

KIDS' ROOMS AS PLUS TERRITORY

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Abstract

It has become a condition for modern people to be 'on the move' (Bauman 1998, Rushdie 1995, Diken 1998). We move physically, mentally and, especially, virtually. The new global space and the use of new technologies undermine the old conception of Home. These days Home has to be revitalized. It is important, because at home we try tactics 'to home oneself'. An ability even more important than ever, because we move away from the hegemonic idea about *one* home to the tactics to feel at home, eventually in more mobile ways. I have examined how some children at the age 10-11 make themselves at home. How they domesticate, capture territories and places.

What do our children do to get place, space and rooms, which belong to them?
How do they *do* home?

'To home oneself' can be understood as a self-technology or a tactic (de Certeau, 1984), a tactic to make space around oneself on the places one stay. A way to commit oneself in between the well known and the un-known. It is a tactic one can use other places that at home, also in schools or in other kind of pedagogical relationships.

Key Words: Home; Homeliness; Children; Playrooms; Tactics.

Resumo

Tornou-se uma condição dos tempos modernos o "estar em movimento" (Bauman 1998, Rushdie 1995, Diken 1998). Nós movimentamo-nos fisicamente, mentalmente e, em particular, virtualmente. O novo espaço global e o uso das novas tecnologias minam a velha concepção de Lar. Nos dias de hoje o Lar tem de ser revitalizado. É importante porque em casa tentamos tácticas para "nos fazermos sentir em casa" [*to home oneself*], uma capacidade mais importante do que nunca,



dado que nos afastamos da ideia hegemónica de *um* lar, para a tática de nos sentirmos em casa, eventualmente através de meios mais móveis. Eu investiguei como é que crianças de 10-11 anos se fazem sentir em casa, como é que domesticam e capturam territórios e lugares. O que é que as nossas crianças fazem para conseguir lugar, espaço e salas que lhes pertencem? Como é que elas “fazem casa” [*do home*]?

“Fazer-se sentir em casa” pode ser entendido como uma auto-tecnologia ou como uma tática (de Certeau, 1984), uma tática para conseguir espaço à sua volta nos lugares em que se fica, um modo de se arrumar entre o bem conhecido e o desconhecido. Constitui uma tática que pode ser usada noutros espaços que não o do lar, como nas escolas ou noutro tipo de relações pedagógicas.

Palavras-chave: Lar/casa; Caseiro; Crianças; Espaços para brincar; Tática.



Foto 1 – Andy makes himself at home

A boy lies on his bed reading cartoons. On a shelf above his bed lies a pile of books, some DVDs, an alarm clock and other bits and pieces. The shelf is blue, one of the walls is yellow, the other white. On the yellow wall one can just make out a



map of the world, along with some green stars and something that look like a diploma. The sheets are checked. What is this boy doing aside from reading? He is in bed. Making himself comfortable. Doing nothing. He is in his room, in bed. Making himself at home. We are dealing with homing or 'homing oneself'.

The French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard examines the poetics of space through the very concrete and local. The space is woven closely together with the experience of a particular room and not least, in a particular room. According to Bachelard human beings think in space; but in a physical shape, in its locality and placement. A place can be both the starting point and the goal. A place can be linked to histories, woven into memories, surrounded by an aura which makes an ordinary place seem unique to an individual, and cannot therefore be grasped by standard categories. There are public places, such as malls, schools, stations, cafés and the street; semi-public places, such as offices and workshops; personal places, such as the home; private and intimate places, such as the bedroom or the toilet and secret places, such as a cave or other hiding places. All of these kinds of places are located. In addition to these located places we possess utopian places, dream places, zero places, and dissolved places.

As the Chinese geographer Yi-Fu Tuan notes, space and place are interwoven. Events can take place in a specific space. Space is the place for events. Space is, however, quite abstract and extensive (wide world space). When space becomes well known or is made into one's 'own,' it is transformed into place. Not to closed places, but well-known places (Tuan, 1977). As human beings we are located. To be is to exist somewhere. Our bodies are always located, also when we move in cyberspace. Whatever we do, we do it from somewhere. Placement is necessary to fold out in space. One of the spaces we transform into our own is the home.

The house is located one place and is the frame that makes home possible. The house may consist of a living room, a kitchen, a basement, a toilet, a kid's room etc. Each of these spaces has a particular status as a space towards which memories and narratives gravitate. We invest ourselves differently in the different rooms in the house, because home and living are more than the building. The home it is also sounds, smells, colours, temperatures, experiences of taste, and other people who also are included in this place, in the same space. The home is a kind of cave, in which one can daydream, where one's ideas about the world can be stored and developed, from which one leaves for the world and to which one always returns. Place is more than a position, more than a place; it is a 'where', somewhere one take care of things, somewhere one is familiar with. It is a structure charged with meaning.



Moreover, it is a social and cultural institution. The home is a meeting place for social gatherings, an expression of the personality and lifestyle of the family. It is the place for lived relations, both the affective as well as the elementary physical, and a key to understanding the relationship between materiality and sociality.

Places are and places influence their inhabitants. A place – a ‘here’ – is a specific territory, which acts as a delimitation and a particular focal point. But it is also a space where many sense impressions are made, where capacity can be felt, and where a basic part of the spatial organization of social life takes place.

On the concrete level, space and place are connected. One has to transform or clear place to get space: a space to be in, walk in, breathe in, be a body in. We look for the fullness of space and will not be content with regarding the space of life (the concrete places) as empty and low-quality. We are fond of spaces that are full of life. They do not need to be large spaces, but space is needed. Home begins by bringing some space under control, by capturing territories and by making places where events can happen.

The home is a mixture of place, space and an atmosphere. Home is within us, and we are in it, and our childhood home has the power to both invoke memories and inspire dreams. According to Bachelard:

“I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another. In the life of man, the house thrusts contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being.” (“The Poetics of Space”, 1958, p. 7)

The place is highly in focus – the home – as the first territorialization. This is where one’s world started, or what Edmund Husserl termed the sedimentary meaning. ‘The first place’ is decisive. Bachelard sets focus on the house where we are born. *The first house. The first home. The first territory.* Magic or epiphany radiates from here. Children of today in Denmark probably do not consider home ‘the first place’. The great majority have grown up in a mixture of home and day care institutions. They have not had the possibility of experiencing home as ‘the first territory’. To them, home has been one territory among several since they were very young (in Denmark most children start to go to day care centres at age ½-1 year,



Winther 1999). This change might lead to the belief that their experiences of 'the first place' must be different. That somehow it might not be 'the first place' that carries the magic, but rather the place or the contents of the place or even the possibilities offered in the place. Moreover, the question is whether 'the first place' should be 'the first' - or whether, to a higher degree, it is the place that manifests itself as a manifest place. Still the childhood home will be with us, and be a part of our ability to inhabit. The primary experience of home is a key experience, and when it is given, this experience rises above the house and the concrete home, and becomes a prism of much further reach; a prism that has the capacity to move in and out of the past and the future.

At home the tactic of inhabiting or of 'homing oneself' is practiced.

How does one do this kind of homing? How do we capture territories in our own home? What do our children do to get places, spaces and rooms that belong to them? I have examined how children aged 10-11 make themselves at home. How they domesticate, capture territories and places. At age 10-11 they are still kids, but so big that they move around in their surroundings and in and out of the home. In Denmark children's lives are organized in such a way that young school kids spend two-four hours every day at after school centres. After third grade they can choose to join a youth club without much supervision. A lot of kids chose not to join these clubs, but prefer to go other places (walk around in malls, in sports clubs) or back home. They start their own domestic life, often in a house without any grown-ups (who are usually still at work). Until now the children have primarily been at home together with parents, other grown-ups or older siblings. Now the home opens up as a new possible space.

In at age 10-11 they are now *in-betweeners* between being children and youths. They are neither children, who go along with their parents to and from everything, or teenagers, who want to do everything on their own, but tween-agers. They are beginners. Not absolute beginners at being part of a home, but a lot of them will capture the home as 'homers'. The home is still something new; it is not yet a matter of course or a routine. At the same time, they have already experienced many years of being, playing, eating, sleeping etc somewhere other than at home. The children have at age 10-11 a number of experiences to draw on in relation to *not* being at home. My interest has been to discover how these kinds of homers 'do home'; in other words, how they use and do not use the home place.



To Fix Home

But how can this be explored? One of my ways to do it was to select 24 children (12 boys and 12 girls) and give them a disposable camera for two weeks. They were asked to take pictures of 1) “home” and 2) “feeling at home”. Then the cameras were returned, the films developed, and the photographs were used as the starting points of interviews. My reasons for using this method were several: first, having a camera at hand does something to a person. When taking pictures with a camera one sees the existing world as a landscape from which pictures are to be picked out. It becomes possible to fix details, to arrange certain objects, to permit a glimpse of a personal world, and, at the same time, to allow others to see a fixed fragment of everyday life. It may also provide the power and opportunity to describe what you wish for or dream about. The photographs become both a statement as such and something that acts as a guide or agenda for the subsequent interview. The researcher must adapt herself and her semi-structured questions to what becomes possible in continuation of the photographs and the stories they tell. Furthermore, this procedure gives the children some security in an otherwise unusual situation. The children bring a bit of their world with them. The agenda is, though not set, at any rate influenced - maybe even directed - by the material. It becomes possible to fix details and expose motifs that are otherwise difficult to explain. The pictures offer the children another language, or support and open up for possible narratives (Rasmussen 1999, Winther 2002).

I accumulated almost 350 photos and taped 24 hours of interviews. The vast majority of children took pictures of the same thing. Not identical photos, but series of the same motifs. It is thought-provoking to see so many photos of beds, so many photos of dining tables, of television sets and computers. The great majority of the children have pictures of their best friends and their pets. A few have taken pictures of their parents, and slightly more of their sisters and brothers. Very few have photographed the house they live in from the outside, and even fewer, the surrounding *outdoor* areas. Almost all of them have taken pictures of the computer and/or the television set. There are also a handful of pictures of wood-burning stoves. Empty rooms, empty kitchens and empty dining tables are conspicuous. It is as if the pictures arrange themselves according to a structure in spite of my wish not to see the individual child’s statements structurally. They are, if not stereotypes, then at any rate part of a kind of repetition. It is characteristic that they always go into the house with the camera. Many have photographed the entrance of their one-family house or the door of the flat they live in. Then they have moved about indoors more or less



systematically catching and fixing their home. In addition, they have arranged places for the picture, which, probably, are the places where they feel at home: in bed, under the sheets. Several have placed themselves on a sofa wrapped in a blanket.

There is a marked difference between the sexes in how they photograph themselves in their bedrooms. The boys asked others (siblings or parents) to photograph them alone in the room or in front of the computer or the TV set (like the boy on the first photo, who lay in the bed reading). The girls have chosen to show themselves in the room together with best friends or siblings. There are no photos of girls in front of a computer or a TV, but the girls have both TV and computers in their bedrooms. The hardware is placed in the background together with many other things. It has no separate status, and the argument is: "It's ugly!" The girls have taken photos of a lot of small things in the room: beds, posters, desks and knick-knacks, but also friends, placed in the middle of everything. The boys' aesthetics code is apparently different. They have photographed computers, mobile telephones and television sets in isolation. Close up and not in the room.



Foto 2 – Peter's computer landscape



Foto 3 – One of the TV-sets

It is striking how many things there are in the rooms, how filled up they are. Not exactly chaos, but lived or inhabited space, and some places, mess.



Foto 4 – Hannah's playroom



The Ultimate Own Territory

The kids's room is the child's ultimate own territory. Some of the kids have a key to the room, and lock up to prevent possible 'burglary' from the family. They decide over this place. One child shows me a photo and says:

Child: *This is my room.*

Ida: *A little bit messy?*

Child: Yes (laugh).

Ida: *That's normal?*

Child: *Yeah, there are always a lot of clothes on the floor.*

Ida: *Who has to tidy it up?*

Child: *I do.*

Ida: *Do you do it?*

Child: *Yes! Sometimes..... If not, Mum sometimes does it.*

I asked all of them about 'deciding'. Who decides where and where do they not decide? They all told me that they decide over their room. I asked if this goes for everything. "Yes" the answer was. "Even cleaning?" I asked, and they admitted, "No that's Mum's decision!" There is a limit to how much mess and dirt are allowed. Some places Mum do not want any mess at all; in other places Mum's limit can be reached, and then the mess has to be cleaned up. Most of the kids do the cleaning on their own. But the mother set the limit. In spite of this interruption from primarily the mother, the kids feel that they own their rooms, even if they share the room with their siblings – they still talk about the room as if they are the owner.

The Bed

The bed is seen again and again in the photos. The children say that the bed is where they feel most at home. Here it is safe, warm and cosy. One of the children says:

Child: *This is my bed. I love it. Mostly when I'm there I feel good. Because then we sit on the bed instead of standing, and we talk there (...) The bed is a very wonderful and comfortable place. I feel most safe in my bed, and you know...*

Ida: *Feeling safe is connected with your bed?*

Child: *Yes. In my bed I can hide, cosy up with my friends or we can pull up the duvet and tell each other secrets.*



Foto 5 – The bed as a cosy place

The children themselves appear in many of the strips of pictures. Almost all of them have made one or several self-portraits. They have chosen to appear with their physical subjectivity at home. Their persons, their physical appearances, and their bodies are important in the children's ideas of a home and of feeling at home. They are standing, sitting or lying down in the room. But they have also tried to capture something else. The many beds, the many messy rooms, and the pictures of teddy bears point at attempts to fixate ways of putting your own mark on things, manifesting yourself as an individual and reproducing something safe. The bed is a safe place, a base.

It is like "Little Nemo" from the comic strip *Little Nemo – Adventures in Slumberland*¹. In the comic strip, Nemo is a nice and civilized boy. His vice is that he always falls out of bed or disturbs the adults when he sleeps and dreams. From his bed Nemo conquers the world and the kingdom. The bed (his home) is together with him everywhere. Moveable – but homelike. Whether the bed is moveable back home with 'my' 24 kids, I do not know; but in any case, they stress the bed as a very central place, a place to feel at home and furthermore 'to home oneself'.

¹ Winsor McCay, strip in 'New York Herald' 1905-1911.

'The Small'

Time after time Bachelard emphasizes that it is exactly space that contains the possibilities for dreams and for the worlds of imagination. To Bachelard entering a room is an opening. The room calls for action, for recollection, for tranquillity. In "Childhood in Berlin around 1900" (written between 1926 and 1938) Walter Benjamin circulates around a lot of small, in-between things or places: loggias, bureaus, needlework baskets, the telephone, the staircase, doorknobs, a certain way of creaking, a certain mood. The magic of these small or in-between things, have the ability to hide or open up the landscape of memories. In Bachelard's and Benjamin's works these detailed descriptions of 'the small things' in and around the home are epiphanic. From the home (as the first territory) – the world starts, and it is from here one prepares to meet the world.

The 'small things' do not appear in needlework baskets in the oeuvre of 'my' kids. That would be too old fashioned. Today the 'small things' can be observed on the computer. The computer is a kind of 'arm' out of the home. When you chat or surf on the net out in cyberspace you are still located at home. But all the photos of the hardware can also be a way to photograph hidden thoughts – e.g. in a kind of diary, a very private thing where one writes to oneself.



Foto 6 – Sweet is one way to home oneself



Other 'small' elements are sweets. Sweets are homey. One child explains his photo of the bag of sweets in this way: *Really, I feel most at home when I'm lying on my bed in front of the TV eating sweets.*

Another child tells: *These are licorice allsorts. I can't feel at home without sweets.*

Ida: *Sweets are important?*

Child: *Yes!*

Ida: *Why?*

Child: *Because sweets are the best. It's cosy.*

Their rooms are the places where the children most of all do home. In here 'they home oneself' powerfully. The children also show their teddy bears. Exhibiting your teddy bears when you are 11 years old also indicates a fixation with the familiar. Beds, sweets, teddy bears, TV. The bed can also be graphed as an infantile projection, as the place where the body calms down in a kind of ocean. Warm, cosy. One lets oneself be absorbed and absorbs at the same time. The wood-burning stove also absorbs. TV, sweets, sofa, bed and hearth – one eats the candy or the food (if one is allowed to eat in the sitting room or in the bedroom), just as the fire consumes the wood. Homey comfort, consuming, total wrapped up. One lies softly and comfortably in pillows and duvets inside the Holiest of Holies - eating. The hominess (das heimliche) can transform into the uncanny or un-hominess (das unheimliche) (Freud 1918), and very concretely, into fatness. Maybe the bed and the teddy bears also indicate that the 11-year-olds are still children. The bed appears as the safe nest, where several of the children have placed themselves and have even settled down between the covers. The nest protects. Closed like a seashell. Gaston Bachelard describes the house as that kind of shell: a seashell that both protects and closes around you and at the same time, contains the dreams and the possibilities of the world of imagination.

There are also rules for the kid's rooms that must be dealt with. Cleaning up has been pointed out as a central theme. Immediately all the children think that they decide 100% over their room, where there can be chaos although the rest of the home has rules. But there is still a trump. MUM. It is not debatable. Only one kid complains about his interfering mother. Another rule is about access to the room. The door is a threshold that separates the included from the excluded, the well-known from the unknown. To knock on the door, close it, lock up, just go in are central



themes. The door and the doorstep are thresholds to the home, like the front door: thresholds into the holy room of the child. The bathroom is also a holy space, a place where one can retire and obtain peace; but the sacredness of the kid's room has another quality. In this room kids can establish a lot of other rules. Mess is something familiar and self-inflicted. Not tidying up suggests autonomy over a domain.

The children do a move from the home as such (the shared space), to their own room (own territory), into bed (holy space). In their room they make the decisions. Exercising one's self-decision is a tactic for homing oneself. A key action is to be able to go to the kitchen, grab some sweets, and bring the sweet into the room.

One child says: *In your own home you just take sweets. You can't do that other places.*

Maybe the kid's room is the most obvious place to latch on to for the children, when they want to show the place they feel most at home. On the other hand, the kid's room is the most superfluous place in the home. What the children do in this room they can do other places. The sweets can be eaten in the living room, and one can sleep on a sofa and play computer in the office. The function of the children's bedroom is to some extent like a store, from which one can roll out and back in again. This is even more the case with very small children, who do not stay in their rooms; their rooms are storage rooms and maybe place to sleep. For teenagers or tween-agers their room becomes the place where they can be alone together with their friends. 'My' kids took photos of this. The materials in this room, the posters on the wall, the mess and the friends. They have a powerful consciousness of ownership. This room is their territory. It is an extra territory. They have this territory even more (plus) than anything else. In here they make demarcations. The way the children do this territorializing – homing themselves – is by decoration. They put up posters (horses, pop stars, football stars). They decorate with fans and lava-lamps, influenced by current trends.

Moreover, it happens through practice: they watch TV, play on their computer or lie in bed reading. The practice could have been done other places, but they like to do it this place. To be in their room and to feel at home in their room is connected to a special way to transform it physically. Their room is the plus territory, Home No. One, but at the same time this room is the least defined space because the kid's room does not yet have a history or a clear functionality. We do not yet have a fixed idea of what this space is and could be – except being 'my own'.



Two Homes

9-5, 7-7, 2-12 are not results of soccer matches but proportional figures often used in divorced families. They tell how long children from broken families stay with Mum and Dad respectively. Some of the children I worked with came from broken families and therefore they had to relate to more than one home. But is that possible? Is it possible to have more than one home? Is it crucial how many days you are each place?

One of the children replies when I ask if one can have more than one home

Child: *I think so*

Ida: *How? Tell me about it.*

Child: *It depends on how you feel at home, how you feel safe – I think.*

Ida: *Feeling safe is important?*

Child: *Yes, I think feeling safe is the most important thing. Home is a place where one can feel safe. Where you trust each other, where you are able to say what you think, and the others understand you.*

Ida: *Is the place – at home – important?*

Child: *No*

Ida: *Can it also happen in the school?*

Child: *Yeah...*

Security and being able to rely on someone are important. More than one home is possible; but it is complicated, as is made clear when she tells me about her father's home, where she stays every second weekend. I ask if this home also is her home. She replays:

Child: *I don't think so, because I'm not there very often. For many years I did not see my father at all. They got divorced before I turned one. And I started to see him regularly when I was six. He was out of my life for a long time, and therefore I don't feel at home in his home.*

Ida: *What kind of place is his home then?*

Child: *Just a place where I am. Not my home.*

Another child lives equally long in both places (with Mum or Dad), and therefore officially has two homes.

Ida: *Both places are your home. Do you have a favourite?*



Barn: *No, not really – I like living with my mum, but on the other hand, I prefer my father's home, because we have more space there. They live in a house and I have my own room. I don't have that back home in my mother's home.*

Having her own territory means that she may prefer one place rather than another. But she doesn't declare that one place is more home than the other. More than one child says that it is possible to have more than one home, and home is not the same as feeling at home. The majority explain that home is connected to the place where they live. Together with your friends you can feel at home in the friends' homes or other places. But that's not home. A distinction must be made between home and feeling at home. Thus, the kids often feel at home both at home and away from home. To be together with your family (on holiday etc.) means that you feel at home with them at your side, and therefore you 'just' have to capture new places. The home ground is brought along, and you do not have to worry about that. How long it takes to capture new territories depends on more than one thing: are you experienced in doing this? Is it first time or have you done it several times? If you are experienced you have certain tactics. One of the children has moved eight times. Two or three times before the parents broke up, and several times since the divorce. One this background the child it is able to state clearly that it takes him three months! Three months before everyday life become everyday, and three months before he has been at the place so often that it feels homey.

Time is essential, and furthermore, it is important to have – or to be able to have – a friend at the new place. One child explains this way:

Child: *At my father's place I can do what I want.*

Ida: *Why?*

Child: *Because there I can be on my own when I want – I can just go outside. And my father and my step mum – she has four children. Two of them stay there permanently and two of them have a job. I spend a lot of time together with all of them.*

Ida: *So, you feel at home out there, even if you don't stay there?*

Child: *Yes!*

Ida: *You have two homes? One together with your father and another with your mother?*

Child: *Yes.*

Ida: *When your dad moved out there did it take a while for you to transform it into your home?*



Child: *A while, but not too long, because it was a lot of fun staying there, and I got a lot of friends out there.*

The children circulate around the well-known, safe places, places where they are often, and spaces where they are part of the decision-making. Furthermore, they mention the importance of being able to establish friendships or relate to siblings, half-siblings or friends. The number of days they spend in each place is not a theme. 'Often' can be every second weekend, but it can also be 50% of daily life. The number of days does not seem to be what is important, but rather the way the time is used, and the range of possibilities in the different places.

Exit

We understand through our spatial knowing. According to Immanuel Kant space is an a priori form of acknowledgement. We think in space, we cannot remove space, but we can remove the things in space. At the same time, we do something in special places. 'What', 'where' and 'how' are constantly at work: "Where is homing done?", "How do we home ourselves?" I could ask. Or, as I asked at the beginning of the chapter: How is this kind of inhabitation? How do we conquer these kinds of tactics in our own homes? How can our children get some space and place that belong to them?

Places where something happens are not pure. There we are surrounded by rules and systems, and the space itself and the codes make some practices possible, and others impossible. Materialization happens in specific places, and these spaces symbolize home and the possibility of feeling at home. This can be observed around the dining table, on the toilet, in the way the kid's room is used etc. In the space it can happen, 'it happens', being at home is possible, but one does not necessarily home oneself. Home is the physical place, where one is placed bodily. Your address is a way to define yourself – you have a place. A place, a locality, which can be the starting point for your travels out into the galaxy. But having an address is no guarantee that you will feel at home in exactly that place. It is necessary that the place has space if one is to be able to feel at home.

To live and inhabit is not the same. Most of us live, but we do not necessarily manage 'to inhabit'. To inhabit is to home oneself, a tactic for making the space around oneself one the places one stays; a way to commit oneself in between the well known and the unknown. The unknown is everywhere. You do not have to travel away and return later, but we all have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that out is



also at home. Therefore, we have to make ourselves at home all the time. When we are at home and when we are outside our homes. When we are back home, in our place, the place is not a safe close cave, but a place where we get connected with the world out there. We are in a changeable world, where borders and nations, the relation between private and public, tactile and virtual change. As modern people (both children and adults) we are able to log on the net, we are online, and in the spirit (and most of all, in the fingers) we are mobile and on the way out there – even if we are located in bed.

But if that is the case, has the importance of home and a specific place vanished? My answer is no. When I turn the normal understanding of home into a problem, my intention is not to remove home, but to revitalize it. It is important, because at home we try out tactics for 'homing' ourselves, an ability that is more important than ever, because we are moving away from the hegemonic idea about one's home to the tactics of feeling at home, eventually in more mobile ways. The children I worked with 'home themselves' in their own rooms. They decorate the place. They put up different kinds of echoes on the walls. Pop stars, football idols. Things they collect fill up the shelves and drawers. In their rooms they listen to their favorite music, often identical to the music they all hear – but not identical with the family. In their rooms they practice transforming space to place.

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