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Drama-based Methods in Urban Settings

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Abstract

A fruitful way to understand the development of a neighbourhood is to get in touch with the local people, who have good knowledge of their environment. In this study drama-based methodology proves helpful in revealing inhabitants' feelings and experiences and in providing citizen-centred experience-based knowledge. This research is part of the 'Urban Studies and Metropolitan Policy' Metropolitan Region Research and Cooperation Programme. In autumn 2010 four applied theatre workshops were held involving 55 6th graders, a drama instructor and a researcher. The workshops were organized in the city of Espoo, Finland. Besides testing the method, the aim of the research was to gather information on children's independent mobility and children's perceptions of their environment and threats they perceive to exist in these spaces. Previous experiences and research of the topic and using drama methods were also utilized. The original idea for using the applied drama method has its roots in previous research work done in the Degree Programme in Performing Arts at the Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.
The drama method provides a constructive effect for the community in itself while serving as a method for data collection. It encourages the participants to take contact and interact with each other, which can generate socially and emotionally enriched information.The group composition and drama instructors' know-how are central for the success of a workshop. Providing experience-based knowledge, the drama method works best in case specific and local contexts. The drama method lies close to focus group research, and it fits well in urban studies, where the tradition of versatile applied methods exists. The method should be further developed in terms of analysing the results. Also triangulation and organising comparison focus group without drama flavours could enhance the reliability of the results. The drama method has the potential to map emotions and feelings related to a place.

Children in Urban Environment

The movement routines of children develop in the terms of their environment, and individuals balance between independent mobility and the feeling of safety. The western tradition conceives children in a two-folded way. In Rousseau'an tradition children are thought to present purity and innocence, which must be protected against the roughness of the world of adults. On the other hand children are seen as disturbance and evil in the disciplinary world of adults. Both grounds, innocence and unruliness have been used as a reason for paternalizing the children. (Valentine 2001, 49-50; Matthews 2003; Aitken 2001, 172) The needs of children became an indicator of society's well-being in the 1970's along Bill Bunge's researches. Nowadays, more attention is paid to children's autonomy and their legal rights to have their voices heard, and urban child friendliness has become an important topic in the urban studies (Aitken 2001; O'Brien 2003). The children are slowly becoming more visible in the public sector as well. For example in Finland, in year 2002 many communes established their official child policies, and in Sweden in year 2001 the transport administration decided to import the children's point of view in all of its policies. (Aarnikko 2002)

On the other hand children's independent mobility is being restricted, especially in big cities. As a result of densification of the city structure public places for children have become rare in western countries. (Nordström & Björklid 2004; Prezza 2004) Another threat for children's independent mobility is the increasing usage of private cars and the conveyance of children. In this vicious circle the amount of traffic is increasing, which worsens the quality of the environment and decreases the benefits related to children's independent mobility. (se eeg.. Helsingin ympäristön tila: teemakatsaus 2/2009; Strandell 2004, 124). Skills related to the environment are crucially important for the identity formation and becoming independent. Everyday motion is vital also for

physical well-being as well as for motorical and social development. The freedom of movement correlates positively with children's social behaviour. (Nordström & Björklid 2004; Askelo 2007; Ilmonen 1992; Prezza 2004) Finnish children are relatively independent movers by bicycle, foot or public transportation. They start to expand their territory around the age of 11. (Britschgi et al. 2007)

Places and the built environment shape people's perceptions, cooperation, and feelings of belonging or alienation (Zukin 1991). Places are not mere locations; they are places for someone and for some purpose. The meaning of a place depends on how well it serves one's interests. This is also true with children: in their activities the environment, which they feel suitable for themselves, becomes especially visible (Raittila 2008, 23). The politicality of local identities becomes visible especially in the urban context, which may offer both positive chances and ground for conflicts. (Buttimer 1978, 14–19; Shields 1991, 5–6; Valentine 2001, 205) Power structures and unequal allocation of privileges have an effect on the formation of spatial practices. (Aitken 2001, 170; Zukin 1991; Shields 1991) Places can be seen as processes, where different definitions and meanings of the nature of the space compete (Aitken 2001, 171; Massey 1994, 155). The economic geography of a city is formed mainly in terms of working inhabitants. Locating the people who are outside working life (like pensioners, unemployed, or disabled people, children) and making their spaces visible is important, since many problems thus become visible in a personal level. (Aitken 2001)

In families with children, the family members are interconnected, and the mobility needs of children have an effect on adults, too. In the region of Helsinki 15 % of the daily travel of the 30–44-year old people consist of chauffeuring others (Kalenoja ym.2009, 28). Concern for the safety of children has increased their chauffeuring. Most dissatisfied in the traffic security are the families with small children. Reduction of the use of private cars is considered as a political goal especially for ecological reasons (see e.g. Strandell 2004; Uudenmaan hyvinvointistrategia 2008, 14; Helsingin ympäristön tila: teemakatsaus 2/2009, 8). Enhanced use of private cars is criticized also due to health problems like increasing obesity and a lack of exercise. The same reasons are used to rationalize the use of public transportation. (Britschgi ym. 2007, 21; Mackett 2003, 329) The movement routines of children and young people have long-term effects in the future, the national health and the amount of traffic. (Britschgi ym. 2007, 79) Public places which offer opportunities for free movement, interaction and role formation are important for children and young people. Municipal administration should take their opinions seriously, because they are the voice of the future (Chawla & Malone 2003, 138). An environment which is suitable for children is usually good and safe for other parts of the population too (Wiik 2005).

Experience-based Knowledge

Due to its intuitive character the applied theatre method is suitable for the researching people's experiences. According to Pia Bäcklund, the notion of experience-based knowledge has similarities with the term tacit knowledge, referring to non-transferable knowledge which is difficult to make explicit. Though experimental knowledge is subjective and naturally inborn in the same way, it differs from tacit knowledge in being actively brought as a part of public policies. Experimental knowledge is lived, experienced and shared in people's everyday lives. It is based in people's own experiences and interpretations of the causality relations. It is factual to the person who has it, even when someone else would question it. (Bäcklund 2009, 44) Juha Perttula suggests that experience can rise from information, feeling, and intuition, as well as from belief (Perttula 2008, 137). Maija Faehnle defines empirical knowledge as people's values, needs, experiences and meanings related to certain issues. (Faehnle 2009, 85)

Experience-based knowledge is social and cultural by nature. The culture and public discussion in the society form what we find precious and valuable, and experimental knowledge also includes common interpretations of for example good environment. (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, 2; Bäcklund 2009, 44-45) Arts, images and imaginary things have their unique effect in developing the inner world, too. That is the reason why experiences should not be held commensurable for everybody. A person can make different interpretations of things in different situations. Every moment builds on the previous one and imagination of the future. Experiences form a continuous stream, which never takes the same form twice. (Bäcklund 2009, 45Vadén 2001, 96; Clandinin & Connelly 2000, 19) A the same time knowledge, experience, and research are intersubjective in the way that one can open them up to others, but they a not necessarily universally applicable. (Vadén 2001, 104). The way of knowing is rather different than for natural sciences, where there is a demand for repetition and objectivity. (Vadén 2001, 95-96)

In urban planning, one must face the fact that every citizen has their own visions of good everyday life and how it can be accomplished. Bäcklund emphasizes the subjective nature of experience-based knowledge: therefore, the utilizing of experimental knowledge in public policies is only halfway through. (Bäcklund 2009, 43) According to Eija Hasu (2009), who has studied urban residential areas, experience-based knowledge is also needed besides expert knowledge. Urban planners need to predict the ways of using different spaces and areas, as well as processes in the social environment: mere expert knowledge is not enough. It's critical that planners understand the behaviour and needs of the citizens in order to minimize the conflicts related to the use of space. (Hasu 2009, 114) Experience-based knowledge is seen as a way of challenging to the experts' privilege to define a good city. (Bäcklund 2009, 46) Maija Faehnle emphasizes that different directions may have different expectations and visions of the role of the inhabitants. The objective observation and the collecting of experimental knowledge should both be seen useful in completing one another. (Faehnle 2009, 87-88) Bäcklund also states that the prerequisite for the utilization of experience-based knowledge is that in the decision making process, there is room for inter-subjective knowledge, and that its local meaning is not undervalued in terms of generalizability (Bäcklund 2009, 51)

Tere Vadén finds that the methodology and punctuality of the research play a central role when people's experiences are utilised in the research process. The research should partly deal with the question how participants' experiences and theoretical formulation affect one another. Different forms of experience should be allowed to question one another. Vadén acknowledges that academic scientific research potentially tends to colonialize other forms of experience. (Vadén 2001, 93-94) Methods for describing the experience and collecting the research data vary. The researcher must lead the participant to share his or hers own experiences, and not to interpret it in the research situation. The quality of the data does not relate strongly on the comprehensibility of the information, but rather on how truthfully participants are made to express their experiences that are crucial for the research. (Perttula 2008, 140-142)

Both Nordström & Björklid as well as Rasmussen & Smidt find that a child observes and collects information about his or her environment with his/her body. This physical bodily knowledge is typically difficult to put in words, and therefore alternative methods to collect data should be used. The children's whole picture of their environment consists of intertwined social, cultural and physical elements. Stuart Aitken is specialized in children's geographies, and he thinks that when growing up, people forget the art of playing with the environment. Donald Wonicott goes further in stating that when forgetting how to play, we also forget the ability to have dialogue and face contradictions. Play and theatre methods come close to one another as imagination-based actions. Especially with children, good results may be achieved with alternative methods of collecting

information. They are familiar with the world of physicality, play, and flinging oneself. (Rasmussen & Smidt 2003; Nordström & Björklid 2004; Krueger & Casey 2000; Aitken 2001)

Framing the Method

In the field of urban studies, versatile methods for collecting and analyzing data have been used. Questionnaires, interviews, SWOT -analyses, observing the inhabitants, and future workshops are popular methods. Drawing, guided walking tours, photographing and building miniatures may be used in describing the environment. Map-based methods are also common, and nowadays they are often combined with the internet. This has enabled the collection of information from many groups, and has made possible the fact that the answering no longer is time or place-related. (See e.g. Horelli et al. 2001.) One example of these is PehmoGIS or Soft GIS, a program with which inhabitants can tell about their experiences related to a place. The children can be also accustomed to argumentation and analyzing their environment. (Kanervo 2007, 6, 13) Every method has its pros and cons and triangulation is common. The choice of the used method should be done according to the research interest.

Applied theatre workshop adds its own flavour to these methods. In this research, it is categorized as an extended version of focus group discussion. This is justified because in focus group research the value is the special data produced via interaction between the participants. Focus group research has been used in social sciences, the health sector as well as in economics. Anu Valtonen describes the method as organized conversation, where a group of people has been invited to discuss a certain matter focused but freely for about two hours (Valtonen 2005, 223-7). The starting point is that the discussion is unstructured. The method has been utilized in describing and understanding different life experiences and in mapping people's opinions, needs and wishes. In usability and marketing research, the method has been used in creating new ideas, to make concepts and to evaluate. In these cases, the creative potential of the group, which is born in interaction of different views and comments, is utilized. Focus group research has also potential in enabling peer support. (Valtonen 2005, 226-7, 231; Vuorela 2005; Fern 2001)

Group discussion makes many obvious things visible. At the same time, several debatable conceptions may rise, which demand negotiation. (Valtonen 2005, 228, 235-6) The research interest has its effect on what kind of group is desirable. According to Fern, when unique information is sought, the most useful group is small and heterogeneous, but still demographically comparative. In these cases, subjective, personal unshared information may come forward. When the research aims to certainty, a bigger and cohesive group preferred, as it concentrates on shared knowledge. The homogeneity and cohesion of the group provides certainty about normative behaviour. This improves the quality of the results when everyday experiences and generalizability are important. The reliability and validity of the research are also affected by the number of groups. As well as in any other qualitative research, in focus group research one needs to pay attention to standard questions, independence of the answers, and representability of the sample. According to Fern, the generalizability is more connected to the choices made by researcher than to the method itself. (Fern 2001, 190)

Reporting the interactive situation is challenging. Like in any other qualitative material, only a part is taken forward. (Valtonen 2005, 240) Valtonen states that in an ideal situation everyone would take part in conversation. The participants may have different amounts of information and the talkative ones may dominate the situation, as well as the more silent ones might do so by remaining silent. Some might also be persuasive, which may affect the opinion of the whole group. In these

cases, the researcher must remain sensitive, concerning whether the attitude of the group is genuine or a result of the situation. (Fern 2001, 119, 190; Valtonen 2005, 235-6)

Art-based Methods and Applied Theatre

According to Diane Conrad, postmodernism has increased the use of applied methods in scientific research. The relationship towards truth and the production of knowledge has transformed from a traditional object-subject dichotomy towards a subject-subject-positioning, where the informants actively participate in the research process and the creation of knowledge. (Conrad 2004, 15) In the use of art based methods, too, the artist-centric view alters into a communal, participant-centered view. Instead of the creative personality of an artist, in the centre are the participants with their experiences. (Sánchez-Camus 2009, 347)

Art-based methods have been utilized in different phases of the research process for some time. In addition to theatre methods photographing, as well as written stories and even dance have, for example, been used. A common feature of these approaches is the aspiration towards intuition and sensitivity, and acknowledging the multifaceted nature of reality. (See e.g. Quinlan 2010, 119) Methods which utilize fiction in scientific research may raise doubts about the truthfulness and the objectivity of the results. Among scientific realm one tends clear the text from multi-interpretative elements in the name of clarity. (Haarsaager 1998, 61) According to McCarthy and Hughes, the art-based methods open up the research process into a more interactive direction. Written text may restrict the definition of the research problem in terms of the target group. Through more versatile expression, the human experience may be better and whole heartedly understood. In addition, the research process itself becomes more attainable when the participants have versatile means for telling about their experiences. The researcher's task is to verify the knowledge through triangulation, and by combining different views and sources. (McCarthy & Hughes 2004, 140)

According to McNiff, art-based research includes systematic testing and experimentation, which aims to gaining more information about life. The researcher using the method should describe the method so that the research could be repeated and could benefit other people, too. Developing the method might also be the primary goal of the research. (Mcniff 2008) The application of drama methods is based on a thought that knowledge accumulates in people in hidden ways. McCarthy and Hughes state that art-based methods enable reaching this knowledge, which is not fully consciousness or otherwise communicable.The art-based methods mediate a picture of a reality which is based on multiple interpretations, so that versatile picture of the reality and people's experiences is gained. (McCarthy & Hughes 2004, 142)

When using applied theatre methods, terms like applied drama, participatory theatre, or community theatre occur. The word "theatre" originates from an ancient Greek word which refers to looking or auditorium (theatron). "Drama" (drao) is related to dramatic work or ritual acts. According to Heikkinen, in the 1970's and 1980's, theatre referred to the interaction between actors and the audience, while drama referred to the experiences of the participants in general. The terms have been used one upon the other for some time, and confrontation between them is found fruitless. As Teerijoki & Lintunen notice, it's not important which concept one is accustomed to use, but to acknowledge the value of communal aesthetics and practical-theoretical drama work. (Heikkinen 2001; Teerijoki & Lintunen 2001)

Applied theatre is usually practised outside theatres, in informal places like day-care centres, schools, jails and community halls. With theatre, one can strive towards bigger change or bring out hidden stories of a community. With the term 'applied theatre', one refers to combining it to some other activity. Helene Nicholson compares theatre to, for example mathematics: one can commit it in a so-called pure form or apply it to other problem solving. (Prentki & Preston 2009) According to Teerijoki & Lintunen, the power within applied theatre lies in its temporality and spatiality, and in the communication of the immanent participants. Through dialogue, the participants are involved in the whole process. (Teerijoki & Lintunen 2001, 148; Sánchez-Camus 2009, 349) With the methods of applied theatre, the research process might gain pedagogical, political, or performative dimensions. (Teerijoki & Lintunen 2001; Conrad 2004)

According to Katri Mehto, the most important characteristics found among drama methods are operationality and interactivity. The matter under examination is transformed from mere talk into collective making. Mehto worked with HIIT (Helsinki Institute for Information Technology) in Drama project where user-centered product concept design methodology was combined with drama methods. The project was run 2004-2006 and it was a central part of the development work of drama methods conducted in Degree Programme in Performing Arts in Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences during the last ten years. According to Mehto, experience-based tacit knowledge in drama sessions settles on equal terms with cognitive knowledge. These sessions are a communicative situation, where knowledge, thoughts and feelings are mediated through different channels. Applied theatre forms a so-called third space, where interaction and convergence become possible. It is a place where memories and tacit knowledge are transformed into verbal form with dialogue and conceptualizing. In this process, knowledge becomes shared and explicit. (Mehto 2008,16-17)

Diane Conrad defines applied theatre (popular theatre) as a part of participatory action research. It includes sharing the research process and participant-based analysis of the topics. According to Conrad's experiences, the method enables the formation of a counter-narrative and a more versatile idea of the research topic for the researcher as well as for the participants. Conrad cites Fabian, according to whom certain kind of knowledge cannot be expressed otherwise than through action, acting or performance, while the knowledge about culture or social relations is performative rather than informative by nature. Conrad concludes that through performing one is allowed to be someone else, which provides new alternative knowledge, based on spontaneous, intuitive knowledge that is based on experiences. (Conrad 2004)

When one refers to applied theatre, it is usually separated from performance, where action takes place on the stage. The catharsis build up in a play liberates but simultaneously passivates spectators by outsourcing the action to the actors. The goal in applied theatre is instead to activate the participants and to look for different meanings together. (see e.g. Boal 2000; Heikkinen 2001) One of the central characters and developers of applied drama is Augusto Boal, who saw theatre as a political, transformative power. He wanted to empower the people who were in a subordinate position in the society and make disadvantages visible. His work leant on the thoughts of Bertol Brecht and Paulo Freire, and he wanted to encourage people to take a more active role in their lives and start a change. (Boal 2000, 155; Conrad 2004; Johansson 2010, 71) Nowadays there are many forms of applied theatre, like different forms of Boalian Theatre of the oppressed, theatre for development in Africa, British communal theatre, socio drama, and different psycho dramas or drama therapy. In our research the approach resembles the tradition of Theatre in Education (TIE), which was born in the 1960's. In the words of Teerijoki & Lintunen, the TIE approach makes the students actively take part in the activities by considering different choice situations and problems. The form of interaction may vary, and it combines theatre, educational drama and simulation. (Teerijoki & Lintunen 2001, 140-142; Conrad 2004; Prentki & Preston 2009)

Applied drama has become especially popular in education, and several researches about its benefits have also been conducted. Drama has been used in problem solving in mathematics, where the social interaction and emotional aspect of learning improved through self-reflection. (Chaviaris & Kafoussi 2010). It has also been used in geometry (Duatepe-Paksu, A., Ubuz, B. 2009), adverbs and language teaching (Çokadar, H., Yilmaz, G.C, 2010; O'Gara, P. 2008), ecology (Şimşek, T. ym, 2010). In these and other researches drama is found to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom, enhancing social interaction and improving learning results. It may, however, acquire more time than traditional teaching methods. With drama methods, the learning is aspired to connect to the pupils own life and experiences, which creates more permanent results in learning.

Applied theatre methods also have among other things, been used in the work for HIV/AIDS awareness among others in Africa (mm. Kafewo 2008; Middelkoop ym. 2006). Officials and representatives of different organizations praise the emotional and communicative effect of the method. At the same time, theatre is seen as a softer means than campaigns which are numerally, biomedically or economically measurable, and its impressiveness is not widely known. Consequently, despite its merits, the method often lacks political mandate, and it is not recognized in the field of official support or politics. (Johansson 2010, 70–71) Applied theatre has also been used in the field of integration of immigrants. Research of a multicultural theatre project conducted in Helsinki revealed that the method improved integration among the group through interaction, and also by offering the immigrants visibility and a channel to express their willingness to take part in Finnish society. The project expressed the need for reciprocity: the immigrants hoped that they would be seen as enriching subjects in the Finnish culture instead of mere objects. (Westerling & Karvinen-Niinikoski 2010) Also in Norway theatre methods were used in immigration centers for

making immigrants' experiences visible. The method proved successful in offering place-bound people a liberating possibility to meet and establish social relationships. (Horhagen ja Fosephsson 2010)

Drama Workshops

The empirical part of this research was conducted in the Metropolitan Area of Helsinki, in Espoo. Altogether 4 drama workshops were held in Tapiola and Espoonlahti, which are both regional centres of Espoo. The average income is a little higher in Tapiola than in Espoonlahti, and there are also slightly more detached houses in Tapiola (Helsinki Region statistics 2010). These areas resemble one another in terms of public transportation: there is no railway traffic, a metro is planned within next ten years, and currently buses are the only public transportation form. In Espoonlahti, at the Maininki elementary school one class attended two workshops, and in Tapiola, at the Jousenkaari elementary school two classes attended, and one workshop was held for each group.

The central themes of the drama workshops were formed on the basis of the research concerning the independent mobility of the children in the city. I formed a recapitulation of the former research and discussed it with the drama instructor with whom the workshops were planned. The interest in the workshops was especially about the feeling of security/insecurity and the freedom of mobility and autonomy of children in the city. The workshops were recorded.

In the drama workshops the following commonly known practices were used and applied (Owens & Allan 2002, 26-34):
- Games and playing are useful in focusing the attention and imagination, as well as waking up the group or calming it.
- A continuum or opinion line visualizes and makes different opinions in the group physical. A line is drawn across the room, one end referring to' yes', the other end to 'no'. Participants react to different arguments by taking their place on the line.
- Mantle of an expert is task-centred exercise, which creates commitment to the situation. The participants are advised to act as experts of different areas.
- Role on the wall. One participant stands as a model and her body lines are sketched on the wall to present an imaginary character. Facts and characteristics of this character are made up together and written around the character. The character may be used in other exercises as well (in our case in the process drama).
- Statues or living statues visualize the participants' perceptions. Rest of the group may interpret the statue, and this practice may lead the reactions of participants towards more abstract thinking
- Improvisation in small groups enables presenting the participants own interpretations of the given situation. The act can also form a basis for discussion.
- Process drama is often an educational practice. It is a longer story, where participants are made to consider the topic from a certain point of view (Hertzberg 2003).

The information gathered in the workshop was analysed with common qualitative methods. Like, for example, in ethnographic research, the data from drama workshops mediates strongly through the researcher (Vuorinen 2005). I define the research situation in the spirit of Perttula (2008) as "again lived experience", where space is also given to amazement and feelings. On the basis of the recordings of the workshops, I made a so called lettering in proposition level, which means writing down the emerged issues, the context, and the general atmosphere instead of meticulously interpreting expressions and gestures. After that I compacted and thematized the data, and focused on the central issues. (See e.g. Eskola & Suoranta 1998; Vuorinen 2005)

Results

Tapiola and Espoonlahti are both regional centers with good services, and moving around was therefore perceived as quite easy in both places. The received information about different means of transportation consisted of things related to user-friendliness and expediency. Walking, riding a bicycle, or a usage of public transportation and private cars completed one another. In both regions, the 12-year-old children are accustomed to independent mobility in their environment, and the 6th graders understand a great deal about the environmental impact of different means of transportation. Their experiences consist of both self-experience and things learned from others: a bus might be fun because of its bumpy ride or because it is known to be ecological. Role models also became apparent in comments like "Adults go to work by car". Valtonen (2005) stated in the context of focus group research, the workshop may make some obviousnesses visible like the jointly experienced fact that choosing the means of transportation varies according to weather conditions and the location of the hobby. On the other hand, differences and opposite attitudes towards the metro or the use of private cars also became visible.

Experience-based knowledge is often stated as situation-bound by nature. The events of the previous days had a clear impact on the latter workshops in November in Tapiola: there had been a big snowfall and the work of the snowploughs was still in progress. In these two groups, it was often mentioned how the snow made cycling difficult and made many children switch the bike to walking or bus for the winter time. Some students found it, however, ok to ride a bike in the snow. The previous workshops were held in October, and the snow -issue wasn't on the children's lips as much during that time.

One of the main concerns in small scenes made in the workshops was the fear of being left alone. This seemed to be the counter side of independent movement in an urban environment. In a tricky situation children expected to get help from other people like friends, the bus driver, a friend's

parents or even elves. Caring and communal city lives at least in children's minds. A counter-narrative to this was the dark city of drunk people and criminals. Various "weird guys" were the most common theme which caused anxiety and insecurity among the children when moving around in the city. This was also what parents usually warned their children about. Previous research also reveals that in the Nordic countries, children are taught to be careful and to take responsibility of their environment while, for example, Italian children are more used to physical closeness and handling socially challenging situations (Nordström & Björklid 2004).

In the workshops became visible, that the evening time and the darkness also cause insecurity. In this case, werewolves and ghost stories were also mentioned, which depicts how relevant they still are for 12-year-old children. In the traffic, the children's feeling of security was connected to a drug- and alcohol free environment as well as to a moderate speed and avoiding crashes. The children's interpretation of the easiness and safety of inhabitation clustered according to their personal housing: children living in detached houses preferred to live in them and vice versa. Generally comforting was the presence of certain kinds of people in the neighborhood like elderly ladies or families with children.

The children were also asked about proposals for improvement in the future cities. The groups were divided into experts of, for example, traffic, housing etc. In one of the groups, the children made up a religion which would cause an attitude change in individuals which would make them give up private cars. Some saw advanced technology as the key to a safe future: boys invented things like the 'SuberMoberBike' and 'Miracle shoes'. In the world of 6th graders (boys), space ships and superheroes with their equipment are still present, and they would like to have something fast-moving in their everyday life as well. In one group, the attention flew in to space, invading planets and fighting Martians, and using Santa's sleigh. This was an excellent example of how rationalizing tasks and the mantel of an expert may also cause rebellion within children for whom the imaginary world is still strongly present. The importance of good commission in the use of imagination and of a follow-up of the small group exercises became apparent. They are the key elements in receiving the desired information from the participants.

At the same time some "experts" gave realistic answers. Children suggested things like investing in walkways and cycle paths and public transportation and informing about it as well as adding street lights sand security control. These kinds of things have also come up in previous research.

Our results confirm the ideal that is also found in previous pieces of research on a safe, stimulating and clean city environment (Ilmonen 1991; Prezza 2004). In the children's city of dreams, one would have places for various activities and places to enjoy free candy and hamburgers. Spending time or sleeping in the park without anyone disturbing was also found important. The importance of friends and the acceptance of young people as users of public space were emphasized in previous research (Morrow 2003; Turtiainen 2001). In our workshops, the theme occurred in the tragedy of being left alone or being bullied, which indicates the importance of friends and company in urban environment.

Conclusions

The applied theatre workshops delivered crucial information for further development. The perceived benefits for the research situation were:

- a relaxing effect for the overall atmosphere
- enhancing interaction among participants as well as between the group and the instructor

- the physical activity improved the concentration of the children
- an open situation for discussion was created although some participants were, as always in social gatherings, louder, some more quiet.

Conducted in this form, drama method resembles focus group research where interaction and discussion within the group is thought to cumulate new knowledge. Drama rehearsals are used as a stimulus in this process that utilizes creativity, openness, intuition and narrative. The composition of the group is important. The optimal group size is around 15 people, since this amount creates variety and interaction while still being controllable. The moderator has a great responsibility in creating an atmosphere where children dare to express themselves and regard the behaviour of others with open mind. The drama workshop may stimulate different associations, and it is moderator's duty to direct them in benefiting the collection of information. This requires experienced moderator. The social character of the workshop also has its impact on the fact that the opinions of louder individuals are highlighted and they have an effect on the whole group and its associations. It is important to take care of the interaction so that it works in many directions. In addition, the co-operation between researcher and drama instructor is vital during the whole process.

The method proved useful in mapping certain local experiences, moods and thoughts. Some of our findings confirmed the results from previous research. Broadening contexts also emerged, for example the relation of independent movement and fear of being left alone. The method proved to be sensitive with delicate issues like the feeling of safety. Experience-based knowledge is built on participants own experiences, but in the group new knowledge is formed as well when people share their thoughts with others. When the researcher is a part of this process, it may open up non-verbal understanding of the target and its dynamics. In the exercises, participants' experiences are delayed and discussed to get a deeper understanding about them. A narrative structure of certain used practices may promote the repetition of commonly shared stereotypes while some exercises promote argumentation and reveal opposite attitudes.

As stated before, bodily practices may get the researcher closer to silent bodily knowledge than mere linguistic practices. Verbal discussion and interpretation are essential for opening the experiences, even when physical rehearsals are used as triggering the experiences. Written reports are the most common way of sharing research results. The bodily images must be turned into verbal expressions, and non-verbal communication should also be taken into consideration via the means of qualitative research. This, however, includes the danger of ambiguousness. The results of theatre workshops are not to be analyzed purely in terms of theatre research, but rather by finding the interpretation in the group via discussion.

In other fields of culture and arts, various approaches combining science and art have also been a topic of interest in the last few years. The knowledge collected via drama method could be further analyzed via a performative study in a theatre scene. According to my study, the expedient interpretation and presentation are the most important focus of further study. It is also important to deliver the information to decision-makers and other officials when collecting citizen-centered information of the experiences of children.

In the field of applied theatre the heritage of Augusto Boal lives strong: outside pedagogics the research is usually participatory action research or it has emancipatory social goals. In our study the group met with the instructor only once or twice, and thus a deeper reinforcing effect was not sought after with the workshops. The instrumental benefits of the method may prove helpful in justifying the method compared to other methods. The method should in any case serve well the

task of collecting information when used for that purpose, and the research should be conducted in a responsible way. This means that careful preparation and some background knowledge of the issue are as central as in any other research. In this research, the background material was previous research concerning the mobility of children in an urban environment. The material framed the planning of workshops and gave perspective to the work. In the field of urban studies, a tradition of combining different methods exists. Applied theatre workshops could be well combined with other methods, and triangulation could also enhance reliability. In this research, participants could have asked to fill a short questionnaire of their mobility habits beforehand, and the gained information could have been utilized in planning the sessions. A useful comparison for future research would be to organize a comparison focus group where normal discussion without drama flavors would take place. My assessments and accounts of the method are based on few workshops, and a more systematic study is needed to clarify the concept. According to the assumptions based on this work, it seems that drama workshop has potential in gathering experience-based knowledge with inhabitants in the field of urban studies. In the workshops different experiences of city life, as well as commonly shared conception are made visible.

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