is defined by the space it refers to and describes, by the vocabulary and links space makes use of, and by the code that space embodies (Lefebvre 1991: 44). In the words of Lefebvre, 'More generally speaking, what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by thus taking on body therein. Ideology per se might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space' (44). So, what Lefebvre claims is that the production of space not only suggests but in fact also forms ideology. Hence, there cannot be ideology without space and the process of its production.

Thereupon, an approach to space as a social product compels us to the consideration of space agents as manifested not only from built forms but also of established ideologies. Consequently, cities are not merely a 'context' for children's lives; cities are considerably shaped by children's activities and by the need to reflect their presence in the social organisation of urban life. And, simultaneously, what it means to be a child in the city is fashioned by the varied ways in which urban spaces are constructed and lived. Then, my brothers' playing practices did not just take place in the sheltered and isolated space of our house; they were intertwined in a mesh of meanings and relations within the complex process of production of the city. So, on account of the comprehension of how children and the city relate, we must consider both the diverse ways in which children contribute to the production of urban spaces and the degree to which their experiences and practices correspond to broader social relations and the particular social and spatial formation of cities.

It is important to gain an understanding of what it means to be a child in the contemporary city. Although children are 'in a sort of liminal, inbetween space', as Tracey Skelton says, they play a significant part in urban society and it is essential that their presence is considered (Skelton 2007: 166). Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the contrasting conceptions of childhood play a substantial role in defining children's place in the city. Here I will not expand upon a definition of childhood; however, it is important to recognise how traditional connotations of childhood not only shape the urban environment, but also inform children's perception and experience of their playing practices.

At the beginning of this work, I wrote how *we* (adults) tend to think of children playing in the (natural) outdoors, carefree, yet safe. This dominant cultural association of childhood reveals that children and urban space are usually seen as incompatible entities (Bavidge 2006, Ward 1978, Scott, Jackson & Beckett-Milburn 1998, Jones 2002, Matthews, Limb & Taylor 2000). The cultural constructions of childhood are important because they define the way that children contribute to the production of urban spaces. Simultaneously, children's experiences and practices correspond with the role that these cultural constructions of childhood assign to children in the social and spatial production of the city.

Alan Prout maintains that modernity produced a particular version of childhood which places 'children as "the cultural other" of adulthood' (Prout 2005: 10). This version of childhood divides the urban world into categories that differentiate childhood from adulthood, which associates the child with private, nature, irrational, dependent, passive, incompetent and play, and the adult with public, culture, rational, independent, active, competent and work (10). Accordingly, Hugh Matthews, Melanie Limb & Mark Taylor also recognise this differentiation of childhood from adulthood by identifying two popular conceptions regarding the place of the child in the city. On the one hand, moral anxieties create the idea of public space as unsafe and dangerous, where children are vulnerable. This vision portrays children as 'angels', 'potential victims, under attack from unruly gangs, prone to the ravages of strangers and threatened by the excesses of environmental dangers, such as traffic, and desperately in need of protection and care' (Matthews, Limb & Taylor 2000: 54). Conversely, there is the contrasting idea of children seen *as* the problem, as 'devils'. In this scenario, children's perceptibility in public spaces is seen as conflicting and undesirable. Children, here, are the 'polluting presence, because by congregating together they are seen to be challenging the hegemony of adult ownership of public space' (54). And as a result of these constructions of childhood, social institutions like family and school mediate the relationship between the child and the city.

Children playing, hanging out and wandering in the street represent that tension. Not only do they risk being hit by a car, but they are also at risk of being abducted, raped, and getting lost; they are vulnerable to violent or delinquent acts by others, and so on. Conversely, there are several assumptions of children 'on their own'; people fear they 'may become the perpetrators of violence and vandalism or become embroiled in smoking, drug taking, drinking or underage sex' (Valentine & McKendrick 1997: 223). This tension is well characterised in the following short fictional story produced within *The Great Book* workshops:

> Rodo and Santy went to *Gran Plaza* [a shopping centre] by themselves with their mother's permission because Rodo had a mobile phone. They took their skateboards with them to the shopping centre, and they went inside the skate shop.
> — Santy, everything's so cool! – said Rodo.
> — Kids, get out of my store! – shouted the store manager.
> — Run, Rodo! – shouted Santy. And they left the store skating at high-speed while the store manager chased them.
> They entered *Onix* [a store for tween girls] and dressed up like girls to hide from the store manager. But, they were detected, so they decided to jump through a window to a trampoline. [They jumped] and, thankfully, they landed safely. (PLY062-EDA4)

As we can read in the story, the aforesaid contrasting conceptions of childhood are so taken up by children to the point that they inform and define their narratives of play. In the story, Rodo and Santy are vulnerable, and thus their mother only allows them to go 'out' to play within the constrained space of the shopping centre where they would be continuously monitored by the

implicit adult presence and security measures of the shopping centre. This, along with the provided mobile phone, (partially) guarantees the boys' safety. And, at the same time, that constrained space of the shopping centre with its implied regulations and prohibitions, plus the constant adult presence and security measures, establish the boundaries of Rodo's and Santy's territories, where their 'autonomy' cannot pose a threat to the hegemony of adult ownership of public space.

The story of Rodo and Santy shows that the parental safety concerns and anxieties are often used to legitimise increasing levels of surveillance that stigmatise children. These surveillance measures are relevant because they are a recurrent theme in the narratives of play produced within *The Great Book* workshops. For example, in one story, a girl is not allowed to go to play in the park by her parents (PLY069-EDA4). In another story, a girl asks her mother to go out to ride her bicycle, but her mother does not let her go because she does not have the time to chaperon her (PLY066-EDA4). In another story, the neighbourhood association decides to close down a park against the children's wishes because they deem it unsafe (PLY032-FILN). In another story, two brothers get a bicycle from their parents, but they are not allowed to ride it outside their house, so they have to go to the organised and monitored traffic-free Sunday activity for cyclists that takes place on some major streets in Guadalajara called *Vía RecreActiva* (PLY076-EDA6). In another story, a boy is only allowed to go outside to play under specific restrictions and warnings (PLY084-EDA6).

What the basic surveillance measures portrayed in the short fictional stories (time and space limitations, chaperoning, neighbourhood watches and mobile phones) suggest, is that parents and caretakers define children's playing practices, thinking of all the potential 'dangers' that the public space represents for children. This corresponds with what Sue Scott, Stevi Jackson & Kathryn Backett-Milburn say regarding the tensions between autonomy and protection that arise in relation to children and childhood in the contemporary city: 'Much of adult-child negotiation about boundaries of what, where, how and with whom children are allowed to engage in particular activities – is likely to be framed in terms of potential risk' (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998: 695).

As I stated earlier, children's risk is at once real and imaginary. Children are arguably more vulnerable than adults, so their competence and agency are often overlooked. The core problem is that children's competences are merely defined in relation to adult's competences. So, to the adult eye, children are usually perceived as 'innocent', 'incompetent' and vulnerable, and they are often segregated from the adult world, although 'statistically, children, like adults, are more at risk in private space from people they know and from domestic hazards and accidents' (Valentine 1997: 69). That is, children's vulnerability is not an objective construction, because, for instance, the relation between the child and the urban environment is mediated by a conception of childhood as the 'the cultural other of adulthood'.

Furthermore, these basic surveillance measures to which children are submitted, portrayed in the short fictional stories about playing practices, correspond to Foucault's notions of surveillance, social control and examination (Foucault 1995). As the children's narratives show, surveillance is present in children's everyday playing practices; in their stories, children explicitly and implicitly suggest that they know there is an adult watching or the possibility of an adult watching their behaviour.

The stories imply that since children's competence is in question, it is the role of the adult to take care of their safety. This is evident in the short fictional stories that end with a 'parents know best' moral message (PLY032-FILN, PLY047-FILN, PLY063-EDA4, PLY046-FILN). In these stories, when children are seen as lacking in adult-sanctioned 'appropriate' behaviours (playing in an unsafe place, playing in the street, playing in the rain, not obeying the space and time restrictions imposed by parents), then social control is administrated by adults to children. This control may be called discipline. And, in these stories, children project this disciplinarian discourse in which children are shown – told – and taught the appropriate ways of being and how to behave by a fictional adult. In these narratives, there is a system in which children are recursively being examined as they are being watched.

This Foucauldian scenario makes sense as the cultural conception of children as vulnerable requires that adults make decisions for them. However, in this discourse, adults see their role as to socialise children, making them believe and behave in ways that adults consider 'proper'. What is interesting is the fact that not only do the stories reflect that children are subjected to a control order in which their agency and competence are often overlooked, but that their stories also leave little room for fictional agency. Most of the short fictional stories about playing practices constructed within *The Great Book* workshops portray scenarios that oblige them to either assume and yield to the new realities of childhood, or to constantly struggle and confront them. The following fragments of two short fictional stories illustrate these distinct scenarios:

> There was a young lady named Monse who didn't like her family because they reprehended her a lot. One day, she decided to run away to avoid any more reprehension. Since Monse liked to climb trees, she had the idea to build a treehouse. She planned it thoroughly. When she ran away, she finally felt liberated. But when she noticed her parents were looking for her, and that the only thing they wanted [by reprehended her] was to protect her, she felt awful, and decided to go back home. Thus, she understood that sometimes a 'no' is better than a 'yes'. (PLY047-FILN)

> There was a boy named Carlos who had been forbidden to go out, however he always wanted to play outside. So, he was always trying to escape, but he got caught every time. One day he made a plan, and tried to escape again, but, again, he got caught. He kept trying, but he always got caught. Thus, one day Carlos told his dad: Why can't I go out? And his dad said: *No*. Then, Carlos tried to convince him, and his dad kept saying no, until one day Carlos finally convinced him. And since then, he can go out and play outside, and he lived happily ever after. (PLY061-EDA4)

As these stories demonstrate, competence is not evaluated objectively by parents. And the result is the friction between parents and children negotiating their competences and uses of public space. Both Monse and Carlos face similar types of restraint, and they deal with it in a similar manner: since they are not allowed to play outside they try to run away. Monse accomplishes her escape, while Carlos tries over and over again without success.

It is evident that Monse is more skilful than Carlos. She not only manages to run away, but she also is capable enough to build a treehouse where she can live. It is also obvious that the parents of both children are concerned about their safety and the dangers that public space represents for children. But, in these two examples, the competences are treated in a distinct way. Although Monse is somehow able to live by herself outside her home, her parents do not evaluate her skills or abilities to negotiate public space safely. On the contrary, at the end she recognises her parents' concerns and agrees with them without resistance. In contrast, while we are uninformed of Carlos' competences besides his inability to run away from home, he can contest his parents' negative views to play outside.

Although I recognise that these examples are fictional, the way that children construct their narratives of play is based on children's actual experience and understanding of the friction caused by the negotiation of children's competences and uses of public space. As I stated in Chapter 1, children project onto their narratives their understanding of reality. So, while the girl who wrote the story about Monse is probably unable to build a treehouse, her narrative is fashioned by the way she deems that her abilities are not objectively evaluated by her parents.

As these examples show, the friction between parents and children is usually caused by external forces and demands, and not as an effect of their actual competences or realities. Hence, we need to emphasise the importance of understanding the differences and diversity amid children and the multiple personal realities that define how children individually perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment, a point that I will explore further in the following chapter.

Nonetheless, what is noteworthy about the stories of Monse and Carlos is that children have somewhat absorbed their parents' concerns and anxieties over their own safety. This is clearer in the death-by-traffic stories discussed in the previous chapter. All those stories showed that children accept and assume their parents' concerns over their safety through the social imaginaries in a fragmented, partial, spontaneous and individual process that not only includes the material environment and their individual storied routes, but also the established ideologies perpetuated through books, television, movies and the media. That is, this cultural anxiety is deeply embedded in popular culture, and produced and reproduced throughout the socio-spatial relations, informing and defining not only adults' conceptions of childhood, but also children's perception of their role in public space.

Literature for children serves to (re)produce the constructions of childhood as the 'cultural other of adulthood' that define children as vulnerable. But, by associating children with the natural and rural, it helped to perpetuate the hegemony of adult ownership of public space that children (re)produce through their own playing practices and which ultimately they project onto their short fictional stories. For example, Billie, the main character of the children's book, *The Invisible Day*, is an extremely overprotected girl, whose mother does not allow her to do anything by herself:

> Even though I am almost eleven years old, my mother is stuck to me like glue.
> It seems like kids everywhere else in the world are walking to school alone, scooting down to the corner store for a pack of gum, or going over to a friend's house after supper for a game of basketball. But I live in New York! Home of muggers, dive-bombing pigeons, the subway, and people who talk to hydrants. I've noticed that grown-ups are delighted to list the countless dangers. And one of these days, I'm going to have to look after myself out there in the wilds. (Jocelyn 1999: 3)

Billie's story suggests that even though she wants to challenge the imposed restrictions, she understands that the public space is no place for a girl. This way, the story serves to indoctrinate children about the dangers of the 'urban jungle' while it explicitly defines the child's place in the city. This definition is perpetuated not only by the representation of the child and the city as incompatible entities in literature for children (e.g. *The Invisible Day*, *The Saturdays*, *Little Red Riding-Hood*, *Oliver Twist*), but, also by the fact that children are essentially excluded from literary and theoretical accounts of the city.[29] Literature for children, through the conceptual and moral boundaries to which it refers, delineates the extent of children's territories. And these boundaries, constructed by an adult-centred hegemony and policed by discipline, are legitimised through ideologies of care.

For instance, in the story of Rodo and Santy, although we can read a sense of children's 'understanding' of the dangers that the city represents for them, as the story advances, we can notice that their presence in the shopping centre is problematic. As mentioned before, the conception of children as 'the cultural other of adulthood' means that they are seen not only as vulnerable but also as irrational 'devils' whose visibility in public spaces is undesirable as it challenges the hegemony of adult ownership of public space.

The tension in the story is provoked by the fact that the store manager perceives the public and visible presence of the boys unaccompanied by adults as uncomfortable and inappropriate. Correspondingly, in a study about the importance of a shopping centre for a group of teenagers in the East Midlands of the United Kingdom, Hugh Matthews, Mark Taylor, Barry Percy-Smith & Melanie Limb argue that children gathering in shopping centres are often seen as unacceptable,

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[29] As I stated in the introduction, of course, this is started to change as there are more and more studies every day that recognise the weight of studying children's lives in the city (e.g. Ward 1978, Hart 1979, Michelson, Levine & Michelson 1979, Holloway & Valentine 2000, Christensen & O'Brien 2003). Nevertheless, as I also suggested, these accounts are mainly circumscribed to children's studies, and the child is barely mentioned in the more prominent studies about the city.

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in part 'because these places are commonly interpreted to be an extension of the public realm of adults (in which young people have no place when adults are not around) and partly because their behaviour is perceived to be at odds with the norm' (Matthews et al. 2000: 288).

The public-private character of shopping centres allows the employment of surveillance measures (i.e. private security guards, surveillance cameras, access control) that guarantee a moral regulation of space that controls both behaviour and access. This way, as Gary Marx & Valerie Steeves suggest, surveillance is 'offered as a necessary tool of responsible and loving parenting' and good governance (Marx & Steeves 2010: 193). Then, as the story of Rodo and Santy hints, the boys are not only safeguarded by their mother via their mobile phone, they are also observed by the panopticon that operates within the shopping centre. Not only must the boys be observed to keep them 'safe', but their monitoring is also required because adults cannot trust them to act properly by themselves.

As discussed earlier, the short fictional stories about playing practices, implicitly and explicitly admit that children know that there is an adult watching or the possibility of an adult watching their playing activities. For example, in one story, a group of girls are scared to go to the park because there is always a woman from the neighbourhood monitoring their every move, and who intimidates them when they do not follow the rules (PLY010-FILN). In another story, a 'grumpy' neighbour reprimands a group of girls because they made too much noise when they were gathered in the park (PLY054-FILN). In another story, a girl goes to a serpentarium with her mother, but she gets so excited looking at a python that she breaks away from her mother. However, she decides to sit next to a food-cart until her mother comes, and her mother does come and find her there (PLY057-FILN). In another story, a boy goes by himself to a city festival with his parents' permission, and he confidently explores the festival until a man who offers him candy floss attempts to kidnap him. But the boy can get away from the man and runs to the main entrance of the festival to find his parents, who were waiting for him there all along (PLY003-FILN).

Holly Blackford proposes that Foucault's panopticon can be applied to thinking about playgrounds (or playing spaces), given they operate under a similar principle of surveillance: children playing in the centre of the playground while adults are sitting on the park benches surrounding them (Blackford 2004). This same principle applies in the shopping centre, the parks, the serpentarium and the festival depicted in children's narratives, as children play in these spaces with adults surrounding them while monitoring and supervising them. While supervision is associated with maintaining children safe,[30] panopticism aims to generate a particular type of subjectivity in children, an internalisation of discipline through self-monitoring.

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[30] Holly Blackford defines 'supervision' as 'the mechanism of safety in the rhetoric of playground safety and design recommendations' (Blackford 2004: 228).

This concept becomes particularly interesting here since as children purposely wrote 'fictional' stories, they unconsciously projected onto their narratives this internalisation of discipline through the auto-imposed restrictions and regulations of the made-up playing practices and through the self-binding boundaries of the fictitious playing spaces. This only reaffirms the impact that the ideologies of control and care have on children's perception, experience and imaginaries of their playing practices. In this way, children's understanding of their role in the public space is based on the antagonist cultural constructions of childhood, perpetuated through books, movies, television and the media, in which they are 'taught' to be 'safe' in public space to not be considered a 'threat' to the hegemony of adult ownership of public space.

Literature helps to impose and preserve the conflicting position between children being at risk and children becoming a threat that dictates the conception of urban childhood. *Oliver Twist* (Dickens 2008) is the epitome of this social anxiety. *Oliver Twist*'s plot is well known, the terrible and melodramatic story of the memorable waif who is faced with work at a young age, and then, as a victim of deception, with becoming part of a thieving gang, but whose story has a happy ending when he finally finds his family and his total redemption. This was the first novel in English to take a child as the central character (Ackroyd 1990: 216-17). What becomes particularly interesting here is the characterisation of the urban child in the novel. The role and place of Oliver in the city represents both contrasting social anxieties – Oliver as an 'angel' and as a 'devil'.

The innocence of Oliver's character is exposed to the menace of the evils around him; that is to say, a child in a conflicting position where his naiveté puts him at risk of becoming a threat to society. Thus, simultaneously society fears Oliver, it also fears *for* him. Dickens exploits the idea of Oliver's innocence to dramatise the story. Oliver has to abstain himself from any criminal act to preserve his innocence even for the reader, as he is persistently under this threat. For Oliver's case, self-monitoring is the only way he can achieve his redemption at the end of the story. Just as Oliver knows that there is the possibility of him getting caught committing any criminal act, so he abstains from doing it; Dickens knows that there is the possibility of Oliver being judged by the reader if he commits any criminal act, so he keeps his character innocent.

The story of *Oliver Twist* is relevant because, as we see in the story of Rodo and Santy and in many of the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, the same social concerns are still applicable in the contemporary city, albeit that the temporality and circumstances of Oliver are so far removed from the majority of children that attended the workshops. The story of Rodo and Santy and the stories mentioned earlier where children are under constant surveillance show that children are still perceived as an anti-social threat that must be placed under surveillance to 'protect' society. And, through discourses of children's safety, urban society develops and puts into place control measures to 'protect' itself, which restricts children's agency in public spaces.

The storyline exemplified in *Oliver Twist* not only helps to articulate the idea that surveillance measures are justified because they are put in place for the sake of the child's safety; they also instruct children how to articulate their urban narratives regarding how to abstain themselves from the urban dangers. And, as children read and reread this ubiquitous storyline in books, movies, television, and so on, not only do they began to appropriate the same discourse, as most of the short fictional stories proved, but this also becomes part of children's understanding of their place in the city, thus perpetuating the hegemony of adult ownership of public space.

This is evident as the relations of power portrayed in children's narratives of playing practices show that children internalise the idea that they need to be somehow 'controlled', dominated and guarded for their own protection. The surveillance measures described in children's narratives monitor different types of health-risk behaviour that contribute to the death and disability of children, and that at the same time (arguably) play a part in the disruption of the 'urban social order'. Such behaviour may be that which contributes to (unintentional) injuries and violence (to themselves and others), like playing in unsafe or forbidden places and being by themselves in public spaces, and behaviour that is not considered proper, like running, playing, hanging out or being loud in places considered the domain of adults.

Accordingly, in one of the activities at the beginning of *The Great Book* workshops, children shared (with the help of drawings) their playing practices.[31] In this case, it was important to me to get an initial sense of *where* children played in the city, so I encouraged them to share stories of games that were played in places outside their houses, including their backyards. However, with every workshop about kind of playing that I carried out, this activity became a sort of space for children to voice their protests. Almost every child related a story of prohibition and restriction where his/her playing practices disrupted the hegemony of adult ownership of public space. For example, one boy told how he could not play outside his house because his neighbour was short-tempered, and every time he played with his friends in the street, she bawled at them stating that they were disturbing the whole neighbourhood. In many workshops different children said that their neighbours had taken their balls in several occasions without any apparent reason. One boy said that he could not play in the street 'because he could dent or damage the parked cars'. Many children in distinct workshops stated that they could not play 'anywhere', implying that the inside of their houses could not be considered as a playing space. Another girl said that whenever she invited her friends to play over her house, they could not play in her backyard, because her parents said that they made too much noise and they could mess up the washing on the line. One girl said that she could not ride her bicycle, save in *Vía RecreActiva*, because her parents did not allow her to ride it in the street as it was too dangerous, and she could not ride it in the park near her house either because it was forbidden to ride bicycles there as they

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[31] Or moving or dwelling, depending on the theme of the workshop.

could damage the grass. Another boy related that he was not allowed to play in the backyard of his house with his ball because he 'could break a window with it'. And the list goes on.

These protests expose how the cultural constructions of childhood that identify children as 'devils' help to define the boundaries that determine children's place in the city. And, again, these cultural constructions are perpetuated by the narratives that portray children as irrational in books, movies, television and the media. Several newspaper headlines reveal that children's play is perceived as a menace to society. For example, 'Tammy Cooper, Texas Mom, Arrested for Letting Kids Play Outside Unsupervised' (Anon. 2012), 'Parents Face £100 Fine if Children Play Football in the Street' (Wilkes 2007), 'Florida Housing Complex Wants to Ban Kids from Playing in Street' (Graff 2011), 'Boy of FOUR is Threatened with £5,000 Fine... for "Playing Too Loudly" in his Garden' (Sims 2011), and so on.

These reports contribute to the preservation of the cultural narrative that children do not belong in the public space, which ultimately encourages control and 'regulation' of children's play, and the argument is always made under the reasoning of 'children's safety'. The discourse of safety obliges urban society to document and organise children's play to define children according to certain norms, and this organisation of play implies a commercialisation of play that means that children become active consumers, thus ensuring the identification and production of children as consuming subjects. This is evident in the story of Rodo and Santy, for instance, as the safety concerns compel their mother to grant them some sort of autonomy in the contained and controlled space of the shopping centre – a space specifically designed for consumption.

Furthermore, the real life stories and the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops clarify that urban society fails to recognise children's play. As Forrest B. Tyler, Michelle Y. Holliday, Sandra L. Tyler, John J. Echeverry & Maria Cecilia Zea state: 'Children's play seems at best to have a dubious status in the eyes of adults. […] adults view play as outside of ordinary life, as not directly related to economic reward, as separate from productive activity or word. At least by implication, play is devaluated' (Tyler et al. 1987: 13). This concurs with what Francesco Tonucci says about the contemporary city, that it is constructed for production and consumption (Tonucci 2004a). And, since children's play does not entail a support of the neoliberal model only by inference, the proclamation of 'safety' guarantees that children through play become greater consumers (McKendrick, Bradford & Fielder 2000a, 2000b). The examples depicted in the short fictional stories (mobile phones as surveillance mechanisms, shopping malls as playgrounds, and organised and structured playing activities and add-on playgrounds as nannies) confirm that for children nowadays, to play 'freely' and 'safely' it is imperative to consume.

Thus, these new forms of play entail different urban geographies that reflect the adults' urgency for order, safety and control. Accordingly, Francesco Tonucci & Antonella Rissotto argue that:

The modern city increasingly takes on the appearance of a sandbox, of small fenced in spaces designed with specific functions and set up for children and for them alone. The playground city was intriguing because it was varied and extensive. It had flexible boundaries; meeting others was sought after and not shunned, security was ensured by a process of continuous spatial appropriation by the children. In the sandbox city nothing unexpected happens, the perception of its space is immediate and it terminates in the very instant in which it is perceived, security is achieved through a clear-cut separation of the inside from the outside. (Tonucci & Rissotto 2001: 410)

This 'sandbox city' is palpable in the children's life stories about their playing practices, as they illustrate how the city increasingly alienates children from the remainder of the community and prevents them from partaking in the use of public space. An argument that was also made by Jane Jacobs in her critique of the 1950s new urban planning policies (Jacobs 1993: 97-115). The history of playgrounds exposes how these spaces were purposely created to cast out children from the public sphere, thus preventing them from having an active role in the city. Playgrounds were created in Germany as organised and instructional play areas to 'teach' children the 'proper' ways to play. Howard P. Chudacoff relates that in the United States with the Industrial Revolution and consequent changes in the city, open outdoor spaces became more and more rare, compared with the previous recreational opportunities in the rural outdoors. Social reformers were increasingly concerned with children's more frequent presence in the streets and futile 'fooling around'. These well-meaning adults worried the negative socialisation that might result in this kind of autonomy and freedom, so they began creating spaces explicitly intended for children's use and play (Chudacoff 2007: 68-85).

Thus, these novel spaces emerged from adults' increased concern regarding the sanitation and safety of the urban environment, and their newfound aspiration to 'protect' and 'occupy' their children. At this point in urban history, children's play was defined and dictated by a 'play-work', and used as a way of social control. In this sense, the birth of playgrounds brought a rigid and ordered system to allegedly proffer leisure. However, with the advances of child psychology at the commencement of the twentieth century, adults started to recognise the weight of play as a fundamental activity in children's development. But, as Chudacoff states, since 'play is so important, it was often not left to children to decide for themselves, rather adults took charge of determining what type of games, toys, and environments could inspire the most productive use of play time' (103-07). As we can see, the increasing exclusion of children from public space is hidden within the rhetorical proclamation of serving the best interest of the child. Then, this assertion is (re)produced by children in their narratives of play, as we can read in the following short fictional story produced within *The Great Book* workshops:

Once upon a time, a group of girls used to go to a big park. They loved it. But, there was a childless irritable woman who lived across the street from the park who got angry every time the girls played there. So, she used to shout angrily at them. One day, the girls decided to confront the situation and told their parents about the woman. Thus, the girls' parents decided to fence the park, so that the

woman could not intimidate the girls anymore. Two months later the girls could play in the park without to worry. (PLY010-FILN)

This short fictional story serves to close this section. In the narrative, both the parental concerns and anxieties over the children's safety and the common adult fear of children appear. On the one hand, the group of girls are vulnerable to the intimidation and threats of the woman, and conversely, the woman fears that, through their actions, the girls may disrupt and misappropriate the public space. Hence, to 'protect' the girls, their parents decide to contain them within the fences of the park. The fence, then, is the mechanism that administers and exercises the power of the adult-centred hegemony of public space under the discourse of 'children's safety'. The *dispositif* demarcates the girls' place, defines their boundaries and shapes their playing practices, at the same time that it (re)defines the built environment.

As discussed earlier, Lefebvre argues that space is not simply produced for mere consumption, but that spaces can be altered, adapted, appropriated and produced by a series of individuals (Lefebvre 1991). Furthermore, his contention is that these forces of production and consumption of space do not function alone, rather, they inform one another in the continual process of production and reproduction of space on a day-to-day basis (12). In Lefebvre's argument, space is produced as much by children in their everyday playing practices, as by language, that is, by the symbols, codes and vocabulary that urban society uses to define childhood and the space that children inhabit (44). In his words, 'It seems to be well established that physical space has no "reality" without the energy that is deployed within it' (13). Hence, we cannot characterise the fences represented in the aforesaid story as purely physical boundaries, and we cannot isolate those material boundaries from the symbolic, cultural and ideological boundaries of urban society. For this reason, it is imperative that we understand that children's urban experience is intertwined with the symbolic, cultural and ideological constructions of childhood. That is, that their perception, experience and imaginaries of the city are shaped by children's playing practices and by the way they contribute to the social organisation of urban life. At the same time, the way children perceive, experience and imagine their place in the city is defined by the diverse ways in which urban spaces are constructed and lived.

It is important to understand that through the narrative construction of urban experience children not only make sense of places, people and events, but they also articulate the power relations involved in their relationship with the social city. Children's narratives of the city are imbued with the meanings and values that urban society assigns to urban childhood. The conception of urban childhood projected onto children's narratives, as it is fashioned from the specific point of view of the child, have a distinct meaning and value, which may or may not coincide with the adult's conception of childhood. However, as the short fictional stories of playing practices produced within *The Great Book* workshops show, urban childhood is influenced and determined by the power relations established by the adult hegemony over public space. Owain Jones argues that

the 'adult expectations and assumptions about children in urban […] spaces […] are important because children are, more or less, under the control of adults, or have to live their lives under adult surveillance which may be either critical or approving' (Jones 2002: 18).

The problem of the symbolic antagonistic portrayals of children (as angels or devils), ubiquitous in children's narratives of playing practices, arises as follows. Since these representations go back and forth between real and imagined adult concerns about the nature, reality and fate of childhood, there are real consequences for the lives of urban children and for children's experiences and conception of urban space (i.e. fear of/for children in urban space, commodification of childhood space and play, cultures of fear and curfew, exclusion and surveillance, and the notion of the city as environmentally negative). Thus, it is important that we understand that the symbolic representations of childhood are not just merely symbolic constructions that have no influence on the life of children; on the contrary, these symbolic constructions play a significant role in children's encounters with the material environment.

Girls' tales of play:
Gender stereotypes and symbolic boundaries

In 1977, Iris Marion Young wrote an influential essay on feminine bodily movement and spatiality (Young 2005: 27-45). In 'Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body. Comportment, Motility and Spatiality', using as illustration the differences between the way a boy and a girl throws a ball, Young shows girls as circumscribed in using space and inhibited in bodily movement: 'Girls do not bring their whole bodies into the motion as much as the boys. They do not reach back, twist, move backward, step and lean forward. Rather, the girls tend to remain relatively immobile except for their arms, and even the arm is not extended as far as it could be' (32). According to Young, such comportment, motility and spatial restrictions do not have any biological explanation, rather, they have their source in the cultural and social background that condition girls' oppression in society. Girls learn to live out their existence in agreement with the characterisation that patriarchal culture assigns them, where they are physically inhibited, confined, positioned and objectified (42).

Then, a year on from the publication of Young's essay, Ward wrote: 'Certainly, whenever we discuss the part the city environment plays in the lives of children, we are really talking about boys. As a stereotype the child in the city is a boy. Girls *are* far less visible' (Ward 1978: 152). One can argue that both Young's and Ward's statements are outdated, and much changed for urban girls since the late 1970s. For instance, the distinct experiences between my younger brothers and me prove that my gender was never a disadvantage regarding the urban freedom I enjoyed in my

childhood, but I recognise that my experience cannot speak for every girl in Mexico.

Since this research originated from that distinction between my memories of my brothers' and my own childhood playing practices, I was particularly interested in the children's short fictional stories about playing practices produced within *The Great Book* workshops. I was looking forward to reading what stories children would tell about their everyday playing practices and what those stories would tell us about children's relationships with the city. However, although I acknowledge a distinction between my memories of my brothers' and my own childhood playing practices, the issue of gender was never at play. But, as I read the children's narratives of playing practices, I found myself asking the same question over and over again: what do girls play? There is so little information in children's narratives about what, where and how girls play. And, on the contrary, there is enough material about the impediments and restrictions they face in the public space.

There is something about speaking of children's play in terms of gender that makes me uncomfortable. I consider that the sense of equality and simplicity should prevail over an activity that proclaims pleasure and aimlessness. Yet, the children's narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops opened me up to the reality that children's play is strongly loaded with prejudices and gender inequality. The short fictional stories show that the image of the girl, as a 'little woman' continues to be that of the 'other' (from the image of the man who holds the power and authority). Therefore, given that the short fictional stories were produced in an inequitable patriarchal society like Mexico where over 48% of women normally ask her husband, partner or any relative for 'permission' to go out alone during daytime, over 33% let them know they are going out, and only 18% of women never ask (CONAPRED 2011: 70), it seems relevant to explore the role that children's playing practices has in supporting the preservation of traditional sex-role divisions of urban space and in the construction of children's identity, which ultimately influences how they perceive, experience, imagine and write about the city.

In the previous section, I studied the role that the cultural constructions of childhood play in the way children perceive, experience and imagine their urban experiences. I argued that there is a conflicting standpoint of children being at risk and children becoming a threat that demarcates the urban boundaries that determine the place of the child in the city. I also contended that, to understand the way that children perceive and imagine their place in the city, we need to consider that children's urban experience is intertwined with the cultural and ideological constructions of childhood.

The short fictional stories show that in the same way that childhood is constructed as the 'cultural other of adulthood', the image of the girl as a 'little woman' reveals the fears and anxieties resulting from the cultural construction of girls as vulnerable bodies. If children as the 'other' of adults are considered 'at risk', girls are in a riskier position, since the images and expectations

about women make them 'asymmetrically associated with sex, birth, age, and flesh' (Young 2005: 3). This means that to access children's urban experience, we need to concede that there is not only a distinction between adulthood and childhood that defines children's perception, experience and imaginaries of the city, but that there is also a distinction between boys and girls that needs to be considered. Consequently, my aim in this section is to evidence that children's playing practices are influenced and shaped by children's internalisation of the cultural, symbolic and ideological gendered divisions of urban space. My contention is that girls are subjected to a series of boundaries and bodily regulations through symbolic representations that not only impede their participation in public space, but also define their identities. And, I maintain that the way girls write about public space mirrors the symbolic representations that associate them with the domestic space of the house.

Before advancing, it is worth noting that this is not a gender study. While I acknowledge that there is a prevailing distinction between boys' and girls' roles and place in the urban space, my interest in the topic predominantly lies in the recognition that symbolic and cultural constructions subjectively inform and define the way that children perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about their urban experience. The short fictional stories about playing practices written by girls are useful because they allow me to elucidate the idea that children's experience of the city is based not only on the materiality of the urban environment and in children's imaginary encounters with the city, as I discussed in the previous chapter, but also on the way that their role and place in the city is defined by the cultural divisions of urban space and on the way that their identity is shaped by symbolic representations.

One of the most popular children's stories of all times, *Little Red Riding-Hood*, is copiously adapted and retold. The appeal of the well-known story is that it allows authors to deal with difficult themes, such as violence and sexuality in a manner that is acceptable to adult mediators. It is presented as a cautionary tale to instruct girls not to talk to strangers, and introduces the 'dangers' outside the home. The story produces numerous interpretations: the natural cycles, morality, the ritual of becoming a woman, sexual violence, sexual awakening, the cycle of life, to mention a few (Dundes 1989). The many adaptations of *Little Red Riding-Hood* prove that there is a prevailing adult anxiety regarding the girls' vulnerability and naiveté at the mercy of predators.

The problem, as Iris Marion Young asseverates, 'is the fact that the woman lives her body as object as well as subject' (Young 2005: 22). The basis for this is the patriarchal and sexist social norms that define woman as an object – as a mere body. As I discussed in the previous section, there is a parental anxiety over children's safety, whether they are boys or girls. However, as girls are assumed as bodies, as objects, the parental anxiety regarding girls' safety is distinctly exercised, as Ward writes: 'Boys can stay out longer and later. They, it is assumed, are more capable of looking after themselves. Parents fear for their girls, by no means without reason since

in most parts of the world the unaccompanied girl in the street is regarded as fair game for minor molestations' (Ward 1978: 156).

In the previous section, I used as an example the stories of Monse and Carlos to explain how children's competences to negotiate public space are not objectively evaluated by parents. In the said short fictional stories, both Monse and Carlos live in restrictive households, they cannot play outside their houses, and they are not given any reason by their parents not to do so. Monse is skilful; she manages to escape from her home and she builds a treehouse to live in. On the contrary, Carlos is less competent, and thus he never manages to escape. Nonetheless, despite Monse's apparent self-sufficiency, she has no space within her house or family to express her opinion, and she quietly assumes and accepts the imposed boundaries and limitations that confines her to home. Whereas Carlos, although he is not as adept as Monse, has a space within his home and family to express his desires and needs, as he not only can confront his father and ask him the reason for his limitations, but to make him change his mind and let him play outside his house.

The distinction between the two narratives exposes that there is significant issue of gender at play when children's competences to negotiate public space are evaluated, confirming, as Ward stated, that there is a sociocultural assumption that girls are less capable and more vulnerable than boys. The gendered distinction in the playing practices, represented in the stories of Monse and Carlos, is a recurrent issue in the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops. Hence, while parents fear that the boys' actions or intentions in the public space may get them hurt, they prepare them to cope with any challenges they can face. While in the case of girls, the parents not only fear the girls' actions or intentions, but also the external actions and intentions towards them. Therefore, girls, in the eyes of their parents (and adults) are not subjects, but rather objects that need to be protected from predators. That is, to the eyes of the patriarchal society, for instance, Carlos may get lost, but he is prepared all along to survive and cope, while Monse not only may get lost; she may also be assaulted.

The patriarchal construction of girls as vulnerable bodies provokes a series of bodily regulations and restrictions that impede their participation in public space. These sociocultural normative paradigms about the girl's body are well exemplified in the short fictional stories, for example:

> One day, Reina and Berta went to the park to play on the swings, but Reina fell off the swing and got muddy. So her mother reprehended her, and she punished her by locking her in her room without any food or television, because her clothes were new and her mum bought them in New York. (PLY060-FILN)

The story reveals that Reina must be compliant towards the bodily regulations that are imposed to her to play. Thus there is an incompatibility between her 'femininity' and her playing practices. So far, Reina (like the girl who wrote this story) may not recognise why it is so imperative for her not to ruin her clothes while playing, albeit she accepts it as an inherent aspect of her reality.

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But, as she grows older, she will have to adapt to the restrictions imposed to her. Iris Marion Young asserts that: 'The more a girl assumes her status as feminine, the more she takes herself to be fragile and immobile and the more she actively enacts her own body inhibition' (Young 2005: 44). Through her mother's reprimand, Reina (and the girl who wrote the story) soon learns to hinder her movements and actions. Reina is told not to ruin her clothes, not to get dirty, not to get hurt, and that the things she wishes are unsafe for her (Young 2005: 43). And, as Young writes: 'she develops a bodily timidity that increases with age. In assuming herself to be a girl, she takes herself to be fragile' (43).

And, as the story also shows, these bodily regulations and restrictions soon become part of the girl's understanding of reality. Then, through the apparently neutral and innocuous personal and private self-regulations and self-restrictions, accepted and assumed as part of the girl's everyday routines, her body is socially regulated, adapted, and familiarised with the patriarchal social control (Foucault 1995). The girl's body is inscribed in the complex sociocultural and historic processes that define her as a 'girl'. Her definition as a 'girl', then, is embroiled with the ideological, familiar and generational tradition of the sphere she inhabits, with her personal and biographical circumstances, her social class, the place where she lives, and so on.

Hence, the girl's body (understood as the body of a little woman) constitutes the basis for the gendered demarcation of spaces and definition of roles in society – that is, the gendered organisation of the city is a social construction based on the bodily traits of the girl whose meaning, value and power are defined by patriarchal norms. Consequently, society ascribes to the girl a series of actions, behaviours and attitudes regarding her body, together with the limits she cannot transgress to 'protect' that body and the social penances she faces if she disobeys. As for Reina, the girl's need to play becomes secondary, as her primary concern is to 'protect' her body. Then, as a result, girls structure different forms of play that do not endanger their bodies while simultaneously 'keeping them in their place' – these forms of play translate into more passive games played in a confined and 'secure' environment, like the house.

In this way, the understanding that the place of the girl (as a little woman) is in the house is supported by a series of symbols, language and codes, imbedded with meanings of safety and vulnerability. In this context, the girl (as a little woman) is excluded from the public space where she is regarded as an object. Then, the spatial dimension of the city is valuable to define the notions of 'private' and 'public'. And at the same time, it is crucial to demonstrate that behind those concepts there is hidden the system of patriarchal domination. Therefore, the antagonism between private and public space generates a paradigm of roles and activities for each gender and establishes a hierarchy of those.

There is an ample body of work devoted to the study of the cultural dichotomy between feminine and masculine (de Beauvoir 1956, Young 2005, Cixous 1976, Kristeva 1981). This dichotomous

understanding of reality provokes a hierarchical organisation of the involved parties, resulting in the cultural association of women with the least prestigious terms of that dual reality – that is, women are associated with nature, reproduction, intuition, body, irrational and private, while men are associated with culture, production, reason, mind, rational and public. I will not provide an extensive feminist history or review of the two terms. I will state, however, that I base my analysis on the understanding that gender is a sociocultural construction – that is, that a girl is not born but rather grows to understand that she is a girl (de Beauvoir 1956: 273, Young 2005: 43).

The girl's role and place, and her 'feminine' behaviour, then, is not straightforward; it is inculcated over a series of guidelines, and this is well-represented in the short fictional stories written by girls. For example, in one story, a girl wishes and dreams about going to the museum because she loves art, and thus she begs her parents to take her there. But, her parents promise that they would take her 'only if she gets straight A's in school'. So, she studies and prepares for her exams, and she is a good girl the whole year, and finally her parents take her to the museum (PLY095-FM5C). In another story, one girl goes to a festival with her parents, as a 'reward' for her 'good behaviour', but the girl gets lost when she disobeys her parents (PLY090-FM5C). In another story, a girl is rewarded by her parents for being a 'well-behaved and studious girl' by taking her to *Selva Mágica* (an amusement park in Guadalajara). The girl excitedly says: 'Finally, I will have fun outside and far away from home!' Then, she goes to the amusement park with her parents, she has fun, and eventually she grows up and gets married. And, by the end, she realises that she does not like going to the amusement park anymore; rather she enjoys being at home with her family and children (PLY037-FILN).

In these stories, girls are subjected to a series of regulations that guide their behaviour. By inculcating the pursuit for the 'ideal' comportment, parents assure the girls' discipline through self-monitoring (Foucault 1995). By rewarding the girls' good behaviour, the going outside becomes secondary to the gratification and admiration that the girls receive over their determination, commitment and effort. And, thus, in the search for their parents' approval, they will continue to reproduce this comportment over and over, until they assume that the outside does not offer anything of greater value than the gratification they receive in the inside of the house.

Hence, the social construction of feminine behaviour entails that girls (as little women) exercise a series of disciplinary practices, using Foucault's term, of significant ideological and political consequences for their definition of roles, places and identity (Foucault 1995). The sociocultural discourse that dictates the norms, regulations and restrictions about the girl's behaviour is then internalised by girls so their domestication is naturally and 'voluntarily' lived and experienced, like in an illusory exercise of personal liberty. Such normative paradigms are not of discretionary compliance, and even though each girl interprets them according to her personal and social circumstances, these normative paradigms are always followed, like if they were an express

command of the culture in which they are situated, and thus regulating and restricting the girl's actual behaviour as much as its subjective and imaginary construction.

The three girls from the abovementioned stories are regulated and restricted by their parents; however, it is the three girls who wrote the stories who rationalise, assume and accept the norms, regulations and restrictions that outline the behaviour that circumscribe them to the house. The story about the girl who goes to the festival, for example, illustrates that the girl's desire for adventure and independence are quickly smashed by reality when she gets lost because she 'disobeys' her parents. Thus, eventually she will come to presuppose the dangers of the outside world that her parents warned her about, and she will restrain herself to avoid them. And, in the story about the girl who goes to the amusement park, she constructs a future version of herself where she assumes and accepts her imminent reality as pertaining to the domestic space of the house.

These three narratives are not isolated examples; they exemplify the reoccurring storyline manifest in many of the short fictional stories about playing practices written by girls. The troubling aspect of this sort of storyline is the self-binding boundaries of the fictitious playing spaces that circumscribe girls. That is, albeit these self-binding boundaries appear in many of the short fictional stories, whether written by girls or boys, boys are able to somewhat challenge them, like in the story of Carlos, for example. While in the case of girls, their limitations are so absorbed that they are not able to produce fictional stories of pure enjoyment where they can finally be adventurous, risky, freed and autonomous without having any consequences. As a case in point, the following story is a response from a writing prompt that reads, 'In this story the main character goes out to play far away from home':

> [The girl goes out to play far away from home] without realising the possible consequences of her actions: she could be abducted or hit by a car, and her parents won't notice that she was hit by a car, only she would know. Her parents will only know [that something bad happened to her] through the news. And, besides, her parents will be very worried about not finding her. After coming back home, her parents won't let her go out alone any more, and she will learn her lesson. Then, because of this experience, she won't do it again. (PLY104-FM5C)

This story demonstrates the girl's rationalisation and internalisation of discipline. The mere thought of going far away from home, proposed by the writing prompt, triggers in her a response that reproduces the patriarchal narrative that she is acquainted with, as if by not reproducing it she would be in fact violating the imposed boundaries and regulations. This narrative about the terrors that public space represents are preserved and reinforced by the symbolic representations, which portray girls as vulnerable, imprudent and naïve at the mercy of predators and which girls read over and over again in literature for children. This way, society not only assures the 'safety' of girls, but it helps to maintain girls under the male control while preserving the patriarchal hegemony of public space.

Little Red Riding-Hood functions as the perfect illustration of the vulnerability, imprudence and naiveté of a girl object at the mercy of predators (Perrault 2009). Little Red, however, is imprudent – this is accentuated with the red colour of her cloak – and disobeys her mother, which provokes her fateful end when she is eaten by the wolf.[32] The patriarchal stance of Charles Perrault's version of the story cannot be any clearer in reproducing a feminine model of behaviour that needed to be controlled under male authority, and with that contributing to exempting, and justifying, its aggression and violence.

A recent Spanish adaptation of the story by Carmen Martín Gaite, *Little Red Riding-Hood in Manhattan* (2009), reintroduces the story in an urban setting, and the title instantaneously links the eponymous girl to New York, the archetypal city. The story appeals to a contemporary urban audience, yet one that remains worried about the girl's vulnerability in the city, despite the violence and sexual undertones of former versions having been removed to an extent and it having been infused with reviewed ideologies that promote girl's independence.

These two versions of the story, disparate in their ways of portraying the vulnerability of the girl, represent the two extremities of the majority of symbolic representations in literature for children. On the one hand, the story by Perrault exemplifies the deeply conservative attitudes that aim to restrict, control and dominate girls, and, conversely, the story by Martín Gaite characterises a more contemporary understanding of feminine independence and autonomy while still safeguarding the girl's integrity. However, at both poles, the traditional patriarchal roles and values are inscribed. For instance, in the story by Perrault the moral message is explicitly stated at the end:

> Young children, as this tale will show,
> And mainly pretty girls with charm,
> Do wrong and often come to harm
> In letting those they do not know
> Stay talking to them when they meet.
> And if they don't do as they ought,
> It's no surprise that some are caught
> By wolves who take them off to eat. (Perrault 2009: 103)

Martín Gaite's story, although not as explicit, shows similar traditional patriarchal values. For example, the story ends in a fairy-tale-like scene of the grandmother dancing in the arms of Mr Wolf, in a full display of images of romantic love, denying with that all the sexual liberation that the grandmother proclaimed throughout the story (Martín Gaite 2009: 220-21). And, in another scene at the finale, Sara (Little Red) takes a taxi and, when she gets out, the taxi driver expresses

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[32] In Perrault's account (the first published version), the story ends after the wolf eats both, first the grandmother and then Little Red. While in other versions (Brothers Grimm and a French version), the grandmother is rescued from inside the wolf, leaving the grandmother and Little Red unharmed. And, in other more sanitised versions, the grandmother hides in the closet and she is never eaten by the wolf.

his concern about the girl's fate, in a clear assumption of her vulnerability to predators: '–It surprises me that there are not more crimes. How is it possible that a girl so young is outside her house by herself at this time! What are her parents thinking?' (Martín Gaite 2009: 226, own translation).

Thus, despite the better intentions of Martín Gaite in attempting to portray a more empowered girl, in the end, the two stories accomplish exactly the same: the girl fears the outside world of her house while assuming and accepting that only a man can protect and take care of her. The result of these stereotypes, as the short fictional stories show, is the girl's practical negotiation of space which confines them to the house in an illusory natural and voluntary exercise of personal liberty.

Literature for children, as a socialising agent, helps to reinforce and preserve the patriarchal system of values about gender that subordinate and control girls (as little women). Patriarchy here is understood as a system in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it, and whose authority is enforced through social, political and economic institutions. Literature for children (exemplified in *The Invisible Day*, *Little Red Riding-Hood in Manhattan*, *Little Red Riding-Hood* and in every other version of that story) produces the private sphere, epitomised in the space of the home, as the space where girls are not only safe, but where they, as little women, perform their most important activities and experiences.

These symbolic representations in literature for children are important because it is through books that girls are introduced to the established ideologies of urban society. Accordingly, Judith Stacey, Susan Béreaud & Joan Daniels argue that stories, narratives and folktales, as important channels of transmission of culture, produce and socialise (and, in consequence, they also normalise) the sexualised images, gender roles and stereotypes of the 'social groups'[33] for the whole society (Stacey, Béreaud & Daniels 1974). This is also understood by Bronwyn Davies in her book, *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales* (Davies 2003). Here, Davies explores the way that gender is constructed in society through narratives that attempt to instruct and normalise the gendered divisions and roles established by the patriarchal society, as she writes:

> The division of the world into female and male is a consistent ordering device in children's stories. Through hearing traditional narratives children learn to recognise themselves and others as located within their own lived gendered narratives. Stories provide the metaphors, the characters and the plots through which their own positionings in the social world can be interpreted. (46)

The gender stereotypes portrayed in literature for children have significant power over the girls' perception, experience and imaginaries about their role and place in the city. Lefebvre argues that space is produced as much by girls in their everyday practices, that by language, that is, by the stereotypes, symbols and codes that urban society constructs to define girls and the space

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[33] Iris Marion Young affirms that: 'Different social groups have different needs, cultures, histories, experiences, and perceptions of social relations which influence their interpretation of the meaning and consequences of policy proposals and influence the form of their political reasoning' (Young 1989: 257).

they occupy (Lefebvre 1991: 44). Then, as the short fictional stories show, these stereotypes, symbols and codes are (re)produced by girls in the way they articulate their narratives, assuming and accepting them as part of their understanding of the world. This is not only evident in the girls' narratives that demonstrate the girls' rationalisation and internalisation of discipline; it is also implied by the lack of information about the games and places where girls play.

All the girls' short fictional stories I mentioned so far reveal that girls are bounded by norms, regulations and restrictions that confine them to the house. It is not surprising that girls did not articulate their games or places where they play more clearly, given that within the workshops children were encouraged to talk and write about outdoor play. For instance, there is a short fictional story that simply states: 'That day [the three girls] played a lot' (PLY038-FILN). Another girl relates: 'Once upon a time there was a girl that played every day. One day the girl met another girl, and they became friends, and they played in a very pretty park' (PLY104-FM5C). Another girl writes: 'Yeni was very bored, so she asked her parents if she could go to the park, but they didn't let her go, so she got really mad at them and locked herself in her room' (PLY069-EDA4). Conversely, I can enumerate several games and toys that were mentioned by boys in their short fictional stories: skateboarding, football, swimming, toy cars, war, space travel, wrestling, hide and seek, videogames, fantasy card games, ball games, and cycling, to mention some. The most detailed short fictional story about a playing activity relates (other than the one about the swings): '[Alison and her friends] used to get together in the park to gossip, chat and skip rope' (PLY054-FILN).

The story of Alison hints at what Jane Lever observes about girls' play being more passive. In her study about the gender differences in children's play, Lever described the differences between boys and girls from the empirical observation of the structure and organisation of children's playing activities (Lever 1976). She discovered that boys, unlike girls, play outdoors more often, play in groups of many boys of diverse ages, play longer, prefer competitive games, and when there are disputes, they resolve them more effectively (480-82). In contrast, girls play less outdoors, they play in smaller groups, intimate groups, most often in pairs, they play in private places, and when there are disputes, girls prefer to end the play, and the continuation of the play depends on the state of the personal relations (480-84), which coincides with the representation of girls' play portrayed in the story of Alison.

Lever observes that, through play, boys learn independence, organisational skills and experience in rule-bounded events; and at the same time, they learn to play with people they dislike and to compete with their friends (484). However, girls, instead of playing 'formal' games, replicate the social patterns of the fundamental human relations. Girls' play is more spontaneous and free of structure and rules and its organisation is more cooperative than competitive, which promotes the empathy and sensitivity required to take the role of the 'particular other' (484).

Lever advocates that boys' play provides a more adequate preparation for a better social and

working performance (Lever 1976: 484). While girls' play prepares them 'for the private sphere of the home and their future roles as wives and mothers' (484). This symbolic understanding of play as a preparation for adult life had already been approached by Roland Barthes in his essay about French toys in *Mythologies* (Barthes 1991). Barthes writes about French toys as objects that 'literally prefigure the world of adult functions' (53). He notes: 'There exist, for instance, dolls which urinate; they have an oesophagus, one gives them a bottle, they wet their nappies; soon, no doubt, milk will turn to water in their stomachs. This is meant to prepare the little girl for the causality of house-keeping, to "condition" her to her future role as mother' (53).

This preconstruction of her identity as a mother is signified when the doll is given to a little girl. We do not just give it to her and wait to see what she does with it, we explain how to take it in her arms, how to rock it. This parental demonstration is not normally given to a boy, since rocking a baby is not within the affective gestures of a male. Therefore, we see young girls that acquire the conditioned reflex of rocking dolls. And adults, often forgetting that such behaviour is only the result of directed instructions, say: 'so young and she already have maternal instincts!' Later, the girl will be persuaded to keep playing with the doll, to sleep with it, given that this is considered as a real and proper training for the future mother. Whereas a boy that expressed any preference towards dolls will be pushed and swayed to aggressive and competitive games.

Barthes' essay works as a perfect illustration of the idea that the adult sees children as adults-in-the-making. He writes: 'the adult […] sees the child as another self. All the toys one commonly sees are essentially a microcosm of the adult world; they are all reduced copies of human objects, as if in the eyes of the public the child was, all told, nothing but a smaller man, a homunculus to whom must be supplied objects of his own size. […] toys are usually based on imitation, they are meant to produce children who are users, not creators' (53-54). This way of indoctrinating children for their future role in society, of shaping their identity, through play, is constructed as a narrative. When giving the doll to a little girl we narrate how she *must* play with the doll, then she observes mothers doing whatever they do with their babies, and, while replicating it, she constructs her own narrative of the way she must 'use' the doll. Narrative, in this sense, is not only the way the girl makes sense of the world; it also becomes the means to shape her identity.

As I stated before, the girl (as an individual) is not born with one or another identity. Her identity is constructed amid a series of narratives that shape her sense of self, her feelings, her relationship with herself, with others and with her surroundings. Donald Polkinghorne, quoted by Bruner, identifies this process as 'narrative configuration', that is, the series of narratives about oneself that the girl (as an individual) organises into a whole and that contribute to her construction of 'self':

> We achieve our personal identities and self-concept through the use of the narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. […] Self, then, is not a static thing or a substance, but a configuring of personal

events into an historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be. (Quoted in Bruner 1990: 115-16)

Anthony Giddens defines self-identity as: 'the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent' (Giddens 2004: 53). For Giddens, self-identity is not just a reflexive act, it is the construction of the concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others) (53). Giddens, then, defines self-identity within the context of society; he believes that self-identity is not only shaped by the institutions of modernity but it also helps to shape those institutions (Giddens 2004). Giddens' understanding of identity in terms of a social context, allow us to recognise that identity is always constructed in relation to a given environment, and thus it is a way of being in a place and a way of relating with others and with groups. Therefore, identity constitutes a way of existing in the social world, and it shapes the way that girls (as individuals) interpret their reality and their actions. That is, identity is a complex, dynamic and sociocultural phenomenon that is in an incessant process of construction and reconstruction through the course of the girls' (as individuals) life events, and through their social relations, history, geography, knowledge, culture, and experience.

Therefore, girls' (as individuals) identity is profoundly intertwined with their physical and social environments. In the lives of girls, as the short fictional stories produced by girls within *The Great Book* workshops show, cultural and ideological gendered divisions of urban space, gender stereotypes, symbolic representations and social assumptions have a major impact in their construction of identity and influence how they perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about their playing practices. So, there is no neutral or merely objective view: all of children's experiences and perceptions of the urban environment are affected by the internalisation of the real and imagined sociocultural and ideological constructions of childhood and urban space.

In the previous section, I explored the role that ideology has in the way that children perceive, experience and imagine their playing practices. Ideology is important because children's playing practices are not isolated actions – that is, girls' playing practices do not merely take place in the confined space of their house; they are located in a society, and as such, they are intertwined in a mesh of meanings and relations within the complex process of production of the city. Then, as I argued here, the patriarchal urban society in which the girls that attended *The Great Book* workshops are situated, provokes distinct forms of play between girls and boys, and then these differences are used as symbolic material. For example, the different allowances that are given to girls and boys to play outside their houses, is then symbolically understood in the cultural association of girls with private space and boys with public space. Thus, cultural ideas about the place and role of girls in the city do not necessarily reflect the girls' vulnerability and competences, although they might originate within the context of those concerns. This is because symbolic

representations and gender stereotypes are developed and used in the strategies that the patriarchal society employ to maintain its control over girls (as little women). This is well exemplified in the following fragment of a short fictional story written by a girl in *The Great Book* workshops:

> One day a girl was twirling, and while she was performing one twirl, she felt down, so her mum told her: — I told you [not to twirl]! And she took her to the hospital where an X-ray showed that she had broken her hand. […] Her friends came to visit her in the hospital. And, she told them: — See? That's why you shouldn't twirl, it is very dangerous. (PLY098-FM5C).

It is important to contextualise the story. Traditionally, in Mexico, girls were not allowed to twirl because it was considered 'improper' and 'indecorous' behaviour (although this was not always voiced) and it was considered improper because girls generally wore dresses or skirts, and thus, while twirling, the skirt goes up, showing the girls' underwear. Although nowadays it is not that common for girls to be restricted from twirling, as the story shows, there are still people who disapprove the action. I heard people say to girls: 'Don't twirl, you're only teasing boys!'

In a patriarchal society like Mexico, where one in five thinks that a woman is partly to blame for being raped (CONAPRED 2011), the statement in the story has nothing to do with the physical risk that the action of twirling represents. Rather, it is informed by powerful gender stereotypes that objectify girls, and has little to do with the risk that girls may fall down. The story (and the prohibition itself) is indeed related to the fact that within the patriarchal Mexican society, girls' behaviour (as little women) is constantly monitored because there is a social assumption, as Ward observed earlier, that girls are unable to look after themselves. And that social assumption led to a series of stereotypes that stigmatise girls as vulnerable yet imprudent and naïve, and thus that they need to be controlled to assure their safety and integrity.

Eventually, the girl's experience would probably contradict the stereotype when she realises that twirling did not represent that much of a physical danger, yet the power of stereotypes and social assumptions is that they had little to do with her actions. And, what is most likely is that the girl in the story will stop twirling once she internalises the message that she *should* not do it, the same way that her mother probably internalised it and then passed it on to her, thus restricting her bodily movement and behaviour. The stereotype, then, not only provides a deliberate reason why the girl should not twirl, but also ensures that she behaves in a 'proper' way, 'like a girl'. As Henrietta Moore asserts: 'The power of gender stereotypes is not just in the mind, for they have a perfect material reality, which helps to reinforce the social […] conditions within which they are developed and employed' (Moore 1995: 38).

Accordingly, Moore argues that the scope of feminist studies in anthropology comprised the examination of 'what it is to be a woman, how cultural understandings of the category "woman" vary through space and time, and how those understandings relate to the position of women in different societies' (12). She proposes that a further exploration of this understanding requires the

conception of gender and gender relations – that is, the way in which women and men, and the established characteristics of femininity and masculinity, are defined throughout space and time. She states that gender may be understood from two viewpoints: 'either as a symbolic construction or as a social relationship' (Moore 1995: 13).

Moore also suggests that these two perspectives – gender as a symbolic construction and as a set of social relations – must be understood as interconnected and mutually constituted (36-38). In this sense, girls (as individuals) act in relation to their intentions and beliefs, which are always culturally shaped, as I have insisted here, as well as historically and spatially situated. The way that girls perceive, experience, imagine and write about play is related to the social assumptions about their role and place in the city, as much as their individual everyday playing practices. Because, as the short fictional stories produced by girls within *The Great Book* workshops show, the sociocultural assumptions, through the gender stereotypes and symbolic representations, influence how the urban society relates to girls, and in turn, how girls relate to themselves, with others and with the urban environment. And all these actions have an effect on the girls' attitudes, beliefs and future intentions, as well as on their knowledge and understanding of the urban world, and of their own place and role in the city.

So, what society considers to be the appropriate behaviour and actions of girls reflect and affect what it imagines the girl to be, and how it expects the girl to behave. While it is important to understand that different social groups have different standards, expectations and ideas about girls, which vary according to age, culture, class, race, and so on, and also that these expectations or beliefs change over time and between places, as Lefebvre states, the symbolic representations are not innocuous, they structure the spaces of the city, filling them with significance and meanings (Lefebvre 1991: 44). The values, hierarchy and symbolic actions define the social space in a way that is directly linked to the spatial practices. That is, the patriarchal values imbedded in the gender stereotypes and symbolic representations define girls as vulnerable, imprudent and naïve and associate them with the private space of the house, outline the distinction of the girls' playing practices. And, as the girls' narratives about play showed, the whole construct of meanings imposed by patriarchal society directly and indirectly shape not only the girls' everyday playing practices, but they also have an impact on their construction of identity, and influence the way they perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about their playing practices.

The child in the social city – Final remarks

The narratives about playing practices that I analysed in this chapter show that children make sense of the urban environment in a dialectic interaction with the social city and everything

it comprises: social relations, forms of organisation, urban regulations, different spatial, temporal and material social realities, established ideologies, relations of power, social representations, cultural constructions of childhood, and symbolic meanings. Here I argued that there are conflicting standpoints between children being at risk and children becoming a threat, between safety and power, that delineate the urban boundaries that define the place of the child in the city. Through the study of the role that the cultural constructions of childhood play in the way that children perceive, experience and imagine their urban experiences, I maintained that we need to consider that children's urban experience is intertwined with the cultural and ideological urban structures. Then, I explored the short fictional stories about playing practices written by girls to explain the idea that children's playing practices are influenced and shaped by the children's internalisation of the cultural, symbolic and gendered divisions of urban space. I contended that girls are subjected to a series of boundaries and bodily regulations through symbolic representations that impede their participation in public space and define their identities.

Thus, the children's short fictional stories about play evidence that living in the city is as much about mediating relationships with other individuals as it is about living in physical places and spaces; there is an ongoing interactivity between the nets of relationships, places and spaces. As Helga Zeiher writes: 'It is not only daily spatial conditions that influence the children's different ways of shaping daily life. Individual ways of shaping daily life develop across the life span, in a lifelong sequence of negotiations with the existing spatial, temporal, materials and social realities. And, these realities are also influenced or produced by the individual's activities and ways of shaping their lives' (Zeiher 2003: 77).

Children's urban experience integrates both the objectivation (through the established relationship between the child and the urban environment) and the material and symbolic realities within the everyday practices constructed through time and accumulated in the experience. It is in this way that children construct their sociocultural processes and practices (like meaning) from shared referents, whether in a collective or in an individual manner. So, as Soja proposes, space is a cultural constructed entity (Soja 1996). As such, it is part of the general cultural mesh, and like any cultural entity, space is shaped and altered, accepted or rejected. So the way children make sense of the urban environment is both reliant on their encounter with the social city and on the internalisation of the cultural constructions of childhood.

Thus, children's urban experience incorporates the direct relationship with space, as well as objectivation, socialisation, ideology and identity. So, as the children's short fictional stories about playing practices produced within *The Great Book* demonstrated, the study of the child in the city demands that we understand that the children's urban experience comprises not only their direct relationship with space and their everyday practices, but also the social relations within which they occur, as well as their processes of objectivation, their physical and symbolic

realities, the material, conceptual and moral boundaries they are subjected to, the children's individual and collective identity influenced by the real and imagined constructions of childhood, and their subjective experience, that is, their urban imaginaries.

Accordingly, the narratives exposed that the child interprets his/her experience in their everyday and permanent interaction with the social city, while at the same time he/she constructs his/her identity. Then, since the environment is persistently (re)produced, individuals are continually engaged in the process of negotiation and renegotiation of new meanings of place and of different understandings of their identities. And with the continual changes of the environment and with the changes in the individual's experiences of the environment, individuals reconfigure their understandings and produce new meanings of place at the time that they reformulate their identities.

Thus, children's identity is embroiled with their personal and biographical circumstances (a point that I will expand in the following chapter), the ideological, familiar and generational tradition of the sphere they inhabit, their social class, the place where they live, and so on. However, although these aspects have an influence on children's experience and perception of the city, they do not necessarily determine it, because children can act and modify their practices and the structures in which they are situated.

Through the narrative construction of their playing practices, children make sense of the places in which they play, the people involved in their playing activities and their playing experiences. At the same time they make sense of their realities, they project their wishes, their aspirations, and thus (re)define their realities. It is through narrative that children appropriate their social relations, (re)interpret them, and imagine them. In this way, through narrative, children undertake an active role in the social structure of the city. Far from merely reproducing the social city in their narratives, they appropriate it, they mediate it, they filter it, they articulate it, and they project it in a different dimension, that of subjectivity.

5. 'In the City We Dwell':
The Personal City in Children's Narratives of their Everyday Dwelling Practices

When Kevin Lynch asked his graduate students to write their childhood memories of the urban environment, he acknowledged with that lone enquiry that the city has a significance that is individual, personal and intimate. He also revealed that the construction of urban experience is socially formed and it involves emotional processes. I said that the city is the product of social relations, but I also said that the city is a social space where the material experience is mediated through the subjective and imaginary experience, and that the city is not only the physical reality but also the city produced in the imagination.

In Chapter 3, I argued that the way children experience the city is not only the product of the objective circumstances (i.e. the material environment), but also of the ways in which children imagine those circumstances and nourish them with the stories told by other people, and interpretations of books, television and the media. It is important to understand the objective circumstances of cities as much as the way children perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about those circumstances. To study the relationship between the child and the city we must consider that the urban space and children's urban experience is not (merely) based on the physical city; rather it is affected, altered and informed by the external elements and information, and reconstructed in the imagination.

Nevertheless, what Lynch's work about his students' childhood memories evidenced is that we can only access children's experience of the city from children's own position. The problem in his study lies in the fact that he attempted to study adult's childhood memories to get the children's point of view about the city, but adult's childhood memories are exactly that: memories. And those memories are already processed by the adult stocks of knowledge, that is, through those filters of knowledge that are constructed through experience and rationalisation (Thrift 1985, Jones 2001). Thus, since children have 'less' experience, for instance, children's perspectives on the world are, without a doubt, distinct of those of adults. This means there is an aspect of urban experience that is not comprehensive, that cannot be oversimplified in general accounts.

For example, as I showed in Chapters 3 and 4, the challenges children face in the city are particular to their abilities and limitations, whether these abilities and limitations are defined by objective and/or sociocultural parameters. This is evident in my discussion about the dangers that the street/road represents for children presented in Chapter 3. There I showed that, on the one hand, the developmental theories suggest that children under the age of ten do not have the natural capacity to perform safely on the road all the time, nor can they be taught to behave properly; and

conversely, the parental anxiety over children's safety and the parental and governmental sense of responsibility for children's actions define children's outlooks on the risks and dangers in the street. Consequently, as Owain Jones suggests, there are profound differences between the world of the adult and the world of the child that cannot be fully bridged (Jones 2001: 176).

However, children's experiences of the city not only differ from those of adults and other social groups; as I showed in Chapter 4, they are also distinctive between girls and boys. In the Introduction of this work, where I compared my brothers' playing practices with my memories and Lynch's students' memories of childhood playing practices, I noted how the experiences of a girl learning to ride a bike in a middle-class neighbourhood in Mexico in the 1980s, two boys playing in their living room in Mexico in the 2000s, and a boy playing in a Japanese concentration camp in Indonesia in the 1940s are also dissimilar. So, what makes these experiences different?[34] These examples illustrate that it is not only matter of age – yes, all them were children roughly about the same age, but we all lived in different cities, which means not only different geographies and language, but also different cultural values, for instance.[35] Apart from the apparent differences produced by the huge gap in time, there are also factors such as each child's skills, limitations, personal conditions, means, point of view, education level, knowledge, access to information, and so on, which influence the way children experience the city.

Hence, just as children's experiences are unique to the way they make sense of the urban environment, each child's experience of the city is unique to his/her particular circumstances. This personal and partial aspect of urban experience is what strengthens the relevance of this work. If we intend to understand the relationship between the child and the city we need to consider that each child constructs his/her own version of the city from his/her individual standpoint. This is important because, as I said before, there are four fundamental aspects necessary to access children's urban experience: the spatial form, the meanings of place, the spatial practices and the actors who makes those practices (the child). And, as I also argued, if we ought to explore the subjective aspect of children's urban experience, we need to do so by exploring children's fictional stories of their everyday urban practices, that is, a method that captures children's everyday practices and their spatiality, the place in direct relation with space

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[34] Kevin Lynch used an example of a child living in a Japanese concentration camp for his study of childhood memories of the *city* (Lynch 1979: 103-04). The debate whether a concentration camp can be considered an urban setting is not relevant to this discussion.

[35] Again, I understand that it is problematic to compare my brothers' childhoods and my own childhood to the childhood of a boy in a concentration camp in what appears to be such a light tone. I recognise that the meaning, degree, impact and consequences of the processes involved in the construction of experience of these three cases are not comparable. I also understand that the psychological, political and sociocultural complexities of the condition of violence and trauma in which Lynch's student's memories are based are not comparable to the trivial experiences of my brothers' and my playing practices nor to the sociocultural environment in which my brothers and I grew up. However, while I recognise that the processes involved in the student's memories go beyond language, time, geography and cultural values, I cite Lynch's example because the comparison (as problematic and unparalleled) helps me to emphasise in a more discernible way that each child's personal circumstances play a significant role in the construction of the experience of the city, and thus, it is important to pay attention to the context in which each child (as a subject situated in place, standing in an urban setting) is situated.

and society, the place in the dialectic interaction between the spatial forms and the sense of place, the networks that articulate the urban places from the experience of children, and the space seen through the eyes of the child (as a subject). Therefore, to understand the relationship between the child and the city and to access the subjective aspect of children's urban experience (that is, the urban imaginaries), we need to acknowledge the perspective of a child (as a subject) situated in a place, standing in an urban setting.

So far I explored children's moving and playing practices, so, now I turn to analyse children's dwelling practices as presented in their narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops. In the previous chapters, I revealed that to study the child in the city we ought to consider the two factors of social space: both the objective and the subjective elements, as they together define children's realities. I also substantiated that the way children make sense of their environment is both reliant on their encounter with the social city and on their internalisation of the real and imagined constructions of childhood.

In this chapter, I analyse children's short fictional stories about dwelling practices produced within *The Great Book* workshops. The narratives of dwelling practices reveal that a child's relationships with the city is rooted in his/her personal relationship with the house and in the meanings he/she invests in it. In this sense, as children localised in a particular place in relation to the city, the dwelling experience (and the urban experience) is partial, individual, personal and intimate because it includes not only the physical reality, but it also involves children's own bodies – that is, it comprises children's engagement with the house (and with the environment) at the levels of perception, corporeality and agency. In the narratives of dwelling practices children engage with the urban reality through their partial perception of the city, through their particular corporeality, affectivity and emotions, and through their agency influenced by their particular necessities and by the social city, and made possible by their emotions, their corporeality, their wishes and their imagination.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first section, I examine the idea of the house as a point of reference, focusing specifically on the notion of 'return' revealed in the short fictional stories about dwelling practices. I propose that the house is the basic space that locates children in relation to the city, and as such, that it is in the house where they begin to negotiate their spatial and social realities, where their initial efforts to define their personal identities take place, and where they learn to communicate their realities and identities.

In the second part, I explore the role of perception, corporeality and agency in children's narratives of home. I argue that the personal circumstances of children define the way they perceive, experience, imagine, and ultimately write about home. By focusing on the narratives of orphan children constructed within *The Great Book* workshops, I contend that while children are not speaking directly about themselves, children's narratives of home are written from the first-person

perspective, that is, from the partial, individual, personal and intimate viewpoint of the child.

In the third section, I conclude that the dwelling experience is constructed in time, by a concrete, situated child, in a fragmented way, and affected, altered and informed by external elements and information, is (re)constructed in the imagination, and is ultimately (re)defined and written in children's short fictional stories. As the short fictional stories about dwelling practices show, despite the points of encounter, each child has his/her own version of home, and this in turn, defines each child's own version of the city.

The house as a starting point

Gaston Bachelard in his influential book, *The Poetics of Space*, stresses the importance of the house for human existence: 'For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word' (Bachelard 1994: 4). Also, Barbara Allen argues that the house is a place of synthesis, the definitive place (Allen 2003: 140). As Bachelard and Allen suggest, the home is not only a concrete structure, a refuge; it has broader symbolic and ideological meanings.

Based on Bachelard's work, Otto Friedrich Bollnow argues that the house represents a basic point of reference from which children construct their relationship with themselves, with others and with the world (Bollnow 2011). The house is the point of reference in their relationship with their vicinity, their neighbourhood, their community and their city.

Accordingly, *Barro de Medellín*, a children's book about two boys, Camilo and Andrés, opens with an account of Camilo's house:

> When Camilo heard the first thunder, he went to the door of his house, pulled the rough cloth that served as a curtain and looked outside through the window. And, as he had done on so many occasions, he contemplated the whole valley. He thought again that he was lucky to live where he lived, on the hilltop of the Borough of Santo Domingo Savio. From there he could see the whole city and the always-green mountains that surrounded it. It didn't matter that most of the streets were not paved and that whenever there was a downpour, which it was every day, he had to walk through a quagmire. Neither did it matter that the drinking water came to the taps every two days, or that on many occasions the electricity was cut off just when it started to get dark, as if the electricity refused to understand that at night is when it is needed the most. Camilo cared even less that to get there he had to climb an endless steep hill, which left most people breathless. (Gómez Cerdá 2008: 9-10, own translation)

In the tale, Camilo lives in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Medellín in a simple house. For him, his house is the centre of his world. His relationship with the city is constructed from the conditions and the location of his house, for instance. He lives in a poor neighbourhood at the top

of a hill in a low-income household, and this certainly defines his perception, and thus his experience of the world, in the same way that his personal circumstances, his point of view, his capacities, his limitations and his memories shaped the way he experiences the city.

In the previous chapters, I discussed the play spaces and the street as places where children confront their identities with their real and imagined spatial and social realities. However, I believe that it is in the house where children begin to negotiate those spatial and social realities, where their first attempts to define their personal identities take place, and where they learn to communicate their realities and identities. Therefore, my purpose in this section is to show that children's relationship with the city is rooted in their personal relationship with their house and in the meanings they invest in it. Here I will explore the idea of the house as a point of reference, concentrating specifically on the notion of 'return' revealed in children's short fictional stories. This idea of 'return' will also help me to examine children's spatial experience, a point that I anticipated in Chapter 3 – that is, the way in which children, through the quotidian encounter with the material city, confer certain meanings of value and intentionality onto space. Here, it is important to explore children's spatial experience, because this element of children's urban experience, while it is influenced by each child's culture and group of belonging, also responds to a personal cognitive pattern. Thus, while the children that attended *The Great Book* workshops may pertain to the same group of belonging, the same culture and the same material city, there is an aspect of each child's spatial experience that is personal, because the way in which each child confers those meanings of value and intentionality onto space are based on the personal opinions, preferences, values, trajectories and behaviour of each child. These personal circumstances are a primary source for the understanding of space, and thus, for children's urban experience.

Here, I will use a different approach from the one I took for the analysis of the short fictional stories in the previous chapters. Unlike the previous chapters, I will focus mainly on one single story constructed within *The Great Book* workshops. I use this single story approach because, while the chosen story contains many of the recurrent imaginaries of home that emerged in the short fictional stories about dwelling practices, it helps me to strengthen the idea that each child's personal circumstances play a fundamental role in his/her construction of urban experience. Thus, I will mainly analyse one story, with the intention that it will allow me to explore how the child's personal experience is constructed in direct relation to his/her personal background (here understood as the house and family – as his/her point of origin). While the story exemplifies many of the children's imaginaries of home expressed in their fictional narratives about dwelling practices, and represents the way in which children's narratives are constructed from the child's own way of perceiving and understanding the urban world (and the role and place of home in this understanding), this single story approach has more to do with my intention to show how children construct their urban experience from their own position of the world. The imagery of this story is a model of children's imaginaries of home as revealed in children's fictional narratives and of the way in which children's

fictional narratives evidence the way in which the child's perception and experience of the urban environment is organised in a concentric manner around himself/herself.

The story of Camilo begins by situating him in space. He is in his house at the top of a hill, and every spatial relationship is constructed from there: the way he perceives the whole city and the mountains, the streets outside his house and his journeys to get home. The story of Camilo is fictional, and it was indeed written from an adult perspective. Nonetheless, the way Camilo's spatial relationship with the city is characterised has substantial grounds. Many authors agree that to experience the city and to cognitively organise their urban experience, children require a point of reference from which everyday practices and routines are constructed (Bollnow 2011, Lynch 1960, Trowbridge 1913). This point of reference is not only important for cognitive mapping processes. It has an affective value since its everyday character establishes the rhythms, times, and forms of contact crucial for the production of a sense of place.

This point of reference may change with the passing of time. But, as the following fragment of a short fictional story constructed within *The Great Book* workshops shows, for children, this point of reference is the house:

> […] José's family was killed. […] He was left alone and didn't know where to go, so he came back to Mexico walking by himself. José didn't have a place to live since he had lost his family; he was five years old. Thus, he used to go to the street markets,[36] where everybody began to know him, to ask for food. José grew up, and he kept going to the street markets to ask for food, and to pick up cardboard that he used to sell to get some money. José turned ten years old, and he kept going to work to the street markets every day. He lived alone in a house he made of tin and cardboard. José didn't know his last name. José grew up, he turned thirty years old, and he had never spent the money he earned. So, he built a house. Then, he met a woman, and they got married, they had two children and lived happily ever after. (DWL039-FM5B)

In this story, the spatial significance of the house is palpable. The notions of 'coming back' and 'going' not only refer to a spatialised existence, but they also imply that there is a 'starting point' (Bollnow 2011: 56-57). Children as living beings situated in space have a reference point which roots them in space. Kevin Lynch and C.C. Trowbridge assert that individuals are 'domicentric', which means that they tend to orientate themselves with reference to an established central place: the home (Lynch 1960, Trowbridge 1913). Moreover, several cognitive mapping studies reveal that children's cognitive maps are most detailed in the area of the home (Lynch 1977, Anderson & Tindall 1972, Everitt & Cadwallader 1972).

Children's social experience is highly spatialised. Bollnow suggests that children 'would lose

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[36] The word used in the short-story is '*tianguis*'. In Mexico a *tianguis* is a traditional outdoor market that exists since the pre-Hispanic period and that continues fundamentally in the same form until today. These markets are held on specific days in a town or a city neighbourhood. In Mexico these types of markets are a significant cultural and urban referent.

[their] foothold if [they] had no firm point of reference to which all [their] paths were directed, from which they derive and to which they return. […] [They need] such a centre, in which [they are] rooted in space and to which all [their] relationships in space refer' (Bollnow 2011: 119). Therefore, the spatialised existence is directly linked to a social existence.

The short fictional stories support Lynch's and Trowbridge's claim that children are domicentric, and for them, as long as they are not yet independent, that point of reference to which all their relationships in space refer is the house of their parents.[37] The house is not seen as a simple material structure, but it has a social value. The (parents') house as a reference point is not manifest in only José's story; it is also present in many of the children's narratives. For example, 'We couldn't *return* to *my* home, so we had to stay at my grandma's' (DWL032-FM5B, my italics). '[The girls] didn't know how to *return* [to their houses]' (DWL041-FM5B, my italics). '[Her aunt] took her to a house *far away* from her *own* house' (DWL045-FM5B, my italics). 'When Angel turned eighteen years old, he *left his* house and with the money he had saved, he planned to build *a* house. […] When he realised that to build *a* house was not as easier as to dream about it, he *returned* to live with his parents, and he lived happily ever after' (DWL080-JM6B, my italics).

All these examples reveal that for children *their* home is their parents' house and that their home is the point of reference from which they construct their spatial associations in the city. Home is (under normal circumstances) the place where children have their first sense of oneness and self (Chawla 1992: 66-68), where they create their primary social relations and where they begin to know and explore their surroundings. Therefore, the system of children's spatial relationships is organised from the home outwards. The places to which they go and which they return are associated with this point as their organisational centre (Bollnow 2011: 119-21).

Therefore, home is a significant fixed point of reference around which children structure the reality. And, given this function of home as the quintessential reference point, J. Douglas Porteous suggests that in the same way that the primal divisions of psychic space are self and non-self, there is a 'fundamental dichotomy in geographical space between home and non-home' (Porteous 1976: 386). This idea of the home as a significant point of reference for children is relevant for this thesis, because home, as the quintessential reference point, functions as sort of a first *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977, Bourdieu & Passeron 1977), which unconsciously inscribes in children the values, patterns, behaviour and rules of the home (as a physical space and as an emotional place) and family to which they pertain. This is important because, as I have iterated, when studying the relationship between the child and the city we must take into account the two factors of social space: the spatial framework within which children live, and the space as perceived and imagined by children. Then, every child, every specific age group, every social

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[37] As I stated before, the complexities of street children and homelessness are beyond the scope of this work.

class, or any other specific group when experiencing space in determined time, produce certain meanings; that is, the perception of space, the symbolic meanings attached to it, and the associated everyday use will differ from child to child and from class to class, for instance.

In this way, the particular circumstances of each child's home, that is, the physical qualities of the house (the characteristics of the place in which the house is located, the particular features of the house, etc.), the socioeconomic status of the household and the sociocultural background of the family, among other specific particular circumstances, inform each child's perception of urban space, the symbolic meanings attached to it and the associated everyday use of space. Consequently, José's perception of urban space, the symbolic meanings he invests in his houses and the associated everyday use of the material house are determined by his particular circumstances as an orphan child with few resources, for example. His particular circumstances (the material space, the meanings, his subjective perception, and his spatial practices) are certainly distinct from those of a child who lives in a solid house with a functional family, for instance.

The objective elements, like the place in which the house is located, the physical qualities of the house and the socioeconomic status of the household, to mention some elements, that children interiorise in their quotidian encounters with the urban environment have a primordial role in children's appropriation of space and in their construction of their understanding of the urban world, while conferring on them a sense of belonging and identity. Therefore, the personal circumstances of each child's house and family are inscribed in the way he/she perceives, experience and imagines the urban environment.

Furthermore, the house as a significant point of reference is also relevant to children's urban geography. As I stated earlier, in children's imagined geography, the home is to dwell in and the city is planned for automobiles to circulate in. This understanding of urban geography portrayed in children's fictional narratives is dominated by a safety discourse. The house as the epitome of privacy and shelter occupies a preponderant role as it is the basic space from which children structure and organise their urban lives, and the only space (and the private automobile as an extension of the house) that children deem safe.

The story of José is pertinent because it encompasses many of the reoccurring imaginaries of home that appear throughout the short fictional stories about dwelling practices:[38] for children, home is an anchor, a shelter and a safe place within the city; it is intrinsically connected to the idea of family, and it gives them identity and sense of belonging. Accordingly, José's 'return' connotes that his point of origin was Mexico. Nevertheless, José's walking back to Mexico does not only refer to a spatial association; it also implies that there is an emotional connection to Mexico. The

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[38] We are not interested in the migration and homelessness motifs implicit in the short fictional story because they are beyond the framework of this research.

almost logical decision to go back reflects that Mexico represents a place of origin as well as where José belongs. His existence is rooted in Mexico, and even though he no longer has a house or a family, he builds his social relationships there because he is content in Mexico, he is *at home*.

This longing for home is well exemplified in the pattern of returning after getting lost or being abducted that is prevalent in the children's short fictional stories. For example, in one of the short-stories, a girl goes to play outside her house and she gets abducted, but she manages to escape and to return 'to her mum'. And when she is safe at home, the girl promises her mother that she will never leave the house again without her permission (DWL038-FM5B). In another story, three girls get lost while trying to return to their houses from the store. They have a tense and eventful journey in their desperate attempt to return home, but they manage to get back home unharmed (DWL041-FM5B). One more tells the story of a girl who gets abducted by her aunt. The girl gets anxious about not being able to escape and to return to her home. Her sister looks for her without success. However, it is the mother of the girl who intuitively finds her, and the girl returns home safely (DWL045-FM5B). Then, another relates the story of a girl that gets lost for months without being able to find her way back home, but eventually, she finally finds her home (DWL118-JV6B).

This desire for home is reinforced by the notion of familiarity, that is, by the continuity and stability of experience required for the maintenance of identity, as Agnes Heller elucidates:

> Familiarity provides the basis for our everyday activities, and at the same time is an everyday need. Integral to the average everyday life is awareness of a fixed point in space, a firm position from which we 'proceed' […] and to which we return in due course. This firm position is what we call 'home'. […] 'Going home' should mean: returning to that firm position which we know, to which we are accustomed, where we feel safe, and where our emotional relationships are at their most intense. (Heller 1984: 239)

Thus, the resulting anxiety for not being able to return home portrayed in the stories mentioned above is proof that this quotidian return to the fixed home gives children some stability. In the story of José, this stability is represented by the everyday activity of going to the street markets to ask for food and to sell the cardboard, and returning home after a working day. This everyday activity also reflects children's understanding of home as a familiar place, a familiarity produced by the repeated act of returning home and by the cultural narratives of home as the place to which one must return because that is where the family is.

Peter Somerville claims that construction of familiarity goes hand in hand with the construction of identity and with the construction of privacy (Somerville 1997: 235-37). Children 'are at home if they control their own boundaries, if they can be themselves within those boundaries, and if the world within those boundaries is one which they have made or are making for themselves' (235).

The house, in this sense, not only serves as a known fixed point in space, but as a well-

demarcated world on its own, constructed against the outside world. The boundaries within which the domestic space is created guarantees the privacy of the home, since the power to exclude others is crucial to assure a place for one's world, that is, proximity of kin, with shared lifestyles, personal activities, décor, possessions, etc. (Somerville 1997: 235-37). Nevertheless, so as to create this domestic familiarity, it is necessary to have the means for the maintenance and management of a household and the security of possession of a dwelling for that household. The legal absence of such means or security will result in homelessness, and in such circumstances, domestic familiarity may break down, and the identity of the household unit might also be damaged. Thus, a minimal level of household income and security of tenancy are indispensable for domestic privacy, identity and familiarity.

This understanding of home and the familiarity it provides to children are fundamental for children's urban experience, as they determine and structure the children's rhythms, patterns and behaviour of their everyday urban practices. In an imagined geography where the street and the public space are defined as hostile environments, and which is determined by a safety discourse, the sheltered, private, familiar space of the house fulfils the needs of the child, while simultaneously defining the way in which the child establishes his/her relationship with themselves, with others and with the environment. That is, in the social construction of urban space, the meanings attributed to the house are determined by the child's and the society's need to be safe, which in turn defines the material form of the house. The material form of the house, which responds to a social necessity, in turn shapes the distinct forms of dwelling and socialising in the city. The meanings of shelter, identity, familiarity, privacy and security attributed to the house are not isolated from the children's urban understanding, nor from the relationship between the child and the city, as it is in this meaningful place as a point of reference that each child constructs the street and the public space as a hostile environment. In turn, the house acquires that form and these meanings due to the spatial practices that define the street and the public space as hostile environments.

For children, privacy, identity and familiarity are fundamental for their constructions of home. In the story of José, for example, his lack of a parental house defines his existence. He builds his social relationships in Mexico, and more specifically in the street markets, from the fact that he has no physical home. Without a solid house, José has nowhere to go, no last name, no family and no belonging. The association of home with José's identification exemplified in his story reveals that for children the house not only has spatial value, but it is also the basis of their identity.

In the story of José, home emerges as a profound axis of meaning and as a pivotal physical and emotional point of reference in his life, which is summarised in the feelings of security, happiness and belonging. Last name, family and belonging are certainly not 'things' in the logical sense that José can own them, but as the story illustrates, he is aware of them as fundamental to his sense of

being. The story shows that José's home transcends the spatial localisation, because it involves an ontological positioning of who he is and what he does in the place in which he dwells. Thus, home emerges as a sign of attachment and as a sense of belonging. This is evident in the emotional and symbolic links between José and his (lack of) house. However, these links are dynamic allowing for the relationship between José and his home to be continuously modified.

The relevance of identity attributed to the home for the social construction of urban space revealed in children's short fictional stories, and exemplified in the story of José, lies in the fact that those feelings of security, happiness and belonging (or the lack of them) both define and are defined by the way in which children construct their spatial relationships with the material city and with the social city. For example, José's lack of parental home defines his need to 'return' to a place where he feels identified. The circumstances of his return (a boy without a family and parental home) define his spatial practices (for example, his need to buy and sell cardboard to survive) and the spatial form of his house (a house constructed by the basic materials he has access to). At the same time, his spatial practices (his work and saving practices) and his permanent search for identity and belonging, resulting from his lack of family and a parental home, also define the spatial form of the concrete house that José later builds (as a stable house filled with a new sort of surrogate family).

The 'return' portrayed in the story of José, and exemplified in the stories of children getting lost or being abducted, is also ubiquitous in literature for children. In *The Invisible Day*, for example, Billie, a ten-year-old girl, escapes a repressive home by having a carefree adventure in the city, but then, having had her escapade, she gladly returns to a 'real' home where she is safe and loved (Jocelyn 1999). Ann Alston notes that this return to the home in literature for children is essential for adults because it guarantees that children 'recognise and internalise the importance of returning home, for it is in the home where adults have complete control' (Alston 2008: 72). As the short fictional stories demonstrate, children indeed internalise the idea that children must return home because that is where they belong and where they are safe, which echoes our discussion in Chapter 4 about girls' domestication.

The issue is that we no longer know if children's longing for home is rooted in the constant reinforcement of the ideal of home that adults embed in literature for children as a result of their encounters with these cultural constructions of childhood in their own childhoods (72-73). It may be possible that this attachment to home reflects universal developmental needs; however, it is troublesome to separate the universal and the cultural. This is problematic because, while the need for protection, affection and identity are universal, according to the 'human-scale development' developed by Manfred Max-Neef, there is no unequivocal or universal way to determine the satisfiers to those needs (Max-Neef 1991: 13-54). In this way, while the house can function as a satisfier of the need for protection, affection and identity that leads to an attachment

to home, it is plausible that the definition of home as a satisfier of those needs is a sociocultural construction. This refers to the social construction of urban space discussed earlier. Therefore, the universal need for protection, affection and identity, and the spatial practices originating from those needs, defined the house as the quintessential space for the satisfaction of those needs. The spatial practices defined by those universal needs determined the physical form of the house, its features and qualities. And, then, in turn, the house was first shaped by, then began to shape, the members of a society.

Nonetheless, here my interest lies in the conception of home as a place children keep coming back to in their fictional stories. This 'return' is relevant because it not only proves that children's internalisation of home as a centre of their universe is so deep that they cannot escape it in fiction, but it also evidences that for children the home provides them with both psychic security and physical safety/protection, regardless of whether this satisfaction is universal or sociocultural.

The contrast between the inside and the outside of the house in the short fictional stories is conclusive: in children's imagined geography, the outside of the home is a hostile place, whereas the inside is seen as a safe space. In this sense, the first approach to this notion of security comes from the straightforward understanding of home as a shelter. This understanding implies the material configuration of home, that is, as a concrete structure that provides physical security and protection from the elements. And, as a point of departure and return the house represents a stable refuge for children.

This point is fundamental to the discussion, because, as I presented in children's imagined urban geography, children construct an idea of a city planned for automobility, which is made of fragmented sheltered spaces (houses, school, work and places for leisure and consumption) connected by a network of roads that house automobile sanctuaries. In this imagined geography, the street and the public space are hostile environments for children, so the only place where they imagine they are safe is in the house (and in the private automobile as an extension of the house). This imagined urban geography thus articulates children's understanding of the city – that is, children have their particular way of imagining the urban geography based on what they (actually) know or understand about the city, on their encounter with the material city (as situated subjects), and on the information they receive from books, movies, television, the media, and the stories told by other people. This imagined urban geography may or may not coincide with the objective information, but, nonetheless, it has the power to influence and inform children's urban practices. In this way, the characteristics of the safety and shelter of the house do not (necessarily) have to do with the actual features of the house, but with the meanings children invest in it, and then project onto their narratives.

Martin Heidegger claims that the peace in which one lives is related to the enclosure of the dwelling space (Heidegger 2001: 147). That means that to dwell in peace, we need protective

walls and a sheltering roof. Accordingly, a house offers children stability, security and peace. And, in the story of José, these physical attributes of shelter and ease appear: the distinction between the fragility of the house made of tin and cardboard and the presumably fixed concrete house José later builds reveals the sense of protection that in children's imaginaries the house embodies.

José's story is not only important because it provides a valuable example of the sense of protection the house represents as it is revealed in children's short fictional stories, but also because, my aim in this section is to provide a reading of the way in which each child (as a subject) establishes a distinct relationship with his/her house, and, thus, with the city. In this way, José's story shows that while the short fictional stories about dwelling practices evidence that there is a common imaginary of the house as a sheltering space that provides affection, security, identity and belonging, the particular circumstances of José (as a boy without a parental house) show that the level of security, identity and belonging is determined, to begin with, by the physical characteristics of each child's house, as well as his/her familiar situation, economic status and sociocultural background. Thus, while each child needs protection, affection and identity (either due to universal or sociocultural needs), the manner of fulfilling those needs certainly differs.

Porteous contends that the home provides the three fundamental territorial satisfactions: identity, security and stimulation (Porteous 1976). His study suggests that these satisfactions come from the control of material space, and this control is assured by two primary processes: by the personalisation and by the defence of space (383-85). That is, the personalisation of space is an affirmation of identity and a vehicle for safeguarding stimulation. And, the defence of space is the means by which security is guaranteed, and stimulation is achieved. So, what Porteous' study proposes is that spatial control is necessary for the maintenance of individuals' psychic health, and given that home offers the fundamental territorial satisfactions, it is the preferred space and offers a fixed point of reference around which children can personally organise their spatial realities.

A territorial approach could help us with a reading of the story of José. The short fictional story portrays three houses: the unspecified house of his parents, the house made of tin and cardboard and the house he later builds. These three houses emphasise his need for a home, and they are certainly a gravitational point of reference. He gets pulled back to each of these houses in different moments, and he structures his life around them. However, the contrast between the three houses indicates that there is a need besides the stability of the physicality of the house. In the narrative, José's need for home stability develops: the invisibility of his parental house suggests a higher degree of need for security, identification and stimulation; the fragility of the house made of tin and cardboard suggests a slighter improved security, identification and stimulation; and the presumably fixed concreteness of his last house implies an accomplished security, identification and stimulation.

Security is achieved in terms of a firmer demarcation between public and private that each house

provides with respect to the previous one. Identification is attained with the personalisation of the home, which is implied in the construction of his last house, and at the same time this personalisation, as a means of projecting an image of himself, also provides him with psychic security. Stimulation is accomplished by constructing, modifying and defending the home. Hence, his happiness at the end of the story could be the result of the three territorial satisfactions the house he later builds provides him.

However, the story of José not only speaks of material boundaries; it also speaks about his family (whether the one he lost or the one he later builds) in relation to home. In the story, home and family are almost indivisible. In the children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, family relations permeate the rich images of the house too. Children see the house as the haven of family, and they equate home with family. In fact, no single short fictional story suggests otherwise. Thus, this evidences that the home may be more socially than territorially defined. Therefore, the meaning of home is defined in terms of specific acquainted people and involves the people with which children interact. The house, then, is a distinctive and inclusive place where children have deep social, psychological and emotional connections.

The association between family and home is not unusual. According to Lewis Mumford, 'People are as attached to places as they are attached to families and friends. When these loyalties come together, one then has the most tenacious cement possible for human society' (Mumford 1961: 287). Nigel Rapport & Andrew Dawson observe that 'home' is a conceptual construct that guides children's actions and informs their identities (Rapport & Dawson 1998). However, simultaneously, home is also a physical, spatial context. Allison James argues that this duality of home is historically used as a cognitive resource through which, gradually, children are made to be literally 'at home' in the family (James 1998). In fact, this intersection between the concept of 'home' and 'family' is critical for the identification of the interrelations between the ideological and the physical nature of home present in children's narratives.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that this correlation between home and family not always existed, and it is a product of the urbanisation and modernisation of society. This correlation has its origins in the late 1800s, and it was born from the gradual identification of the home environment as the key physical and emotional place for children's personal and private lives. This, in turn, was the result of the 'cult of domesticity' (Welter 1966, Ariès 1962, Hareven 1991, Christensen, James & Jenks 2000). Accordingly, this system aimed to preserve the 'purity' of women by emphasising new ideas of femininity and of the woman's role within the home. The 'cult of domesticity' powered by the morals of middle-class society urged women to stay at home with their children and changed the dynamics of work and family (Welter 1966, Ariès 1962, Hareven 1991, Christensen, James & Jenks 2000). Pia Christensen, Allison James & Chris Jenks affirm that: 'The gradual centring of "the child" within "the family" meant that by the late

1800s the family was no longer regarded simply as the site for reproduction, but had taken on responsibility for socialising (civilising) "the child"' (Christensen, James & Jenks 2000: 123). This resulted in children's social dependency upon their family and their home (123).

This idea of children's dependency upon family and home is evident in the short fictional stories whereby children attribute a series of fundamental roles to the house. For example, children write that the house is the place where people satisfy their nourishment needs (e.g. DWL015-FILN, DWL009-FILN, DWL005-FILN, DWL061-JM6B); it is a patrimony (a commodity that anchors children to a territory) (e.g. DWL010-FILN, DWL002-FILN, DWL037-FM5B, DWL050-FM5B, DWL057-FM5B, DWL082-JM6B); it is the material space that gives people identification (e.g. DWL076-JM6B, DWL074-JM6B, DWL083-JV6B, DWL098-JV6B); it is the place where people receive affection and nurturance (e.g. DWL005-FILN, DWL003-FILN, DWL043-FM5B, DWL044-FM5B, DWL059-FM5B, DWL071-JM6B); it is the space responsible for children's socialisation (DWL046-FM5B, DWL038-FM5B, DWL053-FM5B, DWL060-FM5B, DWL066JM6B, DWL069-JM6B, DWL093-JV6B, DWL119-JV6B); it is a material space that reflects the economic resources of the people who inhabit it (e.g. DWL089-JV6B, DWL091-JV6B, DWL092-JV6B); it is a place that defines the people's moral values (e.g. DWL028-FM5B, DWL023-FM5B, DWL130-EDA4, DWL119-JV6B); it is the place that shields people from the dangers of the street and the public space (e.g. DWL038-FM5B, DWL045-FM5B, DWL059-FM5B); and it is the physical space that gives people a sense of identity (e.g. DWL131-EDA4, DWL134-EDA4, DWL122-JV6B, DWL124-EDA4, DWL117-JV6B, DWL106-JV6B).

This point is relevant because it is directly linked to the children's imagined geography presented in Chapter 3. In children's narratives of the city, children construct an idea of the street and the public space as hostile environments where they do not belong, and, in contrast, the house is constructed as a welcoming and safe space. The house as a welcoming and safe space for children, therefore, is intertwined not only with the narratives of the insecurity that define the street and the public spaces as hostile environments, but also with the cultural and ideological discourses that assign those said meanings and attributes to the house, and which prescribe that children belong in the house. Thus, children's conception of the city and of the home is not isolated; it is intertwined with the mesh of meanings and with the cultural and ideological constructions of home and childhood. Thence, the home as a source of identity in children's narratives about dwelling practices is not merely founded in the materiality of the house and on their social relations constructed within the house, but it is established in a society that defines the house as the archetypical haven of the family.

'Houses' are supposed to acquire the character of 'homes' since they offer and assume the environment in which the close, private and intimate family relationships are located (Bowlby, Gregory & McKie 1997, Relph 1976, Dovey 1985). In a study of environmental autobiographies

made by Louise Chawla, the most recurrent source of attachment to a remembered childhood home was its association with loved family members (Chawla 1992). She argues that during the preschool years, children associate home with loved family members, because during these years (when they are confined to the indoors or the immediate surroundings of the house and in close proximity to their parents or caretakers) their experience of home is profoundly influenced by the quality of these first social bonds (68). Peter Somerville contends that this confinement to the indoors (i.e. the domestication of children) is facilitated by the 'familialization' of children, that is, by creating an environment of domestic familiarity and privacy (Somerville 1997: 236-37). While individuals without families have homes too, a fundamental factor of the everyday understanding and cultural constructions of home is the idea of a place within which children are (or will be) raised and tied by a familiar and emotional bond, and thus, a place of origin, a place of belonging and a place to which to return.

This notion of home as a familiar place and as a place of belonging portrayed in children's fictional narratives is fundamental for the study of the relationship between the child and the city, because, in children's imagined geography, the fragmented sheltered spaces (school, work and places for leisure and consumption) and the network of roads that connect these spaces revolve around the house as a gravitational centre. That is why this idea of return portrayed in children's fictional narratives is so relevant for children's urban experience, as it establishes that in children's imagined geography it is in the house, as a point of reference and a familiar place, where children satisfy their individual needs for psychic security, physical safety/protection, identity and belonging. In this way, in children's imaginaries, they can endure those long car journeys and experience the hostile environments outside their home, because they have a 'home-base', a point of reference, a 'nest' where they can return and feel safe, sheltered, identified and where they feel they belong. In children's narratives, then, in this idea of the house as a point of reference and a place to which to return, intertwine not only children's dwelling practices, but also their personal circumstances, the personal meanings attributed to the house, and the sociocultural and ideological constructions of childhood, family and home.

Conversely, these cultural constructions of home not only influence children's understanding of home but also define their 'ideal' home. Therefore, many of the short fictional stories expose that children idealise the home as the centre of the middle-class nuclear family. Nonetheless, this idealisation of home is aspirational as it only appears in the stories when there is a (re)construction of a family. For example, the story of José is written with an emphasis on José being left alone in the world, but at the end of the story, he gets a sort of substitute family: a middle-class nuclear family. This pattern is apparent in the stories of orphanhood, death and homelessness. In these stories, children relate in detail the circumstances of the loss of the family, and then, as if by magic a surrogate family resolves the story, a middle-class nuclear family (e.g. DWL091-JV6B, DWL107-JV6B, DWL115-JV6B, DWL120-JV6B).

Several studies argue that there is a traditional ideology of home as a physical entity where a heterosexual couple, married or cohabitating, live with their children or other relatives (Bowlby, Gregory & McKie 1997, Alston 2008, Bernardes 1985). Thus, the children's constructions of home are founded in an ideology of home rather stereotypical and regressive: as the haven of the middle-class nuclear family – what Graham Allan & Graham Crow call 'the modern domestic ideal' (Allan & Crow 1989: 20). Several authors argue that this ideology encourages the reinforcement of heteronormative relations and sexuality, the dismissal of diverse household living arrangements, and the marginalisation of groups that do not naturally pertain in such settings (e.g. homeless or street children) (Allan & Crow 1989, Bowlby, Gregory & McKie 1997, Alston 2008, Bernardes 1985). However, what is relevant here is the role that ideology plays in the way children understand and imagine home.

As I argued earlier, there is an aspect of children's urban experience that is directly related to the way ideology subjectively informs and defines urban childhood. Ideology is fundamental to understand children's experience of the city and the way they make sense of their urban practices, because children's dwelling practices are not isolated actions – that is, children's dwelling practices do not just take place within the walls of their house; they are situated in a society, and thus they are intertwined in a mesh of meanings, relations and imaginaries within the complex process of social construction of the city. The traditional Mexican society in which the children that attended *The Great Book* workshops are situated, for example, propounds a rejection of non-nuclear families, and this disqualification is used as symbolic material. For instance, the once and for all 'happy ending' portrayed in the *telenovelas* in which there is a religious catholic wedding between a man and a woman, is then symbolically understood in the cultural association of the heterosexual catholic marriage as the 'ideal' of family. Hence, cultural ideas about the 'ideal' family composed by a mother, a father and children do not necessarily reflect the children's biological necessity for this kind of family, although they might originate within the context of those concerns. Here, I will not delve into the socio-political arguments regarding the development of these stereotypes and symbolic representations of family, because they exceed this work. I use this example to show that, as Lefebvre maintains, symbolic representations are not insignificant; they structure urban spaces and spatial practices, filling them with significance and meanings (Lefebvre 1991: 44).

Therefore, the reappearing plot of the child that loses his/her family and that suddenly gets a surrogate family, portrayed in many children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, may be the result of the continual reinforcement of the ideal of home and family embedded in the stories that children encounter, since the clear pattern that appears in the children's short fictional stories follow the storyline of many of well-known stories: the orphan-like figure that does not have a family or lives with a 'bad' family, but who manages to escape to a 'good and loving' alternative family at the end (e.g. *Cinderella*, *Harry Potter*, *Oliver Twist*). Ann

Alston claims that literature for children 'promotes a specific ideology; it attempts to instil in its readers certain values which dictate how families should be: loving, respectful, preferably with two parents, contained in domestic harmony and sharing wholesome homecooked family meals. Yet the relevance, function and significance of family are never brought under scrutiny' (Alston 2008: 2). The fracture provoked by the losing of family, like in the story of José or in many examples of literature for children, may drive the plot to make the stories more entertaining. The problem is that through the reproduction of these narratives of home, children understand loss, family and home at the same time that they construct their identities and inform their imaginaries of home, without asking the essential question of what constitutes family or what is 'ideal'.

As previously discussed, the influence exerted by power, control and the symbolic representations of childhood have a significant impact on children's construction of identity and, therefore, influence how they perceive, experience and imagine their urban childhoods. A child's identity, as part of a group, society or family, and informed by the symbolic representations and ideological constructions of childhood, is collective, and as a subject informed by his/her own practices, perception, corporeality and agency, is individual. Thus, a child's individual identity as the result of his/her own social relations, education, beliefs, affections, needs, experiences, and so on, is shaped primarily in the home, because, a child's relationship with the city is organised with the house as his/her point of reference. The system of children's spatial relationships is organised from home outwards. It is in the home and family, as the basic point of reference from which children construct their relationships with themselves, with others and with the world, that children first define their realities and identities.

In this way, the house as a place acts as the cohesive element of the group to which the child belongs (the group is here understood as the family and the society in which the family is situated) and as a symbol of the permanence of the group throughout time. The space of the house constitutes a referent of meaning, and it becomes a place through the mechanisms of appropriation of the child, who transforms and invests meanings into the space of the house he/she dwells in, through his/her acts, practices and by identifying himself/herself with the house, in both a collective and individual manner. Thus, a child's identity is intertwined with the house, as his/her first basic point of reference. Those meanings and attributes children confer upon the house, as a space with specific qualities and shaped by the particular circumstances and distinct practices of the family or group that dwells in it, are a fundamental part of their understanding of their personal urban realities. That is, it is in the house, as children's basic point of reference, where children not only learn (through the individual and collective meanings, the society, the spatial form and their practices) that the space outside their home is dangerous and the house is the only safe space in the city, but also that their individual and collective identity is intertwined with their families, with the society (with all that it entitles: meanings, ideology, and so on) in which their families are situated.

It is important to highlight that not only do children's practices (individual and collective) have a significant impact on children's construction of identity, but the symbolic constructions also play a fundamental role in their construction of identity, as it is through these that children primarily learn those collective meanings attributed to the house and family and the role the house and family have in the urban society. That is why the literature for children referred to earlier is significant: it informs children's practices, which eventually influence their construction of identity. Ann Alston suggests that literature for children was initiated by the middle classes as a way to educate its readers about their ideological beliefs about other classes, religion, education, and mainly, family (Alston 2008: 3). This tradition of literature for children continues to inform children about these normative ideals of family. In adhering to these social models of family, which do not reflect the variety of family life in the contemporary city,[39] literature for children proffers what Foucault calls a 'disciplinary discourse' (Foucault 1995), which serves to form children who will follow this desire, and thus, reproduce this 'ideal' family. And, as the short fictional stories show, this desire for the 'ideal' family is already assimilated by children and replicated in their narratives.

For example, in one story, a man migrates from the country to the city to find a job. He starts to work with an architect as a construction worker. When he has some money saved, he asks the architect to build him a house. Then, when he finally has a house, he gets married and has *two* children (DWL091-JV6B). In another story, the people from a neighbourhood never smile; they are always sad. A family arrives in this neighbourhood, and two boys decide to throw a party to cheer people up. The entire neighbourhood goes to the party and they all become friends. So, the two children make a lot of friends, they meet two girls, they get married and each one has *two* children (each sibling has a boy and a girl) (DWL107-JV6B). In another story, there is a new family in a building of apartments, but nobody in the building likes them, because the husband is a drunk, the wife is too scruffy, and their *many* children are spoiled and rude. Eventually, the family moves out, and a new family moves to the building: a family of a couple and *two* children. And now everyone is happy (DWL115-JV6B). And, in another story, a couple of children are orphaned and they leave their house. They live on the streets, and since they do not have any money or anything else, they start to steal from houses. They get caught and go to the reformatory. One day, the people from an orphanage take them out of the reformatory and bring them to live in the orphanage. They grow up, buy a house, get married and each one has *two* children, and they are now happy (DWL120-JV6B).

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[39] A recent study revealed that in Mexico there are eleven different household compositions categorised as follows: 11.1% single person household, 4.1% housemates, 16.8% single-mother family, 2.8% single-father family, 0.6% same-sex couple, 6.2% empty nest, 4.7% young couple without kids, 3.8% stepfamily, 9.6% extended family and 40.4% nuclear family (this classification is divided into two categories: 14.6% nuclear family with children over 12 years old and 25.8% nuclear family with children under 12 years old) (López Romo, Rodríguez & Hernández 2012). Although the percentage of traditional nuclear families remains significant (40.4%), the proportion of alternative family types is also considerable.

However, what is surprising about this desire of children for the 'ideal' family is the role the house (as a material structure) plays in the (re)construction of the family. As the story of José shows, his happiness fully relies on the construction of his house. Only after he can afford to build a stable house he is worthy of a family and happiness. This is also a reoccurring pattern in the short fictional stories. For example, in one story a house is falling apart, and only when the family can rebuild it can they be happy (DWL070-JM6B). In another story, a man moves to the city and he gets many jobs, but when he finally starts to earn good money he buys a big house, and then he gets married and has two children (DWL091-JV6B). In another story, a man wants a house, but he does not have a job or money, so he buys a lottery ticket and wins; then he meets a woman, gets married and has two children (DWL143-EDA4). Therefore, as all these stories illustrate, there is a clear correlation between the materiality of the house and this 'ideal' family.

In this sense, the house is not just the bricks and mortar; the house is associated with the idea of safety, stability and care that the 'ideal' family is thought to provide. Here it is important to highlight the fact that the house as portrayed in children's narratives is constructed within the children's imagined geography. Remember that in this imagined urban geography the street/road is constructed as a hostile environment, so it is consistent that children constructed an idea of the house as a safe shielded haven where all the dangers of the street cannot penetrate. The materiality of the house acquires significance, then, because its conception is framed not only within the cultural and ideological constructions of childhood and family, but also within the social imaginaries that construct every space that is not the home as a hostile environment.

Children's imagined urban geography originates in this devising of the house as the only safe space in the city (and the private automobile as an extension of the house). This is because the house is the initial space where children satisfy their basic needs, where they establish their stronger social bonds and affects and where they feel safe and secure from that hostile environment. The house is not just the material space, it is a place loaded with meanings and it is a space where children are confronted and contained within real and imagined spatial structures and realities.

Thus, the city is not merely the spatial form: the spaces of the city are veiled by memory, by spontaneous associations, by conscious or unconscious manoeuvres, and at the same time, the city is the space where children are confronted and contained within real and imagined spatial structures and realities. It is also a site of perception, an agent of memory, a store of meanings, a site of agency, and a place of experience. The social construction of the city is a continual process of production of space that children make in interaction with other actors and by orientating their spatial practices through the weave of meanings (the urban imaginaries) the society continually constructs and reconstructs. The image presented in Chapter 3, where children endured long car journeys through the city, is more relevant when we understand that

the house is not just a material space; it is the space where children begin to construct their social relations, where their spatial practices are determined, a depositary of meanings, their point of departure, their centre of the world.

The story of José started with home, with the unspecified house of his parents. Then, with the loss of his family, he had a journey to (re)discover his identity. He grew up, he matured. And, by the end of the story José constructs a house and a family, and thus he can return home. The story of José is pertinent because, as I have showed here, it exemplifies well this recurrent return journey that appears in many of the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops. The story of José, as many of the children's fictional narratives, uses the basic pattern of the circular journey, which follows the trajectory: home – departure from home – adventure – return home. According to Maria Nikolajeva, this pattern has its root in European Romantic philosophy and can be found in any children's text across all genres and levels (Nikolajeva 1995: 46). And, the objective of this journey is the maturation of the child (both the character and the reader). However, the return home is more of an issue of security; whatever the adversities and ordeals, the safe home is the final end (46-48). Thus, when there is a loss of family, the construction of a house is crucial because it allows the protagonist of the story to complete his/her journey by returning home.

But, for the sake of children's urban dwelling, the imagery of the construction of the house filled with an 'ideal family' as the happy conclusion allows children to materialise the fundamental dimensions of their dwelling experience. That is, in the image of the 'ideal' house children deposit their complex understanding of home as the basic space that locates them in a particular place in relation to the city, a space that offers them real and imaginary security and safety, a space that is familiar, that represents family, and that gives them identity, belonging and meaning: a house to which they believe they will gladly return every day.

Nevertheless, this house is not some isolated building merely invested with certain individual meanings; it is situated within a society that plays a role in the definition of those meanings. At the same time, all these individual, sheltered, safe, familiar spaces that represent family and that provide children with identity, belonging and meaning, configure those fragmented spaces from which each child constructs his/her world against the rest of the city. While the collective imagined urban geography portrayed in children's fictional narratives is composed of a series of fragmented sheltered spaces (home, school, work and places for leisure and consumption) connected by networks of roads that house automobile sanctuaries, in children's individual imaginaries, each child's house is the gravitational centre around which this imagined urban geography revolves. So, it is in the house where children's relationships with themselves, with others and with their environment are rooted – the house is understood as the space where children satisfy to different degrees their individual needs for psychic security, physical

safety/protection, identity and belonging according to the physical characteristics of each child's house, and his/her familiar situation, economic status and sociocultural background, and so on. Thus, the home, as the place where children begin to negotiate their spatial and social realities and where their initial efforts to define their personal identities take place, is the root of children's perception and experience of the city. While the house is collectively defined by the society within which it is situated, as the centre of children's urban universe as defined by the physical qualities of the house (the characteristics of the place in which the house is located, the particular features of the house, etc.), the socioeconomic status of the household and the sociocultural background of the family, among other specific particular circumstances, as well as by the child's perception of urban space, the symbolic meanings attached to it and the associated everyday use of space, the house is also individual. Consequently, since it is in this individual understanding of the house (informed and influenced by a series of collective meanings) in which children's relationships with the city are grounded, children's perceptions and experiences of the city are individual, partial and intimate.

The experience of home: A first-person narrative

In the previous section, the analysis of the children's short fictional stories about dwelling practices showed that a child's relationship with the city is rooted in his/her personal relationship with the house and in the meanings he/she invests in it. Therefore, for children localised in a particular place in relation to the city, the dwelling experience, like the urban experience, comprises not only the physical reality, but it also involves children's own bodies and emotions – that is, it involves their engagement with the environment at the levels of perception, corporeality and agency.

In this section, I will explore the role that perception, corporeality and agency plays in the construction of children's narratives of home. My aim here is to note that the personal circumstances of children define the way they perceive, experience and imagine home. I maintain that children's narratives of home, while children are not speaking directly about themselves, are written from the first-person perspective, that is, from the partial, individual, personal and intimate viewpoint of each child according to his/her particular dwelling conditions and experiences. I focus my attention on the narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops by the orphan children because, unlike the stories analysed in the previous section and the rest of the children's fictional narratives about dwelling practices (which reflected the idea of home as a source of safety and nurturance), the fictional narratives by the orphan children represent the house as a source of anxiety. This patent distinction allows me to convey a clearer argument regarding the fundamental role that perception, corporeality and agency play in

children's dwelling and urban experience.

Now it is essential to clarify that many of the themes revealed in the short fictional stories written by the orphan children that I discuss here could be interpreted with a psychoanalytical lens. Let us remember that my approach to children's narratives, as outlined in Chapter 1, is based on the principles of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT): a projective psychological test in which a child tells/writes a story when given ambiguous stimuli (in this case, a writing prompt). The principles of the TAT propose that the stories children compose convey their construction of reality, thus uncovering underlying concerns, motives, and the way in which they see and understand the world (Bellak 1954, Holt 1951, Stein 1955, Shneidman 1951). Albeit, I do not intend to establish that this study can (or should) be appraised against the TAT, the 'apperception' element of the TAT (that is, the projective element) means that children responded to ambiguous stimuli (the writing prompt) and, therefore, exposed their hidden emotions and inner conflicts regarding their dwelling experience onto their stories. Given the characteristics of the selected group (orphan children) and theme (dwelling), unlike the majority of children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, within the narratives written by the orphan children many profound psychological traumas surfaced. Nevertheless, I will not delve into a psychoanalytic reading of the stories, because it is not the aim of this work to use children's short fictional stories to explore children's personal anxieties or psychological traumas, rather to access children's subjective aspect of urban experience. The traumatic themes, and the significance of perception, corporeality and agency, then, are analysed here with the same narrative approach I used throughout this work and with the aim of understanding how these are significant for the construction of children's urban experience.

During *The Great Book* workshops one of the first activities was to give children the chance to share (with the help of drawings – for some examples of the produced drawings, see *Children's drawings* – Appendix 12) their dwelling practices.[40] This activity, besides preparing the ground for the story writing, was deliberately planned to show children that there are different ways of dwelling,[41] that is, to make children aware of the subjective aspect of the dwelling experience. There was a particular group of children in one of the workshops that is worth mentioning; they came together from the same orphanage, and the fortuitous chosen theme for the workshop was 'dwelling'. After I told the fictional story of *The Great Book* to this singular group of children, I prompted the activity in which some of the children narrated in turns, while drawing, their dwelling practices.

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[40] This activity was done according to the selected theme for each workshop. In some workshops children shared their dwelling practices, while in others they shared their practices of moving and in others they shared their playing practices. The three themes: moving, playing and dwelling, were randomly selected according to a predetermined alternation in the workshops' schedules.

[41] Or moving or playing, depending on the theme of the workshop.

When the activity started, one boy drew, described and related in detail to the rest of the group his house (the orphanage), his (shared) room and his favourite place in the orphanage, and then he told a story of the time he had locked himself on the rooftop of the orphanage. After he finished narrating his experience, I invited the rest of the group to share their own dwelling practices, but nobody wanted to participate. Puzzled by the children's unwillingness to partake in the activity, since this activity was popular among children in the other workshops, I insisted. Finally, they revealed that they all lived in the same (institutionalised) house, and thus their rooms were identical (or the same), so they assumed there was nothing left that could contribute to the discussion.

Lefebvre's representational spaces become more relevant when we consider that group of children. These children unquestionably inhabited the same house, they (arguably) had identical rooms, and they probably even had matching beds. They all possibly ate the same food every day and had uniformed clothes. But, Lefebvre understands space as being both material and imagined. This means that space is not only the physicality of the orphanage; it is also the imaginary constructions children create about their material realities to make their individual experience meaningful to them. Hence, children's experience of their material dwelling is directly linked to memory and articulated through intimate sites. So, if we did not consider the children's personal needs, bodies, desires, capacities, points of view, ideas, knowledge, emotions, feelings, memories, aspirations and fears, their dwelling experiences would positively be the same. While these children believed that their dwelling experiences were alike because of their similar material realities, as their stories later showed, their experiences were in fact distinctive and personal.

Hence, the dwelling experience, like the experience of the city, comprises not only the physical reality; it also involves children's own bodies, that is, it involves children's own perception, corporeality and agency. In fact, our first encounter with the urban environment is given through perception. Perception is the mechanism that allows children to transform what they receive from the urban environment through their senses into an organised and coherent experience (Rapoport 1977). As explained earlier, children as a social group share cognitive and developmental factors that influence to the same degree[42] their perception of the urban environment. For example, during the course of life there is a definite quantifiable physical deterioration in sensitivity to taste, to smells, to colour and to sound, so, children have a 'capacity for vivid sensory experience' that adults do not have (Ward 1978: 22). Scale also plays a significant role in the way they experience the world. Moreover, children's perception of the environment is more indiscriminate than that of adults because they are short of appreciation, which means that they have less reference points to associate with their experiences (Tuan 1977).

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[42] This, of course, applies according to the different stages of development and under normal circumstances, and it has obvious exceptions: children with disabilities, for instance.

Children also lack social awareness; thus their perception is not affected by social considerations (Ward 1978: 22-23).

There are other shared aspects during the different stages of development that define children's perception of their urban experience, like the topological relationships in which the child is situated (i.e. proximity, separation, order or spatial succession, enclosure or surrounding, and continuity), their comprehension of 'projective space' (when children understand and are 'able to operate successfully amongst a series of known relationships and sequence of objects and situations') and their grasp of Euclidean space (when children 'can conceive of spatial relations in the abstract') (24).

Nonetheless, each child has a biased perception of the objective urban reality since this reality is determined by the child's own cultural values, experience, history, aspirations, adaptation level, and so on – namely, a series of characteristics that drive the child to create his/her own universe that is organised in a concentric manner around himself/herself, and that has an immediate space which is the environment he/she inhabits, a space constructed with personal and direct information.

As I argued at the beginning of this work, the child (as a subject and as an actor) with his/her agency and subjectivity plays a paramount role in the social construction of urban space. This means that urban society is continuously constructed and reconstructed by the subjects. The child (as a subject) and his/her actions have a direct relation, that is, the child is not just a mere human being, but a person that *acts* (Di Méo & Buléon 2005: 29) – that is, children are here understood as social actors and active agents, which contrasts with former conceptions, which saw children as passive recipients and voiceless objects of concern who are reliant on adult control and care. Thus, the child (as a subject and as an actor) can transform his/her reality. At the same time, the child (as a social subject) is a spatial subject, that is, an embodied individual situated in a place, standing in an urban setting. An understanding of a spatial subject refers, for instance, to the discussion established in the previous section in which the child has a spatial (namely, territorial, physical, ideological and psychological) point of reference in which his/her understanding of the world is determined. But, according to Alfred Schutz, this spatialised existence of the child (as a subject) is, in first instance, centred on himself/herself, around his/her body, as he writes:

> The place which my body occupies within the world, my actual Here, is the starting point from which I take my bearing in space. It is, so to speak, the center 0 of my system of coordinates. Relatively to my body I group the elements of my surroundings under the categories of right and left, before and behind, above and below, near and far, and so on. And in a similar way my actual Now is the origin of all the time perspectives under which I organize the events within the world such as the categories of fore and after, past and future, simultaneity and succession, etc. (Schutz 1945: 545)

Thus, the corporeality and emotionality of the child (as a subject) are fundamental for the understanding of the relationship between the child and the city, because the city has an inescapable spatial dimension that not only involves its spatial form (the materiality of the city), but that also involves the spatial experience of the subject – remember that, as I have reiterated, the social construction of the city is produced by the correlations between the subject, the spatial practices, the society, the spatial form and the meanings. In this way, every spatial practice is possible and concretised through the inherent corporeality and mobility of the subject. In this conception of the spatial practices, then, the corporeality is not only constitutive of the child (as an actor) (and in consequence of his/her practices), it is also a form of spatiality. In this way, in the idea of the child as a situated subject, standing in an urban setting, the first eminent spatial dimension is corporeal.

Hence, while the orphan children inhabited the same space, their different circumstances, desires, competences, knowledge, points of view, and so on, influence the way they perceive that same space. That is, their perception of the materiality of their common dwelling space is biased, and thus their dwelling practices are influenced by this partial perception. So, once I explained to them how dwelling experiences can be different according to likings, to capacities, to wishes, etc., they all started to share their individual experiences. And, as one might imagine, their stories were so diverse that the similarities faded rapidly. Consequently, despite their material similar realities, none of the children told the same spatial story. Their own point of view regarding their dwelling practices resulted in a diversity of stories about the same physical space: the orphanage. All these different stories together intertwining, contrasting, coexisting, and feeding each other crowded the workshop. Those individual stories helped them (and me) to understand what at the beginning of the workshop was so elusive: that our subjective perception of the world plays a significant role in our dwelling (and urban) experience.

It is relevant here to remember that children's urban imaginaries are at the same time individual and collective. Their collective urban imaginaries form part of the social city in which they are situated, as children who share certain conditions, age, gender, competences, cognitive and developmental factors, spatial practices, geography, roles, boundaries, regulations, and so on, within the same sociocultural and ideological environment. Children, both as one great-undifferentiated group (as distinct from adults) and as specific groups that share certain circumstances or conditions, produce similar imaginaries. And, at the same time, there is an aspect of children's experiences that is not shared, that is partial, individual, personal and intimate. Therefore, while every child's relationship with the city consists of shared real and imaginary elements, it also has a personal element that is constructed from each child's specific point of view, a point of view that is constructed, as said earlier, in a concentric manner around himself/herself and informed by his/her particular circumstances, beliefs, desires, competences, needs, affectivity, emotions, corporeality and so on. Thus, the way children establish their

relationships with themselves, with others and with the urban environment is not uniform, and it is expected that the way they live, internalise, perceive, experience and imagine the city can be equally distinct. Not every child that experiences the same urban space or makes the same spatial practices can tell the same spatial story, as not two children could live the same urban experience.

This is important because in the city as a book, all these individual and collective narratives intertwine, feeding each other. That is, both children's individual and collective imaginaries form part of the urban mesh of narratives that inform, intertwine, contrast, coexist and feed each other. Children (as individuals and as a group) take from this mesh of narratives what they need to complement and compose their own spatial stories, their own city, and thus, their own urban experience – an urban experience that is meaningful to each child.

For example, during that said workshop activity, every child told a distinct spatial story. One boy told how much he hated his bed because of its location: the sunlight faced him directly in the morning, and thus it woke him earlier than he wanted and needed to. Another boy recounted that he had found an automobile magazine under the bed of another boy who had already left the orphanage, and that he now keeps it hidden under his own bed, and that he reads it every day before bed. A girl said that she loved to live in the orphanage, given that in the previous house she lived in she was always cold and there was not enough food, but in the orphanage she mentioned she had 'the warmest blanket and delicious food every day'. Yet, another girl told the orphanage was the 'worst place to live in', since as soon as she arrived there with her younger brother, he was transferred to another orphanage and she cannot see him any longer.

While material realities have an effect on children's dwelling experiences (i.e. the geographical location of the window in relation to the bed of the boy indeed shaped the way he perceived his sleeping, the same way to having or lacking a shelter could define a child's dwelling experience), it is also true that what defines their dwelling experiences is the way children process those material realities through their individual filters of information – the 'warmness' of a blanket is defined not by accurate weather measurements, but by a personal referent, for example. It is only through that process that those realities acquire personal meaning, because children's perception not only involves their spatialised existence and the sensory qualities of space, but also their interior existence with its affective and emotional traits.

Therefore, in the acting process (let us say, in the world of making or doing), the spatial practices are always tinted with meanings, emotions and affectivity. Accordingly, meanings are important because they express the intentionality, the goals, the ways of solving everyday problems and the formulas and recipes of common sense with which children project themselves from one instant into the next instant that has not happened yet. However, the meanings not only advance on what children have not done or on what has not happened yet but which they have envisaged; the meanings also bring the past into the present and they actualise it by re-enacting in the present

what was learned in the past. All of this is part of what happens every instant in the urban spaces.

Thus, the making of a spatial practice in a determined place can provoke in the child an affective or emotional response due to a series of circumstances. For example, as a response to pleasant memories of a place or a practice, as a response to a memory of an enjoyable event that happened in a given place, as a response to a child's fear, as a response to a painful memory associated with a place or a practice, as a response to a feeling of insecurity provoked by being in a given place, etc. These affective and emotional components are not only articulated in the making of a practice, but they can also propel the child towards making other practices.

As Joan Nogué writes, children's everyday life is 'in essence and simultaneously, spatial and emotional' (Nogué 2015: 141, own translation). That is, children interact continually and emotionally with spaces and places, which they invest with meanings that eventually return to them through the emotions these spaces elicit. Thus, both the individual and collective memory, along with the imagination, are spatial more than temporal. Children experience specific emotions in different urban places and spaces and by making different practices – thus, the everyday spaces in which children make their everyday practices are permeated with emotion and affectivity. Hence, children emotionally experience these places and spaces, because these are not mere bricks and mortar; they are sociocultural constructions saturated with a dense intangible content that is often only accessible through the universe of emotions. In this way, children's urban experience is not so much supported by a material experience as it is by the autobiographic experience, namely, by a mesh of meanings that articulate children's individual and collective memory.

Therefore, to understand children's perception of their dwelling experiences, we ought to take into account that the house is entwined in a meaningful structure, that is, the experience of home entails the spatial, social, emotional and temporal senses. As Proust related in the famous scene of the madeleine in *Swann's Way*, the perception of an object recalls an entire life history (Proust 1992: 60-65). In this way, the spontaneous memories invoked in the time-delay between the girl and her blanket, for example, informed the girl's experience of the orphanage. And, in this sense, memory plays a significant role in children's dwelling (and urban) experience. As the image of the girl with her blanket shows, memory is not a straightforward record of events or biography, children's remembrances are assembled in the creative process of memory.

Thus, the analysis of the spatial practices and the meanings I made so far is incomplete if we do not consider those emotions and affectivity that permeate children's everyday urban practices. Every spatial practice the child makes (as an embodied subject) is tinted with feelings and affection and produces in them emotions of diverse nature. The affectivity is not only connected with the spatial practices; it usually also entails affections associated with the space in which the practices are made. For example, the children from the orphanage constructed their real life stories of their dwelling experiences from their memories of loss. They were aware the orphanage

was not their home but an institution that had some material qualities of a house but lacked any sense of 'home' – home as notion associated with family. Their real life stories revealed that they lost their houses when they lost their families, and with that they lost their sense of safety. And, like in those examples, their short fictional stories reveal that their imaginaries of home are defined by the same sense of loss:

> Juan was a very naughty boy. One day he was playing in the stairway [of his building] and he fell down. His mother loudly crying took him to the hospital, but he died. And his mother due to her sadness killed herself. And the building was abandoned. (DWL006-FILN, short fictional story written by a ten-year-old boy from the orphanage)

> [The two boys] were left alone, their parents were dead, and they were adopted because they didn't have any family left. They didn't eat; they were really skinny, because their parents abandoned them [when] they died. […] And when they saw the house where the whole family used to live and they reminisced, they felt sad and started to cry. (DWL009-FILN, short fictional story written by a girl from the orphanage)

> Once upon a time there was a house where there were only children. Their parents had died. [The children] were an older sister and two younger brothers. And, since they had very little money, they didn't have much food. One day, people started to donate money [to them] and with that [money] they bought food and water. But, one day, people got tired and stopped giving them money. And the children were left without any money and food. (DWL015-FILN, short fictional story written by an eight-year-old boy from the orphanage)

> Once upon a time there was girl who was poor and ate very little. A man saw her and felt so sad that he decided to help her. He was married. So he gave the girl a mum, [sisters], and many things. She moved to live with them, but then her dad died. Her mum was poor and her sisters were mean. So, she decided to go and live in a cave. The cave was really pretty. She took all of her material possessions: clothes, blankets, bedspreads, and she ran away to the cave, and she never came back [to her mum and sisters]. She felt very lonely, like a lone star. And, when she died she became a star. She was happy. [Her dad was with her] and she embraced him tightly. (DWL005-FILN, short fictional story written by a nine-year-old girl from the orphanage)

These fragments reinforce this association of dwelling and loss. The grim character of these and of most of the short fictional stories produced within this specific workshop is not present in any of the stories produced in the other workshops. This divergence reveals that the complex personal realities that involve the memories of losing a family are directly linked to the notion of the house. In the story of Juan, after all the death, a whole building is abandoned. In the story of the two boys, to see the house where their family used to live triggers an utterly emotional reaction. In the story of the three siblings their lack of parents leaves them in a position of sheer poverty and deprivation. And, in the story of the girl, the loss of two families drives her to live in total reclusion and isolation for the rest of her life.

Accordingly, the home (like the urban environment) is nothing taken in and of itself; rather it is related to an accumulated set of experiences. As children living in an orphanage we presume

that the children who wrote these stories experienced the loss of a home and of some sort of family. And, it is evident that their imaginaries of the house are permeated by these personal circumstances, as there is a constant (implicit and explicit) reference to the idea of abandonment. Their short fictional stories confirm what I discussed in the previous section, that for children home is intrinsically connected to the idea of family. However, unlike the stories analysed in the previous section that reflected the idea that home is a source of safety, the narratives written by the children from the orphanage illustrate the house as a source of anxiety. In these stories there is no happy ending, their narratives are fashioned by a sense of instability, they invest in the image of the house their complex relationships of dwelling, and the house thus is the image of loss: of a family, of their source of identity and of their sense of security and safety.

Thus, as we can see in the said children's short fictional stories, the spatial practices are not only defined by the spatial form (the materiality of the house) but also by emotion. In this way, the affective and emotional components are not only articulated in a spatial practice; they also happen in the emotional states that urge children to embark upon other practices. Moreover, those affective and emotional components (that emerge in the particular and concrete practices) are connected with the socially constructed meanings (the urban imaginaries) that regulate, orientate and colonise (Lindón 2008a) the practices and emotional states. So, the spatial practices, the meanings, the emotions and the affectivity integrate a complex mesh that is extended throughout the experience, and within which the biography of each child is developed.

Therefore, the subject is not only corporeality, but also emotion. To approach the relationship between the child and the city, we must explore the spatial practices, the meanings, the affectivity and emotions that children put into play in their everyday. Nonetheless, the spatial practices children make are never isolated actions. Children's everyday practices are intertwined in sequences of practices, orientated to achieve something. And, at the same time, the everyday practices of one child are linked to the practices of another subject. For example, the reading activity of the boy who found an automobile magazine in the orphanage is linked to the misplacing of the other boy, and at the same time, their dwelling activities were intertwined in the same material space for a moment. However, eventually, the boy who left the orphanage is now linked to other subjects in other spaces and in another time. Thus, the social construction of urban space is developed in a permanent, fragmented, and at the same time, connected way, in those intertwined practices of diverse children and subjects that converge for instants in certain places and in a certain time, which then separate and establish new spatiotemporal convergences with other subjects and in other places.

The social construction of space is fragmented because in each place and in each instant takes place singular phenomena, with a life of their own, that mark distinct urban narratives. Simultaneously, these everyday practices form a mesh because the children inhabiting this

orphanage are related to other distant subjects and places, which nevertheless can influence them in their practices. For instance, as I stated in the previous section, the parental home (or the first home of the child), is the point of reference for all the subsequent forms of dwelling, as it remains inscribed in the structure of the human experience throughout life. Thus, the parental home (or any previous home of the child) is not merely a distant place: as the stories show it is present in children's narratives and it inhabits their wishes and their fears.

Nonetheless, to select and articulate their short fictional stories about dwelling practices, without realising it, children make use of a mesh formed by other subjects, spaces, practices and meanings, and at the same time they form part of that endless mesh of urban narratives that define the socially constructed city. These convergences of diverse children and subjects in a fragment of space and time allows the configuration of spatiotemporal bubbles that, at the level of the everyday, set in motion the urban life and the city itself. However, the analysis of these bubbles would be only partial if we did not consider that not only at play in the practices are the corporeality and the meanings, but that they also have an emotional charge.

It is important to highlight here that children's short fictional stories, given their essence as a projective tool, allow us to capture the practices, the meanings and this emotional charge. Hence, as each child wrote a short fictional story of a given ambiguous prompt about dwelling, he/she projected onto that story his/her own needs, motives, beliefs, wishes and anxieties regarding home. And, although each child believed that he/she was telling a story in the third person, in fact, he/she was narrating his/her own story.

The relation of this emotional aspect with children's everyday practices and with the dwelling spaces is evident in the persistent references to food that appear in the three latter cited short fictional stories and in the real life stories that the children from the orphanage narrated. While in the real life stories the definition of what makes the house a good or a bad place was frequently associated with the abundance or absence of food, in all the short fictional stories it appears that one vital consequence of children's abandonment is their malnourishment. In her book about the study of food, Carole M. Counihan argues that food is a source of love, power, socialisation and connection between parents and children (Counihan 1999: 22). Counihan even claims that, 'the withdrawal of food can symbolize the withdrawal of love' (143). The deprivation portrayed in the stories is not (only) speaking about food per se; it (also) suggests children's powerlessness towards their dwelling conditions, their sense of insecurity and their lack of attachment, nurture and affection.

Furthermore, in her chapter devoted to children's fictional stories about food, Counihan states that children's imaginaries of food are reliant both on the attitudes and presence of the parental figures, and on children's personal relationship with food (151-55). That is, given that food serves as a connection between parents and children, the absence of food represents the disruption of

the bond that ties children with the person that satisfies their emotional and physical needs. Thus, the particular and powerful constructions of home as a place of scarcity are only possible for children who experienced a consistent physical and/or emotional deprivation in their own lives.

However powerful this image of deprived children is, I am not interested in the psychoanalytical aspects of children's abandonment; the relevance of this example lies in the way that emotion is intertwined with children's practices and spaces. In this sense, the material space of the house is permeated through experience. According to Antoine Bailly, the diversity of lived spaces, the superposition of perceptions, and the capacity to symbolise are directly linked to emotional processes, thus transforming the house into a depositary of meanings (Bailly 1993). Thereby, the house is not only conceived in terms of its physicality, form and movements, but also in terms of the memories and emotions associated with the spatial space and the spatial practices of the child. Therefore, when we address the experience of home, we ought to consider children's subjectivity, because the relationships, emotions, feelings and memories that children establish with their house constitute children's identity. Home, thus, is a complex and indistinct concept that includes memories, images, wishes, fears, past and present; it entails a combination of rituals, personal rhythms and everyday routines; and at the same time, it constitutes the reflection of the child as dweller, of his/her dreams, hopes, tragedies and memories.

Children dwell a place (e.g. their house) in a concrete space and time; they dwell in a portion of the surface of the Earth of diverse dimensions and scale. Some are minuscule and apparently insignificant in size and everyday nature: their bedroom, their house, a rooftop, the hiding place in their house. This hiding place, for example, as many of the negligible parts of the city, may turn into places filled with meanings that incarnate the experience and aspirations of each child, and that evoke each child's memories and express his/her diverse thoughts, ideas and emotions. In this way, the urban space is not merely a geographic space; it is above all an experiential space, formed by the places whose materiality is tinted by the immaterial and intangible elements that turn every place, through each child's practices and meanings, into something unique and non-transferable. Therefore, the places are the marks that structure, bring together and invest with meaning the geographic space. Places are not simple geographical localisations, easily identifiable on a map through a system of coordinates that specify its longitude and latitude. Place offers an important means through which children give meaning to their urban world and through which they act in the world. In this way, children create places in space and they live them day by day by imbuing them with meanings. These places become ingrained in children, at the same time that children feel they are part of these places. Places, thus, on any scale, are essential for children's emotional stability because they act as a bond, as a point of contact and interaction between the social phenomena and the individual experience. In this way, the geographic space is, in essence, an existential space, an immense and tight mesh of representational spaces, all them distinct.

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Conversely, the sense of loss and the anxiety portrayed in the stated short fictional stories, despite being attached to the children's memories and perception of home, rather than associated with something negative only, is insistently creative and empowering. I said that in these stories there is no happy ending; however, the narrative itself offers children a medium to articulate, (re)configure and (re)construct the spatial form of the house and their everyday practices. And, in this way, narratives and the imaginaries of home constitute a form of agency.

As I said at the beginning of this section, children's agency has a significant role in the social construction of space, because as a person that acts, the child can (re)configure and (re)construct his/her reality. Agency is generally defined as the capacity of children (or any individual) to act in any given environment. Within the literature of children's geographies, children's agency is often conceptualised as a form of resistance to the dominant structures of power (Jeffrey 2012, Emirbayer & Mische 1998). Nevertheless, as Amos Rapoport writes, 'clearly people's knowledge of the city is due to movement through it, action and behaviour in it and involvement with it' (Rapoport 1977: 374). For this reason, when I say that children engage with home (and the urban environment) at the level of agency, I literally mean that children can act in their dwelling (and the urban environment), which does not equate to autonomy (understood as children's freedom of action); that is, that they are active actors regardless of the position in which they stand and indifferent to the complex material, conceptual and cultural boundaries they are subjected to.

However, children's ability to act, and to (re)configure and (re)construct their urban reality is defined by the precise necessities of children, as individuals and/or as a collective group, and their particular limitations. For example, the acts of resistance of children living within residential care homes in Scotland regarding their food is only possible and relevant within those specific circumstances (McIntosh et al. 2010). I concede that children as a collective group share similar limitations and circumstances, actually, I rely on those for our study of children's narratives of the city, yet I admit that the many forms of inhabiting and being in the city result in varied forms of agency. I understand children's agency not only as the intentional and driven action, but also as their capacity to project, wish, empower and act creatively.

It is important to stress that children's capacity to act creatively is tangled with a tendency to repeat, to reiterate the established, almost always rooted through the instauration of patterns of the quotidian behaviour (Juan 1995). However, to think and approach the spatial practices, we must also consider that children's agency goes hand in hand with their corporeality – namely, the child's potential to act is not only the result of his/her interior world and of a world of meanings and orientations through and shared with others, as well as a world of individual and collective memory and fantasies, but it is also the result of the child's corporeality that allows the making of the practices. Therefore, while each child's agency is intertwined in a social mesh that may influence his/her actions, these actions have an intentionality that is directly related to

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his/her corporeality and emotions. For example, in the story of the girl that loses two families, the girl decides to run away from home. While the 'running away' may be interpreted as a common response from a girl with complicated familial issues – that is, her actions are entangled with certain social patterns – her actions are possible because of her capacity to move and to take decisions and as driven by her dissatisfaction and lack of love. Her actions are directly related to her own body and emotions. And despite the disheartening outcome of the story, her running away allows her to reconfigure and reconstruct her spatial reality and spatial practices.

Children's dwelling experience is not only determined by their actions and the material space (the city as it is, the life as lived), but also, as they imagine their practices and the material space (the city as they imagine to be, the life as experienced) and as they wish their material space and their practices would be (the city as they wish it to be). Agency, as a way to (re)configure and (re)construct along with the imagination, allows them to project a different dwelling reality, with a world of possibilities, that nevertheless is intertwined with each child's goals, intentionality, the ways of solving everyday problems and the formulas and recipes of common sense, necessities, fears and anxieties. In this way, children process and articulate the fulfilment of their needs not only in consonance with their individual conditions, but also with their adequacy and deficiency, and with their wishes, desires and hopes. In this sense, the capacity of children's agency to project, wish, empower and act creatively goes hand in hand with the imagination. Gaston Bachelard states that 'imagination augments the values of reality' (Bachelard 1994: 3) and he elicits the importance of imagination in relation to the experience of place when he writes: 'the sheltered being gives perceptible limits to his shelter' (5).

For instance, the house is the quintessential place where children satisfy their basic needs: shelter, food, clothing, safety, stability and care. And, certainly, that satisfaction can be facilitated by the design of the house, the household resources, the household composition and stability, and the ways of inhabiting. However, imagination is capable of building walls with intangible elements like shadows, and that same imagination allows children to feel protected within those 'walls' made of shadows. So, as Bachelard insinuates, imagination also can turn physically solid walls into fragile and vulnerable ones, making children feel unprotected within those walls. The short fictional stories written by the children from the orphanage reinforce Bachelard's argument. For them, unlike most of the rest of the short fictional stories constructed within *The Great Book* workshops, the house is not a safe place. Within those walls made of words, children appear hopeless, unloved, discarded and insecure.

This is well exemplified in the story of the girl that loses two families. In this story, the house is actually never mentioned. Instead, her dwelling is defined by family, nourishment and material possessions. And, when she loses her (adoptive) father, her source of love and nurturing, she decides to go and live in a cave in complete solitude leaving behind her (adoptive) family and

every bad thing they represented. This example shows what imagination can produce. Not only does the girl imagine the house as an insecure space despite its material qualities, and, thus directly linked to her practices and emotions, but she also imagines the space where she could feel secure as a response to that instability and her feelings of discontent regarding her dwelling experience.

Hence, what imagination can produce is directly linked to each child's own perception, his/her particular corporeality and his/her ability to (re)act. Therefore, the short fictional stories about the dwelling practices, despite their similar patterns, always pertain to the child's own subjective relationship with the materiality of the house, not as an undifferentiated materiality, nor as a house in itself, but as a relationship between the child's body, the spatial form of the house, his/her spatial practices, his/her particular meanings and the mesh composed of social meanings, of other subjects and other spatial practices in other spaces and in another time. Thus, the child does not just accept the house – that is, the house is not just a material building in which the child automatically functions. Rather, through his/her dwelling practices and through his/her perception, corporeality and agency, he/she maintains an openness to the mesh of urban narratives, while he/she continually (re)configures and (re)constructs his/her dwelling experience – that is, the child creates his/her own personal home and his/her dwelling practices to some extent according to his/her perception, corporeality and agency. Therefore, children's short fictional stories (as narratives) do not represent the house (or the city); they (re)present perception and experience – namely, each story (re)presents each child's partial perception of home (and of the city), his/her partial perception, his/her distinct corporeality and his/her personal form of agency.

'My house is a city' – Final remarks

> The house was so big that the city could fit in it. [In the house] lived the mum Gela, the dad Jorge, their brothers and their sisters, the grandparents, their children, etc.
> Every morning they all woke up at the same time. The children went to school, which was in the house. The parents and their siblings went to their jobs, which were also in the house. The house was so big, much more than normal. So, the first day, the children couldn't find their parents, neither they could find the front door. But, [when they found the door] the children went outside the house [to look for their parents] and they couldn't find them in the garden either because it was so big. […]
> Then, the children came back into the house and found a super extra big bedroom that looked almost like a castle, and it was their bedroom. Afterwards, they found their grandparents that were lost for a while. (DWL012-FILN)

In the previous chapters, I examined the play spaces and the street as places where children confront their identities with their real and imagined spatial and social realities. Nevertheless, in this chapter, I showed that it is in the house where children begin to negotiate their spatial and social realities, where their first attempts to define their personal identities take place, and where

they learn to communicate their urban realities and identities. I also showed that as children localised in a particular place in relation to the city, the dwelling experience (as the urban experience) is partial, individual, personal and intimate because it includes not only the physical reality; it also involves children's own bodies – that is, it comprises children's engagement with the house (and with the environment) at the levels of perception, corporeality and agency. The short fictional story at the opening of this section was written in one of *The Great Book* workshops and it is titled: 'My house is a city'. This story serves to conclude this chapter about children's dwelling practices as it rounds off this idea of the house as the place where children's relationships with the city are encapsulated.

In the story, the house, like the city, is so big that children never fully come to know it all. The urban experience, like the dwelling experience, is not a rational event. As the story insinuates, the physical city is by itself so complex and so vast that children come to know it only in a fragmentary and partial manner. It is impossible for children to have a complete notion of the patchwork of city areas, neighbourhoods, forms of dwelling, practices and experiences of the city. However, children, like any other citizen, need to know what happens in the city to move around, and they need to understand their place within it. Thus, to do so, like in the story, children travel around the house (alias the city) (independently or not); they observe it, they communicate with other children and people, and they gather information from different sources. Nevertheless, all this material is fragmented and limited. Each child takes information from here and there, not only from the known information and sources but also from the many imaginaries the city produces. Each child also creates its 'own city' by arbitrarily choosing bits and pieces from the multiplicity of fragments the environment proffers.

As the narratives of the dwelling practices I studied in this chapter exhibit, children's dwelling experience, like the urban experience, is not logical; it does not coincide with any rational measurements or data. By this means, urban experience is exposed to chance, instead of certainty. Urban space is a place of change (mostly in its meanings, rather than exclusively in its form), and it is the place where fortuitous encounters with strangers happen. Its meanings are nourished by the transitory colonisation that one or another practice undertakes, which becomes more changeable the busier, the more crowded and more indeterminate the place is. And this uncertainty and continual change are almost impossible to map. As said before, the city cannot be represented, let alone travelled, in a neutral way. The city's geography itself affects, alters and informs places, possibilities and potentials for the constructions of 'situations' (McDonough 2002). It is then as a sort of counter-narrative, with endless possibilities whereby each individual must take diverse routes through the city and overcome the obstructions the city proffers. Hence, as Tom McDonough asserts: 'the city is only experienced in time by a concrete, situated subject,

as a passage from one "unity of atmosphere"[43] to another, not as the object of a totalized perception' (McDonough 2002: 246, 248).

In this way, children travel from one space to another without grasping how these city fragments interconnect or how these fragments by themselves could offer an illusion of the city as a totality. The story at the beginning summarises this idea. Children move from room to room without realising how they all relate or how these rooms by themselves offer them an illusion of the house as a whole. In this way, there is an aspect of the urban environment that children do not know or do not (fully) understand, and, in this way, imaginaries complement, supplement and occupy the fractures or gaps in what children (can) actually know or understand about the city (Lindón 2007a: 89-91). That is, the imagination has a key constructive purpose that allows children to experience the city and make sense of the urban environment. It is through their imagination that children are able to decipher their home (and their urban environment) and effectively negotiate the material, cultural, conceptual and moral boundaries that they are subjected to. This means that the house as both social and material space is actively constructed (rather than passively experienced), as children do not merely perceive it: they negotiate the reality of home through their imagination.

This same process happens in children's urban experience. Since they cannot have an omnipresent or absolute perception and experience of the whole city, they supplement the information that is missing by using the experiential information they have and according to their particular circumstances, and filling it with the information they gather from many different sources, with their own ideas, their desires, their fears, and so on. Thence, each child constructs his/her idea of the city with his/her own fragments, his/her own narratives, making his/her own connections, rearranging the pieces to his/her own references, and highlighting what is important to each of them, and then each child reconstructs it in his/her imagination in a fragmented, spontaneous and discontinuous way, and ultimately portraying it in their short fictional stories.

This relates directly to Lefebvre's representational spaces and de Certeau's spatial stories. Accordingly, the house, like the physical city, is articulated in children's imagination through symbols, language and meanings. That is, the house (and the city), is (re)constructed from a sum of urban fragments that are lived, perceived, sensed, valued and imagined by children. These personal narratives, the spatial stories, shape the way children perceive, experience and imagine home, and the urban environment. Thus, as I have reiterated, home is not only the material construction; home is a site of perception, an agent of memory, a site of agency, a store of meanings and a place of experience.

As the short fictional stories about dwelling showed, in this fragmented experience of the city, the

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[43] *The Naked City* map is a fragmented map, and it has a different 'unity of atmosphere' (as Debord calls it) for each fragment.

house plays a significant role in children's partial perception, not as a mere fragment of the patchwork that conforms to each child's city, but rather as a physical, ideological and psychological point of reference. What the narratives of dwelling also indicated is that a child's experience of home is not unequivocal. That is, each child defines his/her own city according to his/her own relationship with the house and the meanings he/she invests in it. The significance of the short fictional story stated at the beginning of this section is that it summarises what I discussed throughout this chapter. Children's narratives of their dwelling practices revealed that children's relationships with the city are rooted in their personal relationship with the house and in the meanings they invest in it. Accordingly, as children situated in a particular place in relation to the city, the dwelling experience, like the urban experience, is partial, individual, personal and intimate since it encompasses not only the material reality, but also involves children's own bodies at the levels of perception, corporeality and agency. Furthermore, the stories showed the dwelling experience, like the urban experience, is constructed in time, by a concrete, situated subject, in a fragmented way, and affected, altered and informed by the external elements and information, (re)constructed in the imagination, and ultimately (re)presented in children's short fictional stories.

Therefore, the image of a gigantic house into which a city can fit gives both the idea of the capacity of the city to contain everyone and everything, and at the same time, the city is home. As the short fictional story illustrates, for children, the city is the social space where they move around, play, go to school and have encounters with other children and other people, a place that they do not completely recognise and comprehend, but where they know their house is. In the story, children do not have a name, only their parents are named. Plus, like in many of the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, here the city is a puzzle, a hostile environment, a place where children, when they are alone, get lost. For children, as the story shows, the city is indecipherable, full of boundaries; they cannot perceive its limits. Altogether these images remind us of children's imagined geography in which converge the recurrent imaginaries of the city as a place where their identity fades, where they do not belong, a place full of dangers, and a place where they are subjected to material, conceptual and moral boundaries.

Nonetheless, the story also suggests that this huge and enigmatic city is their home. Children's lives occur in it, and their house is in it. The climax of the story is the children's search for their parents; this is the symbolic action of children finding a place of identification within the city. Thus, the house as a place of return is their place of identification, because, although they feel lost within this huge house that resembles the city, they are in *their* house, in their anchor, and it is implied that they have a shelter, they are safe, they are with their family, they belong there.

The story of the house into which a city can fit, as also shown by the other stories discussed throughout this chapter, does not only materialise the children's imaginaries of home. Children do not just accept the house. Rather, through their dwelling practices and through their

perception and narratives of their dwelling experience, they maintain a receptiveness to the dwelling experience, while they (re)configure that perception through their short fictional stories in their own language and with their own symbols and imaginaries. Children's short fictional stories, as narratives, do not represent the house nor the city; each story (re)presents each child's partial perception and individual experience. Children's narratives of home certainly share points of connection. However, as the short fictional stories about dwelling practices showed, each child has his/her own version of home that is projected into each child's narratives. And given that children's relationship with the city is rooted in their relationship with the house, this individual version of home, in turn, defines each child's personal city. Moreover, as the story of the house where the city fits suggests, the city, like *The Great Book*, contains every child's imaginaries and narratives of home, and thus, of the city.

Conclusion:
The City, the Child and The Great Book of the City

The city

In this thesis I explored a collection of children's fictional narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops, a series of workshops designed and carried out specifically for this research. This work began from the idea that children make sense of the urban environment through stories, and thus I argued in this thesis that children's fictional narratives are the place where children project the subjective aspect of urban experience, namely, their urban imaginaries. I also proposed that an approach and conceptualisation of urban space through children's urban imaginaries as a permanent process of social construction allow us to confer intelligibility onto the city and to make visible certain urban processes and phenomena the previous approaches overlooked or directly dismissed. For example, the gaps in the study carried out by Kevin Lynch, discussed at the beginning of this work, show there are profound differences between the world of the child and the world of the adult that cannot be fully bridged. If, therefore, we want to access children's urban experience we ought to study a child's point of view.

In this sense, the study of children's imaginaries allows us not only to take into account the point of view of the child, but it also allows us to explore the weave of meanings in direct relation to the spaces and places, to the practices and to the child (as a subject). Thus, if urban imaginaries allow us to enter into the meanings of places and spaces, these meanings are articulated through the 'making' of the everyday urban practices – namely, the meanings are constructed through the ways in which children engage with these spaces. The challenge, however, is how to capture the everyday practices along with their spatiality. As I discussed in the Introduction, there are studies that attempted to examine children's practices and their spatiality using three different approaches: 1. through observation, 2. through images, and 3. through the narratives of the subject that makes those practices. The problem with the first approach is that while the studies do pay particular attention to the practices and their spatiality, they do not take into account children's imaginaries, because these perspectives are constructed from the point of view of an observer and are mostly focused on establishing children's particular uses of urban space rather than on the meanings of space. The second approach poses the issue that there is an emphasis on the examination of the geographic image that children construct of their environment, as it is reflected on maps, drawings and other graphic representations, and thus, what is absent from this line of research is any effort to acknowledge the city as something more than a conglomerate of streets, buildings and spaces. And, finally, the most common strategies of the third approach (through interviews and groups discussions) are used more to explore specific aspects of children's uses of urban space, than the meanings or imaginaries of the city. And, the lesser-used

strategy (through life stories) focuses on childhood memories, that is, not a child's point of view, but the childhood memories of an adult, which becomes problematic due to the said limitations.

Therefore, as I showed throughout this work, if we ought to explore the subjective aspect of children's urban experience, we need to employ a method that not only captures children's everyday practices and their spatiality, but one that also considers: 1. the space seen through the eyes of the child (as a subject), 2. the place in direct relation with space and society, 3. the place in the dialectic interaction between the spatial forms and the sense of place, and 4. the networks that articulate the urban places – even virtual or distant – from the experience of children. In this way, children's fictional narratives as a methodological resource allow us to enter into the complex patterns, textures, digressions and paths that constitute their experience and self in a socially constructed urban environment. The exploration of children's urban imaginaries through fictional stories offers a window into the meanings children confer onto places, everyday practices and the spatial experience, and onto the social weave of meanings in an integral way. Therefore, as I demonstrated throughout this work, through the exploration of children's fictional stories I address some of the limitations of previous approaches to the study of children's urban experience.

Thus, in the approach here employed, I maintained in this thesis that children's urban experience is defined by the series of interwoven narratives that compose the urban mesh (i.e. official narratives of the city, objective narratives of the city, stories people tell about their everyday practices, opinions, memories, the stories told in the media, books, television and movies, rumours, stereotypes, meanings, ideologies and symbolic representations). Thus, this work proposed that the experience of the city is socially constructed, which means that children's urban narratives are produced not from pristine conceptions, but from previously constructed narratives.

In this conception of the city as a social construction, I urged in this thesis that we approach the city as a book made of interwoven narratives. As I showed throughout this work, the conception of the city as a book addresses some of the limitations of previous approaches to the study of children's urban experience while contesting the idea that the city is not only composed of physical structures, but that it is also constructed by the intersecting lives, narratives, imaginaries, meanings and experiences of those who live in the city. In this proposal, I focused my attention on three children's everyday urban practices: moving, playing and dwelling.

I chose these everyday practices, because, as I showed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, their different particularities allowed me to advance the argument that children's experience of the city is subjective – that is, the child's urban experience is constructed in time, by a concrete, situated subject, in a fragmented way, and affected, altered and informed by the external elements and information, (re)constructed in the imagination. These everyday urban practices also allowed me to show that the child constructs the city spaces and places day by day, in a constant interaction with the material environment and with the different social actors, and through the constant

negotiation and imagination of what happens in the city. For instance, as I explored in Chapter 3, the narratives of the practices of moving revealed that children's experience of the city is a process that involves the children's engagement with the physical city articulated through the subjective and imaginary experience. Then, as I argued in Chapter 4, the narratives of the playing practices show that the way children make sense of the urban environment is both reliant on their encounter with the social city and on their internalisation of the cultural constructions of childhood. As I maintained in Chapter 5, the narratives of the dwelling practices reveal that children's experience of the city is partial, individual, personal and intimate since the urban space is fragmented and subject to change, and also because it involves children's engagement with their urban environment at levels of perception, corporeality and agency.

Furthermore, in this conception of the city as a book, the city is made of stories. Thus, as I claimed in Chapter 2, based on the constructivist theories of Bruner, children make sense of the urban environment through narrative, that is, it is through narrative that children organise, comprehend and appropriate their urban experience. As I showed in this thesis, children's fictional narratives are the place where children project their urban imaginaries and the tool for our understanding of the particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment. A city made of stories implies that the life of the child is understood as a story that is incorporated into the stories of other children and other city inhabitants. In this conception of the child's life, the child is understood above all as an experiential being, for whom his/her existence in the world is presented as a unique and exclusive adventure, and who articulates his/her urban experience through narrative. In this way, narrative configures and organises the imaginary constructions children make to articulate their urban experience – that is, narrative articulates the representational space that Lefebvre proposes in a direct relationship with the spatial practices. At the same time, as de Certeau proposes with his spatial stories, children, through the making of their everyday practices, configure with their bodies and actions their urban experience in a direct relationship with both the narratives that are part of the social city to which children belong and with the mesh of narratives that configure and organise their subjective and imaginary experience.

For that reason, children's fictional narratives as a methodological resource allow us to address the limitations of the approaches previously mentioned, as it permits us to explore the child's point of view in direct relationship with his/her spatial practices, the society, the spatial form and the meanings in an interconnected and integral way. Therefore, narrative is the children's everyday practice that holds this whole thesis together. Narrative here is not understood as the procedure of narrating an event or merely capturing a story in print. Narratives, as de Certeau defines them, are understood here as 'spatial trajectories' (de Certeau 1988: 115). Thus, narrative is the way in which children articulate their everyday lives, and at the same time children's narratives constitute a fundamental part of the urban fabric. As de Certeau writes:

For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them, from the alphabet of spatial indication ('It's to the right', 'Take a left'), the beginning of a story the rest of which is written by footsteps, to the daily 'news' ('Guess who I met at the bakery?'), television news reports ('Teheran: Khomeini is becoming increasingly isolated...'), legends (Cinderellas living in hovels), and stories that are told (memories and fiction of foreign lands or more or less distant times in the past). These narrated adventures, simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the commonplaces of an order, do not merely constitute a 'supplement' to pedestrian enunciations and rhetorics. They are not satisfied with displacing the latter and transposing them into the field of language. In reality, they organize walks. They make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it. (De Certeau 1988: 116)

Thus, drawing on de Certeau's spatial stories and on Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, I argued here that urban space is a social construction constituted by the interconnection of five elements: the subject, the spatial practices, the society, the spatial form and the meanings. And the confluence of these elements is dynamic. For example, as I revealed in Chapter 5, the spatial form of the orphanage influences the orphan children's dwelling practices and their perception of children's dwelling experience. Simultaneously, the orphan children's dwelling practices, as children lacking a family and a family home, with their specific needs, define the spatial form of the orphanage. At the same time, the particular spatial practices of each child define each child's perception of his/her dwelling practices, while his/her specific circumstances of their previous dwelling practices influence each child's experience of the orphanage. Also, for instance, as I evidenced in Chapter 4, the parental and governmental sense of responsibility for children's actions produce a conflicting viewpoint of children being at risk and children becoming a threat. In turn, the resulting fears and anxieties, the conflict between safety and power, demarcate the urban boundaries that determine the place of the child in the city. Therefore, the reciprocal interaction of elements: the child (as a subject and as a group), the spatial form (the material street, the playground and the house), their practices of moving, their playing practices and their dwelling practices, as well as the collective and individual meanings, stress the significance of the subjective with the objective, the real with the imaginary, the material and immaterial aspects of urban space, the individual, the social and the spatial, for the understanding of children's experience of the city.

What I proposed here is that in this understanding of the city as a social construction, what prevails is the interconnection of all these elements. So, in *The Great Book* all the elements of the socially constructed city are interlinked, correlated and woven into an urban mesh. In this way, the social construction of the city cannot take place separately from the social rules and representations of the urban environment and urban childhood – that is, the sociocultural narratives that organise and codify the social construction and imaginaries of spaces and places. Thus, children's perception, experience and imaginaries of the city are informed by shared collective norms of behaviour, forms of organisation, notions of worth and value, and so on.

This constructivist approach allows us to consider that the child, as a subject situated in a place, standing in an urban setting, is crucial to approaching and (re)constructing the spatial practices and the spatiality that children (as subjects) are able to perceive, experience and imagine from their own place, from their own perspective of the urban world. In this understanding of space, the city is not merely the bricks and mortar; it is a complex network of social relations and it is the imaginary constructions children make to make their urban experience meaningful to them.

Thus, in this constructivist approach to the relationship between the child and the city, children's fictional narratives about everyday urban practices, as a methodological resource, bring to light the diverse aspects of the urban reality that partake in children's experience of the city while revealing the intangible elements (namely, urban imaginaries) that contribute to children's understanding and experience of the city and that allow us to access how children perceive, experience and imagine the city from their particular place and circumstances.

But, what is more significant is that children's fictional narratives, as a methodological resource, provide an understanding (at least partially) of the relationship of the child with the city that goes beyond a specific circumstance, although each fictional story is constructed from a specific and well-demarcated place. In other words, children's fictional narratives have the virtue of providing an account of the interconnection of the situational and particular spatiality (the unique, the specifics of a place) with spatialities that are reiterated in other places and in other scenarios. Thus, children's fictional narratives allow us to understand the role that different urban imaginaries play in the social construction of the city within a horizon of the singularity – understood as the interaction between the particular and the general, or the individual and the social – which can be recognised in other scenarios.

The city is at the same time individual and socially constructed. As I showed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, the ways in which children articulate their encounters with the city in their imagination play a significant role in this construction. That is, in children's experience of the city, the ways in which children articulate the material city (the spatial form) and the spatial practices through subjective and social meanings (urban imaginaries) play a fundamental role. As I showed in Chapter 4, the symbolic, cultural and ideological constructions of childhood also inform children's urban experience, that is, the social context in which children are immersed. Finally, as I showed in Chapter 5, in children's urban experience the perspective of a child (as a subject) situated in a place, standing in an urban setting, plays a part; that is, child engages with the with the urban environment at the levels of perception, corporeality and agency.

The child

> Felipe: I've just found out that more than half of the world's population is us children.
>
> Mafalda: And, what's that useful for?
>
> Felipe: Now, for nothing, but in thirty years *we* will be the ones doing stuff and holding positions, and the world will be in *our* hands, the children's hands.
>
> Mafalda: Bah! But in thirty years *we* won't be children anymore!
>
> Felipe: You're always trying to upset me! (Quino 2001: n.p., own translation)

At the beginning of this work I stated that to access children's experience of the city we need to study a child's point of view. There are profound differences between the way children and adults perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment, which cannot be fully bridged. The above cited quote from the celebrated Argentinean comic strip *Mafalda* reminds us of that. Thirty years ago, I was a girl learning to ride a bike; I have my memories of that time and of my childhood urban experience, but the ideas of the city I had back then are certainly different from the childhood memories I own now. I pondered on my brothers' playing practices inside the house, because I cannot help but to compare our childhoods. The day I was sitting in the living room of my parents' home contemplating my brothers playing, I deemed it so odd that they were enjoying themselves in their sheltered, solitary and aseptic mode of play instead of being outside exploring the city, riding bicycles and playing with other children. I am aware, however, that I judged them (and their playing practices) from my adult point of view, a perspective that is constructed through my experience, knowledge, circumstances, beliefs, aspirations, imaginaries, and so on. I (as an adult) will never be able to think as a child nor to understand through my experience and memories what it is to be a child in the contemporary city, because, even though I was a girl living in the same geographic city as my brothers, not only I changed, but the city and its social imaginaries also changed. It is not the intention of this thesis to compare my childhood to my brothers' childhoods. I wondered about the stories (they never told me) of their childhood games inside the house, because I wanted to know what it is to be a child in the contemporary city, I wanted to know how they interpreted and dealt with adult-based intentions and interpretations of the urban environment, that is, I wanted to empathise, I wanted to get as close as I could to the way they perceived, experienced and imagined their everyday urban practices. That is what I tried to do throughout this thesis; my main aim was to access the subjective aspect of children's experience of the city.

This thesis considers that the access into the subjective aspect of children's urban experience must be the first step towards an understanding of the relationship between the child and the city. Because, since we cannot bridge the differences between the way children and adults perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment, if we do not take into account children's experience of the city, every attempt to reconfigure the city in favour of children, for example, will be made based on adults' constructions of childhood, that is, from 'the adult

ideological standpoint', as Matthew Speier calls it (Speier 1976). Children are not adults-in-the-making; they are social actors and active agents who contribute to the social construction of the city. Thus, we need to take into account their point of view in any attempt to understand their particular ways in which children perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment.

Therefore, as this thesis demonstrated, children's fictional narratives of the city as a methodological resource *can* offer a significant approach to children's urban experience. As I showed throughout this work, there is an important aspect of children's relationships with the city that is articulated in the imagination. Children, without realising it, appropriate the urban space through their individual experience and urban practices and by articulating their experience and practices in their imagination through the series of interwoven narratives that compose the urban mesh (i.e. official narratives of the city, objective narratives of the city, stories people tell about their everyday practices, opinions, memories, the stories told in the media, books, television and movies, rumours, stereotypes, meanings, ideologies and symbolic representations). These narratives allow children (as individuals and as a group) to understand what they do not know, to value the urban phenomena and the practices they make, and thus, to make their experience meaningful to them. For this reason, not every child that experiences the same urban space or same urban phenomenon can tell the same spatial story, as no two children could live the same urban experience. Nevertheless, as I showed, children who share certain conditions, such as age range and similar sociocultural backgrounds, the same material city (in the broad sense – both in its physical configuration and in its access and forms of regulations and control), the same dominant social imaginaries of the community and the same sociocultural constructions and symbolical representations of childhood, have common experiences, and thus common imaginaries. Because, imaginaries are at the same time individual and collective.

For example, as I revealed in Chapter 3, children (as a group) imagine road traffic as a tedious experience. Nevertheless, while the collection of children's fictional narratives evidences this, the same tedious phenomenon of road traffic is distinctly experienced and dealt with by every child in their individual stories. As a case in point, in one story, a boy is looking forward to get his driving licence so he can drive a car (MOV052-ENV5). In another story, a girl wishes that there were no more cars in the city (MOV075-FM5A). In a different story, a man buys a faster car because his old car is too slow (MOV046-ENV5). In one more story, a man is in a bad mood due to a traffic jam (MOV015-FILN). And, in another story, a girl decides to wake up earlier to avoid road traffic. These stories showed that each child establishes a different relationship with the same phenomenon (road traffic). In children's fictional narratives, automobility determines the structure of their lives, nevertheless, a boy wants to be in control of this compromising phenomenon by driving his own car, a man decides to challenge the same phenomenon by improving the velocity of his automobile, a girl chooses to wake up earlier to avoid the worst

aspect of that same phenomenon, a man only gets angry at that same phenomenon while a girl imagines a city in which that phenomenon does not exist.

Thus, each child's relationship with road traffic, while it consists of shared real and imaginary elements, also has a personal element that is constructed from each child's specific perception and experience of that same phenomenon constructed from their particular circumstances, beliefs, desires, competences, needs, affectivity, emotions, corporeality and so on. In this way, children do not form a great-underdifferentiated category, just as the way in which children establish their relationships with themselves, with others and with the urban environment is not uniform. So, as I showed throughout this thesis, it is expected that the way they live, internalise, perceive, experience and imagine the city can be equally varied.

But, what can these individual and personal stories tell us about the city as a complex reality? Since it is practically impossible to attend (to all intents and purposes) every point of view and every imaginary of every urban phenomenon of every citizen throughout time, the distinctive private and collective imaginaries are impossible to chart, let alone if we consider that the children who attended *The Great Book* workshops live in a city of over four million people. Thus, one of the things the subjective aspect of children's urban experience can tell us is, first of all, that the experience of the city is not comprehensive. It would be unmanageable to work with the total of children's urban imaginaries to sketch each child's urban experience, or to establish patterns of behaviour of their spatial practices, or to find the most representative stereotypes that some social groups made about children and which help them to orientate their behaviour and practices. In this sense, children's fictional narratives, as a qualitative method, can only aim for a certain level of knowledge, as announced by Fredric Jameson in his *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Jameson 1991).

In his book, Jameson refers to the classic work by Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, in which Lynch is concerned by the idea that the city dwellers alienate themselves as they are unable to represent (in their minds) their own position within the totality of the city in which they live (51). As Jameson writes, the city inhabitants, when they need to cover urban areas too heterogeneous or too similar, the lack of traditional markers (such as monuments, nodes, natural boundaries, built perspectives), they feel disconcerted (51). Thus, Jameson says, by referring to Lynch, that the 'disalienation' would require 'the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories' (51).

Therefore, this mimetic conception of the correspondence between the representation and the reality, between maps and cities, which I discussed earlier and that is criticised by de Certeau,

becomes particularly unsustainable if what we are dealing with are the imaginary relations every child constructs with the urban structures. There is no person, research group or urban planner that would be able to capture a vision of the city as a whole. Children, as subjects and as actors, move around the city writing spatial stories, as de Certeau suggests (de Certeau 1988: 91-93). By doing so, they construct a version of the city that is personal and partial, but since it is constructed in direct relationship with the interwoven narratives that compose the urban mesh, their version of the city is at the same time collective.

As I showed throughout the analysis of children's short fictional stories, this methodological approach, through its projection component, meant that children responded to the writing prompt by incorporating into their narratives the ways in which they see and understand the world. Every child, by creating a 'fictional' narrative, without realising it, revealed his/her spatial position from which he/she sees, perceives and constructs his/her spatial relations. Every child also revealed the limitations, boundaries and forms of control he/she is subjected to, his/her priorities regarding his/her urban practices, the way he/she understands the urban geography, his/her way of dealing with the adult-based intentions and interpretations of the environment, his/her conception of his/her role in the social and material city, his/her fears and anxieties about their spatial practices, the city he/she wishes for and desires, the filters through which he/she evaluates and imagines the urban environment, the way he/she establishes his/her relationship with himself/herself, with others and with the urban environment, his/her emotional needs regarding his/her spatial practices and urban relations, his/her meanings invested in places and spaces.

While the projection aspect of the method used for the construction of children's urban narratives allows us to establish each child's perception, experience and imaginaries of the city, for the study of the relationship between the child and the city, it is more relevant to distinguish certain aspects that are shared by children, both as one great-undifferentiated group as distinct from adults, and as specific groups that share certain conditions, such as age, gender, competences, spatial practices or geography, to mention a few. This realisation can, for instance, help us to determine the distinction between boys' and girls' playing practices, as I explored in Chapter 4. So, children's fictional narratives allow us to establish that children (as individuals and as a group) live in different degrees of compromise with the urban reality. Nevertheless, each child, while pertaining to that great-undifferentiated group or to one or various of those specific groups, is at the same time a subject, and there will be aspects of their experience that are not shared, that are partial, individual, personal and intimate.

Therefore, children's fictional narratives *are* a significant tool to explore further any aspect of urban reality and children's spatial practices, and one that would allow us to differentiate those degrees of compromise within the urban reality. As I reiterated, a vast area of children's private worlds is imaginary, and, for that reason, it is understandable that this area only manifests itself

when children are invited to construct a fictional story concerning an ambiguous prompt about an urban spatial practice. Children's fictional narratives, as I demonstrated throughout this thesis, are useful to access the ways in which children, as that great-undifferentiated group and as part of a distinctive group of children, live the 'objective' conditions of the city and construct their private worlds in relation to the public structures. As this thesis revealed, the second thing the individual children's fictional narratives can tell us is that children's urban experience is at the same time individual and collective. Children's individual fictional stories do not give the full picture; rather, the collection of interwoven individual stories allow us to distinguish certain referents and imaginaries that that great-undifferentiated group or each specific group of children has, and to understand from which position and with which tactics they configure those referents and imaginaries.

'The Great Book of the City'

Although the city is so immense and complex that children perceive and experience it in a fragmentary and partial manner, in the children's fictional narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops there are several common themes in the way children conceive and imagine the urban environment. In the children's imagined geography, the city is planned for automobiles to circulate in. In the children's narratives there is a conceptualisation of urban space as fragmented, connected through the dynamic flows of road traffic. That is, the city is made of fragmented sheltered spaces (houses, school, work, and places for leisure and consumption) connected by a network of roads that house automobile sanctuaries. In children's short fictional stories, the street/road and the public space are hostile environments for children wandering, walking or riding bicycles, and there is a sense of risk associated with these practices. Additionally, every other means of transportation (except the private automobile) is also dangerous. Nevertheless, children need to go from one sheltered space to another, and to do so, they endure long, tedious car journeys. Thus, in children's fictional narratives, children do not belong in the street. Actually, walking and cycling are secondary to driving (or being driven), and playgrounds and play spaces are regulated and well-demarcated by physical fences and security mechanisms. The street/road is the threshold of children's safe territories, which are constrained to the house (and the private automobile as an extension of the house) as the only safe space for children. Therefore, children's imagined geography is dominated by a safety discourse.

In this constraining and regulated space of the city, the children's fictional narratives offer, apart from this imagined urban geography, another information: a series of tactics, drifts and fantasies that constitute a fundamental part of the children's experience of the city. As I argued throughout this thesis, one of the main attributes of the children's fictional stories as a methodological resource

for the city of the children's experiences of the city is the preponderant role conferred on the child as a subject situated in place, standing in an urban setting. Thus, what children's fictional narratives also tell us is that, although the children are influenced by their personal circumstances, by the urban environment, by the urban society, and by the meanings invested in spaces and places, there is an aspect of their experience that is spontaneous, personal and intimate.

It is through those tactics, drifts and fantasies projected onto their narratives that children challenge those boundaries and regulations, and find a way to (re)construct and (re)configure their urban realities. For example, in one story, a girl escapes the boundaries imposed by her parents by running away from home (PLY061-EDA4). In one more story, a couple of boys challenge the restrictions and regulations of a shopping centre to explore it on their own terms (PLY062-EDA4). In another story, a girl fantasises with the idea of a different city, a city without the chaotic character imposed by automobility (MOV075-FM5A). In a different story, a girl runs away to live in a place where she was no longer mistreated (DWL005-FILN). And, in another story, a group of girls decide to confront a situation in which they are not allowed by a neighbour to play in a park (PLY010-FILN). In all these stories, it is through those small acts of resistance – determined by their individual necessities and by the social city, and made possible by each child's emotions, corporeality, wishes and imagination – that children actively contest the determined paths and the imposed codes, boundaries and rules by finding pleasurable acts in their relationships with their physical environment. These tactics, drifts and fantasies allow us to recognise that the urban experience is partial, individual, personal and intimate, which results in countless ways of inhabiting and appropriating urban space. Therefore, tactics involve an active exercise of (re)appropriation of a space organised by others (by those who have the power to organise it, as in this case, adults), through small and quotidian actions that reproduce and at the same time alter the dominant order.

At the same time, it is useful to consider the ways in which children contest, (re)construct and (re)configure their urban realities because they provide cues to understanding what is relevant for children in urban terms, and this be eventually could be used to reconfigure the urban environment in favour of children. The material produced within *The Great Book* workshops allows many readings and interpretations. In this thesis I focused my attention on how children's fictional narratives as a methodological resource assists us in understanding the subjective aspect of children's urban experience – that is, how children's fictional narratives as a methodological resource assist us to understand the role that imagination play in children's experience of the urban environment. Thus, the analysis of children's narratives here was inspired by that specific purpose. Nevertheless, there could be more studies or analysis about those same stories, for example, with the aim of reconstructing the city children want, or to provide a reading of children's limitations in the city, or to present a comparison of the ways of inhabiting the city between the different groups of children from the distinct schools.

The valuable character of children's fictional narratives is that, like the experience of the city, they are partial. The city produces an endless number of stories, points of view, meanings and imaginaries, and, thus children's fictional narratives can have as many readings, interpretations, confluences and orientations. Thus, the interpretative potential of children's fictional stories should not deny that this is a methodological resource inscribed in the logic of the city as a space made of interwoven narratives – namely, in the logic of the city made of stories as partial fragments of a complex whole. Thus, children's fictional narratives *are* a way of accessing the analysis of spatial meanings (urban imaginaries) in specific contexts (the spatial form, the society).

As I illustrated through the analysis of children's fictional narratives, children's experiences of the city are constructed through the objective narratives of the city, the social narratives (that is, the social imaginaries), the symbolic, cultural and ideological constructions, and children's partial perception of the city, through their particular corporeality, affectivity and emotions, and through their agency influenced by their particular needs and by the social city, and made possible by their emotions, their corporeality, their wishes and their imagination. All these intertwined narratives define *The Great Book of the City*.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the study of children's urban experience with the approach I proposed here, should not overestimate the imaginary or subjective aspect of urban experience. While the approach I offered certainly allows us to get a closer look at the way children perceive, experience and imagine the city, what the analysis and interpretation of children's fictional narratives says is not be considered as an unquestionable truth simply because children write it so in their stories. This necessary characteristic of this approach evidences that there is no totalising or absolute way to understand the city or the urban experience. There is no field of study able to capture in-depth the complexity of the city as a whole. This is why it is so important to understand the city as a complex mesh of narratives. The city, understood as a book made of interwoven stories, requires that, in the construction of urban experience, every aspect of the city and every narrative it produces will play a significant role (official narratives of the city, objective narratives of the city, stories people tell about their everyday practices, opinions, memories, stories told in the media, books, television and movies, rumours, stereotypes, meanings, ideologies and symbolic representations). At the same time, the urban experience is partial and subjective, so there will always be an aspect of it that is open to interpretation. Therefore, a book made of interwoven stories acknowledges that children's urban experiences are situated within a mesh of narratives, and thus, that they are not isolated events; they are affected, altered and informed by the external elements and information, and (re)constructed in the imagination.

Therefore, as I insisted throughout this work, *The Great Book*, as a methodological resource, proposes that the interpretation and analysis of children's fictional narratives needs to be

contrasted, first of all, with the objective information of the city, so this can provide a context in which these narratives are constructed. For example, as I contended in Chapter 3, practically every child that attended the workshops constructed a fictional narrative in which children are hit and killed by a car while walking or crossing the street. If we do not pay attention to the objective information of the city in which these children live, an interpretation without attending to the context in which these stories were constructed would certainly provide an alarmist outcome in which children should not be allowed to be in the street under any circumstances. So, it is essential to confront those stories with the objective information about children's competences to behave in the street/road, with the actual impact of the presence of vehicles in the street and with the data about the accidents and actual risk of a child being hit and killed in the street by an automobile. Thus, in this case, we have to make a reading of children's fictional narratives in two different ways. On the one hand, the actual risk of a child pedestrian being hit and killed by a car is in fact low, which implies that the portrayal in children's fictional narratives does not coincide with the reality. Nevertheless, conversely, this storyline portrayed in children's fictional narratives is significant because it shows that children are expressing a threatened vision of road traffic, and thus, it suggests children's perception of road traffic as a threat to their wellbeing and safety, which is constructed in a context in which the discourse of automobility is produced as a solution to the problem of security.

Consequently, this shows the relevance of the confrontation between the factual information about the everyday urban practices and the imaginaries of those same practices as presented in children's fictional narratives. Then, at the same time, it is not only important to use the factual information as statistics and surveys about the city: we should neither dismiss the information produced by other kinds of approaches to the study of children's experience of the city, because they offer the distinct angles of that same reality. Only by using all these approaches and interpretations are we able to take a closer look at children's experiences.

Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the approach I presented here is constructed on other approaches. Namely, the study of children's fictional narratives (the study of children's imaginaries and of the subjective aspect of children's urban experience) requires not only the knowledge the objective approaches advanced, but also the knowledge of other disciplines that made great progress in the understanding of the immateriality of the city, like the sociology of an interactionist or phenomenological approach, cognitive and social psychology, or anthropology with a focus on the symbol. However, those advances only provided certain elements towards developing my own approach to the immaterial aspect of the city, the approach that I presented here. This approach, the children's fictional narratives, takes into account all the narratives the city produces: official narratives of the city, objective narratives of the city, stories people tell about their everyday practices, opinions, memories, stories told in the media, books, television and movies, rumours, stereotypes, meanings, ideologies and symbolic representations.

In this way, *The Great Book* is the city itself; it is an imaginary book that would contain, if they were ever to be written, all the interwoven stories of those who live in the city. It is the tool to access the way children perceive, experience and imagine the city, and it is the document in which those partial narratives and its analysis are inscribed – namely, *The Great Book* is a conception of the city, a methodological resource and this thesis.

The stories contained in *The Great Book* are heterogeneous: a girl move house (MOV059-ENV5), a group of boys play football in a vacant lot (PLY049-FILN), a family works to improve their house (DWL014-FILN), a girl learns to ride a bicycle (MOV080-FM5A), a woman is late for work due to traffic congestion (MOV004-FILN), a boy dies while playing in the staircase of his building (DWL006-FILN), a boy grows up, builds his house, gets married and has children (DWL039-FM5B), a girl gest lost (DWL118-JV6B), a family embarks on a long car journey (MOV038-ENV5), a couple of boys play in a shopping centre (PLY062-EDA4), evacuated families become social transgressors (DWL028-FM5B), a man buys a new car (MOV046-ENV5), a girl goes to a serpentarium with her mother (PLY057-FILN), a boy goes by himself to a city festival (PLY003-FILN), a man listens to music in his car while driving (MOV118-JM5B), a couple of girls go to the park to play on the swings (PLY060-FILN), a girl is not allowed to go to play in the park (PLY069-EDA4).

The city is so complex, so immense and subject to change, that the stories I explored here are a fraction of the infinite number of stories that children and the city produces. As time passes, cities change, so, evidently, the relationship between the child and the city changes all the time. Since the conception of this work and since I carried out *The Great Book* workshops, the city changed and with that children's perceptions, experiences and imaginaries of the city inevitably changed. To what degree it is impossible to determine unless we create another series of children's fictional narratives. Nevertheless, the conception of *The Great Book* allows us to take into account this dynamic certainty of urban space and of the relationship between the child and the city.

Hence, it is important to highlight here that this is not a comprehensive study of urban childhood. This study is located within a social and cultural spectrum: 1. the studied children are from a Latin American city (Guadalajara, Mexico) – this means the narratives produced within *The Great Book* workshops do not suggest a generalised 'global' childhood; both their individual and collective imaginaries are understood here as framed within the sociocultural background that Guadalajara, as a Mexican city, offers to them; 2. although their socioeconomic classes vary, since *The Great Book* workshops were developed in a book-fair and in schools, it is obvious that they do not belong to the lower socio-economic classes that have no access to education or cultural events. This means that while I understand that narrative as a form of thought is intrinsic to every human being, I recognise that the children who took part in the workshops had some prior encounter with storytelling, therefore, I cannot provide any information whether (and how) the method employed for the construction of children's narratives could be applied to children

without any scholastic basis; and 3. this study does not include street children nor the intricacies of child labour – the fact that I do not include these groups of children, or different spatial practices (other than moving, playing and dwelling) implies that there is plenty of information regarding urban childhood and children's imaginaries that is not included here.

Therefore, this is necessarily an unfinished work insofar as it points beyond itself to further studies, due to the continually developing nature of the composition of the city and as a result of the shifting character of all the elements that construct the social city and their interconnection. *The Great Book*, as this unique, incommensurable, endless and shifting book, thus implies that we keep producing and reading children's fictional stories ad infinitum. It is unlikely that we will (and could) do that; therefore, *The Great Book* proposes that we come back to it every time a significant shift occurs in any of the elements that are part of the social construction of space (i.e. childhood, the children's practices, the material form of the city, the society with its ideology and culture and the dominant social narratives) as this will mean an immediate impact upon the way children perceive, experience and imagine the urban environment, to actualise our understanding of the relationship between the child and the city. *The Great Book* also proposes that we look at different urban practices, the everyday ones and the more specialised ones. So, this is by no means a comprehensive study of children's experiences of the city. It only strives to employ a methodological approach that allows us access into the subjective aspect of children's urban experience (namely, urban imaginaries), and while doing this, it provides us with an initial insight into children's perceptions, experiences and imaginaries of the city (of a particular city: Guadalajara).

Appendices

Appendix 1:
Contents of the attached CD

This thesis is based on the children's short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops, the series of workshops designed and carried out specifically for this research. The enclosed CD contains the digitalised versions of the short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops and they include the children's own drawings and handwritten stories (in Spanish). The data is treated confidentially. The original fictional short stories produced within the workshops at the book-fair were destroyed after digitalisation for confidentiality reasons, and the original fictional short stories produced within the workshops at the schools were returned after digitalisation to each school library concerned, and they were collected as a big book (suggesting to be *The Great Book*) with the appropriate disclaimer (see *Disclaimer in book for schools –* Appendix 11). The short fictional stories produced within *The Great Book* workshops included personal details (name, age, and school) of each child, however, on the digitalised versions this information (name) was blurred, and an inscription was placed on it ('Personal Information'). Prior to the blurring of the personal details (name), the sex of the child was included in the document for classification purposes only (this information was not originally included in the material). Despite the fact that there were produced 577 short fictional stories within *The Great Book* workshops, for this work I deliberately used only the short fictional stories pertaining to the moving, playing and dwelling practices. Thus, the enclosed CD only contains the JPG files of the children's fictional stories about the moving, playing and dwelling practices.

Three directories are included in the root directory of the CD (THE GREAT BOOK OF THE CITY - Children's Short Fictional Stories): PRACTICES OF MOVING, PLAYING PRACTICES and DWELLING PRACTICES. The PRACTICES OF MOVING directory contains the JPG files of the digitalised children's short fictional stories about practices of moving; the PLAYING PRACTICES directory contains the JPG files of the digitalised children's short fictional stories about playing practices; and the DWELLING PRACTICES directory contains the JPG files of the digitalised children's short fictional stories about dwelling practices. The CD include the following JPG files of 419 digitalised children's short fictional stories in total (421 JPG files in total). Each electronic file (each short fictional story) has been assigned a classification number that includes a code for the theme of the short fictional stories (practices of moving: MOV; playing practices: PLY; and dwelling practices: DWL), a sequential number, and a code for the place and group where the story was produced (*FIL Children*: FILN; 'Elías Nandino Vallarta' Primary School: ENV; 'Ricardo Flores Magón' Primary School: FM; 'José Martiniano Hernández' Primary School: JM; 'José Vasconcelos' Primary School: JV; and 'Aprender a Ser' School: EDA):

PRACTICES OF MOVING	150 children's short fictional stories in total (150 JPG files in total)		
	Filename		
FIL Children (Book-fair) 37 short fictional stories (37 files in total)	MOV001-FILN.jpg MOV002-FILN.jpg MOV003-FILN.jpg MOV004-FILN.jpg MOV005-FILN.jpg MOV006-FILN.jpg MOV019-FILN.jpg MOV020-FILN.jpg MOV021-FILN.jpg MOV022-FILN.jpg MOV023-FILN.jpg MOV024-FILN.jpg MOV025-FILN.jpg	MOV007-FILN.jpg MOV008-FILN.jpg MOV009-FILN.jpg MOV010-FILN.jpg MOV011-FILN.jpg MOV012-FILN.jpg MOV026-FILN.jpg MOV027-FILN.jpg MOV028-FILN.jpg MOV029-FILN.jpg MOV030-FILN.jpg MOV031-FILN.jpg	MOV013-FILN.jpg MOV014-FILN.jpg MOV015-FILN.jpg MOV016-FILN.jpg MOV017-FILN.jpg MOV018-FILN.jpg MOV032-FILN.jpg MOV033-FILN.jpg MOV034-FILN.jpg MOV035-FILN.jpg MOV036-FILN.jpg MOV037-FILN.jpg
'Elías Nandino Vallarta' (public school) 5th Grade 29 short fictional stories (29 files in total)	MOV038-ENV5.jpg MOV039-ENV5.jpg MOV040-ENV5.jpg MOV041-ENV5.jpg MOV042-ENV5.jpg MOV043-ENV5.jpg MOV044-ENV5.jpg MOV045-ENV5.jpg MOV046-ENV5.jpg MOV047-ENV5.jpg	MOV048-ENV5.jpg MOV049-ENV5.jpg MOV050-ENV5.jpg MOV051-ENV5.jpg MOV052-ENV5.jpg MOV053-ENV5.jpg MOV054-ENV5.jpg MOV055-ENV5.jpg MOV056-ENV5.jpg MOV057-ENV5.jpg	MOV058-ENV5.jpg MOV059-ENV5.jpg MOV060-ENV5.jpg MOV061-ENV5.jpg MOV062-ENV5.jpg MOV063-ENV5.jpg MOV064-ENV5.jpg MOV065-ENV5.jpg MOV066-ENV5.jpg
'Ricardo Flores Magón' (public school) 5th Grade, group A 26 short fictional stories (26 files in total)	MOV067-FM5A.jpg MOV068-FM5A.jpg MOV069-FM5A.jpg MOV070-FM5A.jpg MOV071-FM5A.jpg MOV072-FM5A.jpg MOV073-FM5A.jpg MOV074-FM5A.jpg MOV075-FM5A.jpg	MOV076-FM5A.jpg MOV077-FM5A.jpg MOV078-FM5A.jpg MOV079-FM5A.jpg MOV080-FM5A.jpg MOV081-FM5A.jpg MOV082-FM5A.jpg MOV083-FM5A.jpg MOV084-FM5A.jpg	MOV085-FM5A.jpg MOV086-FM5A.jpg MOV087-FM5A.jpg MOV088-FM5A.jpg MOV089-FM5A.jpg MOV090-FM5A.jpg MOV091-FM5A.jpg MOV092-FM5A.jpg
'José Martiniano Hernández' (public school) 5th Grade, group B 27 short fictional stories (27 files in total)	MOV093-JM5B.jpg MOV094-JM5B.jpg MOV095-JM5B.jpg MOV096-JM5B.jpg MOV097-JM5B.jpg MOV098-JM5B.jpg MOV099-JM5B.jpg MOV100-JM5B.jpg MOV101-JM5B.jpg	MOV102-JM5B.jpg MOV103-JM5B.jpg MOV104-JM5B.jpg MOV105-JM5B.jpg MOV106-JM5B.jpg MOV107-JM5B.jpg MOV108-JM5B.jpg MOV109-JM5B.jpg MOV110-JM5B.jpg	MOV111-JM5B.jpg MOV112-JM5B.jpg MOV113-JM5B.jpg MOV114-JM5B.jpg MOV115-JM5B.jpg MOV116-JM5B.jpg MOV117-JM5B.jpg MOV118-JM5B.jpg MOV119-JM5B.jpg
'José Vasconcelos' (public school) 4th Grade, group B 31 short fictional stories (31 files in total)	MOV120-JV4B.jpg MOV121-JV4B.jpg MOV122-JV4B.jpg MOV123-JV4B.jpg MOV124-JV4B.jpg MOV125-JV4B.jpg MOV126-JV4B.jpg MOV127-JV4B.jpg MOV128-JV4B.jpg MOV129-JV4B.jpg MOV130-JV4B.jpg	MOV131-JV4B.jpg MOV132-JV4B.jpg MOV133-JV4B.jpg MOV134-JV4B.jpg MOV135-JV4B.jpg MOV136-JV4B.jpg MOV137-JV4B.jpg MOV138-JV4B.jpg MOV139-JV4B.jpg MOV140-JV4B.jpg MOV141-JV4B.jpg	MOV142-JV4B.jpg MOV143-JV4B.jpg MOV144-JV4B.jpg MOV145-JV4B.jpg MOV146-JV4B.jpg MOV147-JV4B.jpg MOV148-JV4B.jpg MOV149-JV4B.jpg MOV150-JV4B.jpg

PLAYING PRACTICES	109 children's short fictional stories in total (111 JPG files in total)		
	Filename		
FIL Children **(Book-fair)** 60 short fictional stories (60 files in total)	PLY001-FILN.jpg PLY002-FILN.jpg PLY003-FILN.jpg PLY004-FILN.jpg PLY005-FILN.jpg PLY006-FILN.jpg PLY007-FILN.jpg PLY008-FILN.jpg PLY009-FILN.jpg PLY010-FILN.jpg PLY011-FILN.jpg PLY012-FILN.jpg PLY013-FILN.jpg PLY014-FILN.jpg PLY015-FILN.jpg PLY016-FILN.jpg PLY017-FILN.jpg PLY018-FILN.jpg PLY019-FILN.jpg PLY020-FILN.jpg	PLY021-FILN.jpg PLY022-FILN.jpg PLY023-FILN.jpg PLY024-FILN.jpg PLY025-FILN.jpg PLY026-FILN.jpg PLY027-FILN.jpg PLY028-FILN.jpg PLY029-FILN.jpg PLY030-FILN.jpg PLY031-FILN.jpg PLY032-FILN.jpg PLY033-FILN.jpg PLY034-FILN.jpg PLY035-FILN.jpg PLY036-FILN.jpg PLY037-FILN.jpg PLY038-FILN.jpg PLY039-FILN.jpg PLY040-FILN.jpg	PLY041-FILN.jpg PLY042-FILN.jpg PLY043-FILN.jpg PLY044-FILN.jpg PLY045-FILN.jpg PLY046-FILN.jpg PLY047-FILN.jpg PLY048-FILN.jpg PLY049-FILN.jpg PLY050-FILN.jpg PLY051-FILN.jpg PLY052-FILN.jpg PLY053-FILN.jpg PLY054-FILN.jpg PLY055-FILN.jpg PLY056-FILN.jpg PLY057-FILN.jpg PLY058-FILN.jpg PLY059-FILN.jpg PLY060-FILN.jpg
'Aprender a Ser' **(private school)** **4th Grade** 14 short fictional stories (14 files in total)	PLY061-EDA4.jpg PLY062-EDA4.jpg PLY063-EDA4.jpg PLY064-EDA4.jpg PLY069-EDA4.jpg PLY065-EDA4.jpg	PLY066-EDA4.jpg PLY067-EDA4.jpg PLY068-EDA4.jpg PLY070-EDA4.jpg PLY071-EDA4.jpg PLY072-EDA4.jpg	PLY073-EDA4.jpg PLY074-EDA4.jpg
'Aprender a Ser' **(private school)** **6th Grade** 12 short fictional stories (14 files in total)	PLY075-EDA6a.jpg PLY075-EDA6b.jpg PLY076-EDA6.jpg PLY077-EDA6.jpg PLY078-EDA6.jpg PLY079-EDA6.jpg	PLY080-EDA6.jpg PLY081-EDA6.jpg PLY082-EDA6.jpg PLY083-EDA6.jpg PLY084-EDA6.jpg PLY085-EDA6.jpg	PLY086-EDA6a.jpg PLY086-EDA6b.jpg
'Ricardo Flores Magón' **(public school)** **5th Grade, group C** 23 short fictional stories (23 files in total)	PLY087-FM5C.jpg PLY088-FM5C.jpg PLY089-FM5C.jpg PLY090-FM5C.jpg PLY091-FM5C.jpg PLY092-FM5C.jpg PLY093-FM5C.jpg PLY094-FM5C.jpg	PLY095-FM5C.jpg PLY096-FM5C.jpg PLY097-FM5C.jpg PLY098-FM5C.jpg PLY099-FM5C.jpg PLY100-FM5C.jpg PLY101-FM5C.jpg PLY102-FM5C.jpg	PLY103-FM5C.jpg PLY104-FM5C.jpg PLY105-FM5C.jpg PLY106-FM5C.jpg PLY107-FM5C.jpg PLY108-FM5C.jpg PLY109-FM5C.jpg

DWELLING PRACTICES	160 children's short fictional stories in total (160 JPG files in total)		
	Filename		
FIL Children **(Book-fair)** 22 short fictional stories (22 files in total)	DWL001-FILN.jpg DWL002-FILN.jpg DWL003-FILN.jpg DWL004-FILN.jpg DWL005-FILN.jpg DWL006-FILN.jpg DWL007-FILN.jpg	DWL009-FILN.jpg DWL010-FILN.jpg DWL011-FILN.jpg DWL012-FILN.jpg DWL013-FILN.jpg DWL014-FILN.jpg DWL015-FILN.jpg	DWL017-FILN.jpg DWL018-FILN.jpg DWL019-FILN.jpg DWL020-FILN.jpg DWL021-FILN.jpg DWL022-FILN.jpg

	DWL008-FILN.jpg	DWL016-FILN.jpg
'Ricardo Flores Magón' (public school) 5th Grade, group B 38 short fictional stories (38 files in total)	DWL023-FM5B.jpg DWL024-FM5B.jpg DWL025-FM5B.jpg DWL026-FM5B.jpg DWL027-FM5B.jpg DWL028-FM5B.jpg DWL029-FM5B.jpg DWL030-FM5B.jpg DWL031-FM5B.jpg DWL032-FM5B.jpg DWL033-FM5B.jpg DWL034-FM5B.jpg DWL035-FM5B.jpg	DWL036-FM5B.jpg DWL037-FM5B.jpg DWL038-FM5B.jpg DWL039-FM5B.jpg DWL040-FM5B.jpg DWL041-FM5B.jpg DWL042-FM5B.jpg DWL043-FM5B.jpg DWL044-FM5B.jpg DWL045-FM5B.jpg DWL046-FM5B.jpg DWL047-FM5B.jpg DWL048-FM5B.jpg	DWL049-FM5B.jpg DWL050-FM5B.jpg DWL051-FM5B.jpg DWL052-FM5B.jpg DWL053-FM5B.jpg DWL054-FM5B.jpg DWL055-FM5B.jpg DWL056-FM5B.jpg DWL057-FM5B.jpg DWL058-FM5B.jpg DWL059-FM5B.jpg DWL060-FM5B.jpg
'José Martiniano Hernández' (public school) 6th Grade, group B 22 short fictional stories (22 files in total)	DWL061-JM6B.jpg DWL062-JM6B.jpg DWL063-JM6B.jpg DWL064-JM6B.jpg DWL065-JM6B.jpg DWL066-JM6B.jpg DWL067-JM6B.jpg DWL068-JM6B.jpg	DWL069-JM6B.jpg DWL070-JM6B.jpg DWL071-JM6B.jpg DWL072-JM6B.jpg DWL073-JM6B.jpg DWL074-JM6B.jpg DWL075-JM6B.jpg DWL076-JM6B.jpg	DWL077-JM6B.jpg DWL078-JM6B.jpg DWL079-JM6B.jpg DWL080-JM6B.jpg DWL081-JM6B.jpg DWL082-JM6B.jpg
'José Vasconcelos' (public school) 6th Grade, group B 41 short fictional stories (41 files in total)	DWL083-JV6B.jpg DWL084-JV6B.jpg DWL085-JV6B.jpg DWL086-JV6B.jpg DWL087-JV6B.jpg DWL088-JV6B.jpg DWL089-JV6B.jpg DWL090-JV6B.jpg DWL091-JV6B.jpg DWL092-JV6B.jpg DWL093-JV6B.jpg DWL094-JV6B.jpg DWL095-JV6B.jpg DWL096-JV6B.jpg	DWL097-JV6B.jpg DWL098-JV6B.jpg DWL099-JV6B.jpg DWL100-JV6B.jpg DWL101-JV6B.jpg DWL102-JV6B.jpg DWL103-JV6B.jpg DWL104-JV6B.jpg DWL105-JV6B.jpg DWL106-JV6B.jpg DWL107-JV6B.jpg DWL108-JV6B.jpg DWL109-JV6B.jpg DWL110-JV6B.jpg	DWL111-JV6B.jpg DWL112-JV6B.jpg DWL113-JV6B.jpg DWL114-JV6B.jpg DWL115-JV6B.jpg DWL116-JV6B.jpg DWL117-JV6B.jpg DWL118-JV6B.jpg DWL119-JV6B.jpg DWL120-JV6B.jpg DWL121-JV6B.jpg DWL122-JV6B.jpg DWL123-JV6B.jpg
'Aprender a Ser' (private school) 4th Grade 21 short fictional stories (21 files in total)	DWL124-EDA4.jpg DWL125-EDA4.jpg DWL126-EDA4.jpg DWL127-EDA4.jpg DWL128-EDA4.jpg DWL129-EDA4.jpg DWL142-EDA4.jpg	DWL130-EDA4.jpg DWL131-EDA4.jpg DWL132-EDA4.jpg DWL133-EDA4.jpg DWL134-EDA4.jpg DWL135-EDA4.jpg DWL143-EDA4.jpg	DWL136-EDA4.jpg DWL137-EDA4.jpg DWL138-EDA4.jpg DWL139-EDA4.jpg DWL140-EDA4.jpg DWL141-EDA4.jpg DWL144-EDA4.jpg
'Aprender a Ser' (private school) 6th Grade 16 short fictional stories in total (16 files in total)	DWL145-EDA6.jpg DWL146-EDA6.jpg DWL147-EDA6.jpg DWL148-EDA6.jpg DWL149-EDA6.jpg DWL150-EDA6.jpg DWL151-EDA6.jpg	DWL152-EDA6.jpg DWL153-EDA6.jpg DWL154-EDA6.jpg DWL155-EDA6.jpg DWL156-EDA6.jpg DWL157-EDA6.jpg DWL158-EDA6.jpg	DWL159-EDA6.jpg DWL160-EDA6.jpg

Appendix 2:
Ethics approval

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Research Ethics Sub-Committee

Approval Status: Approved

To:	Ms L. Llamas Acosta
From:	Prof. C. French
CC:	Dr. M Swijghuisen Reigersberg
Date:	29th October 2013
Ref:	EA 1165

We are pleased to inform you that the Research Ethics Sub-Committee has approved your project: **"The Great Book of the City Written By the Little Ones": children's fictional narratives about the city.**

Approved ethical applications are available in the Research Office for other researchers in the college who are applying for grants; they may also be sent out as email attachments if requested. This is to help applicants. Please let Emmy Gregory know within two weeks of this letter if you would rather not have your ethical application form available in this way. Many thanks.

Dr Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg
Secretary,
Research Ethics Committee

pp.

Prof. Christopher French, chair

Appendix 3:
Disclaimer book-fair

Placement of disclaimer

Translation from the original disclaimer in Spanish

The workshops that are been carried on in this space are part of Lillian Llamas Acosta's PhD thesis (Goldsmiths College, University of London) on the children's place in the city. In these workshops children write and illustrate short stories of the city that will be later used (through digitalisation) for Lillian Llamas Acosta's research, of course, the personal information will be suppressed or blurred, and any material that may include any sensitive information won't be used. All the material produced within the workshops is property of Lillian Llamas Acosta, however, the original short stories may be returned to the concerning children on request by their parents or teachers, who also may restrict the use of their produced material. Needless to say, the aforementioned material and the photos taken in the workshops shall not be used for any commercial purpose.

Appendix 4:
Authorisation letter from head of schools

Translation from the original letter sent in Spanish

[Place and Date]

Lillian Llamas Acosta,

Hereby, I authorize that our school take part in the workshop called **'The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones... In the Schools'**. where the **[academic year]** children will write and illustrate short stories about the city. The workshop will take place the **[date]** in each classroom, free of charge. These workshops will be an extraordinary opportunity for the **[academic year]** children of our school; they will be learning important aspects of the urban environment and society, at the same time that their creative skills will be stimulated.

We have been informed that the short stories and the material produced within the workshops can be used (through digitalisation) for Lillian Llamas Acosta's research, of course, the personal information will be suppressed or blurred, and any material that may include any sensitive information will not be used. The original short stories shall be returned to the school library, so they will benefit any related scholar activity, including the single divulgation or distribution within the spaces of this educational institution. We have also been informed that the aforementioned material and the photos taken in the workshops shall not be used for any commercial purpose.

We will be sending a letter to the **[academic year]** parents to inform of the workshops, their purpose and end, as well as the warnings stated above. It is worth to mention, that as this is an extracurricular activity, the attendance to the workshop will be optional, thus the concerning parents may impede, on request, the attendance of their children to the workshop, or as the case may be, to restrict the use of the material produced within the workshop.

We are pleased to participate in your research, and we only urge you that during the course of the workshops your priority be our children's education, safety and integrity.

Yours sincerely,

[Principal's Name]
Principal
[School's name]

Zapopan, Jalisco a 05 de enero de 2011

Mtra. Lillian Llamas Acosta
PRESENTE

Por medio de la presente autorizo a que nuestra escuela forme parte del taller llamado '**El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas**', en los que los **niños de 5to. 'A', 5to. 'B' y 5to. 'C'** escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día *miércoles 2 de febrero* en el salón de clases de cada grupo, de manera gratuita. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 5to. grado de nuestra escuela; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

Estamos advertidos de que los cuentos y el material que se produzca en los talleres podrá ser utilizado (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando usar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales deberán ser devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. Estamos igualmente advertidos de que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Nosotros enviaremos una carta a los padres de familia de los niños de 5to. 'A', 5to. 'B' y 5to. 'C' para informar sobre los talleres, su naturaleza y fin, así como de las advertencias anteriores. Cabe mencionar, que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller será opcional, así que los padres podrán restringir, a petición, la asistencia de su(s) hijo(s) al taller, o en su caso, limitar el uso del material producido.

Nos complace formar parte de su investigación, y sólo le rogamos que en el curso de los talleres, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños sea su prioridad.

Atentamente,

Lic. Teresa García Celis
Directora
Escuela Primaria 'Ricardo Flores Magón'

S.E.J.
ESC. PRIMARIA URBANA No. 1022
'RICARDO FLORES MAGON'
C.C.T. 14EPR1455E
ZONA 152 SECTOR 11
ZAPOPÁN, JALISCO.

Tlajomulco de Zúñiga, Jalisco a 05 de enero de 2011

Mtra. Lillian Llamas Acosta
PRESENTE

Por medio de la presente autorizo a que nuestra escuela forme parte del taller llamado **'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'**, en los que los **niños de 5to. grado** escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día *miércoles 2 de febrero* en el salón de clases de cada grupo, de manera gratuita. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 5to. grado de nuestra escuela; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

Estamos advertidos de que los cuentos y el material que se produzca en los talleres podrá ser utilizado (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando usar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales deberán ser devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. Estamos igualmente advertidos de que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Nosotros enviaremos una carta a los padres de familia de los niños de 5to. grado para informar sobre los talleres, su naturaleza y fin, así como de las advertencias anteriores. Cabe mencionar, que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller será opcional, así que los padres podrán restringir, a petición, la asistencia de su(s) hijo(s) al taller, o en su caso, limitar el uso del material producido.

Nos complace formar parte de su investigación, y sólo le rogamos que en el curso de los talleres, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños sea su prioridad.

Atentamente,

Lic. Teresa García Celis
Directora
Escuela Primaria 'Elías Nandino Vallarta'

Zapopan, Jalisco a 05 de enero de 2011

Mtra. Lillian Llamas Acosta
PRESENTE

Por medio de la presente autorizo a que nuestra escuela forme parte del taller llamado **'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'**, en los que los **niños de 4to. 'B'** y **5to. 'B'** escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día *jueves 3 de febrero* en el salón de clases de cada grupo, de manera gratuita. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 4to y 5to. grado de nuestra escuela; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

Estamos advertidos de que los cuentos y el material que se produzca en los talleres podrá ser utilizado (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando usar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales deberán ser devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. Estamos igualmente advertidos de que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Nosotros enviaremos una carta a los padres de familia de los niños de 4to. 'B' y 5to. 'B' para informar sobre los talleres, su naturaleza y fin, así como de las advertencias anteriores. Cabe mencionar, que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller será opcional, así que los padres podrán restringir la asistencia de su(s) hijo(s) al taller, o en su caso, limitar el uso del material producido.

Nos complace formar parte de su investigación, y sólo le rogamos que en el curso de los talleres, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños sea su prioridad.

Atentamente,

Lic. Roberto Barajas Páz
Director
Escuela Primaria 'José Vasconcelos'

Zapopan, Jalisco a 10 de enero de 2011

Mtra. Lillian Llamas Acosta
PRESENTE

Por medio de la presente autorizo a que nuestra escuela forme parte del taller llamado **'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'**, en los que los **niños de 5to. 'B' y 6to. 'B'** escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día *jueves 10 de febrero* en el salón de clases de cada grupo, de manera gratuita. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 5to. y 6to. grado de nuestra escuela; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

Estamos advertidos de que los cuentos y el material que se produzca en los talleres podrá ser utilizado (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando usar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales deberán ser devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. Estamos igualmente advertidos de que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Nosotros enviaremos una carta a los padres de familia de los niños de 5to. 'B' y 6to. 'B' para informar sobre los talleres, su naturaleza y fin, así como de las advertencias anteriores. Cabe mencionar, que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller será opcional, así que los padres podrán restringir, a petición, la asistencia de su(s) hijo(s) al taller, o en su caso, limitar el uso del material producido.

Nos complace formar parte de su investigación, y sólo le rogamos que en el curso de los talleres, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños sea su prioridad.

Atentamente,

Lic. Daniel Ríos Robles
Director
Escuela Primaria 'José Martiniano Hernández'

Guadalajara, Jalisco a 07 de Febrero de 2011

Mtra. Lillian Llamas Acosta
PRESENTE

Por medio de la presente autorizo a que nuestra escuela forme parte del taller llamado **'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'**, en los que los **niños de 4to. y 6to. grado** escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día *miércoles 23 de febrero* en el salón de clases de cada grupo, de manera gratuita. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 4to y 6to. grado de nuestra escuela; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

Estamos advertidos de que los cuentos y el material que se produzca en los talleres podrá ser utilizado (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando usar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales deberán ser devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. Estamos igualmente advertidos de que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Nosotros enviaremos una carta a los padres de familia de los niños de 4to y 6to. grado para informar sobre los talleres, su naturaleza y fin, así como de las advertencias anteriores. Cabe mencionar, que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller será opcional, así que los padres podrán restringir, a petición, la asistencia de su(s) hijo(s) al taller, o en su caso, limitar el uso del material producido.

Nos complace formar parte de su investigación, y sólo le rogamos que en el curso de los talleres, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños sea su prioridad.

Atentamente,

Lic. Mercedes Hernández Pagaza
Directora
Escuela de Aprender a Ser

Escuela Aprender a Ser
Primaria Particular No. 86
Incorporado SEJ
C.C.T 14PPR1420W

Guadalajara, Jalisco a 16 de diciembre de 2011
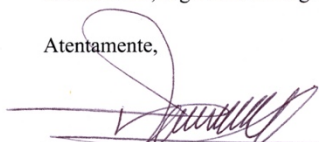
Mtra. Lillian Llamas Acosta
PRESENTE

Por medio de la presente autorizo a que nuestra escuela forme parte del taller llamado **'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos... en las Escuelas'**, en los que los **niños de 4to.** y **6to. grado** escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día *jueves 12 de enero de 2012* en el salón de clases de cada grupo, de manera gratuita. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 4to y 6to. grado de nuestra escuela; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

Estamos advertidos de que los cuentos y el material que se produzca en los talleres podrá ser utilizado (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando usar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales deberán ser devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. Estamos igualmente advertidos de que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Nosotros enviaremos una carta a los padres de familia de los niños de 4to y 6to. grado para informar sobre los talleres, su naturaleza y fin, así como de las advertencias anteriores. Cabe mencionar, que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller será opcional, así que los padres podrán restringir, a petición, la asistencia de su(s) hijo(s) al taller, o en su caso, limitar el uso del material producido.

Nos complace formar parte de su investigación, y sólo le rogamos que en el curso de los talleres, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños sea su prioridad.

Atentamente,

Lic. Mercedes Hernández Pagaza
Directora
Escuela de Aprender a Ser

Escuela
Aprender a Ser

Primaria Particular No. 86
Incorporado SEJ
C.C.T. 14PPR1420V

Appendix 5:
Letter for school parents

Translation from the original letter sent in Spanish

Dear [academic year] Parents,

Our school has been chosen to take part of a workshop called 'The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones… In the Schools'. The workshop will take place the **[date]** in each classroom and will be conducted by the PhD candidate Lillian Llamas Acosta.

Lillian Llamas Acosta is working on her PhD thesis at Goldsmiths College, University of London (London, UK) on the children's place in the city, and the workshops are an important part of her research. These workshops will be an extraordinary opportunity for the [number] grade children; they will be learning important aspects of the urban environment and society, at the same time that their creative skills will be stimulated.

In these 60 minutes' workshops, the [number] grade children will write ad illustrate short stories of the city that will be later used (through digitalisation) for Lillian Llamas Acosta's research, of course, the personal information will be suppressed or blurred, and any material that may include any sensitive information won't be used. The original short stories will be returned to the school library, so they will benefit any related scholar activity, including the single divulgation or distribution within the spaces of this educational institution. It is important to mention that the aforementioned material and the photos taken in the workshops shall not be used for any commercial purpose.

We know well Miss Llamas Acosta, she is an outstanding student and professional, and our school is proud to participate in her research. However, as this is an extracurricular activity, the attendance to the workshop is optional. Please, let us know if you want further information regarding the workshop, or if you do not want your children to attend it, or if you wish to restrict the use of the produced material. We can assure you than in either case, our children's education, safety and integrity will be as always our priority.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

[Principal's Name]
Principal
[School's name]

Zapopan, Jalisco a 17 de Enero de 2011

Estimados Padres de Familia de 5to. 'A', 5to 'B' y 5to 'C',

Nuestra escuela ha sido elegida para formar parte del taller llamado 'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día **miércoles 2 de febrero** en el salón de clases de cada grupo y serán conducidos por la candidata a doctorado Lillian Llamas Acosta.

Lillian Llamas Acosta está trabajando en su tesis de doctorado en Goldsmiths College, University of London (Londres, Reino Unido) sobre el lugar de los niños en la ciudad, y estos talleres son una parte fundamental de su investigación. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 5to. grado; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

En estos talleres, con duración de 60 minutos, los niños de 5to. grado escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad que serán después utilizados (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando utilizar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales serán devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. No huelga decir que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Conocemos bien a Lillian, ella es una destacada estudiante y profesionista, y nuestra escuela está orgullosa de formar parte de su investigación. Sin embargo, cabe mencionar que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller es opcional. Por favor, háganos saber si necesita más información sobre el taller, o si usted no desea que su hijo asista a este, o en su caso, si desea limitar el uso del material producido. Le aseguramos que en cualquier caso, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños será, como siempre, nuestra prioridad.

Muchas gracias por su amable atención.

Atentamente,

Lic. Teresa García Celis
Directora
Escuela Primaria 'Ricardo Flores Magón'

Letter for parents – 'Elías Nandino Vallarta' Primary School (Tlajomulco de Zúñiga) (as sent in Spanish)

Tlajomulco de Zúñiga, Jalisco a 17 de Enero de 2011

Estimados Padres de Familia de 5to. grado,

Nuestra escuela ha sido elegida para formar parte del taller llamado 'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'. El taller se llevará a cabo el día ***miércoles 2 de febrero*** en el salón de clases del grupo y será conducido por la candidata a doctorado Lillian Llamas Acosta.

Lillian Llamas Acosta está trabajando en su tesis de doctorado en Goldsmiths College, University of London (Londres, Reino Unido) sobre el lugar de los niños en la ciudad, y estos talleres son una parte fundamental de su investigación. El taller será una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 5to. grado; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

En este taller, con duración de 60 minutos, los niños de 5to. grado escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad que serán después utilizados (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando utilizar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales serán devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. No huelga decir que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Conocemos bien a Lillian, ella es una destacada estudiante y profesionista, y nuestra escuela está orgullosa de formar parte de su investigación. Sin embargo, cabe mencionar que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller es opcional. Por favor, háganos saber si necesita más información sobre el taller, o si usted no desea que su hijo asista a este, o en su caso, si desea limitar el uso del material producido. Le aseguramos que en cualquier caso, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños será, como siempre, nuestra prioridad.

Muchas gracias por su amable atención.

Atentamente,

Lic. Teresa García Celis
Directora
Escuela Primaria 'Elías Nandino Vallarta'

Zapopan, Jalisco a 17 de Enero de 2011

Estimados Padres de Familia de 4to. 'B' y 5to. 'B',

Nuestra escuela ha sido elegida para formar parte del taller llamado 'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día ***jueves 3 de febrero*** en el salón de clases de cada grupo y serán conducidos por la candidata a doctorado Lillian Llamas Acosta.

Lillian Llamas Acosta está trabajando en su tesis de doctorado en Goldsmiths College, University of London (Londres, Reino Unido) sobre el lugar de los niños en la ciudad, y estos talleres son una parte fundamental de su investigación. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 4to y 5to. grado; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

En estos talleres, con duración de 60 minutos, los niños de 4to. 'B' y 5to. 'B' escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad que serán después utilizados (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando utilizar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales serán devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. No huelga decir que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Conocemos bien a Lillian, ella es una destacada estudiante y profesionista, y nuestra escuela está orgullosa de formar parte de su investigación. Sin embargo, cabe mencionar que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller es opcional. Por favor, háganos saber si necesita más información sobre el taller, o si usted no desea que su hijo asista a este, o en su caso, si desea limitar el uso del material producido. Le aseguramos que en cualquier caso, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños será, como siempre, nuestra prioridad.

Muchas gracias por su amable atención.

Atentamente,

Lic. Roberto Barajas Paz
Director
Escuela Primaria 'José Vasconcelos'

Zapopan, Jalisco a 24 de Enero de 2011

Estimados Padres de Familia de 5to. 'B' y 6to. 'B',

Nuestra escuela ha sido elegida para formar parte del taller llamado 'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día ***jueves 10 de febrero*** en el salón de clases de cada grupo y serán conducidos por la candidata a doctorado Lillian Llamas Acosta.

Lillian Llamas Acosta está trabajando en su tesis de doctorado en Goldsmiths College, University of London (Londres, Reino Unido) sobre el lugar de los niños en la ciudad, y estos talleres son una parte fundamental de su investigación. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 5to. y 6to. grado; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

En estos talleres, con duración de 60 minutos, los niños de 5to. 'B' y 6to. 'B' escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad que serán después utilizados (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando utilizar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales serán devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. No huelga decir que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Conocemos bien a Lillian, ella es una destacada estudiante y profesionista, y nuestra escuela está orgullosa de formar parte de su investigación. Sin embargo, cabe mencionar que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller es opcional. Por favor, háganos saber si necesita más información sobre el taller, o si usted no desea que su hijo asista a este, o en su caso, si desea limitar el uso del material producido. Le aseguramos que en cualquier caso, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños será, como siempre, nuestra prioridad.

Muchas gracias por su amable atención.

Atentamente,

Lic. Daniel Ríos Robles
Director
Escuela Primaria 'José Martiniano Hernández'

Letter for parents – 'Aprender a Ser' School (Guadalajara) (as sent in Spanish)

Guadalajara, Jalisco a 07 de Febrero de 2011

Estimados Padres de Familia de 4to. y 6to. grado,

Nuestra escuela ha sido elegida para formar parte del taller llamado 'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día **miércoles 23 de febrero** en el salón de clases de cada grupo y serán conducidos por la candidata a doctorado Lillian Llamas Acosta.

Lillian Llamas Acosta está trabajando en su tesis de doctorado en Goldsmiths College, University of London (Londres, Reino Unido) sobre el lugar de los niños en la ciudad, y estos talleres son una parte fundamental de su investigación. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 4to. y 6to. grado; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

En estos talleres, con duración de 60 minutos, los niños de 4to. y 6to. grado escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad que serán después utilizados (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando utilizar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales serán devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. No huelga decir que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Conocemos bien a Lillian, ella es una destacada estudiante y profesionista, y nuestra escuela está orgullosa de formar parte de su investigación. Sin embargo, cabe mencionar que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller es opcional. Por favor, háganos saber si necesita más información sobre el taller, o si usted no desea que su hijo asista a este, o en su caso, si desea limitar el uso del material producido. Le aseguramos que en cualquier caso, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños será, como siempre, nuestra prioridad.

Muchas gracias por su amable atención.

Atentamente,

Lic. Mercedes Hernández Pagaza
Directora
Escuela de Aprender a Ser

Letter for parents – 'Aprender a Ser' School (Guadalajara) (as sent in Spanish)

Guadalajara, Jalisco a 02 de Enero de 2012

Estimados Padres de Familia de 4to. y 6to. grado,

De nueva ocasión, nuestra escuela ha sido elegida para formar parte del taller llamado 'El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos… en las Escuelas'. Los talleres se llevarán a cabo el día **jueves 12 de enero** en el salón de clases de cada grupo y serán conducidos por la candidata a doctorado Lillian Llamas Acosta.

Lillian Llamas Acosta está trabajando en su tesis de doctorado en Goldsmiths College, University of London (Londres, Reino Unido) sobre el lugar de los niños en la ciudad, y estos talleres son una parte fundamental de su investigación. Los talleres serán una oportunidad extraordinaria para los niños de 4to. y 6to. grado; ahí aprenderán aspectos importantes del entorno y la sociedad urbana, al mismo tiempo que sus habilidades creativas serán estimuladas.

En estos talleres, con duración de 60 minutos, los niños de 4to. y 6to. grado escribirán e ilustrarán cuentos sobre la ciudad que serán después utilizados (a través de digitalización) en la investigación de Lillian Llamas Acosta, obviamente, suprimiendo o difuminando los datos personales de los niños, así como evitando utilizar cualquier material que contenga información sensible. Los cuentos originales serán devueltos a la biblioteca de la escuela, ya que el material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar. No huelga decir que el material aludido, así como las fotografías tomadas en los talleres, dadas las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizados con fines de lucro.

Conocemos bien a Lillian, ella es una destacada estudiante y profesionista, y nuestra escuela está orgullosa de formar parte de su investigación. Sin embargo, cabe mencionar que como esta es una actividad extracurricular, la asistencia al taller es opcional. Por favor, háganos saber si necesita más información sobre el taller, o si usted no desea que su hijo asista a este, o en su caso, si desea limitar el uso del material producido. Le aseguramos que en cualquier caso, la educación, seguridad e integridad de nuestros niños será, como siempre, nuestra prioridad.

Muchas gracias por su amable atención.

Atentamente,

Lic. Mercedes Hernández Pagaza
Directora
Escuela de Aprender a Ser

Appendix 6:
Spaces for the workshops

Stand purposely designed and assigned for The Great Book workshops at the book-fair (FIL Children)

Details in façade of the stand for the workshops at the book-fair

Translation from the original information displayed in Spanish

1. The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones

2. Writers wanted!

3. This workshop has already started, the next one will start at [time].

4. Once upon a time in this city there was a special and very valuable book. People used to write in its pages the city life: its forms, its transformations, its people and their experiences. But over time, the city unexpectedly changed and people were suddenly in a constant hurry, so the book was forgotten.

5. We [children] have rescued the book and now it's our turn to write it! With our attentive, curious and fun gaze we will compose the book, filling its pages with new and creative stories; thus, the city will have the living and imaginative testimony it deserves.

6. Workshops for children from 7 to 14 years old. Workshops duration: 60 minutes. Free entrance. Requirements: Willingness to perceive the city in a different way and to use your writing skills to be the voice of your city. Come and write a story about the city and be a part of The Great Book of the City!

7. Children's workshops
Workshop leader: Lillian Llamas Acosta
Graphic design: María Fernanda González Llamas

'Ricardo Flores Magón' Primary School (public school) – Charros, Col. El Vigía, Zapopan – School's Principal: Teresa García Celis

Located in the banks of Guadalajara, this school is mainly attended by lower-class children who live in the same area. The deprived neighbourhood is primarily filled with sparse empty plots, scrapyards, building materials warehouses and some modest self-constructed houses. The streets remain unpaved, and even when there is little access to primary services, the proximity to the city's ring road facilitates the transportation and communications. The school is in decent conditions but with no extra features. When the children were asked if they attended the book-fair (*FIL* or *FIL Children*), they all said no.

'Elías Nandino Vallarta' Primary School (public school) – Loma de Ibiza, Col. Loma de Lérida, Tlajomulco de Zúñiga – School's Principal: Teresa García Celis.

This little school is established in a prefabricated metal building that was recently constructed through this process because of its rapidity due to the urgency for a school in this rising sub-urban borough. The new neighbourhood is located in the south outskirts of Guadalajara, with little access to main services and slightly isolated from the urban clamour. Although quiet and secluded, the area is no paradise; the deprived district was built in response to the growth of the city towards south (where the school is located). The public residential development was planned for the people that work in the near factories and services, and serve the upper-classes that live in the nearby areas.

The school is only attended by the lower-class neighbourhood children, and the building is hot and noisy because of the material it is constructed in. Nevertheless, the school is in good conditions, thanks to the excellent school board and a greatly involved parents' association. They are deeply involved with the community. This school do not have a library room (because of their lack of space), so everyday some (already assigned) children from 5th and 6th grades set up a library in the schoolyard during the break. These children act as librarians and when the

break is over they clean everything up and keep the books safely. It is a well-organized task and it is a popular library. When the children were asked if they attended the book-fair (*FIL* or *FIL Children*), they all said no.

'José Vasconcelos' Primary School (public school) – Belisario Domínguez, Col. Mariano Otero, Zapopan – School's Principal: Roberto Barajas Paz.

This school is situated in a very rough area of the city, in the west of Guadalajara, and is mostly attended by lower-class children who live in the neighbourhood. There is a high rate of gang-activity, vandalism and drug abuse in this underprivileged residential area. However, there is moderate access to primary services and some neighbourhood streets remain unpaved, but there is adequate transportation and communications. The large school is in decent conditions with no extra features; on the contrary, it had been continuously vandalised with graffiti. When the children were asked if they attended the book-fair (*FIL* or *FIL Children*), most of them said no.

'José Martiniano Hernández' Primary School (public school) – Cedros 226, Col. Ciudad Granja, Zapopan – School's Principal: Daniel Ríos Robles.

Situated in the west of Guadalajara, on the shores of the city, this school is mostly attended by lower-middle-class children who live in the neighbourhood. The vicinity formerly consisted of farms, was turned into a country residential area in the 1970s as a response to the urban growth. However, this vast area was never consolidated as the huge intended country residential project, and because of the proximity to the countryside, the land's price these days is rather inexpensive.

For this reason, today many small factories and warehouses, and a number of self-constructed and public housing have been established there. Nevertheless, the area maintains a low building density with no green areas, and the streets preserve its original stone pavement in terrible conditions. Although, located in a neglected area, the school is in excellent conditions thanks to the parents' association that works alongside with a very involved School Principal. When the children were asked if they attended the book-fair (*FIL* or *FIL Children*), most of them said no.

'Aprender a Ser' School (private inclusive school) – Hidalgo 2935, Col. Vallarta Norte, Guadalajara – School's Principal: Mercedes Hernández Pagaza.

This small private inclusive school is in a large 1970s house adapted for its educational needs. Located in a centric borough, it has properly access to main services, communications and transportation. It is mainly attended by middle-class and upper-middle-class children from all over the city. The attending children go there mainly because of its programme rather than its location or facilities. This non-traditional participative and active school takes also into account children with special needs and integrates them with the rest of the class. When the children were asked if they attended the book-fair (*FIL* or *FIL Children*), most of them said yes, and the exception included the children with special needs.
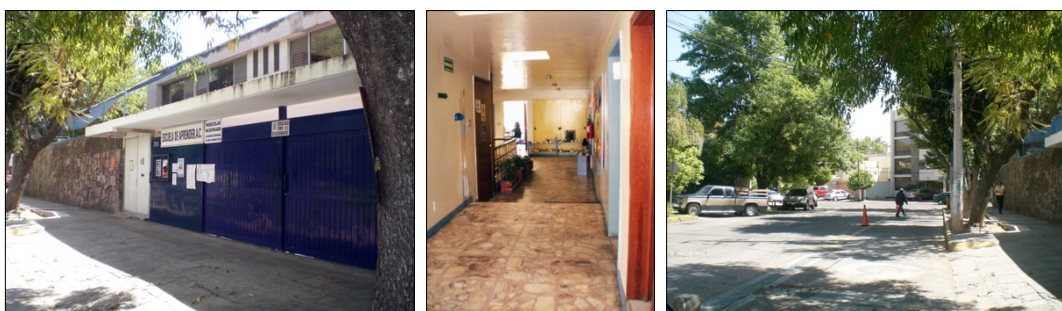
Appendix 7:
Workshops' dates, attendance and total of short fictional stories produced

During the book-fair (*FIL Children*), there were conducted a total of 59 workshops, in the following order: 4 workshops on 28 November 2009, 5 workshops on 29 November 2009, 5 workshops on 30 November 2009, 9 workshops on 1 December 2009, 6 workshops on 2 December 2009, 6 workshops on 3 December 2009, 6 workshops on 4 December 2009, 12 workshops on 5 December 2009, and 6 workshops on 6 December 2009.

A total of 374 children attended the workshops at the book-fair. There were produced a total of 277 short fictional stories, divided as follows: 37 short fictional stories about the practices of moving, 60 short fictional stories about the playing practices, 22 short fictional stories about the dwelling practices, 37 short fictional stories about the smelling sense, 51 short fictional stories about the seeing sense, and 70 short fictional stories about the hearing sense.

In the schools, there were conducted a total of 12 workshops, in the following order: 3 workshops in 'Ricardo Flores Magón' Primary School (Zapopan) on 2 February 2011, 1 workshop in 'Elías Nandino Vallarta' Primary School (Tlajomulco de Zúñiga) on 2 February 2011, 2 workshops in 'José Vasconcelos' Primary School (Zapopan) on 3 February 2011, 2 workshops in 'José Martiniano Hernández' Primary School (Zapopan) on 10 February 2011, 2 workshops in 'Aprender a Ser' School (Guadalajara) on 23 February 2011, 2 workshops in 'Aprender a Ser' School (Guadalajara) on 12 January 2012.

A total of 304 children attended the workshops at the schools. There were produced a total of 300 short fictional stories, divided as follows: 113 short fictional stories about the practices of moving, 49 short fictional stories about the playing practices, and 138 short fictional stories about the dwelling practices.

Appendix 8:
Chronology of *The Great Book* workshops' activities

The workshops were 60 minutes long. Each workshop was led by myself and was attended by groups of different number of children. The participants of the workshops at the book-fair were not specifically chosen, but took part according to their own free choice; the selection of the participants in the workshops at the schools was however made on the basis of the academic years chosen.

The workshops started with an introduction and presentation of the workshops and the selected theme (moving, playing and dwelling). After this, the children were asked to perform four different tasks:

1. After I provided an example, some children, on a turn-by-turn basis, drew on blank paper while narrating an experience (according with the selected theme of the workshop) to the rest of the group. The child thus drew whilst explaining how and where he/she plays, where to and how he/she moves within the city, or how and where he/she dwells within it. They meticulously described the space and place where the activity takes place, specified some details of the activity, and shared interesting and precise information about their experience. In doing so they were encouraged to emphasize specifics more than commonalities. By the end of the assignment we had a panorama of different experiences of the same type of actions, all of them taken place in the city.

2. The following task was a group activity: an oral-collective narrative construction. Each participant of each workshop participated in the construction of an oral-collective story. Based on sets of two photos at a time (see *Photos used in the workshops' activities* – Appendix 9 I started an oral fictional story. I then threw a small ball to a child, who had to continue the story, and he/she had to throw it again to another child, in order to continue it. Every child participated, and the stories were always related to the photos. In this way the children were encouraged and motivated to narrate. This was an initial, preparatory step towards encouraging them to write.

3. After these activities children wrote their stories. There was a brief explanation of the task and a reflection on the process of writing, and on the importance of the latter in relation to the city. In direct relation to each workshop theme, children received a page where they wrote their short fictional stories. Each participant of each workshop wrote a short fictional story. The story had to be fiction, but every page detailed a specific writing prompt, such as: 'A ball is the main character of this story'; 'This story only narrates about grey things of the city'; 'Write a story about the saddest house in the city'. Each child was given a page (or more pages, if requested), paints, water, brushes, pencils, sharpener and eraser, so they could write and illustrate their stories. During the process of creating their stories they were guided and supported in order make them feel as comfortable as possible in the process, and in this way they were able to produce better stories.

4. After all the children had finished writing their stories they read them aloud to the other children. This reading was accompanied by a closing dialogue that reflected on the importance of writing about the city and on the differing ways in which the latter might be conceived.

At the end of each workshop, every child received a badge that says: 'I am writer of The Great Book of the City' (*Yo soy escritor de El Gran Libro de la Ciudad*) (see *Badge design* – Appendix 10). The intention was to make them feel that they had played an active part in this project, and they wore the badges proudly.

Additionally, the fictional narratives created in *The Great Book* workshops at the book-fair were compiled into a big book that was exhibited in the façade of the workshop space during the book-fair (see *Spaces for the workshops* – Appendix 6). The fictional narratives produced in *The Great Book* workshops at the schools were compiled after digitalisation into a big book that was returned to each school library concerned.

Different types of material were produced during *The Great Book* workshop activities: drawings from the activity in which they narrated their experience (see *Children's drawings* – Appendix 12), the short fictional stories with their illustrations, and the photos that were taken at the workshops (see *Photos of the workshops* – Appendix 13).

Appendix 9:
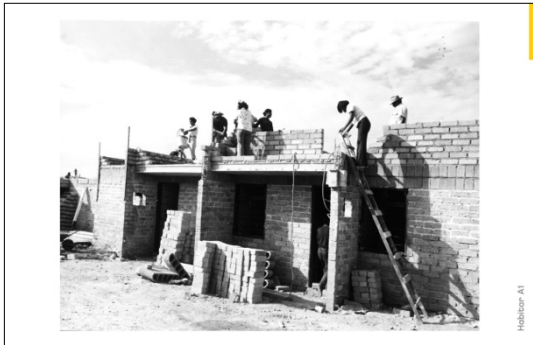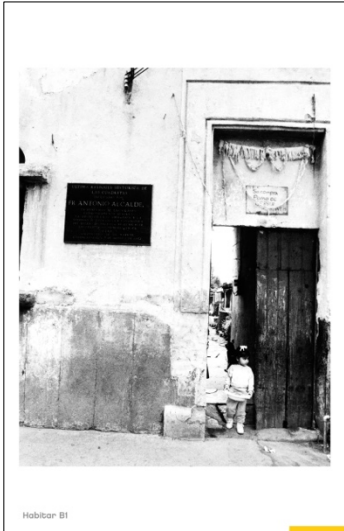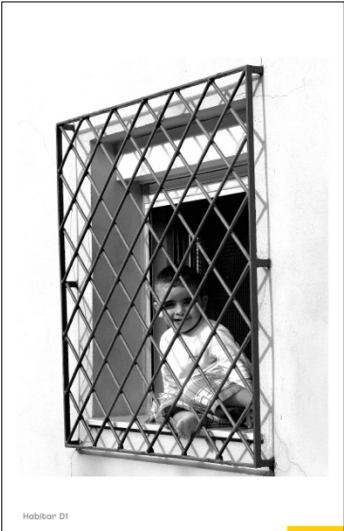## Photos used in the workshops' activities

Photos used in the workshops about the practices of moving
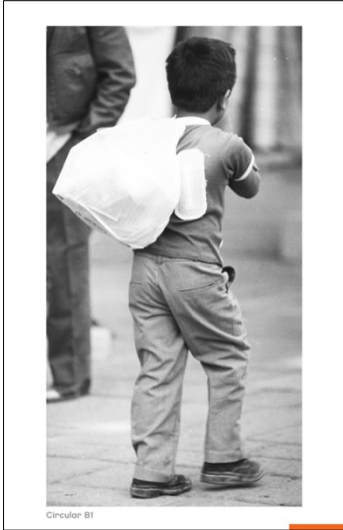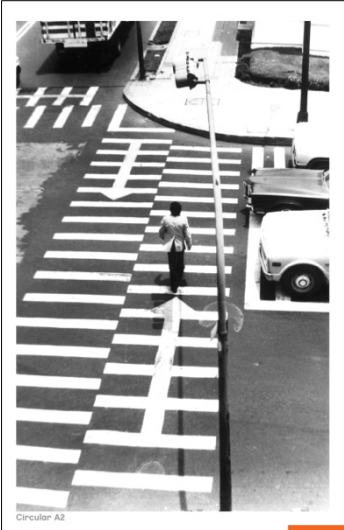
Photos used in the workshops about the playing practices

229
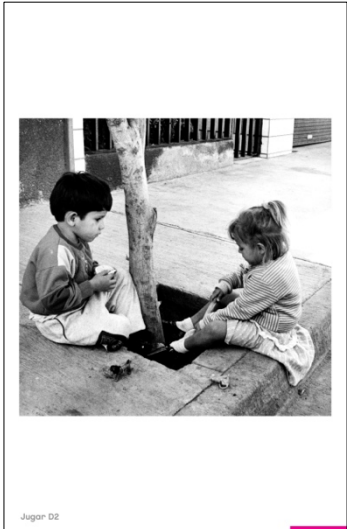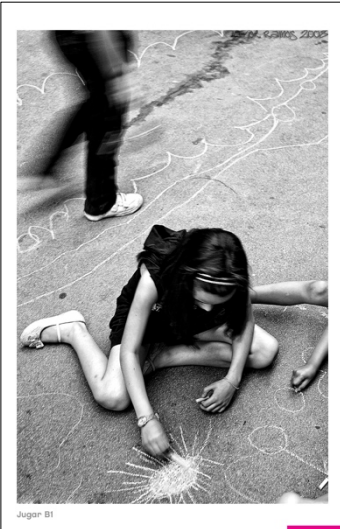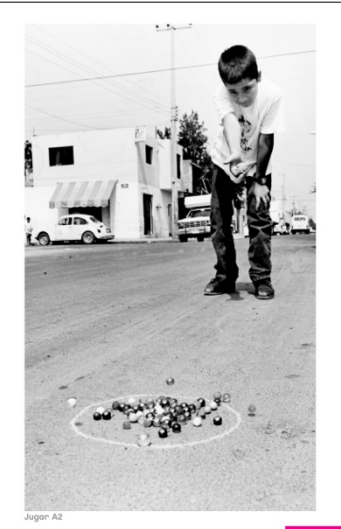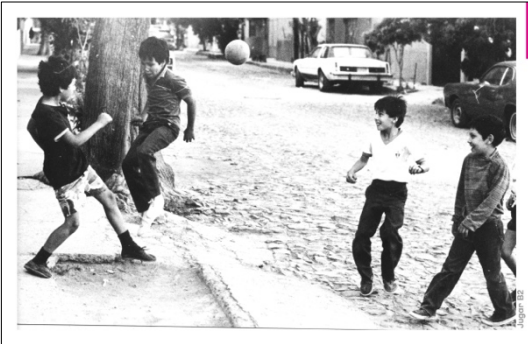
Photos used in the workshops about the dwelling practices

Habitar D1

Habitar B2

Habitar B1

Habitar B3

Habitar A2

Habitar A1

Habitar C1

Habitar D3

Habitar C2

Appendix 10:
Badge design

Appendix 11:
Disclaimer in book for schools

Placement of disclaimer

Disclaimer as placed in Spanish

EL **GRAN libro de la CIUDAD** ESCRITO POR LOS CHICOS

Concepto y Tallerista: **Lillian Llamas-Acosta**
Apoyo: **Ailed Jileta Bogarín & Víctor Llamas Acosta**
Diseño y Arte: **María Llamas**

Talleres realizados en enero-febrero de 2011 y enero de 2012, gracias al apoyo de:

Goldsmiths UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Prisa PINTURAS
Colores que cubren todo

CicloKids

UNIDAD DE SERVICIOS DE APOYO A LA EDUCACIÓN REGULAR ZAPOPAN 15

El material anexo fue realizado por alumnos de 4to. y 5to. grado de la Escuela Aprender a Ser, y al mismo tiempo (previa digitalización), será eventualmente utilizado para la elaboración de la tesis doctoral de Lillian Llamas-Acosta (Goldsmiths College, Universidad de Londres). No obstante ello, considero que dicho material podrá ser de mayor utilidad en cualquier actividad académica que con relación al mismo se lleve a cabo, inclusive la sola divulgación o publicación en los espacios de este centro escolar, estimo que serían alentadores o forjadores de ciudadanos más conscientes, o hasta de futuros artistas. No huelga decir que el material aludido, dasa las razones apuntadas, no podrá ni deberá ser utilizado con fines de lucro.

Se agradece a las escuelas *Ricardo Flores Magón*, *Elías Nandino Vallarta*, *José Vasconcelos*, *José Martiniano Hernández* y la *Escuela de Aprender a Ser*, por su amena disposición y valiosa colaboración en el ejercicio de los talleres **El Gran Libro de la Ciudad Escrito por los Chicos... en las Escuelas**.

Translation from the original disclaimer in Spanish

The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones

Concept and Workshop Leader: Lillian Llamas-Acosta
Support Staff: Ailed Jileta Bogarín & Víctor Llamas Acosta
Art and Design: María Llamas

Workshops held in January-February 2011 and January 2012, thanks to the support of:

[Sponsors Logos]

The included material was produced by children from [academic year] of the [name of the school]. This material (through digitalisation) will be eventually used in the research by Lillian Llamas-Acosta for her PhD thesis (Goldsmiths College, University of London). Nonetheless, I consider that this material will benefit any related scholar activity, including the single divulgation or distribution within the spaces of this educational institution. This will encourage or shape more conscious citizens, or even future writers. Needless to say, the aforementioned material shall not be used for any commercial purpose.

We thank the Schools *'Ricardo Flores Magón'*, *'Elías Nandino Vallarta'*, *'José Vasconcelos'*, *'José Martiniano Hernández'* and *'Escuela de Aprender a Ser'*, for their pleasant eagerness and valuable collaboration in the exercise of the workshops 'The Great Book of the City Written by the Little Ones… in the Schools'.

Appendix 12:
Children's drawings (examples)
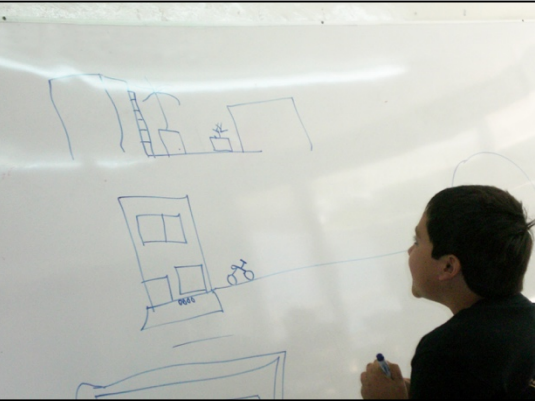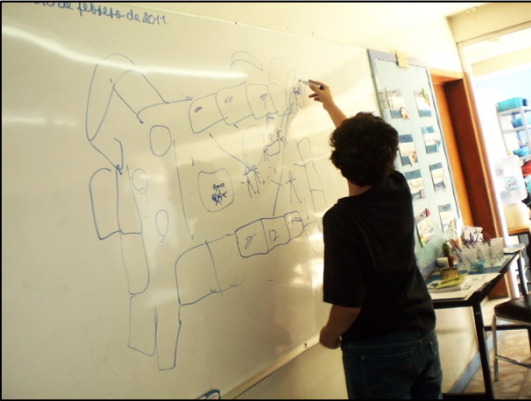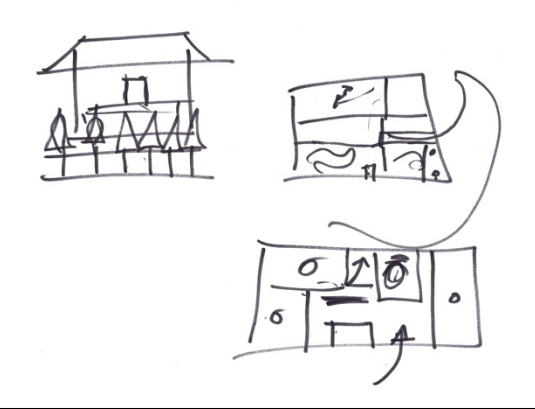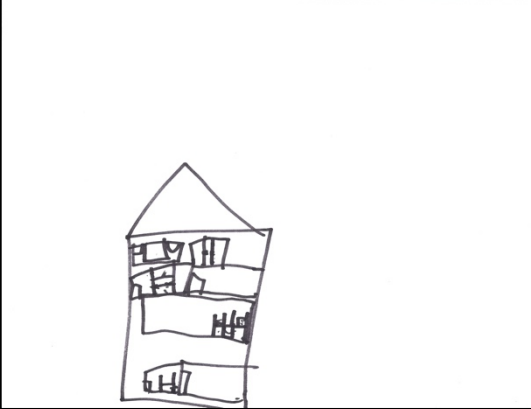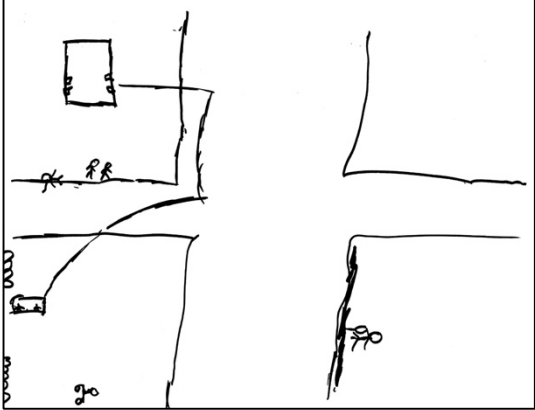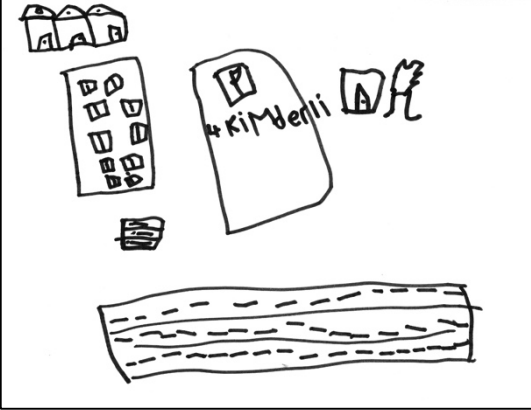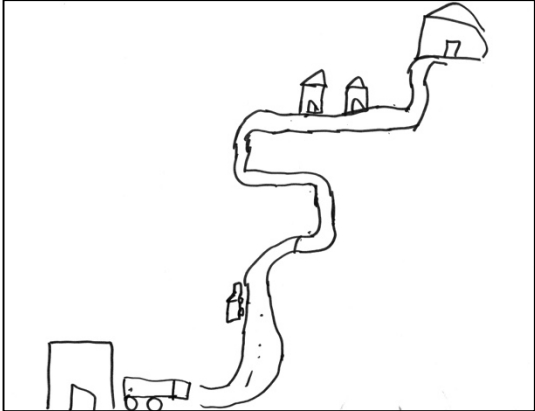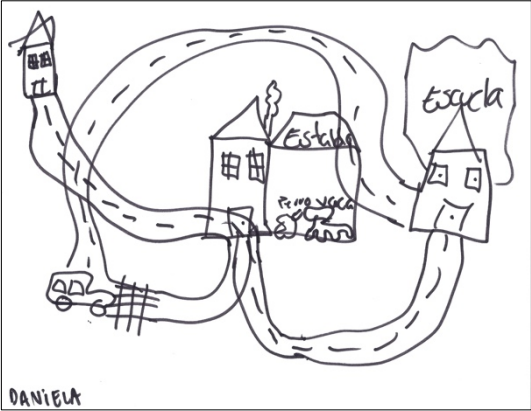
Appendix 13:
Photos of the workshops

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