7. Narrative Assemblage Part II

The fourth part of this dissertation provides insights into the spatial figuration of middle-class childhoods in Nairobi and Berlin, as well as guiding us through the points at which they are intertwined across locales or stay in contrast due to their unique characteristics. It is dedicated to the second part of the 'narrative assemblage', a term through which I frame what is commonly known as the empirical analysis. Instead of emphasising the neutrality of the researcher's role in assembling parts of the (hi)stories shared with them, assemblage emphasises the researcher's active role in this process. The material's very nature is emphasised by the narrative, which it was my aim to capture as much as possible by letting the speakers talk. As elaborated earlier, this process of assembling is guided by the scales of 'Subject & Body', 'Home', and 'City', which emerged as the dominant spatial reference systems among middle-class speakers across space and time. This is the first overarching finding, which I will now unfold in detail before returning to analyse it in Chapter 8.

7.1 Subject and Body: Fluid Subjectivities

This chapter will deal with the spatial figuration of childhood on the interwoven scales of the subject and the body – a relation that I frame as *corporeal becoming (corporeal subjectivation)*. In the collected material, the social topologies of play and discipline are central to this scale. The figurations drawn thereby will be strongly embedded in a methodological reflection, as the narrations of this scalar entanglement offer very important insights about the controversially discussed (dis)ability of children to take on a biographical perspective.

In the context of scalar debates, Deborah Bird Rose (1999) argues that 'the dominant western view of the self as coterminous with the body is completely inadequate for understanding Aboriginal views of the self' (Rose 1999, cited in Howitt 2002: 308). What Deborah Bird Rose deems important for studies on indigenous cultures appeared important to me despite any specific position(ality) of those who are subject to the research. Within Western research traditions, the body has been conceptualised as either location, source, medium, or scale. As a *location*, it appears, for example, in the works of Judith But-

ler and Michel Foucault, in which the body is produced by discursive regimes as humans are made a subject of governmental control, a process in which they also become gendered bodies through the interpellations of a heterosexual matrix. The body conceptualised as a *source* appears in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in which the individual is an embodied material being, and as such the condition of experience, senses, and perception. As a *medium*, the body is understood in structuration theory; for example, Pierre Bourdieu explores the reciprocal and constitutive relation between the body and the social world. Individuals are understood here as embodied actors that shape social fields but also get habitualised by them (for example, taste, rituals, etc.). Conceptualising the body as *scale* is not new. The body as scale has been conceptualised in a way that it 'serves as the foundation upon which all other scales are based' (Herod 2011: 59). As such, it also came onto the agenda of human geographers, often informed by feminist writings. But although the body itself is theoretically contextualised in all these different ways, body theories still often rely on the dualism of the interior and the exterior. To grasp corporeality beyond this dualism, Elizabeth Grosz proposes the Möbius strip as an alternative model, which

> has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes the other [and which] provides a way of problematizing and rethinking the relations between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility but the torsion of the one into the other, the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside. (Grosz 1994: xii)

Her Möbius body model offers me a way of exploring the scalar entanglement of subject and body in the childhood biographical narratives and maps. From the biographical material, the body often emerges as a scale that plays a central role in some of the earliest memories of the speakers. It appears in many ontological forms, from prenatal/postnatal, whole/partial, strong/weak, loved/violated, and desired/repelled to subverted/obeyed. The amplitude of corporeal becoming that emerges from the material is surely more complex than the following scope allows. Nevertheless, it provides great insight into how the subject-body relation is constituted, experienced, and perceived in relation to space. As a theme, corporeal becoming appeared strongly contextualised by a diverse range of topics, from (in)security discourses connected to feelings of (un)safety, gender differences, food cultures, death, and social as well as spatial family and kinship relations. Even though the outcome leaves space to write about all these aspects and their entanglements, my analysis focuses on the figurations of children's corporeal becoming in the context of the most dominant social topologies of play and discipline. The analysis illustrates how social topologies are constituted from situated corporealities, and thus from a specific sensual body each speaker is equipped with, but also from the collective experience of having a child's body and hence being positioned accordingly in societies. It considers the speakers' classed corporeal becoming and observes how this relation figurates on the basis of the age comparison and through specific spatial figures that can be identified as middle class-specific in the overall comparison.

7.1.1 From Live Route to Life Trajectory

It is not new that the subject and the body are constituted by a sort of Möbius relation – from Pierre Bourdieu's cultured bodies to Georg Simmel's body as a tool to understand the relation between self and society; from Karl Marx's productive and alienated bodies in capitalism to the cultural identity expressed through the body in Émile Durkheim's work; from the classed, black feminist body of bell hooks and Angela Davis to Frantz Fanon's relation of psyche and body. All have shown the inseparability of these two scales. Yet, and this is crucial, children's corporeal becoming appears utterly marginalised within these works and is generally a neglected topic. Some exceptions can be found in feminist studies (Young 1980), in the German-speaking branch of educational anthropology and its focus on mimetic processes and performativity (Gebauer/Wulf 1998; Wulf 2001; Gebauer/Wulf 2003), within approaches that look at the constitution of the child's body in society (Prout/Campling 2000), and within a growing branch of children's geographers that puts the body at the centre of their research (Colls/Hörschelmann 2009). What still remains scarce beyond these approaches is a class-sensitive biographical perspective on children's corporeal becoming.

As there are very few studies with children that follow a biographical approach, perspectives which focus on the child's corporeality from a biographical perspective practically do not exist. Nevertheless, even in these few studies, the body still appears, such as in Nicoletta Eunicke's research, which finds that accidents are a common starting point of children's biographical narrations.

> Gumbrina interrupts the interviewer with her opening question and impatiently begins to talk about a broken arm [... This] shows that Gumbrina begins with an experience from her early childhood. So she doesn't choose birth for the introduction, but an event from her life that she considers important. In doing so, she also follows the interviewer's request to tell 'stories' about herself. (translated from Eunicke 2018: 298)

Thematisations of early accidents like that of Gumbrina can also be found in the speakers' narrations. Accidents in that context come up so promptly that they almost seem to impose themselves. When the body is in a state of exception and sometimes even crisis, the memory about it is often very vivid long after, and as such accidents are one of the earliest memories we have access to. This renders the connection between subjectivity and corporeality so important. One example for this is 13-year-old Analia, who also starts her biographical narration with the memory of an accident:

> When I was small, […] my mom was, like, you know, getting me ready for bed. And […] then I fell, and I hit my head. That's why there is a mark over here. […] Yeah. […] I started bleeding, and I got stitches. (Analia, 13 yrs, *2007, female, Parklands, N.)

But it is not only the children whose memory of accidents is very present. The same applies to adults, even though they would still mostly follow the common code of starting the narration with their birthplace or day. The body seems to play a big role in the process of saving the memory, so to speak, as the experience of the body. This is because

experiencing the body in a state of crisis or shock inscribes itself into the memory of the person affected, but also those who witnessed the accident. Likewise, the body seems to be highly involved also during the process of remembering, as some of the memory sits in the body literally, when a smell or a sound, for example, triggers such memory. The body in a state of exception is not only caused by accidents and diseases. The body can also experience panic or anxiety, such as in Ijhanya's moving example of her getting lost as a child.

> [O]ne day my mom took, took me to the baby centre. So, some big, some big children came and took my things. […] So, I just went to find them, but I was lost in the village. So, my mom came back to the baby centre to take me home, but she didn't find me […] the dark came and I was so scar[ed]. Then I went to one house in the village. I knocked [on the door], I entered, and I said, 'I am lost, please can you find my home?' They ask, 'Who's your mother?' I didn't know. 'Who's your father?' I didn't know. [M]y mother took a picture of me […] and she [showed] everybody. Have you seen this girl? Have you seen this girl? One day, she found me. [C.M.: It took some time?] Uh, like two days." (Ijhanya, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Deep Sea Slum & Parklands, N.)

Experiences like these set the body under shock. As such, they often inscribe themselves into the memory and constitute corporeal becoming, which, from a biographical perspective, belongs to a very present layer of memory. But it can also be the other way around. Traumatic events can become completely locked into one's memory, as the psyche could not do anything better than to evict the event that was experienced as so harmful. This applies to people of all ages. In the context of a methodological reflection, the findings show that children are more likely to start their life story with their first memory. Adults, even though they have similar first memories of the body in exceptional situations, on the contrary, predominantly follow common codes of storytelling and start with a co-constructed memory, such as the story of their birth. This indicates that children who are not limiting their biographical narration by common codes of storytelling (for example, from the start to the end) must be highlighted in their ability to share their life memory beyond a subject-body dichotomy, which in adult narrations distort the actual biographical memory.

When I consider Sya, a 12-year-old speaker from Nairobi, who lives in a gated compound that she is not allowed to leave on her own, I find that she has very little agency on the micro-scale. Although she believes in the necessity of such security measures, she has her qualms with them, as they make her present life 'boring', and she often feels 'lonely' (Sya, 12 yrs, *2007, female, Karen N.). She envies other children that have siblings or live and interact together in other housing types. As she is also home-schooled, her life merely spans between the house and compound, the mall and the church. Although it was initially hard for her to engage in the interview, as she felt she did not have much to talk about, she suddenly got overexcited when her narration shifted towards her future anticipations.

> [W]hen I'm 25, I'll start designing. And then when I'm maybe, when I'm 30 or 31, I've already built my own [design] company. Then, I will start spreading it around other

> countries and cities. […] Where I would start my company is here cause Kenya is my home. So, then after that, I will move it to Paris, then/Then I'd go to/Move it to Greece, and then London, and, uh, maybe, uh, move it to Washington, and then, um, there are so, so many places, then, go to/Spread it to France, Germany as well, and, um, India too. […] And then I will, like, visit places, many cities, countries and then afterwards, I will build my dream home in Greece, and then I'll settle there […]. And then, like, when I'm 30, 36 I would start building my dream home in Greece. [… A]fter I have like spread my company around and I have built my house and everything I've wanted has come through, I can start a family. (ibid.)

Sya's future is clear. She has one goal, and she's thought it all through. She is actively investing in that future. The way she describes where her life is headed illustrates a linear trajectory of spaces that relate to their respective milestones: earn, travel, settle, and reproduce. The chronology of life events is clear. As such it points to the pattern of investive status work as earlier introduced as a common global pattern of middle-class subjectivity. To her it is clear that her goals in life must be reached in a specific chronology, because having a family demands a certain amount of personal, spatial, and financial stability.

From the local present, in which she has very little agency (other than that often depicted for children), she directs all her energies towards a global future in which her life is shaped by spatial freedom. In Sya's case, there is a shift that can be interpreted as an act of self-empowerment by 'jumping scales' (Smith 1993: 90). Sya's example shows that '[t]he "global" and the "everyday" are not separate in young people's emotional lives: their fears and hopes represent both a place-based and scale-jumping critical reflexivity as they navigate the present and look toward the future' (Pain et al. 2010, cited in Judge 2016: 256). The act of jumping scales leads to liberation from her subjugated position in the here and now. It is precisely this aspect that highlights the temporal entanglement of scales, as Sya is jumping not only from the 'here' but also the 'now'. From the local presence, where her narrations are dominated and limited by security measures, Sya travels through biographical space and time, when she shifts into her entrepreneurial future self with planetary agency and freedom of movement.

When we look at the aspect of scale-jumping more closely, Sya seems to directly reverse the scalar depiction of children's agencies as stronger in the local than in the global. Through her future anticipation and planning, she not only actively works on overcoming the local scale, but she is also utterly busy with overcoming her status as a child by a strong future orientation. This also becomes clear when we consider what she wants to design:

> [T]here are certain clothes I'd love to wear […] but I can't cause they're for an adult. So, at least for the kids that are growing up, at least I can do those clothes so that they like [them]. I want to wear something like this but it's only for adults but, 'oh wait, this person designs them'. Yeah, then there's like a certain doll I want to design. It's/I would call it an android doll […]. [Y]ou have this remote control thing where you can control it. You can see through its eyes with the, the remote control […] (Sya, 12 yrs, *2007, female, Karen, N.)

Being able to do what an adult can do and being the subject of control is central in Sya's narration. While the clothes can give her the same appearance as an adult, the android doll can be seen as giving her back the 'control' that she is lacking through her spatial limitations, in which her body is constantly governed. The doll, on the contrary, can walk anywhere and 'see' (ibid.) on her behalf.

With regard to methodological reflection, it is important to emphasise the value of these findings for highlighting children's capabilities in biographical research settings. It instead struck me that in a biographical perspective emphasising childhood, the adult speakers' narrations fell rather short on the biographical perspective of the future. This is because the emphasis on the biographical phase of childhood automatically brought them into a specific retrospective perspective that often ended with the transition to their youth. The young speakers instead looked at their lives as a whole and anticipated their future as well. This is another aspect that reverses the question of who can speak in biographical research, highlighting the specific qualities and tunings of biographical methods.

In my opinion, the term 'life path' is often taken too literally. The term suggests that life is a path defined by metrics that starts somewhere, runs linearly, and then ends. From this perspective, an old man is literally far removed from his past. But life, or time and space understood as social constructs, generally do not run so linearly. Some people feel reborn after a drastic change in their lives. Others believe in life after death – a belief that strongly influences their lives in the present. The perception of the body as vulnerable, measured by a biological clock, ageing, etc., plays a decisive role in this. This is why people still have vivid and accurate memories of an accident even years later, whereas their memories of their last holiday are already beginning to fade. Against the background of the spatial-theoretical framework of *spatial becoming*, it seems odd to measure life in that way. I argue that this conceptualisation of time and space can, in fact, be seen as one of the sources of the marginalisation of children in biographical and oral history research. If we consider the biography in a topological way, we notice that some events of the past never gain distance from us, no matter how much, in a metric-chronological system, we move away from them. The chronology of life is not given. The line marking the linearity of life is not natural but institutionalised (Kohli 1997, 2012, 2017). It must be understood as a societally constructed biographical figuration. Being old does not mean being far from one's past, and being young does not mean the same for the future. However, it is a common belief that children live in the 'here and now', careless of the future.

> Becoming a footballer would really be my dream. But if something like that doesn't work out, that's also very likely. I'm also very interested in building, so becoming an architect would be a plan B. (Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.)

Stephan was nine years old when we met. Examples like his oppose the idea that children ar emereley bound to the local present. The young speakers do not only have a clear idea about their future, but they are also already planning their lives accordingly and preparing themselves for that future or demanding others to support them in that regard. When I, for example, asked Lale why she finds that school is an important place to her, she answered:

> Because it's where you get a lot of knowledge to see what you can become in the future. […]. So, in the future, you can be someone who has so many talents, too, and you can find out. Yeah, 'cause some want to be doctors; so the, the teachers say you just have to keep on learning how to do the science things. Yeah. (Lale, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Maziwa, N.)

There are many examples in which the children of the sampling anticipate their futures. It becomes clear that, first, these future aspirations are very realistic and have very little to do with becoming a princesses and astronauts. Second, against the background of the socio-economic comparison, the importance of the future also appears to be middle class-specific. As this applies to children in Nairobi and Berlin alike, this finding supports Olaf Groh-Samberg et al.'s (2014) hypothesis that status work, such as investing in the future, for example through education, is a translocally connecting element of middle classness and additionally accounts for middle-class children. Although the young middle-class speakers want to explore their talents and do not shy away from aiming big (for example, becoming a football star), they also know how important it is to be modest and to have a plan B (Stephan). Most young middle-class speakers had one possible idea of their future.

The examples of Sya and Stephan show that children are very much engaged with their own biographies, actively constructing their life course and working on realising their talents. Conversely, it turns out that the adult speakers did not say as much about their future aspirations as children. This makes it rather hard to see a figuration here. Nevertheless, the extracurricular education (e.g. in music or art schools) that the middle-income speakers already received as children during the 1960s indicates that status work is nothing new. This is different in the lower-income spectrum across the sampling, where the topologies of formal education are confined to the time spent at school. Children of that socio-economic spectrum also relate differently to their futures. However, they too have a vision of themselves in the future, such as 10-year-old Tatiana, who says that 'when I grow up, I would like to be a teacher' (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.).

The class comparison, however, shows that children from the third and fourth spectrum share much more thoughts about the future and often have clearer visions of the next steps towards realising their goals, which are often globally oriented. It is very likely that this difference to some extent relates to the ability of middle- and upper-income children to invest towards this future – either because their families have the economic capital to invest in additional education, or simply because of the cultural capital that children like Stephan have, whose grandfather was also an architect and has left a small library of architecture literature to him. The childhood future visions of children from lower-income groups often remain unrealised, because their life conditions often do not allow them to reach them due to their limited access to the necessary resources. Life instead sends them on routes where they must often manoeuvre through precarious realities, full of detours and spontaneous junctions. Children from middle- and upper-middle-class spectrums, by contrast, have much more planning reliability in realising their future goals. We can assume that with the rapid increase of spaces that aim to develop children's skills as part of meritocratic systems, the lives of middle- and upper-middle-

class children unfold much more easily on linear trajectories. The life trajectory specific to middle classness comes with certain costs, as such a life is only reached by status work. The following engagement with the topologies of play and discipline illustrates how the corporeal becoming of children has been forged towards reaching that status. This engagement simultaneously brings with it a highly relevant insight into cultural aspects of status work from the perspective of childhood and informs the vague discourse on global middle classness on the scale of the subject and the body.

7.1.2 Topologies of Play and Discipline

In the following subchapters, I outline the spatial figuration of childhood on the scale of the subject and the body, concentrating on aspects of play and discipline. In doing so, I focus on how corporeal becoming is discursively produced and figurates on the basis of the specific social topologies that are connected to play and discipline and figurated within the age comparison.

7.1.2.1 Ludic Bodies in Field Figurations

Children are involved with material and immaterial worlds full of fiction, speculation, and possibilities, sometimes without clear boundaries between what is real and what is imaginative. Their imagination is full of mimetic relations with the material world. But that does not mean that their play is limited to the cultural orders of that material world. Playing instead manoeuvres children's figurative selves through worlds constantly transforming while setting objects free from their cultural meaning in a constant process of re-worlding. Hence, a fruit crate turns into a sailboat, and two stones held in front of the eyes figurate into binoculars. This romantic vision of children's play twists a little abruptly when Neo says that play is also 'endless creation and playing on the server, together with more than [a] thousand people' (Neo, 10 yrs *2010, male, Neukölln, B.). The following illustrations of the topological figurations will engage deeper with that rupture and show how middle-class childhood play is related to fields that have figurated tremendously over time and against the background of mediatisation and digitalisation. Fields are social topologies that are very dominant in the narrations connected to children's play. Many games require a flat surface – a space where play can be staged and evolve. In the following, I will illustrate how these playing fields figurate over time and how this figuration discursively alters children's corporeal becoming at the same time.

7.1.2.1.1 Gendered Play: Competition versus Care (1960–1990)

'We used to play marbles most of all', says Elliot (15 yrs, *2004, male, Kariokor, N.). He continues, while staging a little tutorial for me on the red-white checked cloth that covered our table in the garden of Alliance Française in downtown Nairobi:

> We would dig a hole – a small hole. Then we draw, uh, no, we draw the marbles. Let's say we're playing, me and you; you have a marble, I have a marble. We throw it. Maybe yours lands here – here's the hole, and then mine lands here. So, your aim is to hit this marble that's here, and then after you hit it […], you hit the marble here, and you, you're,

> let's say, you've hit my marble, your marble comes here. So, your next aim is to throw the marble into the hole, but if you miss, the game continues. (ibid.)

A couple of days later, at the same table, Chola (26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ajani, N.) tells me that as a kid, 'you just wake up, brush your teeth, take breakfast, and you're outside the door. Yeah. You go play with marbles'. During the following week, again sitting at the same table, Pele remembers how he 'played with marbles […] a lot' (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.). If we consider the example of marbles and look at the spatial relations of play, one thing that immediately becomes vivid is that marbles are played on flat ground. They are small, often colourful glass balls approximately the size of the eye's iris. Marbles are played delicately by hands, which snap and flick, while the body must get close to the ground. That ground must be even, so the ball does not roll into any obstacle. It needs to be a field, and for some variations of the game, the field is, at best, a dry and hard soil ground where one can dig little bowls. Many such competitive games that the speakers played during childhood require fields. Usually these fields are outside. They work like open-air stages, where ludic bodies perform and play, for example, 'rounders, [or] dodge ball' (Eddah, 31 yrs, *1988, female, Ngumo, N.). Until the late 1990s, the games that appear in the narrations were various outdoor games. Even if they, as I mentioned, at times vary depending on specific contexts, it is recognisable from the perspective of the body that all these games bring the body into strong motility, as they are (variations of) sport games. Within these sport (related) games, children's play is structured by their respective specific socio-material topologies. As Kili's example illustrates, matters of power and agency are constantly negotiated during this type of play:

> Shake is a kind of game where it's split into […] territories that you're guarding. […] This is their square to guard. So, you're not supposed to get passed them. When you get to this end, this part [is] called Shake. […] We used to draw on the floor with stones. […] So your point is for you guys, for only one of you, to make it from this point to this point and back. So, if you make it to this from, from the beginning to this end and back, you win the game, and it only has to be one of you to make it. So, it, it helped us learn how to, to work as teams, […]/Let's say this is about 20 kids playing this game. […] So, so, we learned how to strategise. Some of us would be sacrificial lambs. So, the only point is if I tap you like this, you're out. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

Splitting, guarding, teaming, being tapped out. All these play-related actions are constituted by the social practice of differentiation and are therefore linked to the spatial figure of the territory. While the game is based on a territorial spatial figuration, the dimensions of social interactions learnt or practised during the game that Kili described are also teamwork and strategising. Both draw on specific modalities of the body's spatiality at play. Within teamwork, the body must accomplish complex tasks within an assemblage of, in this case, 20 other bodies. Therefore, the players must bring their bodies into collaborative motility with each other. These bodies must act relative to one another and to the field drawn on the floor. All bodies must collaborate to make the game happen, but the collaboration is different according to the side to which the body belongs. Within this most general collaborative rule or logic of the game, each group needs to 'strategise',

as the overarching goal is to compete. That means that the players must put their bodies in motion in a logical way that must be communicated with nine other players of the same team, and this communication should not be completely transparent for the opposing team. Most of this communication is done with facial expressions and gestures and without words. The body is highly alert. All this is framed by a social hierarchy in which 'only one of you [is going] to make it', while others remain as 'sacrificial lambs' (ibid.). The corporeal knowledge that is trained here is at the same time a spatialised knowledge, one that experiences the full body in space, in which the body can be driven to its boundaries:

> So, we'd have a play fight. So, we're tougher than you. So, there's this term we used [to] call the first body. I don't know if you've heard of that. First body means like the alpha male. Basically, the, the person who no one can, no one can, no one can beat. So, we'd go over, and we'd have play fights. And it's an actual fight and I'm just wondering how we were able to be safe. Cause, cause, cause, as kids, we'd play dangerously, you know. (ibid.)

Kili's memory of playing games renders these sport-related games is gendered as genuinely masculine – following the logic of the survival of the fittest. Instead of creating safe spaces for play, these games function to leave the safe zone and risk something as part of the proving of boy- or manhood. But playing with risk as a boy goes further than being involved in play fights.

> We used to play dangerous games, man. We used to put our feet in the/on top of a car to run us over, man! (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.)

Chola's narration does not just deepen the gendered order of these games, contextualised by lower-income childhood, but also highlights the degree of corporeal engagement, where bodies are in intense contact with other human and non-human bodies – experimenting with limits of pain and mutilation. Connected to these class differences, we can also notice that the field is not the hegemonial base of games in lower-income childhoods. While they surely exist, they exist in extended forms, where a field, in the most basic sense of the ground, is opened and space behind the flat surface is discovered.

> Essentially, Kibera or Ayani area was a cemetery for the Nubians [Sudanese community] […] When we were growing up, I remember when we used to dig out, […] guns. Like, skeletons of guns, […] like, AK47s. […] We used to dig out so many things when we used to play. (ibid.)

Chola's play practices show the complexity of play that evolves between groups of children that roam relatively freely in their neighbourhood and socio-material worlds, which at times turns them into archaeologists. In their play, they unconsciously discover traces of global political entanglements. Chola and his friends' play goes below the surface of the world. With this, he brings his body into a completely different spatial order that blurs

common ideas of intrinsic and extrinsic and stresses the fact that we are not on the planet but an integral part of it.

Until the mid-1990s, makeshift toys appear in most of Nairobi's narrations regardless of gender. These toys, above all else the makeshift ball, appeared additionally throughout the entire socio-economic spectrum. However, for less affluent children, the lack of industrial toys also increases the variety and complexity of makeshift toys. To create them, children like Chola really needed to gather information and material to realise their toy creations:

> We never had the money to buy these toys […]. So we used to, we used to make our own toys and make cars through/With wire. […] So, when we watched *Home Alone*, […] we saw remote cars for the first time, yeah? […] So, we were like, 'Eh, man, you guys, we have to make a remote car with these wires.' So we even made a remote car with wires. […] There's one we made using, like, wire. We drive them along with steering wheels. There is one we made them with like, uh, motors and batteries. Yeah. But, yeah, we used to make wires, and then we make boxes with, uh, cars with boxes of milk. (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ajani, N.)

Besides these more complex field figurations accompanied by complex makeshift toy making – where the materiality of that space is not only used as a surface to play on but is a constitutive part of the game – most middle-classed social topologies such as fallows, courts, and pitches are gendered and prevail more dominantly in the male speaker's childhood narrations and maps. As such, they are more marked by physical competition in groups characterised by hierarchies and spatial practices of differentiation marked by a high degree of competition. These games do not unfold spontaneously and usually relate to an abstraction of space and spatial relations, such as a field drawn on the floor. They are played according to strict rules, limiting the amount of invention during the game. These games are often highly competitive and based on territorial logics of differentiation, often enacted by competing teams. As such, they (re)produce the spatial figure of territories.

While the social topology of fields in which children compete against each other or in teams could be identified as more central to the male speakers, the play practices of female speakers were additionally and more strongly characterised by the social topologies of corners and niches in which caring and collaborating was the hegemonial social practice. Whereas the field-related play of the male speakers in fallows, courts, and pitches took place exclusively outdoors, the play in corners and niches belongs to both outdoor places in which an indoor place (mostly home) is staged and to indoor (and often domestic) places. The games predominantly named by the female speakers, such as 'mother, father, child', 'playing house', 'playing cooking', or 'hide and seek', often require much smaller topologies that tend to be more cluttered. Unlike competitive sports games, these games are more often cooperative and based on role play involving objects, such as dolls or cooking equipment, and elements, such as water, leaves, and soil. In the games more commonly played by female speakers, the play often begins with objects being assembled or referring to an already existing assemblage, as Paula (58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.) described: 'But sometimes some rubbish was lying around there [in the woods], and we

kind of played house with it.' As such, they reproduce domestic topologies even though they are played outside. In these games, children mimic domestic rituals and engage in role play in which care-work relations are central.

> We also played, uh, what we call *kalongo*. *Kalongo* is […] role-playing. So, you are the dad. You're the mom. […] So, we would go, uh, take leaves and start cutting. […] I think that really he-, helped us bond, and you also learned to share. (Martha, 28 yrs, *1991, female, Umoja I, N.)

These small-scale domestic and care-related characteristics of the games may also relate to the fact that most female speakers grew up comparatively more protected and spatially restricted than the male speakers. Furthermore, the unequal parenting roles are reflected in these games – where mothers are much more involved in the domestic sphere and in reproductive practices.

The spatial figures produced within the topologies of corners and niches are places, as they involve an assemblage of objects (for example, blankets over a table) and players that enact and mimic other social topologies or the reference to an already existing assemblage (such as that of 'mother, father, child'). These games remain important throughout the generational comparison. Noteworthy is that these gendered aspects of play cannot easily be related to socio-economic status. Gender therefore cuts through the socio-economic comparison. Religion additionally plays a role here and is entwined with the gendered aspects of children's spatial motility and mobility. Analia (13 yrs, *2007, female, Parklands, N.), who is growing up in a Muslim family, for example, is not allowed to play with male children at all.

Besides the gender-related differences, there are also many similarities in children's play. There is even evidence for children who actively reverse common gender roles connected to play. Additionally, the gender difference seems to be contextualised by age. In that context, Kili (32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.) told me, 'So, when we were younger, we'd mix with the girls'. It becomes clear that space and spatial relations take part in the discursive re/production of a gendered corporeal becoming through play. But against discursive spatial order, children do not just occupy the positions kept for them by their specific societal context; they also reverse them, like Mildred, who remembers,

> Mostly, I used to associate with the boys. The football. Uh, we used to play a game called, um, *chapa ngoto*. It's, um, okay, you're playing football. Like, you have one goal post, right? One goalkeeper. Now, you know, like when the ball passes between your legs, you get hit over here on the head? Yeah. So, *chapa ngoto* is like you're being beaten. I don't know what they call a *ngoto* in English. I really (laughs) I, I don't know. I loved playing that game in/When it's rained, and there is mud, and there is water. (Mildred, 39 yrs, *1979, female, Karen, N.)

These structured, as well as domestic care-work-related games, were frequently played until the late 1990s and in both cities by the second-, third-, and fourth-spectrum speakers of the sampling. Therefore, they can be described as typical for middle-class childhoods beyond their national scale. This does not apply to the speakers at the fringes of

the sampling. In these milieus, these games remain connected to the access to outdoor play spaces. Most of their play is less structured by rules and often involves drifts within wider geographical realms, paired with some sort of serendipity, bringing them into all kinds of situations. Finally, these middle class-specific games are marked by temporal structures that follow time patterns, where play often fills the time gaps between appointments in the weekly programme. This limited and scheduled time for play marks a big difference from children from less affluent families.

7.1.2.1.2 Game Boards and Screens (1990–2020)

During the late 1990s, the games that until then had been characteristic of middle-class childhood are mentioned much less frequently in the narrations. This must be viewed in relation to the figurations of the social topologies that middle-class children have access to, as they spend less time outdoors. From this point on in all childhood narrations, boardgames, TVs, computers, and other gadgets appear. Hence, game boards and various screens become the new field topologies, increasingly replacing the outdoor fallows, courts, and pitches, as well as corners and niches. These new field figurations become central mediums of children's play within the third and fourth socio-economic spectrum.

When it comes to the gendered aspects of this increasingly screen-related play, chatting and social media seem to be slightly more popular for female speakers, whereas male speakers are more involved with playing video games. When I asked Sya (12 yrs, *2007, female, Karen, N.) how she spends her time on the phone, she responded, 'Uh, like right, now my friend is on holiday, so I, like, chat with her. Sometimes, we just play games together, and we chat'. When I asked what kind of games she plays, she answered, 'Truth or dare, two truths, one lie, something like that. And then, like, maybe I play a few games but/Like, Subway Surfers or Gymnastic Queen 'cause I'd love to learn how to do gymnastics' (ibid.). Tatiana highlighted another gendered activity connected to screens; when she is on her computer, she watches movies like '*Wonder Woman*' or 'play[s] a baking game' (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.). Like the older female speakers, who would play, for example, 'mother-father-child' or 'house' in the social topologies of niches and corners, the younger female speakers are also involved in more cooperative and care-related themes, such as chatting or baking. These findings show that neither TV nor internet and social media overcome children's gendered (play) practices but rather reproduce them, as in the previous example, where womanhood, domesticity, and caring, as in catching up with each other, matters more to female speakers.

Male speakers, on the contrary, say they 'grow up with a lot of PlayStation' (Milo, 15 yrs, *2004, male, Kileleshwa, N.). The games they play involve fighting that is often connected to politics contextualised by the Cold War, such as

> *Call of Duty* [which is] a first-person shooter [where]; you're like a prisoner of war [and] are [being] captured by the Russians, and you are brainwashed to kill the President of America. (ibid.)

Other games that are central to Milo's gaming culture besides *Call of Duty* include *Tekken*, which is 'a Japanese fighting game', and *Mortal Combat*, another 'fighting game'. Most

of these games (re)produce the gendered play practice of competition and differentiation that was already constitutive of the outdoor field topologies dominant in past childhoods. Children spend so much time engaged with these media cultures and technologies that they often have no 'free time' left after formal education in curricular and extracurricular activities.

> We go to school, then come home. Then, if you have no homework, we go and use a gadget, like we go watch TV or play games on the computer or on the phone, on/or on the tablet. (Nuhu, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Maziwa, N.)

This means that after a day of sitting in school, those who engage with these new media cultures of play again sit and move only virtually. When I imagine Nuhu's body throughout his narration, changing between all the screens – from that of the car's window to the various gadgets he uses – some sort of new version of the homunculus appears, with eyes incredibly big and thumbs so long and thick compared to the rest of his steadily shrinking body. In all these screen topologies, children engage in complex worlds. In these worlds, motility plays a huge role, as through their avatars, children are sent on missions to fight for humanity. While their virtual bodies are brought to extremes, their analogue body experiences only vicariously. Children's corporeal becoming figurates drastically with this topological shift, as they do not experience themselves in space but as projected onto space. Their corporeality transcends as it shifts onto the bodies of the avatars – the other selves that children now identify with in their virtual games. But motility also gets more extreme, involving bleeding and sweating, setting the (avatar's) body into a state of exception while 'racing [and…] fighting' (Nuhu, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Maziwa, N.) Worlds unfold in which children have an incredible amount of agency during 'endless creation' (Neo, 10 yrs *2010, male, Neukölln, B.), while they sit at home on the other side of the screen, protected from any possible and mostly unwanted adventure outside of the house. One does not need to speculate much to realise that the adventure-driven characteristics of these games serve as a substitute for all the adventures lost out there when middle- and upper-middle-class children are protected and sheltered.

The shift in field topologies that has taken place since the 1990s is notably a shift in size. Field topologies figurated from relatively large outdoor spaces (fallows, courts, and pitches), which used to be situated in yards of homes, churches, or schools that allow big groups of children to play together, to indoor spaces and spaces sized down to boards and screens. However, we must also note that behind these screens, large or perhaps endless virtual worlds unfold. While size therefore does not seem to de- or increase, the position of the body shifts from being a tiny part of that huge analogue world to being the director of what unfolds behind that small screen, holding possibility for 'endless creation' (Neo). Consequently, the relation between the body and the world of play is rescaled. At the same time, this shift is related to losing the body in the experience, as the body stays out of every experience behind the screen. Even though on the server you can still 'play together with a thousand other people' (Neo, 10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.), this play is no longer characterised by children who know each other and become with each other in a corporeal co-presence during their play. What really changed in middle- and upper-middle-class milieus is the motility of the body itself. Whereas bodies used to be in

action, today a big part of children's corporeality becomes obsolete, substituted by virtual avatars. Yet interestingly, corporeality and motility play a big role in these games, whereas for the playing child the body stays on the outside of every experience. Something that should feel like an ontological crisis does not, because there are avatars who bridge the experience, such as in ego or first-person shooter games, where the avatar is represented just as the player would see their own body from where their eyes are. Interestingly, despite all this change in the spatial, temporal, and social quality of play, the topology of fields has remained dominant for children's games, and with it the spatial figuration of territories has survived.

When zooming out again to the overall generational comparison, it becomes apparent that, even though board games and TVs rarely appeared before the 1990s, there are exceptions, possibly related to the socio-economic situatedness of the children. Caroline, for example, who was born in 1957 and belongs to the fourth spectrum, recalled that she played many board games and also mentioned the role of the TV during her childhood. The games that 'would be [played were] Ludo [as well as] Snakes and Ladders […]. Yeah, the board games, […] and then, of course, there was TV, you know' (Caroline 62 yrs, female, Karen, N.). During the 1990s and early 2000s and in the narrations of the speakers of the second spectrum, such as Analia, playing outside, within the compound is still integral part of her topologies of play. Next to that board games and TV take on a central role. However, other gadgets, such as computers, tablets, PlayStations, and Xboxes were not mentioned and were also not visible at her place.

> But you can go play downstairs, watch TV, whatever. We just play normal games, […] Snakes and Ladders, Uno, […] The Game of Life. […] Uh, like catch and catch downstairs, or ice and water, or playing bikes downstairs. (Analia, 13 yrs, *2007, female, Parklands, N.)

This is the same for Steve, who also belongs to the second spectrum and describes his topologies of play in a very similar way when he mentioned what he and his brothers do after playing football outdoors:

> [I]f we get bored and tired […] we go inside the house, we could play a card game, maybe even monopoly or we watch TV' (Steve, 11 yrs, *2008, male, Kawangware, N.).

While home is becoming increasingly central to all children in the generational comparison, there are enormous differences regarding class. Children from the third and fourth spectrums prefer to be 'at home because you never know you can miss a new episode and it's not going to come back' (Makena, 9 yrs, *2010, female, Westlands, N.). Home is the new place to be. Media, such as television series, thereby create time regimes that repeatedly place the home at the centre of children's spatial relations at certain times of the day, every day. Whereas television programming was scheduled at set times throughout the day, the internet offers a wealth of entertainment that is both infinite and simultaneous, breaking down any sense of structure in time and causing children to lose their sense of time completely.

> [O]n weekends […] we don't like [to] go outside and come over and things like that, we, we just, we just stay and, you know, watch our phones, um, playing, you know, just in the house not doing much. (Pierre, 13 yrs, *2006, male, Lavington, N.)

Since around 2010, the frequency of screen topologies has increased even more with smartphones, computers, tablets, PlayStations, and Xboxes. Aside from exceptions, such as gaming lounges and internet cafés, where children of the first and second spectrum would go with friends to 'play the PS [PlayStation]' (Elliot, 15 yrs, *2004, male, Kariokor, N.) ocassionally, most screen topologies appear in the house – a place where children of the third and fourth spectrum increasingly spend their time. Pele's comparison of his own school routines and that of kids today, gives an idea, why children might be currently more drawn into staying home:

> [S]chool was 8:30. […] Not like these kids of nowadays; I pity them. They wake up at 4:00 am in the morning, they're back home at 8:00 pm, and they've still got to do homework, then they've got to sleep and wake up – not us. (Pele, 62 yrs *1958, male, Westlands, N.)

Throughout the generational comparison, the time that school children have daily to play freely is reduced increasingly. While during the early 1970s, children 'used to play games most of the time, [and had] very little homework [to do]' (ibid.), during the early 1990s, 'childhood was filled with a lot of play' (Eddah, 31 yrs, *1988, female, Ngumo, N). Also for Elliot, born in 2004 from the third spectrum, outdoor play after school seems to have little space next to his daily routines:

> [At] six, I should be in school. So, at 5:30 [I] wake up, yeah, […] school [starts] at six. [… then] study, till four, but we also played marbles in school, soccer in school. Those were like 30 minutes every day in school. Then, go home at four. After home, [I] take a shower, go out again, play a little, come back, do homework, supper and then I sleep, yeah. (Elliot, 15 yrs, *2004, male, Kariokor, N.)

Similarly, Nuhu's example suggests that playtime keeps in general reducing. He is from the upper-third spectrum of the sampling, and he says, 'We play […] but not that much 'cause most of the [time] we're busy with homework' (Nuhu, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Maziwa, N.). Tatiana's following example shows that the dominance of school commitments during the week also breaks down socio-economic differences:

> On a school day […] I wake up. I take a bath. I go down and have some breakfast. I come back and brush my teeth, and I go to school. I come from school. Um, I change. I take another bath. I do my homework. I revise, and I go to bed. I eat supper then I brush my teeth and I go to bed. [No time for play?] No, I don't play on weekdays. (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.)

On weekdays, the play patterns of children from the first and second spectrums therefore differ little from those of children from the third and fourth spectrums. The differences are more noticeable at the weekend, when school commitments tend to take a less prominent role.

For the Berlin speakers, school-related activities also take up a lot of time during weekdays. Instead of going outdoors, Neo says that when school is over, 'then I usually game [*zocke*], then I read' (10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.). In Berlin, homework also appears in the weekends for secondary school children.

> Then [after Sunday church] I'll go home, get some rest. And then I start either studying or doing homework. And when I've finished that, I hang around again, reading or on my mobile phone. And sometimes, I also help out in the kitchen. Then we eat. (Lana, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Kreuzberg, B.)

For middle-class and upper-middle-class children, this structure is not new. Raphael, born in 1988, for example, says that his childhood was 'limited to the flat, to school and then to music school' (Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.). He adds, 'I was never the kind of person who didn't want to go home, […] who somehow ended up roaming around […]' (ibid.). And even his mother, Rosi, reported something similar.

> The school was […] a part-time school […] And apart from that, it was quite normal to go home briefly and have lunch. […] And then, I often withdrew relatively quickly after lunch and read a lot before I did any homework. So reading was a real relaxation for me; I enjoyed it so much. So, and then I did my homework […]. At that age, I also went to sport at least once a week in the afternoon. […] So, there was a relatively tight rhythm, I think. (Rosi, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.)

In the transnational comparison, we observe the growing loss of disposable time (Marx 1973) in children's play through extracurricular activities much earlier in Berlin than in Nairobi. In East Berlin this also relates to the politically motivated competitive extracurricular sports activities funded by the socialist system of the German Democratic Republic.

> At some point when I was older, I went to the sports club with a friend, so we did a lot of sport on the River Spree. […] [S]everal times a week; that was always the case in the East: if you do sports, then it needed to be right away competitive sport (laughs). And then I was somehow training three times a week and at least one day at the weekend. (Paula, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Köpenick, B.)

Although homework seems at least a little less central during primary school in the Berlin sampling, the younger speaker of the third- and fourth-spectrum perform an extracurricular programme after school, which Stephan described as follows:

> [On Mondays] I go home at 3.30 pm. I do my football things. [I] wait for dad. And then we go to football training, […], then we shower there and get changed. And then we go home. […] Then Tuesday is my day off, so I come home at 4.00 pm, and then I'm on my own and do whatever I want. […] Or every Wednesday I also have French […] And on Thursday, I go at 4.00 pm, I play the flute. And then I go home alone, and there's usually dad with mum, and everyone is there. And then we play a bit, and then we have dinner. (Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.)

In Nairobi, these extracurricular activities are also strongly connected to socio-economic situatedness. This is because these activities for children are mostly part of private school programmes in so-called 'clubs'.

> And then we have the clubs on Fridays, and that's my favourite day. We usually have clubs, and we usually do/do more activities. See, like, they come to teach you different stuff, like when I said horse riding is one of the clubs, first aid, uh, skating, basketball, football, hockey. There are others. But, I [have done] first aid [since] Year 4. So, that's what I do. […] It's very fun. It's a big place. Then we have, like, different activities to do. There is swimming, hockey, football, tag rugby and basketball. (Nuhu, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Maziwa, N.)

In such weekly programmes, children do not just freely play, and even if they do, this playtime is part of the structure and is scheduled for a certain day. Most of these extracurricular programmes predominantly aid in the development of children's skills and must therefore be seen as productive. It seems that leaving children to play freely is not seen as promoting their talents. Looking at the figuration of corporeal becoming from the 2000s onwards, it is clear that children's bodies are becoming much more constrained, while at the same time they are supposed to unfold under guidance (for example, sports or music education). Children are therefore subject to enormous temporal structural constraints that constantly determine when they should be in one body (for example, doing maths, playing music) or another (for example, playing football). Children, regardless of their socio-economic situation, thus learn at an early age to conform to and reproduce structures. However, it is clear that structuring increases with socio-economic status, which means that middle-class and upper-middle-class children have very little disposable time. In that context, Lisa admits of her ballet class that 'sometimes I don't enjoy it, but it's important for my body' (Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, Kreuzberg, B.). In such a perspective, extracurricular activities are highlighted with reference to their aim of developing children's skills, thus strengthening the hypothesis of investive status work as a translocally connecting pattern of middle classness.

7.1.2.2 Subjugated Bodies – from Discipline to Control

In this subchapter, corporeal becoming is contextualised by experiences and memories of subjugation through violence, discipline and control. Both are integral parts of children's lives worldwide. Within the adult-child binary, the child's body is inferior and easily becomes the subject of subjugation, as it to some extent needs guidance and protection. However, the experiences of subjugation that some of the speakers shared with me go far beyond guidance and protection. Especially in Nairobi, many speakers shared experiences of family related as well as institutional mental and corporeal violence. In this context, many speakers shared some of their most transgressive and intimate experiences and memories with me. That the body is so often the object of discipline and control is crucial when we remind ourselves that the body is

> the opposite of a utopia: that which is never under different skies. It is the absolute place, the little fragment of space where I am, literally embodied [*faire corps*]. (Foucault 2006: 230)

This inability to escape one's body renders the scales of the subject and the body so inseparable and, unfortunately, so fertile as a medium, source, and location for discipline through subjugation. Whereas Michel Foucault's historical analysis of governmentality, discipline, and biopolitics largely missed to incorporate the perspectives of children (and, as we know from Silvia Federici (2004), that of women), the following analysis gives important insights into the urgent necessity to engage with children's situations. The range of subjugation shared by the speakers varies with the different topological contexts in which subjugation was exercised on them. Whereas the scalar entanglement of subject and body must be understood as the object, the medium, the source, and the location for this subjugation, the spatial order in which subjugation is practised is embedded in other social topologies that contextualise it. Interestingly and shockingly, it is the home, church, and school – so those social topologies in which children are largely believed to be safe – which are the spatialities in which children are most exposed to mental and corporeal violence from adults.

7.1.2.2.1 Domestic Violence

> We knew which family would be having a father beating the mother. We would hear the screaming at night. It happened in my family. I felt so embarrassed because I knew everyone would know that [it was] us. That really had an effect on my self-esteem. (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu, N.)

Until the 2000s, domestic violence is a central topic in the Nairobian speakers' narrations. It is hard to say whether domestic violence decreased after that, or whether, perhaps, the young speakers (with one exception) just did not mention it. If it was silence, that could be related to the fact that, as most young speakers were met at their homes, their family members were close by, even if they usually did not stay in the same room with us. This could make it hard for a child to share such experiences. The only exception was four-year-old Said, the youngest of all speakers. After she told me how much she liked her sister, I asked her who else is important to her in her life, to which she replied: 'Not my, not my, my, my, my grandma. I don't like her. She beats me' (Said, 4 yrs, *2016, female, Parklands, N.). The biographical narrations reveal, that although home is often related to the idea of a safe space, children are often at risk in this social topology. Gathi also notes that 'home was not always connected to good memories', and explained what caused that impression:

> [W]hen my parents had a huge fight, and [her] baby sister was lying on the floor on a blanket, while [her] parents were screaming, and [she] was really worried about her (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu, N.)

Corporeal violence at home appears regardless of the socio-economic status of the family. As such, Amina, situated in the first spectrum of the middle-class sampling, shared similar experiences, where she felt safe as long as she was not home.

> [I] grew up in a family where there was domestic violence. I rarely wanted to go home early. […] Like, I grew up being the good kid, you know, school, home, doing all my chores on time. (Amina, 21 yrs, *1998, female, Ruai, N.)

When it comes to gender, domestic violence and discipline are exercised by both parents and grandparents. But discipline was not only a matter of the core family. Several examples in the narrations also show that children, especially those of the first and second spectrum, used to belong to a larger community, which supported them but also disciplined them.

> Like, uh, my neighbour can be like my mom. She can beat me up when she feels me, like, doing something wrong. (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ajani, N.)

Discipline takes on different shapes, but many speakers were directly exposed to corporeal violence at their homes, where, as Mildred remembers, 'any mischief we got into, we always […] got a whooping' (Mildred, 39 yrs, *1979, female, Karen, N.). Kili framed this form of discipline by situating it in a wider African cultural context when he said,

> There was discipline at home. Our […] parents beat us, yeah, being from an African home. But it wasn't, it wasn't sadistic punishment. It was punishment [because] you've done something wrong, you know. Uh, it was different from what I see in the movies […] Ours was, we had a tree at the front of our house. So, my mum would pick a branch this, this size, exactly, like this, and it would/By the time you're running it's, it's hit you on your back, or on your neck, you know, but she's hit you once, and then she'll call you and tell you 'this is the reason why'. So, it was, it structured. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

Whereas in the context of home, it is domestic violence, in upcountry,[1] it is 'hard manual labour' (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N) that contextualises children's experiences of subjugation. Until the 2000s, Nairobian children were an integral part of the harvest work in upcountry. The harvest season fits perfectly into the long summer school break, during which working city parents are in urgent need of supervision for their children.

> So, we'd go and help out. And I think, also, yeah, 'cause August was also/was harvesting time. So, we go to the garden and harvest maize and, uh, what else was there? There was maize, predominantly. There was maize, there were avocadoes, big avocadoes, and, yeah, pretty much that['s] it. I think that's also why he [her grandfather]

1 Upcountry is commonly referred to as 'ancestral or tribal land' in Kenya, elaborated on and relating to the scale of home (Chapter 7.2).

> wanted us there. He would say he wants to see us, but, no, he just wants additional hands. (Eddah, 31 yrs, *1988, female, Ngumo, N.)

Upcountry was therefore also an integral part of the time management of urban families. But beyond these matters of time management, Stella, like many others, pointed out the cultural meaning of upcountry.

> [T]hey didn't want us to get spoilt. So, and they wanted us to learn both the urban life and the rural life. [… O]ur holidays were usually three weeks […] [so] we'd be taken to the rural area, and there we'd be left with my aunt and my grandmother, and there we'd learn the hard life. (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.)

This figure of learning the 'hard life', sometimes referred to as 'real life', was a distinct educational pattern of urban middle-class families in the past. Today it can still be found, but in the context of middle-class milieus it has lost its fundamental role in children's upbringing. Stella summed up what this 'hard life' was like:

> [M]y grandmother was not a very jolly person. And I think that she resented us. She felt that we were very spoilt. […] So, in the morning, when you are waking up at six o'clock, they're yelling at you. It's freezing cold because the area we come from it's very dry, so the mornings are very cold. And then you go to the *boma* [building] with the cows, and you're walking through dung […] and it's sticky, and it's smelly and whatever, and then you have to learn how to milk and […] get them prepared, walk them a long distance. When you get there, to the river, you know, if it's dry, then you have to make a hole and then get the water, and then also fill the jerry cans with water, and walk back and make sure they don't lose any cows because you're going to get into trouble. So, that, that time it was just so stressful, and we don't/and you haven't done it that often so it was hard for us. And then after that, the whole day was packed. […] [T]he whole day and cooking with the three stones and […] pounding maize. It's in a long hollow board, and then you put dried maize in it and you mash it to take out the corn, the cover of the corn. And then after that, you put it [in] a grinder and then that's what you'd use as *ugali* [traditional East African cereal porridge]. […] So, uh, that was our reality check. […] You can't slack off and, you know, take a break and hang out. It was continuous manual labour for hours in the hot sun. (ibid.)

Stella's elaborate description of upcountry highlights that it was not only the physical exhaustion from hard manual labour, the responsibility for huge animals and the weather conditions that were challenging for the children. It was also the social coldness with which some children were addressed and treated as spoilt by the city and unworthy around the topologies of nature. For many children, that meant switching from being disciplined at home and in school in their everyday life to undergoing the discipline of the harsh rural environment, which was not at all comfortable and where the children felt like 'urban others'.

The sensory depth of the memories in the context of upcountry is also crucial here, as many speakers describe their bodies as if they were not in their element – a situation, that evoked stress and anxiety.

> When darkness creeps in now, it comes with some fear of the unknown. You don't know what to expect. [Y]ou will hear the, the sound of wild, wild animals from afar, uh, and […] there are still cheetah[s] around, there are lion[s] around, there is this one around, so at night [w]e should always be indoors. Uh, so that was a bit, you know, threatening. (James, 41 yrs, *1978, male, Jericho, N.)

Besides hard manual labour and the fear of darkness and wild animals, cultural aspects, such as the imposed idea of belonging to the external family or the ethnic community, could be experienced as confusing for children. James remembered how people in upcountry were introduced to him.

> 'This is another brother of yours. This one is your father. This one is your mother.' So, this was creating some sense of a little bit of confusion because then everybody is my brother if he's (laughs), he's of the same age or so. And everybody is my father if he's/he is of the age of my dad. Everybody is my mother if [she is] the age of, of my mom. Okay, I came to interpret it later on that, uh, uh, it means they are extended family, and you are bound by some blood relations. […] He [father] used to say that these are, are your people, uh, more than those ones whom you are/you think you are closer to [who] are in Nairobi. (ibid.)

There were no (hi)stories of corporeal violence from upcountry. Discipline here rather took the form of hard manual labour. The fact that children were involved in labour looks first as if the concept of subjugation that rests on the child-adult binary is subverted within the topologies of the rural. Children worked just like adults. But with regard to the emotional aspects of this experience, they did not feel empowered and on an equal footing with adults but instead felt subjected to their power, rituals, and traditions. What is rendered as problematic here is not so much the life lived in the rural per se as the fact that as city children the speakers found themselves in unknown territories, with different rhythms that they often felt they had not been given time to adapt to, while they were expected to function.

7.1.2.2.2 Institutional Discipline: School and Church

Other than in the context of home, where only one younger speaker shared experiences of corporeal violence with me, in the context of school and church, such experiences accumulate throughout the entire age comparison.

> We also have a parade ground [at school], where we all assemble and listen to the headmistress speak to us. She tells us how we should, like when we do something wrong, she corrects us. She tells us to do the right thing, obviously. It's a Catholic school, so the mistress is a sister. (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.)

Religious institutions, predominantly Christian, still run many schools in Nairobi. The formal school system was developed in colonial Kenya, where it was strongly linked to missionaries. Connected to that today is a memory of a welfare system that privileged a few, such as Morris, born in 1962 in Embakasi Village, one of the settlements erected for Kenyan civil servants in colonial Nairobi.

> [T]hey used to sponsor so many students, children, yeah. And, uh, you/Like I learned in a Catholic school, yeah, before the government took over. Things used to be so good [to] a point that we'd receive books, everything on time. They used to run the school so well. Even you are given lunch. Yeah. (Morris, 57 yrs, *1962, male, Embakasi Village, N.)

Here, 'before the government took over' means before independence. Morris's memories of the colonial times are positive. As the son of a civil servant working for the railway industry, he was one of the few comparatively privileged Black Kenyan children allowed to live in the city in government housing. Pele, whose ancestors were close to the colonial government, also retains a friendly tone towards that past and emphasises the intergenerational transfer connected to the values and norms of those days.

> My grandparents grew up in a mission with missionaries, so we're very […] biblical […]. So, Sundays, Sunday church was a must whatever happened. So even me, I instilled it in my kids. (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.)

The term 'instilling' is very prominent in the Nairobian narrations of the speakers born before and during the 1960s. Many speakers reported having been subjected to some sort of instilling. Etymologically, instil comes from the Latin root *stilla*, meaning a drop. Something instilled in a person relates to both their subjectivity and corporeality. The scale of the subject and body appears fluid here – fluid in a way that drops can be instilled in it and it changes its figure. Instilling can be related to a mutually agreed transfer of norms and values from one person to another or from one generation to another, but it can also relate to rather violent inscriptions. In the context of her experience studying at a Catholic school in Nairobi, Tatiana describes the ways in which the instilling of norms and values is practised in her school.

> Um, they [teachers] take sticks, and they beat you [in school]. Sometimes, they take bamboo sticks. They are white. Then they put cello tape, then they punish you. [C.M.:And where do they hit?] The hand. The hand or the buttocks. For boys. Only the buttocks for boys, but for girls, obviously only the hand. [They do it] when you do something really, really wrong [like] making noise [or] playing in class. [What do you feel about being punished that way for the things that you do?] It's not bad, but I don't like being punished. But it's not bad because they're just correcting us. […] Because once you have been punished, you learn from your mistake. (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.)

In Kenya, corporeal punishment has been banned since 2010 by the new constitution, which states that 'every person "has the right to freedom and security […], which includes the right not to be – … (c) subjected to any form of violence from either public or private sources; (d) subjected to torture in any manner, whether physical or psychological; (e) subjected to corporal punishment; or (f) treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading manner"' (End Corporal Punishment 2022: 1). Even though the age comparison points to the success of the illegalisation of such acts against children, the findings show that they exist today. Tatiana's example also reveals not only that these practices of corporeal disciplining instil moral discourses of what is 'good' in children but also that

corporeal punishment is an integral part of what is 'good', as it shapes and 'corrects' you – not in the sense of a defence but as a normative pattern of education that directly addresses the scalar entanglement of subject and body in which the social topology of the subject appears, which is strongly mouldable by all kinds of adults, from the lord (and his will) to the mistress (and her whip).

> So, that is one thing about public schools which I think most of us went through. The beating, the caning. Um, yeah, sometimes it was extreme, and [I] would get blisters. […] Personally, I feared my teacher more than my parents (laughs). […] The first day [in standard one], I got pinched (laughs) so badly. So, I didn't even know what I had done. I think I was talking to other people and, um, yeah, so I'm called to the front and, um, you know, she, she, she, she pinched me, uh, right, um, on my thighs. And, um, yeah, I did something very crazy (laughs). I peed on myself. I cried. It was so painful, I peed on myself. (Martha, 28 yrs, *1991, female, Umoja I, N.)

The practices of 'instilling' could be as manifold as the apparatus built for it. That means that 'you're beaten with a cane or a pipe or in some extreme cases there could be a whip' (Eddah, 31 yrs, *1988, female, Ngumo, N.). But this is not everything; the range of apparatuses invented to instil fear into children's bodies is wide and included also the precise documentation of children's behaviour in school.

> You know this, um, watering pipe? So, they used to be cut, they used to be cut into about an inch. And if you, and if you did something wrong, if you didn't do your homework, uh, if you were a noisemaker in class, […] your name would be written down. So, you're on the naughty list. Uh, but we called it the noisemakers' list. If you talked twice, it was written X2; if you talked thrice, it was written X3. So […] that would mean that […] you're going to be, be punished the most seriously. […] So, so the boys would be beaten on their bottoms with the pipe. […] And the girls would be, the girls would be beaten on their hands, on the hands. […] I was afraid, I was really afraid of being beaten by, by that pipe. […] and then it instilled fear. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

Corporeal violence was not always exercised directly by the teacher. There were also indirect forms of violence in which children were forced to perform various tasks, most of which were physically demanding.

> I remember we used to be given a stump. A, a tree which has been cut. And, uh, a big tree stump and you're told to uproot it. For two weeks, you're not going to class. You wake up in the morning, kung, kung, kung, kung, kung until […] Our hands were, hands were just having blisters because of, uh, digging, digging, digging, um. […] Oh, it was hell that time. (Morris, 57 yrs, *1962, male, Embakasi Village, N.)

These cruel practices of 'instilling' in educational institutions were furthermore not limited to primary but already started in nursery school, where children were exposed to practices of degrading that were in themselves racialised, where children were taught to stigmatise others at a very early age.

> And one thing I remember about it [nursery school] was that they used to divide us. We were divided in[to] one bench called rice [on] one side and another on the other side called *ugali*[2] . If you are placed on the side of ugali, it meant you are stupid, and you didn't perform well. Being placed at the side of rice, on the other hand, meant that you are a good child. It's the first time, I remember, that I encountered differentiation. And I would say it made me unfair. We were making so much fun of and really bullying *Wakorino*[3]. The religious people with Turbans. That was really wrong. (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu, N.)

The moral education children received there from such an early age was mostly based on the practices of differentiation and competition. In such an environment, children learn to survive for themselves instead of practising solidarity. The violent pasts of education in both Kenya and Germany also have to be seen in connection with the figure of the child as 'wild', that developed within the rise of the European bourgeoisie during the 18th century – a figure of a child that does not yet count as human and is therefore inferior – and is as such still prevalent today.

7.1.2.2.3 Historical and Methodological Context of Subjugation

By this point, it must have become clear that all memories of corporeal violence at home and in schools were shared by speakers from Nairobi. It is known that Germany also has a long and dark history of discipline through corporeal punishment not only from the terrifying framework of educational concepts in Nazi Germany, as documented by several studies in historical educational research (e.g., see Bühler et al. 2023). Sabine Andresen, President of the Child Protection Association (*Bundesverband Kinderschutzbund*), even concludes that '[t]he history of education [in Germany] can be told as a history of violence in educational relationships' (translated from Andresen 2018: 6). The missing talk of corporeal violence and discipline in the German sampling must be furthermore reflected on in historical and method(olog)ical contexts and should not give the impression that children are not subjected to violence in Germany at home and in care institutions. The sampling is not sufficient to be representative in this regard. It is furthermore important to question whether corporeal violence as a form of disciplining was not experienced by the speakers or was simply not shared with me.

Even though corporeal punishment does not appear in the German sampling, school was predominantly referred to with negative connotations and in connection with other forms of discipline involved in children's corporeal becoming.

> Unfortunately, I also spend quite a lot of time at school. […] Because you only study there and can't do anything else. […] Because you sit there all the time and aren't allowed to do anything. (Neo, 10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.)

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2 *Ugali*, common throughout East and Southern Africa, is a dense, cake-like porridge made from white maize or cornmeal.

3 The Akorino are a community of African Christians who follow a faith rooted in the principle of nonviolence and spiritual discipline. They are especially recognized for their distinctive white turban, which symbolizes peace, purity, and devotion.

This negative connotation of school can be found throughout the entire age comparison. While Neo complained about the body that cannot move, Anne remembered how she was embarrassed by the teacher in front of the class because she had made a mistake.

> Then the [teacher] asked me: 'And one plus one?' And then I said 'one' because I thought/Or maybe because I had also heard one times one. Or because I simply didn't know and just hadn't listened and didn't realise. And then she stood up and laughed at me in front of the whole class. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

It is furthermore important to acknowledge that none of the Berliner speakers went to a Christian school. Most of them went to school in the German Democratic Republic (East Berlin), where corporal violence and other forms of power abuse were banned much earlier (1949) than, for example, in the schools of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Berlin) (1973). It becomes apparent that the specific political orientation of the parents also matters here, when Anne, who grew up in West Berlin, instead highlights the lack of discipline and order in her family.

> I don't think we ever ate dinner at the same time in my entire childhood. […] So, there were no constraints in the sense that we all sat at home so nicely [*artig*]. […] But my mum, because she was always extra unconventional, didn't work at the table. She actually had all her school things […] always spread out on the floor. And she just sat cross-legged on the floor, smoked, drank wine, and did her schoolwork. Music with her. Someone always came [a]round. […] And I hated that. I became a super orderly person because of it, I'm pretty sure. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

Like Anne, many Berlin speakers grew up with a laissez-faire parenting style within politically more left-oriented, atheist families. Some of these families were additionally influenced by the ideals of anti-authoritarian education, which was promoted as a part of the 1968 movement in Berlin and elsewhere. In this movement, parents (often students) organised themselves to develop care arrangements in which children would be addressed as self-determined actors – a pedagogical ideal that is critical towards adult abuse of power and as such (even though it exists in other contexts all over the world) has to be seen as embedded in a very specific socio-historical context in Germany.

This is because the anti-authoritarian movement was engaged in critical reflection of the cruel disciplining and subjugation practices of the National Socialist regime. Even though the movement must be understood as heterogeneous, what connected all of them was, on the one hand, a critical engagement with the prevalence of the heteronormative concept of the bourgeois core family and, on the other hand, the urge to develop alternative pedagogical concepts that would prevent children from subjugating themselves to such authoritarianism again (see Baader/Sager 2010: 257). Even though this movement has experienced a lot of criticism, in the intellectually left-oriented milieus in Berlin, we can still find advocates of this educational style, which strongly reverberates in the Berlin narrations.

In this context, Fabian also 'experienced a childhood that wasn't so strongly characterised by parental caesura. […] [I]t was just cool at home. And, of course, we had enough

space and everything. We didn't step on each other's toes, and my parents were also relatively flexible' (38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.). Even though the anti-authoritarian education movement had one of its centres in West Berlin with the establishment of the self-help parent-led childcare institutions (*Schüler- und Kinderläden)* during the 1960s and 70s, the ideals of such education or anti-education can, at the same time, not be seen as representative of Berlin or Germany in general, as there is a high plurality in parenting styles, many of which are also highly characterised by Christian conservative norms and values. While the pedagogical anti-authoritarian movement is an important context in the Berlin of that time, the lack of subjugation in the memories and experiences of the Berliner speakers also must be reflected on within my entanglement with this milieu and how this relates to the problem of position(ality), which also affects sampling strategies. This also shows that it is much harder to overcome one's position(ality) in terms of sampling strategies in a city where one has lived for more than 15 years, compared with Nairobi, where I was a stranger.

Therefore, the disparity between Nairobi and Berlin must be seen as biased by my sampling and the specific historical context that influenced education concepts in Berlin. This is important, as the current widespread investigations into child abuse in Germany once more point to the existence of an entirely different idea of education (*Erziehung*) that frames children as inferior to adults. These investigations show that it was the norm for adults to use their physical superiority as part of educational measures in the past. They furthermore reveal that the social topologies in which children were (and are) exposed to discipline through corporeal violence, especially often similar to what is observed in the Nairobi narrations, are the home and educational institutions, often run by the Catholic church – social topologies in which children are moreover threatened by sexual abuse (for more, see the publications of the Independent Commission for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse, Germany).[4] Within the reflections on position(ality), I would finally also like to draw from my own biographical context and the experience of diverse Catholic educational institutions and argue that in Christian milieus, such as that one I grew up in during the late 1980s and 90s in the predominantly Catholic rural area of the (former) German Democratic Republic in what is now the State of Thuringia, corporeal punishment and power abuse was part of the education in schools, and participation in church-related rituals was often performed under the pressure of families and the wider village community. Therefore, my and also my parents' 'German' experience of education styles is much closer to that of the Nairobian speakers, even though the degree of violence my 'generation' experienced in that rural area is not comparable to theirs.

7.1.2.2.4 Re-Framing the Past – Re-Gaining Control

One aspect that connects many of the Nairobian speakers' narrations with regard to discipline and subjugation is that they shift their speaker positions throughout their narrations about discipline and control. What is experienced as threatening, confusing, stressful, and at times traumatising as a child is often later and in retrospect evaluated and re-framed as necessary, or even becomes appreciated.

4 Independent Commission for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse: https://www.aufarbeitungskommission.de

> So, that time when we'd be taken to the rural area, we hated it so much. But now, I understand the importance of it […] [N]ow I do appreciate [what] I learnt at that age. So, I can start a fire by myself. I can/if I had cows, I know things. If I was dropped in the bush, I can/I know how to survive. (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.)

Like Stella, James reviewed the meaning of his relationship with his extended family in upcountry and concluded that

> [When] I was young, I thought that these people who I am with [in Nairobi], these are my people. [But] now I agree, uh, with what, with what he [father] was saying. […] People [who] are closer to you are those ones, uh, who are miles and miles away from you. (James, 41 yrs, *1978, male, Jericho, N.)

This biographical reflection shows that the speakers actively shift their speaker positions throughout their narration. On the one hand, they share their biographical memory from the position of being a child as though they were transporting themselves back to the event and their emotional entanglements 'as a child'. On the other hand, they can speak from their position of being an adult, the perspective of their current position, where the distance from the situation, paired with other experiences that they made throughout their life, shapes how they now view these memories. These reflective moments during the interviews confirm, on the one hand, that our perceptions and the way we relate towards past events can alter throughout the life course. It furthermore shows that these changes do not necessarily happen unconsciously and that people who share their life story in a biographical interview are actively involved in making these shifts in speaker positions visible. Hence, these positive re-framings of events that were experienced negatively in the past occur not only in the context of manual hard labour in upcountry but also in the context of the corporeal violence that many speakers experienced at home or in educational institutions.

> But there is nothing you will do about it [corporeal punishment in school]. Yes. (laughs). […] I mean, when you look at that today, we laugh about it, and you say, 'Okay, I think those teachers made us who we are today'. (Martha, 28 yrs, *1991, female, Umoja I, N.)

In the overall comparison, it seems that many speakers experienced corporeal violence and discipline as the norm. But how can we explain the paradox of the shift from resistance to adaptation? Why do the majority of those who experienced corporeal violence conclude that it was important because 'it structured' them? What is this structure about?

> [W]e're so regimental. Nairobi School used to be, I think it was, we were brought up militarily […]. So, it started as a military school. So, we had, uh, we even had a shooting range in school. I was a goodie […] I never got into that kind of problem [corporeal punishment]. But, uh, some of my friends did. People got caned. I heard about it. […] I was not one of those guys. […] I was a good boy. (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.)

Pele's example points to the colonial entanglements of this discipline and how they connect to bourgeois subjectivity ('I was a goodie'). Nairobi School was founded in 1902 by British colonists serving exclusively white pupils. It was only in 1962 that the school admitted '1 African and 5 Asian boys' (Old Cambrian Society, n.d.: n.p.). Indirect or direct relations drawn between education, discipline, and colonisation appear in the narrations often. Stella connects formal education to the colonial times when she says,

> [W]e were considered to be wealthy in that community and privileged. [M]y grandfather was a tax collector […] interacting with a lot of the colonialists, and by that time, he was able to understand the value of education. So, he tried to get his children educated. (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.)

Morris was also the child of a civil servant who worked for the colonial government in Nairobi. As an attempt to counter the growing unrest during the 1940s and 50s, which later sparked the upheaval of the Mau Mau freedom fighters, the colonial administration privileged some Kenyan civil servants who were migrating from upcountry to the city with providing social housing in Nairobi where they could finally also settle their families. However, as Banyikwa highlights, these places were strongly regulated by the colonial government, instilling a strong sense of safety through order.

> The architecture-planner's contribution to land use change in Nairobi was cast in terms of creating rigidly segregated colonial social stratification of Nairobi's residential areas on racial grounds, a strong concern with health and safety aspects, layout and visual appearance, conformity with accepted standards, densities and development principles. (Banyikwa 1990: 189)

Morris, who was born in 1962, one year before Kenyan independence, grew up in one of these social housing settlements in Embakasi Village. Even though his childhood fell largely in the postcolonial times, his memory provides evidence of how much the norms, rules, and laws of the British rule lived on in everyday life.

> [A]t that time you, you could not, um, plant, uh, some vegetables around your, the, uh, backyard. […] You're not supposed to do any cultivation there because the ground is for the council, not for you. […] And there's a time the City Council, uh, Inspectorate came around and took our dog because we never took it for, for injection. Things, things were in order. They were so straight, yeah. Things were very, very strict. […] Because there were some orders, the Europeans left. Written down orders, strict orders [on] how a country should be run. […] But these days, there [are] all these dogs around. Things are left around like that. (Morris, 57 yrs, *1962, male, Embakasi Village, N.)

Morris mourns a loss of order. As an aged man, he feels unhappy with the current chaos in the city. He does not see the condition of his country as caused by the European expansion that exploited the African continent and caused global inequalities, as would be my approach. Morris does not blame anyone or anything that is long gone and unchangeable; he is dissatisfied with the current politics in Kenya, like many other Kenyans. While

he remembers how things around him were in order, he also remembers the orders he had to follow as a child.

> I would say that life […] used to be good because any child who would mess up, any parent would spank the child, kind of discipline the child on the s-spot and go and report the child to the father and the mother, yeah. […]. It was the community-based character, yeah. And if a child goes haywire kind of un-undisciplined a small group of association, uh, meets and discuss about that child. And, uh, they call the child, eh, and talk to the child, and in case this child continues, he's taken to an approved school. […] [C.M.: And what happens at the approved school?] Discipline, severe discipline. Um, you're spanked, you're told to do [a] hard job […] like in a sort of military training […] It's the government school, eh, it's sponsored. (ibid.)

Approved schools, also known as school prisons, developed in England in the 1930s as a part of the industrial school system, often led by Christian institutions. A child who was assessed as a juvenile delinquent was sent there, kept there, and disciplined with all kinds of techniques – from a monitorial system that included incentives for punishment and corporal punishment (Gear 1999: 166 ff.). Shortly afterwards, the British government also erected several of these approved schools in Kenya, which were often run by missionaries. Philista P. M. Onyango's research about approved schools in Kenya shows that children are sent to these schools most of the time for 'stealing (44.8%)' or 'refusing to go to school (30.4%)', whereas other children are sent there because of 'vagrancy and need of protection (24.8%)' (Onyango 1983: 10). Tatiana's examples show that the figure of the 'evil' child is even today connected to children that either live on the street or are kept in approved schools and is used for moral education. In this context, these children are literally exhibited to other school children as part of the extracurricular activities of their school to warn them to follow the Christian laws in order not to share the same destiny.

> We were taken to the house for boys who/ […] they can't think for themselves […] /Then, then one of them was tied to the bed. Yeah. He was/We were told by Sister, that Sister, that he is, he is too wild. So if he gets loose, he can beat people, eat stones, those things. So, he's tied up. Yeah. We saw him, and we were told not to get too close to him because he was still trying to get out of the bed. He wanted to run. [C.M.: How, how did you feel about seeing that?] Sorry, and I hope that never happens to me. We also saw others who are in the cage, who are put in a certain cage, because if they get out of the cage they can push you and push you without caring. They just push. Sometime later, they are open for/They are let free to roam, and then sometime later they are put in again. (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.)

How can such a representation of the 'good' come about in the narrations, and why is the discourse of the 'good boy' (Pele) maintained? These examples make it clear that children are educated to be pious, which also means that they suppress their emotions, urges, and desires and can only show themselves to be exemplary if they learn to practise renunciation. In such a perspective, subjugation is rewarded and is normalised. Max Weber saw a similar connection between the modern economic ethos and the rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism. Although Max Weber's (2006 [1929]) thesis was strongly

influenced by the European context, and although Christianity in postcolonial Kenya has evolved strongly from its European roots, the results show how deeply colonial ideas have been inscribed in local cultures and that these inscriptions are maintained through fear. While the source of this fear might have changed from being beaten in the past to being marginalised and economically disempowered in today's society, it remains an integral and stable part of education. So whereas the medium of education used to instil fear through the body, this instilling practice is now shifting to the subject, who is called upon to exercise self-control, which requires renunciation.

> I was 11, and I was like 'I want to, to start designing' and […] I had like many things in my head. Then I was 12, I was like […] I'm gonna leave the rest of the stuff I was planning to do and just go to designing. […] I write songs and poems, too, but my main thing is designing. I was also thinking of being an actress, but I was like, mmm, mmm, it looks a bit hard. So, it's like designing; I like sewing, so I'll just go with that. (Sya, 12 yrs, *2007, female, Karen, N.)

Sya is a good example, because at the age of 12 years, she feels pressured to decide what she wants to become in the future and to start working for that now. Staying without a perspective and keeping several options open does not seem wise to her. To accomplish her dream one day, she is convinced that she must start working on it now and practise self-control. When we look at Sya, it does not seem helpful to issue Max Weber the red card of Eurocentrism overhastily. Given the interwoven nature of discipline and status work, it must be remembered that although colonialism in its original form ended, capitalism did not disappear with it. What remains is a system that significantly upholds European and Christian-influenced ideologies of progress and good life and the necessity to be 'a goodie' (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.).

If the exhibition of shackled children serves as teaching material for moral education in schools in which children are made so afraid that they cannot help but take refuge in the self-narrative of 'goodness', then another European concept imposes itself: bourgeois coldness. The 'moral philosophical metaphor' (translated from Stückler 2014: 280) of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2002 [1944]), Horkheimer (2011 [1936]), and recently further developed by Henrike Kohpeiß 2023,

> describes to a certain extent an essential moral principle in capitalist society [in which] bourgeois subjectivity [is] characterised by a quasi-schizophrenic simultaneity of adaptation and resistance: on the one hand, the bourgeois subject is, at least according to the aspiration, an autonomous, responsible and therefore also critical individual equipped with high moral values who is able to question social grievances. On the other hand, however, it is also a functionary within the bourgeois-capitalist order and must adapt and subordinate itself to it in the interests of self-preservation. (translated from Stückler 2014: 280)

It makes sense to discuss the discovery of such bourgeois coldness in the biographical narratives with a view to its emergence in the context of Kenya's colonial 'heritage', because, as a moral principle, it also appears within postcolonial studies (for more, see Kohpeiß 2023). In this context, an example of colonial pedagogical practice can be con-

sidered, which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o recalls from his school days in his essay *Decolonise the Mind*:

> English […] was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference. Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking *Gĩkũyũ* in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford. And how did the teachers catch the culprits? A button was initially given to one pupil who was supposed to hand it over to whoever was caught speaking his mother tongue. Who ever had the button at the end of the day would sing who had given it to him and the ensuing process would bring out all the culprits of the day. Thus children were turned into witch-hunters and in the process were being taught the lucrative value of being a traitor to one's immediate community. (wa Thiong'o ([1986] 1994: 11)

On a spatial-theoretical dimension, this disciplinary practice can be compared to Michel Foucault's panopticon – a prison architecture in which the inmates have no view of the guards, who, for their part, can see every inmate in every cell. According to Michel Foucault, the inmates discipline themselves by constantly observing their peers – the discursively produced guards. Once this institutional discipline has been incorporated, it becomes more and more self-control in the course of the biography. This self-control works so well because societies create and use systems of exclusion, in which, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o writes, people are 'being taught the lucrative value of being a traitor to one's immediate community' (ibid.).

As long as there are children who are 'tied to beds' or kept in 'cages' (Tatiana), they become evil performative spectacles for other children who are told they had better be pious or their destiny will become theirs, and so they follow the lord, the headmistress, the system. And as long as there are children who are haunted by these 'evil' children in their dreams, they had better become 'rice' and not '*ugali*' (Gathi) by quickly passing the 'button' (wa Thiong'o) to another person. This postcolonial form of subjugation, specific to the bourgeoisie in the context of the child's corporeal becoming, is a form of subjugation that Silvia Federici describes in the context of witch-hunting, which, according to her,

> did not disappear from the repertoire of the bourgeoisie with the abolition of slavery. On the contrary, the global expansion of capitalism through colonization and Christianization ensured that this persecution would be planted in the body of colonized societies, and, in time, would be carried out by the subjugated communities in their own name and against their own members. (Federici 2008: 21)

Last, I do not want to finish without highlighting the ambivalence in the act of reframing the past. Kili in particular oscillates between several positions on the corporeal violence and discipline he has experienced and witnessed in the past by reflecting on the mechanisms of subjugation and its wider effects on personhood.

> If we weren't disciplined in that way, we would have been more expressive […]. [W]e were afraid. You're in a cocoon. […] You see, it makes you less […] of a critical thinker […] Now that I've grown up, I can think. But if you had asked me that, like probably 15, 15 years ago […] I didn't have a sense. I just, I just knew [I'd] done something wrong I'm being punished […] I didn't think it was wrong. I think, I thought that's just how it was, it was done. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

It is furthermore important to note that the shifting speaker positions from resistance to conformity were not performed in the first socio-economic spectrum. Although the speakers of the first spectrum also experienced physical violence as a means of discipline, there is no change of perspective towards the utilisation of the experience throughout the narration. On the contrary, there is a defence against it. These speakers remain in their resistance. It appears that this also results from the lack of reward in the event of an attempt to ally oneself with the traitor, which, as Chola points out in the following passage, would be classified as an offence and not rewarded at all in their community.

> [L]iving in Kibera, […] as a child, me I grew up knowing that I can't speak English, and I'm learning English in school, […] [b]ut when you go home, most guys from the slum area, they […] will be like, 'Eh, […] that's not the lingo around here' or something like that. […] So me, I learnt [English], but when I went home, either you're talking Sheng' or Kiswahili. […] So, in Kibera, it's not like/We don't pretty much follow the things, 'cause […] for us it's more like the system is, like, teaching you things that [are] not really as relevant as you would want them to be. So, for you to lack the respect of education was very easy. That's the reason why so many guys from Kibera will tell you they are dropouts, 'cause you're teaching them things they're not, they're not relating with. […] You keep on telling them they are failures […] You keep on telling them that they/In the system perspective, they can't make it. […] Or you have education, but you never got a job. (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.)

What Chola says here makes it clear that in precarious environments, such as Kibera, these disciplining practices are hardly working out, because Kibera itself is often used as the metaphor for failed and unaccomplished lives – a social space that is pointed at when children are told to practise discipline if they do not want to end up in the same space. As Chola reports, the young people in Kibera know quite clearly that it is not worth it to obey the discipline that school instils in them, as this will still not change the fact that there is no employment and no future for them.

In sum, the oral and visual (hi)stories reveal how Nairobian children occupy profoundly subjugated positions within educational institutions, where suppression by professional adults is both routinized and legitimized. What initially appears as the disciplining of children's bodies to comply with institutional rules gradually transforms into more subtle practices of mental governmentality. Through constant evaluation, comparison, and measurement of success, power shifts from overt discipline toward diffuse regimes of control that seek not only obedience but self-regulation. While the experiences of discipline articulated by the Nairobian interlocutors differ significantly from those narrated in the Berlin context, a historical contextualization – alongside a critical reflection on the limitations of the study's sampling – problematises any interpreta-

tion of these differences as exceptional. Instead, the findings point to the persistence of historically variable yet structurally comparable formations of discipline and control to which children have been, and continue to be, subjected across space and time.

The classed comparison further sharpens this analysis by showing how middle-class children, in retrospect, tend to reframe experiences of subjugation as necessary or even formative. This reframing can be understood as an expression of *bourgeois cold*: a socially produced emotional and moral distancing through which suffering becomes intelligible only insofar as it appears functional for later success. Within this logic, middle-class children emerge as occupying comparatively fluid subject positions, marked by an ability – indeed a necessity – to shift perspectives, adapt to evaluative regimes, and internalise institutional demands. Such fluidity should not be read as autonomy, but rather as a condition of success within educational contexts shaped by neoliberal rationalities.

In this sense, the retrospective normalisation of subjugation aligns with the formation of the entrepreneurial self, for whom discipline is reinterpreted as investment and constraint as opportunity. Adult recollections thus risk reproducing the very power relations they seek to describe, converting structural coercion into narratives of individual adaptability. This capacity to reframe domination is unevenly distributed and deeply classed, enabling middle-class actors to neutralise harm while obscuring enduring asymmetries of power. Rather than offering closure, the analysis foregrounds the need to critically interrogate how discipline and control are affectively cooled, narratively legitimised, and differentially internalised across social positions.

7.2 Home: Territorialised Housing

Home has permeated all the biographical narratives of childhood, shaping the peaks of their emotional topologies. The importance of being able to relate to a home is prevalent regardless of age, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender and religion. Nevertheless, the actual constitution of home – from its meaning to its geographical and social as well as material and temporal composition – has produced very heterogeneous and classed topologies of (un)be*longing*. Within these, home appears as an imaginary spatial arrangement that materialises in the politics, practices, and artefacts of housing and home-making.

In research exploring housing and home-making from the childhood perspective, the situation of middle-class childhoods in the 'Global South' is missing. Research is often dominated by a focus on inadequate housing conditions (Coley et al. 2013). Other studies employ quantitative designs with child assessment based on adult-centric and normative understandings of self-accomplishment, overseeing children's perspectives, standpoints, and opinions (Haurin et al. 2001). Hence, they also (re)produce norms and idea(l)s of good childhood and good housing in which good is equated with security measures, overlooking emotional aspects of safety within the family or wider community. Amy Clair also notes that the research around housing and childhood 'tend[s] to focus on adult concerns around risk behaviours, behavioural problems and educational attainment [and] neglect[s] the impact of housing on children's lives beyond these concerns' (2019: 609). Last, there is little engagement with the architectural and socio-spatial rela-

tions in which children are involved within their homely topologies. Accordingly, there are no comparative housing studies that engage with children's home-making practices from a translocal perspective.

For the general research on housing and home-making, Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling note that home has often been explored as a dualistic concept, associated with the 'feminine' opposed to the 'masculine', the 'private' opposed to the 'public', 'domestic' opposed to 'civic', 'reproduction' opposed to 'production', 'local' opposed to 'global', 'stasis' opposed to 'change', etc. (2006: 17). These binary contextualisations of home cannot grasp the complexity of home-making practices and continue to disqualify the topology of home as a relevant research topic for global spatial figuration. To fill this research gap, the following analysis offers a classed engagement with the meaning of home in children's lives, considering how the material agency of the built environment becomes enacted within the practices of housing and home-making in translocal contexts.

7.2.1 Home as and beyond the House

Along with the process of the insularisation of childhood, which I introduced before (subchapter 2.1) and will elaborate later on the scale of the city (subchapter 7.3), scholars often also refer to a growing domestication (strongly connected to familiarisation) of children's lives (Behnken/Jonker 1990; Zinnecker 1990; Zeiher/Zeiher 1994). Although this research concentrates more on the spaces outside of the home – the islands that increasingly gain meaning in children's lives – it tends to treat the subject of the home itself only on the margins. It thus comes as little surprise that the theory of domestication also lacks a theoretical concept of home. Similarly to its sibling, insularisation, it seems to be widely based on a geographical/Euclidian understanding of space. But although home can be the house, it can also be composed beyond that and by diverse spatial relations, which sometimes unfold on a multi-scalar entanglement. For others, home is not connected to the walls of any building(s) but connected to themselves or their families. In this chapter, I contribute to a plural and processual understanding of home as and beyond the house based on children's emotional topologies of home-making. The following analysis shows how home transcends the mere physicality of a built dwelling and represents a complex interplay of emotional and topological dimensions, some of which could be entangled on diverse scales.

7.2.1.1 House beyond the House

Even though there are extremely diverse notions of home in the childhood narrations, certain scalar entanglements are found in connection with these notions. The speakers of the first socio-economic spectrum tend to constitute home as house the least. This is often related to their domestic space being rather limited. Therefore, to Yao, for example, the 'house is important [because] you don't have to sleep out' (Yao, 10 yrs, *2009, male, Lumumba, N.). To him and Chola, home relates to a wider topology, including many people beyond their core family, and is constituted on the scale of the neighbourhood. In this context, Chola said, 'To me, Kibera was home' (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.). Interestingly, and relating to my previous research on children's street play in the Tarlabaşı neighbourhood in Istanbul, Turkey, it is not only the concept of home

that reaches beyond the house. Reciprocally, it is also the concept of house that can reach beyond the house.

Figure 20: Domestic practices on the streets of Tarlabaşı, Istanbul.

Source: Photo by the author, 2014.

As Figure 20 shows, children's play and care-work (e.g., clotheslines are hung between the houses) indicate that the notion of house can go beyond the house. That makes the idea of the domestication of childhood even more complicated, because children in Tarlabaşı spend a large amount of time within domestic topologies, but that does not mean that they are not on the streets.

Back in the middle classes of Nairobi and Berlin, we find a spatial figuration of childhood that corresponds more to the notion of 'house as home' (Blunt/Dowling 2006: 88). Thus, in many cases, the constitution of home and the physical confinement of the house are defined by the same boundaries. When I asked Stella what the most important place during her childhood was, she replied,

> This! [pointing at the building she lived in as a child]. I felt […] most comfortable in [here]. It was easy, again, [a] nuclear, small family. […] Um, I had siblings that I liked. Um, my parents are very nice people; um, very generous, very warm, very nice people. Um, and yeah, I think it was just the solitude. I was there, no one bugged me, yeah. Yeah, I think I liked home. It was safe. Yeah. Yeah, there was everything there. We had dogs. We had, I don't know, everything, a place to play around. (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.)

In the middle-class milieus, we also find speakers whose notion of home goes beyond the house. In Sya's case, this is not so much because there is not enough space at home but because she is a single child. As she is additionally home-schooled, she is very eager to meet with peers and complains about being isolated at home. This is why she enjoys accompanying her mom for grocery shopping and loves to eat out. 'Nakumatt [a local supermarket] is like home' (Sya, 12 yrs, *2007, female, Karen, N.) to her and, as such, becomes part of her constitution of home, which even has a biographical relevance.

> I used to go there […] since I was a baby. (Laughs). So, like, I was also known there too 'cause the people who work there, they knew me since I was/Since even before I was born. (ibid.)

Many speakers from the third and fourth socio-economic spectrum regularly eat out when grocery shopping at shopping malls. Sya again made me realise that these practices are connected to domesticity and, as such, must be considered important for practices of housing and home-making. This is because the domestic practice of eating is decentralised from the house and its kitchen and includes commodified practices of eating, including their spatial relations. As such, they enlarge the house as house as well as home.

> We tend to go to Java Karen a lot. And then we sit there because that's, like/I can say it's kinda like home, except it's a restaurant. (ibid.)

From this perspective, it must be argued that domestication cannot adequately be understood as withdrawal from outside into the 'house as house', because domesticity spreads out into the city.

7.2.1.2 One Family – Two Households

Another relationality of home that could be identified in Nairobi was a constitution of home as an urban-rural connection. Most of the Nairobians, especially the older generation, expressed a very ambivalent connection to the city. Biographically, the city often appears as a 'necessary evil'. For many Nairobians, it is the place for working and living throughout the middle passage of life, whereas they see their future and old age as taking place in the rural ancestral land referred to as upcountry. As such, the urban-rural dichotomy also points to a generational order that is connected to it, which I will elaborate more deeply on the scale of the city (subchapter 7.3).

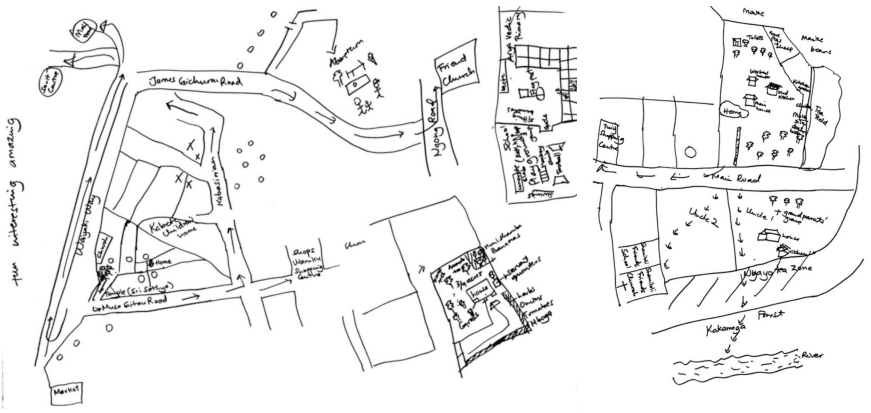
This ambivalence comes as no surprise, because the city also comes as an already ambivalent colonial heritage. The colonial regulation for African rural-urban work migration plays a big role here. Compared to the rural, urban social realities have been a marginalised subject in historical research on colonial Kenya (see Londsdale 2002: 207). This could be because less than ten per cent of Kenyans were living in towns at independence; most of them were in Nairobi (267,000 inhabitants) and Mombasa (180,000 inhabitants) (ibid.: 207). Even by the late 1960s, only three per cent of Nairobi's population had been born in the city. In the racially segregated Nairobi of the 1930s and 1940s, the African population was very small and predominantly female, as most of the African sup-

pliers in Nairobi were women who 'succeeded to build up respectable livelihoods within and outside of family settings [through] [m]any different types of trades, from real estate (Burja 1975) to sex-work (White 1990)' (Frederiksen, 2002: 223). During the 1940s and 50s, the male rural-urban labour migration also intensified with the arrival of the 'salaried white-collar employee of government departments and railways' (Lonsdale 2002: 218) and changed the socio-material order of the city. But at first, due to the lack of housing for workers in Nairobi, many Kenyan men who lived upcountry and worked in the city travelled daily not only between the spheres of production and reproduction but also between the spheres of urban and rural life.

This oscillation between rural and urban lifestyles was later believed to be the source of labour inefficiency and the uprising of the Mau Mau, Kenya's movement for independence (Lonsdale 2002: 212). Therefore, during the 1950s, the colonial rule changed its policy and provided housing for Kenyan civil servants (Lonsdale 2002). Even though this changed the spatial relation of production and reproduction tremendously for a few, most people maintained their strong ties with upcountry. This is why, up until today, many Nairobian families are divided into two households – one in the city and one in upcountry – which Richard U. Agesa (2004: 161) refers to as the '[o]ne family, two households' model. This urban-rural link is evident in most of the Nairobian speakers' narrations, and upcountry must be understood as an extension of the urban home. This applies to the older speakers especially, while the meaning of upcountry loses importance in the younger generations.

> And we used to have fun as kids [in upcountry]. [We were] hunting, uh, hunting rabbits. So, when we go to milk the cows at home, when my grandmother is cooking you've skinned the rabbit and you've put it on the side. […] We used to eat grasshoppers. Yeah, they're very healthy. Green, yeah, we [also] used to pick them when the season was there. […] Then you're back to Nairobi again, to the comics, to the cartoons. (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.)

Figure 21: (left) Map of childhood in Nairobi, (right) Map of upcountry in Kakamega County.



Source: Mental map of Rebecca, 38 yrs, *1982, female, Lavington, N.

Many children's home-related spatial relations in Nairobi must be seen at the scalar entanglement of urban and rural. In some cases, this marks a big difference in children's urban spatial mobility. This becomes very explicit in Rebecca's childhood map, in which she portrays both urban and rural (Figure 21). Rebecca used two sheets of paper for mapping: one for the city and one for upcountry, while other speakers drew upcountry as one additional space on their map. In this way, upcountry seems more disconnected but also more elaborated. While the second map clarifies that upcountry is an extension of home far away from home, its large and detailed representation also emphasises its importance in Rebecca's life. Both maps are characterised by arrows, indicating her spatial mobility. According to her narration, only a few arrows indicate her independent movement on the urban map, whereas all arrows on the rural map mark the radius of where she could go. Figure 21 (right) shows a property in Kakamega County that belongs to her extended family. Three bordering 'homesteads' are depicted. They belong to her father and his two uncles, who participate the family's agricultural business. The family and permanent and temporary workers, such as harvesters, reside there, creating a vibrant social field that promotes Rebecca's spatial independence and co-constitutes her topology of housing and home-making.

But upcountry enlarges not only the house as home but also the family as home. Connected to this is what James said earlier in the context of the sense of (un)be*longing* he acquired from his father.

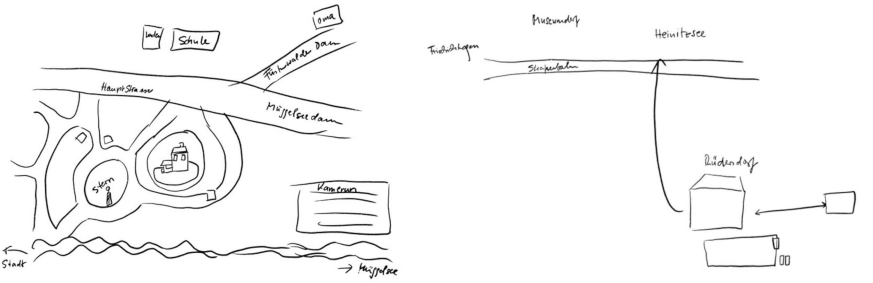
> My people are far away from where, from where I am residing […] people [who] are closer to you are those ones, uh, who are miles and miles away from you. (James, 41 yrs, *1978, male, Jericho, N.)

Such ethnic notions of (un)be*longing* co-constitute an understanding of home that differentiates where someone *resides* from where someone *belongs*. This topological order shows that emotional proximity is not always measured by Euclidian proximity.

Even though there is no such historically forged idea of upcountry in Germany, the existence of another place of belonging, such as the ancestral home, referred to as homeland (in German, *Heimat*, a term unfortunately denigrated during Nazism), exists too. In the narrations, great importance is also attached to grandparents and their homes, which enlarges the concept of home. Thus, Paula depicted her grandmother's place on an additional map (Figure 22, left), marking it as important, where she had access to

> 'a very nice garden [… and a] shed where [they] were allowed to play in the attic' (Paula, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.).

Figure 22: (left) Map of childhood in Berlin, (right) Map of grandparent's place in suburban Berlin.



Source: Mental map of Paula, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.

> My grandma, in particular, was very important. […] She was also very musical, sang a lot with us, and we sang a lot of folk songs and so on with her. So she also demanded it when we came round. And first she sat down at the piano and then we put the books down, then we sang […]. And yes, we were very often at my grandma's […]. (Paula, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.)

In this subchapter I aimed at highlighting the history and culture-specific relation of home as an urban-rural link specific to Nairobi and the entanglements to Berlin. In the next subchapter I will elaborate on this idea at the scale of the city, constituted by the rural-urban dichotomy.

7.2.1.3 Home Is Where the Internet Is

> My home is so important to me, especially because I have Wi-Fi there. (Neo, 10 yrs,*2010, male, Neukölln, B.)

The meaning of being able to connect to an online society or virtual reality occurs in all socio-economic groups and both cities, unsurprisingly among younger speakers. As such, home, a topology often reduced to a local imaginary, appears suddenly as very global, contextualised by the worldwide internet, where children connect 'on the server […] [w]ith over a thousand people' (Neo, 10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.). Wi-Fi is a highly emotional part of the topology of home, appearing daily.

> And that's one of the worst days I've ever had in the house. You don't have power, and there's no TV and power on the laptop. (Yao, 10 yrs, *2009, male, Lumumba, N.)

Home is where the internet is. But it has not always been like this, as Henry, born in 1999, reflects:

> I still live there [in his estate] today. […] Our kids now, uh, back home […] Most of them have phones. Like in, in my court […]. So, uh, kids don't play as much as they used to. (Henry, 21 yrs, *1999, male, Buruburu Phase II, N.)

Although internet access is marked as an extremely important factor for all children in the sample, the upper-third and fourth spectrum of the young Berlin speakers show some difference here, as they emphasise a restricted and self-aware approach to the internet and new media, which goes hand in hand with a devaluation of blunt media stimulation or excessive media consumption.

> Well, I'm more in the social networks. I never really play mobile phone games or computer games. And if I do, it's card games. […]. I think it's more important to read and then realise the different stories and immerse myself in them. And then also to be excited and somehow have your own ideas. (Lana, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Kreuzberg, B.)

While Lana emphasises the importance of appropriate use of the internet and new media, in Stephan's narration, the internet and computers do not feature at all. He instead addresses a restrictive and ritualised approach to watching films.

> So we're only allowed to watch films at the weekend and on Friday evenings and sometimes on Mondays too. (Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.)

Interestingly, even though the internet, tablets, smartphones, video game consoles, and laptops are often portrayed as very important within the topology of home of the younger speakers, the spatial-biographical narration does not unfold but rather stops here – as if the screen were a kind of boundary to a spatiality that is not so easy to talk about. Even though I tried to emphasise this topic during the narrations, speakers had a hard time sharing what makes the connection to the internet and these devices so important. Besides connecting to a global community, which was named in some instances, such as when playing on the server (Neo) or being on social media (Sya and Lana), it seemed challenging to figure out how this connection extends and diversifies children's spatial relations. Even though I tried to elaborate on these spatial relations in subchapters 7.1 and later in 7.3, I also got the impression that what happens there is, in a way, also part of children's privacy and a topic they were not too eager to speak about. Here, my position(ality) plays a role because, to the children, I appear as a total stranger to all the social networks and games they engage with. Consequently, I lack a common space of experience with them, making it harder for them to communicate with me.

7.2.2 Topologies of Housing and Home-Making

Unlike analysing the scales of the subject and body as well as the city, analysing the scale of home depends not only on the biographical narrations and maps but also on the architectural ethnography of the diverse housing contexts. Together, they compose what I frame here as housing and home-making.

Studies that look at the impact of global capitalism on residential city development show that despite the global growth of cities caused by it, local urbanisation processes are not necessarily homogenised and speak in this context of context-specific variations such as 'vernacular neoliberalism' (Park 2019: 63). With regard to housing and the actor dimension of the recipients – the dwellers themselves – there are also studies that show

that even if there is a global architecture transfer, local cultures of using these structures often differ from what the architects and planners had 'calculated into the civil engineering of the[se] structures' (Schwenkel 2014: 169/70). This relation of built and lived housing and home-making must be taken into account, as it might highlight the culturally specific aspects of this relation. The findings of my study, however, also point to the other side of this process and to something that Jane Jacobs frames as 'repeated instances' (Jacobs 2006: 6), which are unmissable and are rendering more and more cities homogeneous, such as 'the sheer multitude of instances of tall buildings' (ibid.: 6). These repeated instances help us to understand specific aspects of the city as a process rather than the city at large as a fixed entity. This process can appear as global assemblages – as repeated instances of situated architectural globalities, which shape childhoods globally.

In the following analysis of housing and home-making practices, based on my contrastive sampling, I argue that, on the one hand, home is an extremely vague concept that can only gain sharpness through empirical evidence of the meaning of home in people's lives. On the other hand, it is a globally existing concept increasingly shaped and reshaped by a globalising housing industry and centuries of global architecture transfers that have been documented poorly (for exceptions, see, e.g., Guerrieri 2020; Roesler 2021; Heynickx et al. 2021). To follow the effect of such transfer on the ground and in the buildings themselves, I look for these 'repeated instances' within the topology of housing and home-making in my material. By doing so, I will show that class as a category of social inequality is very powerful at forging such repeated instances, while at the same time it is just one of many categories that matter there.

The overview in Table 7 shows the categorisation of the speakers, which is divided according to housing types. It also shows which speakers were part of my architectural ethnographic documentation (see those marked in bold). The age comparison shows that whereas most of the speakers younger than 16 years old live in tenements or private apartments, most of those older than 16 years reside(d) in semi-detached or terraced structures. Interestingly, these two groups also mark the highest number of middle-class speakers (upper-second to lower-fourth spectrum). Therefore, according to my sampling, these two building types can be seen as middle class-specific in both cities.

These house types are to be understood as a rough categorisation that describes the purely built form of the house as the type used to refer to the respective dwelling in everyday language, which I will combine in the following with the topology of home-making, as elaborated in subchapter 5.1.4.1. Whether this classification (Table 7) also leads to similarities in the childhood experience and how, precisely, these similarities constituted or whether they develop independently or across contexts will be analysed later from the topological perspective (practices of home-making). It should already be anticipated that specific housing types also have a common topology. But the results also highlight many examples in which this is not the case or is ambivalent.

Table 7: Housing typology of speakers' childhood residencies.

Typology	**Single-family house (detached) (private ownership)**	**Semi-detached and terraced structures (private ownership)**	**Flat in tenement and private apartment block**	**Mixed**
Speakers total	8	17	15	6
Speakers younger than 16 yrs	2	1	12	4
First spectrum		Amina, Mercy, **Yao, Chola,** Ruby	Amina, Mercy, **Yao, Chola,** Ruby	**Ijhanya**
Second spectrum		**Henry,** Matthew, **Kili, Eddah,** Martha, **James, Gathi,** Falak	Rehema, **Neo, Tatiana,** Makena, Fergusson, **Rose-Ann,** Elliot	**Steve, Said, Analia**
Third spectrum	Mildred, Sya, Paula, Stella, Rebecca	**Fabian,** Morris, **Anne**	Ben, **Lale & Nuhu, Milo, Lisa & Lana, Rosi**	Steph, Eliah
Fourth spectrum	**Pierre,** Caroline, Pele	**Raphael**	**Stephan**	

Source: Table by the author.

7.2.2.1 Private Community

What I will describe in the following as framed by the social topology of 'private community' represents all terraced, semi-detached house structures that are characterised by, first, their repetitive elements (e.g. same floorplans and building materials in every building), second, common spaces that residents can access, such as a private and semi-private streets, fields, or communal gardens, and last, their horizontality. These structures can be accompanied by a larger estate they belong to, which can be (un)gated and (un)guarded. The reason why I do not refer to their topologies by the much more common term 'gated community' is because not all of them are gated, which does not make them less private. However, the term gated community is strongly connected to a negative connotation, which often describes its exclusionist character to the outside very well, but is only poorly suited to describing the gated community from the inside – a perspective I will elaborate on in the following. In contrast to the current use of the term gated community in critical urban studies with the term private community, I want to emphasise both the communal character and simultaneously the private nature of this housing and home-making topology.

7.2.2.1.1 Playing in the Residential Streets of the 1970s

To illustrate this simultaneous inner inclusion and outer exclusion, Anne from Berlin and Gathi from Nairobi, who both grew up in semi-detached housing, serve as a good vantage point. They stand out from the speakers in the translocal comparison somewhat as each other's translocal antipodes. Even though they grew up geographically distanced, their biographical narrations show many similarities. As such, they serve as vibrant examples of the methodological metaphor of the countertopology, because they seem to be at the exact ends of the wormhole. In many ways, they represent what I framed earlier as intra-universe and epitomise what I mean by situated globalities. Both grew up in the early 1970s: Anne in Zehlendorf, in the American sector of what was then West Berlin, and Gathi in the Buruburu Phase II (Figure 23), one of five similar estates built for the growing middle classes in Nairobi Eastlands between 1974 and 1976 (Rukwaro/Kieti 2018: 35).

*Figure 23: Housing type of Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu Phase II, N.*

Drawing by the author, 2019.

> Every house was designed in the same way and had the entrance towards the front. So, all the children would always use the front door to go outside, and you would see each other immediately there. Everyone played in front of the house and on the street. […] The street was the most important place to me growing up. It was where I was free to play, talk openly and take charge of my friends during games. It was where we spent a carefree time playing or just sitting to talk about life and things that we hoped for. It's where I felt most wanted and most useful. My opinions mattered, and I felt valued by [my] friends. It's where we made plans on what to do, where and with whom. It's where we played all our games. (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu Phase II, N.)

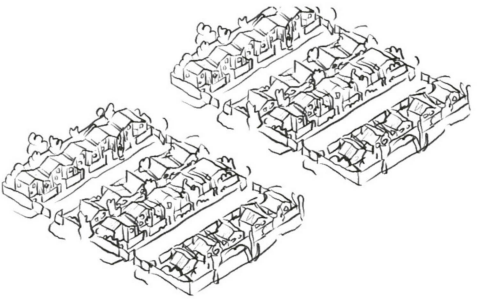
Anne also strongly emphasised the description of the housing type and the arrangement of the street at the centre around which the houses were aligned. The street in front of their house not only appears as central to the housing type in which they grew up but also as central to their lives. In this context, the meaning of the street is depicted similarly by Anne in Figure 24.

*Figure 24: Housing type of Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

I grew up here in Zehlendorf [in] a semi-detached house [...] that all looked the same, all the same size, all the same windows, all the same fence [...and] with a garden, with a street in front of the door. There were only young people with small children in the estate. That means we all grew up together, [and] we all went to school together, some of us in the same class. [...] And we lived on the street from Friday afternoon until Sunday night. [...] Maybe they were my only friends on the street. I was always an outsider at school. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

*Figure 25: Estate of Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu Phase II, N.*



Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

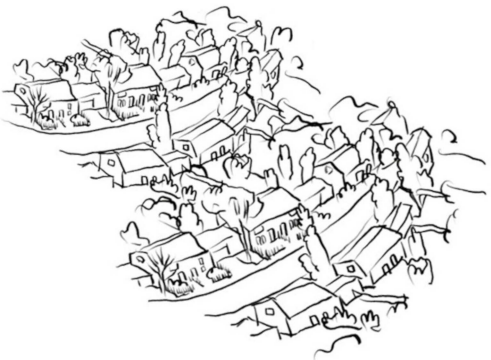
Semi-detached, terraced housing often features elements that emphasise certain socio-economic strata and milieus, family routines and household sizes, borders of private and public, and material cultures (e.g., space for a family car). As such, their physical materiality often gains a performativity that prescribes or suggests a specific use to its inhabitants. But contrary to these built aspects of social engineering, Anne's and Gathi's

examples also show that the communities they were part of only adapted to some of these built orders, whereas they changed or exaggerated others.

Let me give an example – while the plots at the back of the houses in such settlements were originally planned to inhabit the core family in their private outdoor space, Anne says that, nevertheless, '[w]e also had a garden, but we didn't actually use it much because everything happened in front of the house' (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.). Also, Gathi remembers 'a field behind the house […] but we hardly ever played there. Instead, we played in front of the house at the empty car park and on the street' (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu Phase II, N.). In Buruburu Phase II (Figure 25), not every family who could afford such housing during the 1970s had enough to additionally invest in a car. This created additional free space for children's play. On the contrary, most families owned cars in Zehlendorf (Figure 26), but according to Anne, this did not compromise the children's play space:

> And on weekends, I can remember when things got really heated, and we drew with chalk and then somehow/We drew our own streets and then stopped at the traffic lights with our bikes and scooters and Kettcar/and then looked for parking spaces. So, we drew our own little city traffic system. That the parents, some of them, drove their cars onto the nearest big road so that we had a bit more space. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

*Figure 26: Estate of Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.*



Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

In Anne's and Gathi's narrations, the street appears as an emotional topology of (un)be*longing* in which be*longing* is characterised beyond the core family and connected to the wider residential community. This sense of belonging is strongly connected to solidarity and social cohesion. Parents would, for example, support each other by providing care-work for each other's families, which made the organisation of the household, as well as childcare and supervision, much easier.

> Our parents sat in the front gardens and chatted. And my mum could actually go shopping, even when I was little. [...] And she just let us play there in the street because she knew the other parents were looking out for us. (ibid.)

In this constellation, older children would also take over the responsibility of looking after the younger children, to an extent that Anne describes as follows:

> [W]e brought each other up, didn't we? So, we made sure that the little ones weren't beaten up somehow, that the older ones pulled themselves together. (ibid.)

In this context, children would also collaborate with each other and forge alliances that, in Gathi's case, led to the development of information (travel) systems, which involved the following:

> [I]n case you have not done your chores or homework yet, they [the other kids] will inform you that your parents are on the way home so you can quickly start with it. (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu, N.)

In this housing and home-making topology, children grow up beyond the child-adult binary, also as a community of children who establish cultures to which adults have no access, such as the information system. But this is not the only case in which the topology of the settlement fosters a flow of information. The medium-density development of semi-detached, terraced, or row houses also promotes a certain communal control connected to sensory aspects such as hearing.

> We knew which family would be having a father beating the mother. We would hear the screaming at night. It happened in my family. I felt so embarrassed because I knew everyone would know that [it was] us. That really had an effect on my self-esteem. (ibid.)

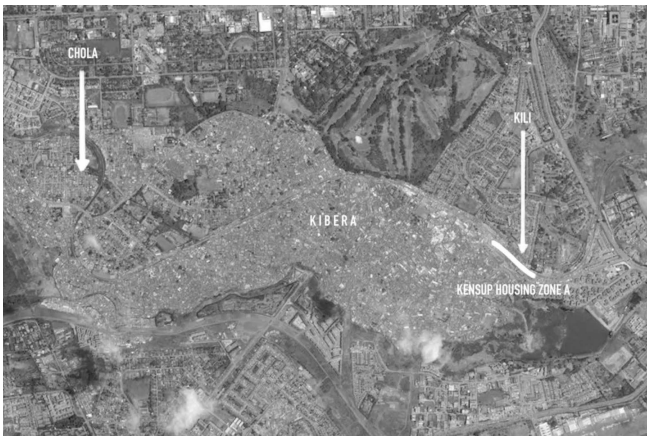
Even though Gathi felt ashamed that the estate could hear there was domestic violence at her place, the fact that domestic violence becomes public means that there is at least a chance that the community can intervene.

7.2.2.1.2 Möbius Borders

As part of the topology of private community, I found another intra-universe around Kili from the lower-third and Chola from the first socio-economic spectrum. This time the tunnel connecting the universes does not go through the globe but through socio-economic discourses of the sociality connected to their respective housing typologies (slum vs middle-class settlement), both of which reproduce by referring to people from the slums (like Chola) compared to people from middle-class estates (like Kili). However, although their description of the respective other predominantly reproduces existing discourses of both spatialities, their self-description is in many senses similar. Therefore, two supposedly different people talk about each other without knowing it and, in doing so, resemble each other remarkably in their differentiation from one another. Geo-

graphically, Chola belongs to a slum and Kili to a middle-class neighbourhood. However, a closer look shows that they are actually at the geographical and socio-economic boundaries of these neighbourhoods. As the map in Figure 27 shows, Chola grew up in the comparatively affluent part of Kibera (slum), while Kili grew up in a middle-class estate bordering Kibera and the railway in a part of Kibera called Laini Saba, on the upper right, where the KENSUP (Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme) housing Zone A is marked by a line today, taking the direct view from Kili's childhood room over Kibera.

Figure 27: Home of Chola and Kili.



Source: Map adapted from Google Maps by the author.

In his biographical narration, Kili reports how he and his friends went into Kibera 'on adventures' (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.). During one such adventure, an incident happened where Kili and his friends were chased by children from Kibera, who threw stones at them. One of the stones landed in Kili's childhood room, and another hit his head. This traumatic experience drastically shaped Kili's imagination of 'the other' from Kibera.

> So at that point, that's when it hit me. 'Hey, I think we're different. These guys don't, they're, they're not, they don't think like I do.' So I/From that point, um, we never, I never, like we never went over to go and interact with the children from that side. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

The borders drawn here also exist in the public discourse. This became evident when I visited Kili at his place and the controversial housing blocks – multiple story buildings that stand like a wall along the railway – had already been built by KENSUP, displacing many people at the margins from their trading practices along the former colonial railway (Figure 28).

Figure 28: (left) Housing blocks built by the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) at Kensup Housing Zone A, Kibera, Nairobi, (right) Photo of railway in Kibera, Nairobi.

Source: Photographs by the author, 2019.

When Chola was a teenager, his parents earned enough to afford to move out of Kibera and into a flat in South C – a well-known middle-class residency in the south of Nairobi. Although this move was connected to the promise that life would become better, Chola experienced it as the quite opposite.

> Living in Kibera is like a culture. I have my boys. I call them. We go sit around. Stories. Walk around. […] Then I moved out from Kibera [to South C] and then I realised in this other section where the guys are called middle class or upper class, the guys don't go out for walks. (Laughs). The guys don't call each other to do like, 'Hey, bro. Let's go eat, uh, *bhajia*[5] from the same plate.' It wasn't like that, and I missed that […]. My childhood, that's very social. […] But where I am now/ […] They will tell you, 'Oh, go home. I think you're supposed to eat lunch.' […] The first two years living in South C, eh, it was so difficult for me 'cause I used to stay outside looking at people, waiting for them to, like, wave at me, like, the way they would in Kibera, but nothing. (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.).

If we now zoom out of the scale of the neighbourhood and into the homes, we see that Kili and Chola both grew up in what is framed here as a private community – Chola in a tiny bungalow arranged in a rather small u-shaped gated estate, cut out of the wider heterogeneous building an dwelling structure of Kibera (Figure 29) and Kili in a rather large estate with semi-detached one-storey housing arranged in several mirrored rows that are characterized by order, similarity and aesthetic repetition.

5 *Bhajia* is a deep fried, crispy snack as part of Indian cuisine.

*Figure 29: Estate of Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

Kili and his siblings had a lot of freedom to play. He and his cousin Eddah, a speaker living in the same estate, express their feeling of belonging.

> So, the first place that was really important for me was Magiwa Estate growing up. It was a close-knit community. […] We knew the neighbours. […] We played, uh, we played. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

Eddah positively frames the community in the estate as 'multi-ethnic', adding that they were 'a huge group of kids who've come from whichever neighbourhood just going to visit other estates' (Eddah, 31 yrs, *1988, female, Ngumo, N.). Eddah and Kili emphasise that they spent most of their time as children outside in their estate's common space. This is similar to Chola, who played a lot in the area between the houses as a child (Figure 30).

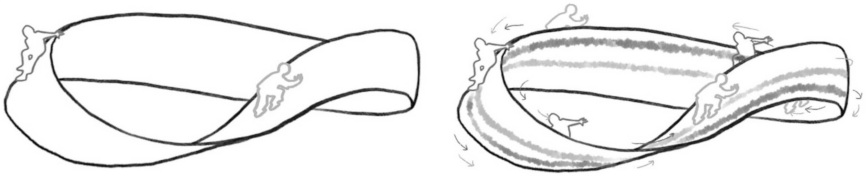
*Figure 30: Path between houses in estate of Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

> [In] Kibera our life was never inside the house. Our life was outside the house, 'cause first of all the house is not big enough. (Laughs). […] I saw the difference when I left, 'cause now [in South C] my, my life is literally inside the house. […], I've lived there for how long? Five years now. And I, I would say I don't even know the second name of my neighbour. But then ask me anything about the guys we grew up with [in Kibera]. We were like brothers, man. (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.)

Kili and Chola describe themselves in opposition to an imagined topological other. By doing so, they reveal what is important to them, and it is quite moving that, in this way, they come to many agreements. As such, the topology of their self/other description forms a Möbius strip. No matter how much they position themselves on the opposite sides of the strips, they always arrive at the same side (Figure 31), as they both appreciate the community and constitute home as a place where they urge to belong.

Figure 31: Topology of self/other description as Möbius strip.



Source: Illustration by the author.

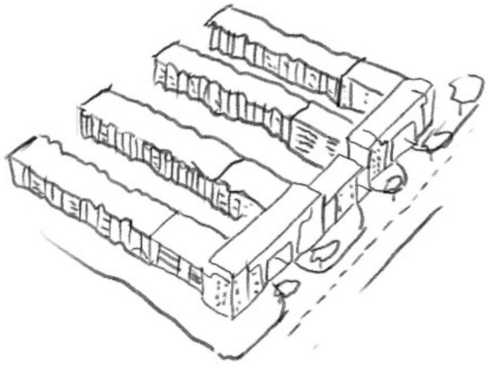
7.2.2.1.3 Commons

Gathi's, Anne's, Eddah's, Kili's, and Chola's (hi)stories resonate with many others who grew up in structures with planned-in communal spaces, which were used by children frequently. In Berlin, these structures are usually existent in the urban periphery. However, Fabian instead grew up in such a structure within the city centre in Tiergarten (Figure 32), which he refers to as an 'inner-city idyll' (Fabian, 38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.).

> The house was relatively big for the standards of that time. It had just been completed by the International Building Exhibition [*Internationale Bauausstellung IBA*]. […] And these houses were designed in such a way that there were different types of houses that were repeated but aligned differently. […] [T]hey were semi-detached houses […] and between these houses were two alleys, and we lived in one of these two[6] alleys. And the alleys ultimately also defined the social space between these houses, where many other, I'll say, middle-class families moved in at the time, all of whom also had children. (ibid.)

6 The townhouses in Lützowstraße have three of these alleys. The incoherence here is not clear.

*Figure 32: Estate of Fabian, 38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.*



Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

The common spaces used by children in semi-detached, terraced house structures are not always streets. In Raphael's case, who grew up in Pankow, a 'park-like situation' (Figure 33) accommodated their play.

*Figure 33: Estate of Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

> Well, there is this very large meadow, and we lived there in a complex called Amalienpark. […] It was built in the late art nouveau period in 1895 as some kind of urban villas. In the end, these were actually detached houses with six units, each with a garden, a relatively large garden behind it. And these were eight[7] villas, which were placed in such a park-like situation. And that was, so to speak, the most important place in my

7 Amalienpark comprises nine buildings, one of which was partly destroyed during World War II. It was later reconstructed. This could be why Raphael mixed up the number of units that belong to the park.

> childhood and also that of my sister, who is significantly younger than I am. And we had a lot of children in the neighbourhood there, and we occupied this place very strongly for us, so to speak, the front gardens and back gardens around the houses. (Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.)

Raphael must be seen as a special speaker within the topology of the 'private community'. This is because the housing type he lived in and the practices of home-making are somewhat between the topologies of 'private community' and 'vertical capsules' (the housing and home-making topology that will be elaborated on in the following subchapter). This is, on the one hand, because he grew up in a structure built at the end of the 19th century by the architect Otto March – a time in which a park-like agglomeration of terraced urban villas can be seen as a special type of housing per se, as it stands in contrast to the topology of Berlin, the biggest tenement city in the world at that time. Topologically speaking, including the dimension of home-making, Raphael's spatial mobility and the amount of participation within a residential (children's) community also show clear differences from, for example, Anne and Gathi, who present the common space in their housing typology as immensely important to their lives. This becomes clearer when Raphael clarifies,

> And if you break it down now, it's ultimately just an outlying village that's relatively well connected to Berlin, but in terms of what it offers in terms of urban space, it's no different from a small town. [...] So, of course, we were supposed to stay at home, and we were more at home, but if we said we were going to the park, then that was fine. (Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.)

But commons as part of housing and home-making practices do not only relate to common spaces. Anne's home (as house) was not just home to her and her core family, but it was where her parents (mainly her father) hosted gatherings of something that I would frame an 'extended political family'.

> My father, who was a journalist, worked for an [...] extremely left-wing newspaper. And he was head of the politics and news department there. [...] So all his newspaper friends were always hanging around our house. And my mum, she loved cooking foreign food [...] she could cook Spanish, she could cook French, she cooked Yugoslavian here and so on. So, they were all always with us. And we children, they all had children, were always allowed to join us late. And when we were tired, well, then we were put on the floor, and you had to make sure that we slept or didn't sleep. It didn't matter. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

That the house is home to people beyond the single family also became evident when Gathi filled out the socio-economic questionnaire. When she was asked to write down all homes that she has lived in since her birth and add the number of people that she shared a household with, this seemed a very odd task to her.

> 'Kikuyu never count people'. That's what my mom used to say. Sometimes here in the States [where she lives now], people ask me: How many people came to your party?

> And I'm like, 'WHAT? – I did not count them'. (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu Phase II, N.)

*Figure 34: Example of demi-detached house with front yard in estate of Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu Phase II, N.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

The house in which Gathi and her family lived was aligned in a row with other two-storey semi-detached houses along a street and on both sides. Each house had a little car park (Figure 34) in the front and a field in the back. A gate separated each property from the street. Even though all these material agents for creating privacy existed, according to her narration they were not used. The accessibility resulting from this was not only limited to adults visiting each other but regarded as a children's community with access to each other's homes – a feature strongly shaping this topology. 'In Buruburu, we also played a lot in other children's homes' (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu, N.). What characterises 'private communities' is that the commonality does not end at the entrance to the house or at the gate but that its residents break with the private-public order. Its physical materiality is generally performed through private material agents, such as front garden fences and gates. In Anne's case, the communal use of homes went far into the private sphere, all the way into the bathrooms.

> [W]e kids just played outside, and if you had to go to the toilet and it was just at the other end of the street, it didn't matter. Because there was someone there, you could go in somewhere. And you could get a bite to eat, and an apple in your hand and so on. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

But this is not all. The climax of opening the private sphere took place when the residents in Zehlendorf, '50 per cent of whom were also genuine left-wingers' (ibid.), decided to quite literally open their doors.

> The houses were all open. At some point, when I was relatively young, my parents started to have door handles from the outside, not a knob, so that all the children could get in everywhere. (ibid.)

This example shows how strongly the respective community modifies the built materiality of housing as part of their home-making practices and according to their needs and ideas of a 'good' life through commoning. But open doors do not only appear in Berlin in milieus of 'genuine left-wingers' of the 1970s; they also existed in the townhouses in Lützowstraße (Figure 35) in the late 1980s.

*Figure 35: Example of townhouses with granny flats in the estate of Fabian, 38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

> I think in primary school, it was more characterised by this immediate proximity, this being outside so much in the neighbourhood, if you like. […] When I was four or five, I was actually allowed to go out on my own as long as I stayed in the immediate vicinity. […] And then I could actually go out relatively early and go to the other children's houses. (Fabian, 38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.)

Similarly to many other older Nairobian speakers from the second and third spectrum, Gathi remembers how her home in Nairobi was very lively and filled with friends and relatives 'coming and going' (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu, N.) and sometimes even staying for longer periods if they had work to in Nairobi. Whether the home was a base for the extended family has to do with generational orders and the urban-rural link, which contextualises many family models in Kenya.

> In African households, um, or rather let me just talk about my house, our household, we had relatives visiting. My mum was the, was the first born [in] her family. And my dad was also the, […] he's the first boy, and so he was the first person to really make it out of the village and come up this side. So, you can imagine, we would play host to everyone; anyone who needed to do something in Nairobi would come and visit us. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

It is not uncommon for these generational orders to be framed by a wider 'African' culture. Stella also introduces the home as a communal space framed by that scale. Beyond the feature of the open doors, the private communities are also characterised by commons. Several families used objects and goods beyond the notion of private ownership, serving as the commons of the community.

Figure 36: Learning bike.

Source: Drawing by the author.

> We all learnt to ride there, all on the same bike. First without training wheels, then with training wheels. That actually went through [...] all the children, through all the households, that little red learning bike. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

The communal bicycle (Figure 36) on which children from the whole street learnt to ride also appears in the Nairobian speakers' narrations. The range of the socio-economic differences between these speakers shows how sharing communal objects is not limited to the economic need to do so.

> We used to ride bikes together. Uh, bicycles were like a communal thing. My/I had one bicycle. So now my, my friend, my cousin, the one I'm telling you [about] who used to live in Karen, the one who was rich, you know, he gave me one of his bikes (laughing) and then, then that one bike became the whole estate's bike. (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.)

More interestingly and against the dominant (and important) narrative of terraced, semi-detached and row house settlements as socio-economically homogeneous bubbles, Chola's and Martha's examples show that socio-economic difference still mattered there.

> Or yes, if, uh, you were privileged to have a bike because not everyone was privileged to have a bike, then we would ride your bike. (Martha, 28 yrs, *1991, female, Umoja I, N.)

Besides the bicycle, several other material agents appear as commons in the context of such housing types. Against the principle of private ownership, children developed rituals of sharing.

> If one person had a football, uh, we/He will just share it with everyone. […] You just come outside with it then we all play with it. […] Like, sometimes we used to come out with our toys. Everybody had, like, separate toys. Maybe somebody has a car. Just come outside and play with them. (Henry, 21 yrs, *1999, male, Buruburu Phase II, N.)

Sharing commons was again not only limited to the outdoor space; objects fixed and installed inside houses could likewise become commons.

> In Buruburu, […] some homes were really famous around us cause they had TVs. But [the] TV was exceptional, mostly we played outside in the streets. Playing outside was anyways the best thing. (Gathi, 50 yrs, *1969, female, Buruburu Phase II, N.)

7.2.2.1.4 The Borders of Commoning

After sharing much about the communality of the community, I will now address its exclusionary characteristics. The cases presented show that the community and its spatial qualities and relations appear as an emotional topology of (un)be*longing*, in which children's cultures were free to evolve, whereas the adult community was perceived as protective in the background. Interestingly, this social cohesion only applies to the confines of its respective residential type. Hence, none of the speakers who lived in a terraced or semi-detached house settlement expressed this cohesion beyond their residential confines.

> And I would say that there were maybe 20 to 25 houses, semi-detached houses, on one side of the street. […] [It was a] private road. Only residents. […]. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

Even though from the perspective of a child that resides in such topologies this private street seems very inclusive, from the perspective of the city at large, private streets and gated estates do not promote a right to the city for all children. This is also because of its horizontal character, which seems hardly sustainable in the overpopulating cities of Berlin and Nairobi.

Let us look at Fabian's case and the townhouses in Lüztowstraße (Figure 37), planned and built in the context of the International Building Exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung* [IBA]) between 1982 and 1984. The homes designed there were 'ultimately exclusive residential property' (Fabian, 38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.), even though they addressed young middle-class families who were given reasonable loans.

*Figure 37: Private street between townhouses in the estate of Fabian, 38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

Additionally, the planners added flats with separate entrances as part of each unit of the townhouses. These flats, also called 'granny flats' (*Einliegerwohnungen*), could be rented out, either to extended family members or to friends or strangers, and were supposed to allow the house owners to 'co-finance the loan' (ibid.). Although the architects and planners had additionally imagined these flats as fostering diversity through 'low renting costs throughout the first 20 years', Fabian admits,

> we never had that much contact with the tenants [...] and the guy who lived there was/ We didn't notice anything about him. He didn't play a big role in my life. (ibid.)

This shows how the built environment had not lived up to its intentions (diversification) but created a socio-economically mixed topology of housing and home-making in which the economic other remained the social other. In Fabian's case, there is already an ambiguity of private and public within the topological community; generally, the 'private community' is private because, in the most general sense, it somewhat ends with its layout.

> [M]um was totally anxious, constantly afraid that something would happen to her girl. So that we would go shopping and be attacked, kidnapped, raped. [...] I wasn't allowed to go anywhere alone. I was always dropped off; I was always picked up. It was extremely restrictive for me. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B)

The material shows that the socio-material process of securitisation has increased significantly since the 1960s. This applies not only to Nairobi but also to Berlin. For example, after the audio recording was stopped, Anne told me how the residents of the semi-detached houses in the street eventually installed alarm systems prominently positioned on the house's wall. Similarly, Fabian talks about a clear shift in the securitisation of the townhouses in Tiergarten.

[B]ack then, everything was always open. Today, it's not like that at all. That's partly because the same people no longer live there and also because of how prostitution and crime have developed. [...] And now they've planted high hedges. This path, which, of course, used to be intended as a passageway, is now closed off with gates that are locked. [...] Now the people there all have motion detectors of some kind and also secure themselves to a certain extent [...] because the security situation in the city has simply changed, in that place. (Fabian, 38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.)

Figure 38: The wall that connects to the gate that Kili refers to in the following passage.

Source: Photo by the author, 2019.

Many speakers who still have access to their childhood homes told me they no longer see children playing there. The small streets and open spaces are empty, and far fewer children live in the neighbourhoods today, while the older generation remains. My architectural ethnographic observations in Anne's street show how the front doors, previously fitted with door handles, were returned to their original state. The doorknobs have been reinstalled. The alarm systems that Anne mentioned are recognisable. The increasing fortification (Figure 38) of the private community towards the outside becomes visible when the speakers who resided in these topologies (most older than 20 years) reflect on the present situation of their childhood homes.

> When we were younger, our gates were all see-through, right? […] But as we grow older, people started putting gates up, you know, uh, or rather solid, making it solid. When I was younger, […] our gate would stay open the whole night, and you're not afraid, but nowadays it's, eh, the gate [is] closed. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

Eddah also reflects that her childhood, which is portrayed here as a private community, was communal in nature. However, it seems questionable whether the same typology would still be lived in and described in such a communal way today, with the increased security that has been added over time and that hinders community-building practices of children.

> As we grew older, we'd go as a group and go […] to other estates. […] So, we would/you'd find a huge group of kids […] just going to visit other estates. […] Nowadays, you can't really enter the estates. You have to leave your ID [person identification], and we were children; we didn't have IDs. […] (Eddah, 31 yrs, *1988, female, Ngumo, N.)

Henry, born in 1999 and the youngest in the topology of the private community, directly answers to Eddah's assessment and confirms the growing securitisation, which ended a sense of (un)be*longing* of children across estates.

Figure 39: Security check at the entrance to a middle-class estate in Nairobi.

Source: Photo by the author, 2019.

> In my childhood […] we never used to, like, go to other people's courts, like, to play. […] because people don't know you there. And then, you know, the security guards, they used to like, uh, check people who are coming in. (Henry, 21 yrs, *1999, male, Buruburu Phase II, N.)

Looking back again to the 1970s, even though 57-year-old Morris remembers his childhood in the 1970s as comparatively safe, he also marks the socio-economic homogeneity of his settlement as the condition of this safety, thus again highlighting the borders of the private community.

> People used to trust each other, yeah. You'd leave and go to a family who you don't know and, uh, you just stay there until in the evening, you play with their children, and you go home. […] We used to have, uh, you know, a, a kind of a village kind of a set up where we know everybody. Because, you know, in a, in a, in a place like Embakasi Village, you know, all parents know each other because they work in the same area. So, when you go to somebody's house, and you say that you were at so and so's house, then they'll say, 'Okay. It's fine.' But these days and this time, in the same village, nothing like that can happen. (Morris, 57 yrs, *1962, male, Embakasi Village, N.)

When Morris relates safety to the fact that 'all parents know each other because they work in the same area', he describes the social coherency used to secure children's spatial mobility based on exactly that colonial imaginary of security: socio-economic stratification and segregation. In Morris's and many other contexts, this order comes with same-designed settlements, which have performativity based so much on order and repetition that the homogeneity of the physical structures must be seen with its often economically homogeneous groups of residents. This, as we remember Martha, does not mean that there is no difference between the homogeneous group, but this difference is relatively big or small depending on the perspective (internal/external).

7.2.2.1.5 Summary: Moving In as the First Generation of Families

It can be summarised that the private community features predominantly horizontal ways of living that can promote social interaction and communal support easily because it connects dwelling structures to a semi-public space (e.g., [semi-]private streets and paths, empty parking, little gardens) which, as the examples above show, have been frequently used by children and as such often also play a broader biographical role. What also differentiates this typology from more vertical typologies, such as tenement and private apartment blocks that can also have a common area, is that the number of residents is much lower, and as a group their 'members' are relatively comprehensible. This difference could also indicate that the ability to know every resident strengthens social cohesion and promotes a sense of safety among the residents. Beyond addressing the human scale (by being comprehensible), the material fabric of such horizontal private communities is that the repetitive typology of look-alike structures necessarily brings its habitants into relation.

The findings indicate that the social topology of private community can be found across class differences, whereas each community is relatively class-homogeneous. Hence, cases like Fabian's show that as soon as a socio-economic mix is allowed or promoted by the design of private communities, such as in the IBA model of 'granny flats', the difference planned and designed here is lived outside or parallel to the community. This is what again marks the private character of this topology.

Regarding the age comparison, it can be noted that this form of housing strongly represents the speakers born between the late 1960s and late 1980s. When we look at the intergenerational difference (which is limited here due to the limited number of younger speakers who live in such structures), it appears as if practices of communalisation decrease over time. This decrease must be seen in relation to growing insecurity discourses surrounding childhood on the one hand. In the following subchapter 7.3, I elaborate on what could be connected with such a change when I look at the spatial mobility of children on the larger scale of the city. On the other hand, it turns out that all the speakers who resided in the topology of private community, except Henry (the youngest), are part of families that were the first generation to move into these newly built homes. Therefore, there is a common understanding that they are the inhabitants of a settlement that is newly built, and as such often commonly known across the city. Starting a life in a place called home together must be experienced as a collective act, which also shapes the collective identity of such places, as people are much more open to getting to know each other when everyone is new. This special circumstance, related to the growing urbanisation of the 1970s and 1980s in both cities – a period in which many homes were built – must be kept in mind when interpreting the material with regard to figuration.

7.2.2.2 Vertical Capsules

> […] living in Kibera it was like […] probably like a better place like, uh, I don't know, in a court or an apartment, uh, 'cause in Kibera now, the families were more communal. Even the difference that I'm experiencing now after moving out from Kibera going to where I live now is, like, in Kibera in the middle of the night if your salt is over, you can call the neighbour and tell them, 'Hey, give me some salt *kidogo*[8] […]'. Where I live now [South C], (laughs) you can't even do that. (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.)

Contrary to the topology of private community, the social topology of vertical capsules will, in the following, refer to the vertical topologies of housing and home-making in diverse apartment blocks, with no or only limited common space (for example, a backyard or garden). These inhabited units can be tenements or privately owned. Perhaps they are part of a perimeter block development (typical of Berlin); therefore, they are indirectly gated or directly gated and guarded within an estate. Generally, this is the topology most commonly inhabited by the younger speakers of the sampling, marking the first and biggest difference from the previous type. The types of building blocks vary in terms of the periods in which they were built (from the 19th century to the 1990s) and the sizes of the speakers' flats (approximately 45 to 130 square metres).

7.2.2.2.1 From Horizontal to Vertical

Rosi was 58 years old when we met. She grew up in an 'academic household' in Pankow (Figure 40), in the north-east of Berlin, where she lived with her parents and her sister during the 1960s and 70s.

8 *Kidogo* is Kiswahili and means 'a little bit'.

And that was a so-called gap building, basically from the sixties. [There was a gap between buildings in a large square with a lot of greenery at the back. So not as densely built up as Prenzlauer Berg and in a flat that was actually quite modest by today's standards. [...] So it was four rooms [...], about 70 square metres, relatively modest. (Rosi, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.)

*Figure 40: Street in front of tenement block of Rosi, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.*

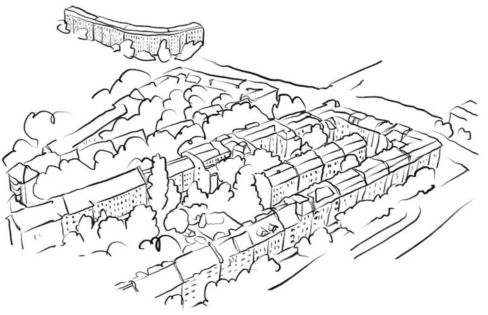
Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

Rosi is Raphael's mother, and coincidentally, they spent their childhood in two different housing types that, in the topological perspective developed here, are both somewhat special cases. Like Raphael's topology of housing and home-making, Rosi's lies somewhere between private community and vertical capsule. Differently from most of the following characteristics of the vertically framed topologies, Rosi and her family had access to a garden-like yard. As shown in Figure 41, this garden is part of a rather large and long garden backyard (*Karree*) inside a structure that looks like a stretched perimeter block.

As with the speakers who resided in private community topologies, outdoor play was important during Rosi's childhood. Yet this outdoor play differs from the private community examples, as it was largely concentrated in the garden-like yard.

So, we were really outside a lot. We played in the street, so to speak, or in our yard, really down in the yard and in the bushes, building huts, so to speak. We rode scooters. [...] It's practically a square [*Karree*] there in Pankow. [...] And there was a plot in the centre [...] that belonged to the church [...] You weren't allowed in there, but there were the best fruit trees and so on. And, of course, there were holes in the fence. And then sometimes we secretly climbed in or something. [...] So that was an important place. (ibid.)

*Figure 41: Backyard garden of Rosi, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.*



Drawing by the author, 2019.

Besides the garden-like yard behind the house that plays a very minor role in the narratives constituting the private community, Rosi's narration also differs regarding the size of the group of children she played with, which was comprised only of her, her sister, and a boy from the neighbourhood. Another difference is that the social group of the private community is age-heterogeneous, whereas in Rosi's and the following cases community is limited to the children's play – which means that although children interact across households, their parents organise the care-work within the nuclear family.

> My mum was at home, which was an outsider under the conditions in the GDR [German Democratic Republic] at the time. They [the other GDR children] were all at nursery school, like that. So, it was a bit different for us. (ibid.)

Rosi, who grew up in the East, and Anne, who grew up in the West, thus represent two (hi)stories that turn the dominant narrative of the working mother in the East versus the housewife in the West around. Another element in Rosi's narration that testifies to an exclusion from the topology of the horizontally lived private community is the complex description of the interior space, where the flat itself, and thus the home as flat (and some garden), is central to her childhood memory. Whereas the interior space is rarely mentioned in the speakers' descriptions of the private community, Rosi offered a vivid impression of the flat and the family 'codes' constituting it.

> There were also certain, you could say, codes or something that came from things. For example, when we were expecting guests, we would somehow switch on the lights in the corridor so that we could see everything clearly or something. I've still got that down, yes. I also switch on the light when someone arrives and doesn't have to come in in the dark. And that was always called 'switching on the dolphin'. And I don't know if you know [Jaques] Tati, that French director, Tati. [...] There are many films. And Monsieur Hulot is an absolutely planned-out guy who always goes to his sister [in] this insanely modern house. And there's this dolphin in the garden. The dolphin is in the garden. And whenever the doorbell rings, she switches on the dolphin first. And

that was the standing expression in our house. […] 'Turn on the dolphin' then meant: 'So now, come here, get everything ready!' (ibid.)

Figure 42: Dolphin fountain.

Source: Film still from the movie *Mon Oncle* from Jaques Tati (1985), screenshot by the author.

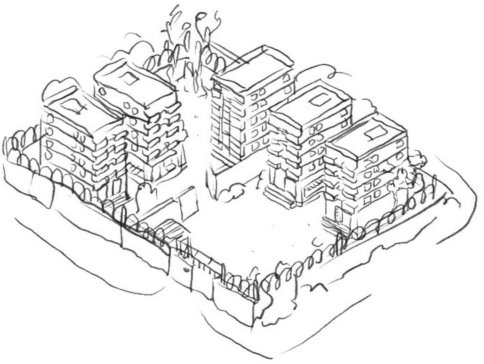
In his 1958 film *Mon Oncle* (Figure 42), Jaques Tati parodies the idea of rationalisation that emerged in the context of Taylorism, which from then on spread to all domains of social life and not only controlled work processes in factories but also shaped, for example, the functionality of bourgeois domestic environments, gender roles, and housework. The hypermodern, rather poorly automated house of the family portrayed in *Mon Oncle* is the symbol of household management taken to extremes and trimmed to increase performance, in which functionality, clarity, automation, and compartmentalisation determine the spatial atmosphere and thus also reflect a rather functional, almost mechanic social interaction of its inhabitants and their guests. The depiction of this milieu reaches its caricature-like climax in a recurring scene in which a dolphin-shaped fountain in the front garden is only ever switched on as soon as a guest arrives and presses the doorbell on the opaque gate. Rosi's family takes over the dolphin gesture ironically. This describes them as a reflective middle-class nuclear family aware of its status. In other contexts as well, Rosi repeatedly establishes this difference from others by referring to her closest environment.

[T]here where I lived […] not that many people lived there, at least from my class, because the school was between two centres, so to speak. […] And there were new blocks of flats built at the back. And that's where most of them lived. So, if you think about it, the streams that went to school, then maybe I went with a friend and two others/we went in one direction, and the whole crowd always went in the other direction. And

> sometimes, I was a bit envious. I found it so exciting. They were closer together. Maybe three people from one class happened to live in one house [...] they perhaps had a stronger sense of community as a result. (Rosi, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.)

In this description, Rosi does not merely relate to others in her neighbourhood as different. She does this in a specific way that does not testify to bourgeois coldness as in Tati's film but in positive recognition of the 'other'. In this recognition, she furthermore expresses appreciation towards communality. In this way, Rosi clarifies her position as a speaker in the topology developed here, in which she occupies a marginal position, and from this position refers to another marginal or special case in the vertical topology, namely the cousins Tatiana and Rose Ann, who are residents of a large tenement housing estate in Donholm, in the south-east of Nairobi.

*Figure 43: Estate of Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.*



Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

When I arrived there the day I met them, the taxi driver dropped me off in front of a supermarket on Outer Ring Road, from where I started my walk. The streets were lively. Shops, fruit vendors, and stands, small restaurants, hair salons, a hospital, a gospel centre, and a fuel station bordered the main road. The residential homes are located along the small streets. Shops appear more jury-rigged then in Westlands. There are trees on some corners, and potholes are bigger than where I came from in Upper Hill. Soon my eyes met Abra, Tatiana's mother, waving at me, accompanied by her three-year old niece, Eve. Wastewater had flooded the muddy road leading to the estate. I carefully observed how Eve navigated her tiny body through the big puddles, reaching the aquamarine-coloured metal gate without getting wet. The estate was somewhat older (Figure 43). It was carefully decorated with cactus flowers. The inner estate was additionally bounded by a fallow concrete wall with a coloured gate.

Unlike Rosi, who is in the upper end of the third spectrum, the cousins are in the lower end of the second spectrum and, in terms of the number of people living with them in a household, have much less living space, perhaps similar to that of the children from the

block Rosi refers to. When I asked Tatiana how an ordinary Saturday in her life looked, not too much of it sounded like a community.

> Saturday, I wake up late. I wash my face. I come down and have breakfast. […] If they have not cooked, I cook break-/I cook tea. I take the tea. I brush my teeth. I do homework if there is any. I wash my socks. I wash my/I polish my shoes. I iron my/I iron my clothes. I go to church for catechism. I come back from church. I wash the utensils. I look for lunch. […] I brush my teeth, [and] then I watch TV. Yeah. [C.M.: And you never play outside with your friends? Saturday?] When, when the people come out. Sometimes they don't come out. Like yesterday, there were no people outside. [C.M.: How is it on Sundays?]. I shower. I go to church, and I come back from church. I have breakfast. […] Sometimes I just come back and stay in the house. (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.)

As Tatiana's example shows, it is not only at school where children spend a lot of time during the week. In the Christian majority of Nairobi, children also spend a lot of time in church on weekends. As such, the church must be considered an additional topology of community. Even though, as the drawing in Figure 44 shows, there is a certain amount of communal space in the estate, a children's community or play in these spaces do not appear prominently in Tatiana's narration. She often seems too busy with school and the chores she must do.

*Figure 44: Inner yard of estate of Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.*

Drawing by the author, 2019.

In contrast to the communal household spaces familiar from the GDR blocks, such as the laundry room, the time spent on housework in the estate in Nairobi is primarily tied to the private sphere. Every household is for itself. This is what makes this form of housing so vertical. The only thing that breaks with this verticality is the fact that

> most of the time it's not a must for me to go outside the court because there are two shops inside the court. (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.)

In my field observations, I saw smaller interactions between the residents who met in these places. Although these interactions usually do not last longer than a few minutes,

they promote social exchange in the estate community. Seeing each other frequently also inevitably creates a social cohesion in which, for example, it would be noticeable if a resident is not seen for a while. The contact also leads to people keeping up to date with what is going on with each other, at least on a superficial level. While Tatiana, at age 10, still plays games with her peers in the estate, depending on the time available, her cousin Rose Ann, who is 13, mostly stays in and spends time on social media. As the 13-year-old also attends a boarding school, she spends very little time at the estate in general.

Let us move back to Berlin, where Neo (ten years) and Stephan (nine years) are the last two speakers who, with certain aspects of their topology of housing and home-making, can also be located at a transition from the horizontal to the vertical. While they, on the one hand, spend a lot of time at home, or in Stephan's case, in extracurricular spaces, such as the sports centre and language school, both have access to a public space that is outside their home but near it. In Neo's case, this is a traffic-free square in Neukölln (Figure 45), adjacent to the apartment block, a late-19th century building, in the following referred to as *Berliner Altbau*, where he lives with his family.

*Figure 45: Aerial view of traffic-free square in front of tenement house of Neo, 10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.*

Drawing by the author, 2019.

> I like my home, the square and the bakery next to me [...]. I think it's very cool there because [...] you can play table tennis quite well. [...] There are actually quite a lot of nice people living there too. [...] [C.M.: Are you allowed to be outside on your own, or do you always have to go out with your parents?] Of course, I can go out on my own. [...] Playing table tennis [at] Böhmischer Platz. (Neo, 10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.)

The closure of the square to vehicles is part of one of several neighbourhood block initiatives *(Kiezblock Initiative)* underway in Berlin and was driven by various small and local resident initiatives. Unlike superblocks, known in Barcelona as *superilles*, neighbourhood blocks usually focus on traffic calming, which can be implemented without costly reconstruction measures and with the local district administration. This does not result

in elaborately designed play areas, as in Sant Antoni and Poble Nou, Barcelona, but in traffic-calmed areas, where eventually children's street play evolves, such as here at the Böhmischer Platz. Children's play here is accompanied by an active local community that, for example, diminished several attempts by the surrounding cafés and restaurant owners to extend their seating in the square, in this way privatising it. These local and informal practices of (re)claiming public space are strongly connected to the community work of a children's theatre and community centre located directly at the square (Figure 46).

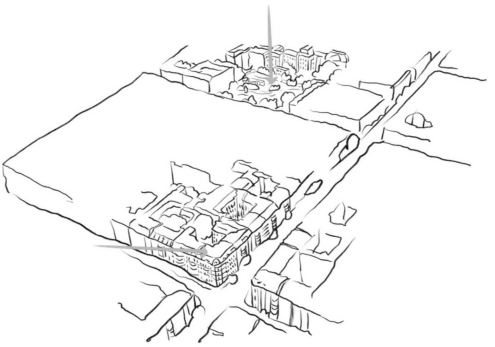
*Figure 46: Close-up of traffic-free square in front of tenement house of Neo, 10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.*

Source_ Drawing by the author, 2019.

From here, let us look at the north-east, where the Prenzlauer Berg district and Stephan's home are located. He lives in a Berliner Altbau with his parents and two smaller siblings, which is part of a perimeter block, similar to the one in Neukölln but much larger and typical of the area around Kollwitzkiez. Stephan is not lucky enough to live directly on a traffic-calmed square, but there is a nearby playground and football pitch next to his school, where he is allowed to go on his own (Figure 47).

> I just have to go along the road, then there's a road across and then turn right, and there's a playground right next to our school, [...] it's quite big. There's a football pitch, a large meadow, table tennis [...] bushes where you can hide. A pirate ship and a balancing course. And a football pitch and a running track. And a sand pit for jumping. [...] I go there four or five times a week. [...] And the playground is also so that I can run around and I can't do that here in the flat. And I can just move around and sometimes be a bit free with my friends, for example, playing football. (Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.)

*Figure 47: Proximity of playground and tenement house of Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.*



Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

With a frequency of four to five times a week, the playground marks an important space in Stephan's life. But still, and like the other speakers above, the interior space of the flat gets much more attention throughout the interview. Whereas Neo from Neukölln spends a lot of online or screen time at home and regularly plays games, Stephan relates to his flat (Figure 48) most prominently regarding the importance of his family and privacy.

*Figure 48: Street view in front of tenement house of Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

> So for me, the flat is definitely very important. [...] Yes, it's also important that I can sleep comfortably here [...]. For example, even if the weather is not good, that you have a roof over your head and that you are protected and that you have something like that, maybe a space where you are a bit more in your family [...]. So first, because you're also protected from some/for example, storms or something, if you also have your privacy more or less that you can't just come in and, yes, listen to everything. And that you are also here with your family and yes, that you can do a lot here with your family. (Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.)

The private sphere appears very strongly in Stephan's description of the home. The flat encapsulates him and his family and nests him. A capsule seems necessary for compensating city life, which he sometimes perceives as overwhelming in a city of many and in which it is 'not always really easy to find your way through the crowds of people straight away' (ibid.). Even though the playground is near his home, it strongly belongs to the topology of the school and enlarges the school instead of his home. This is also visible regarding his social relations there.

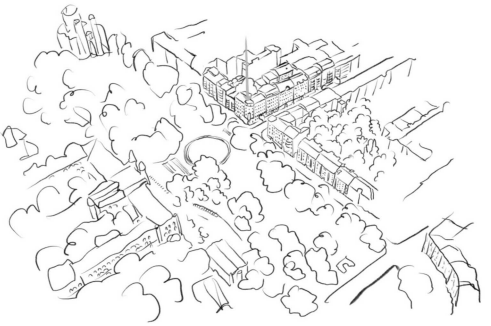
> Well, I go to the football pitch, so there are a lot of people I know on the football pitch. I sometimes see them on the football pitch. I don't even know the names of some of them, even though I often see them on the football pitch. And yes, that's also because we're really, we're really focused on the game and don't really talk to each other much. But when you go there, you usually see the usual people. (ibid.)

Here, too, the difference to the private community becomes apparent, as the group of children Stephan regularly meets remains at some sort of personal distance. Also, regarding the level of the parent community, it must be said that Neo's and Stephan's parents benefit from civic participation in their neighbourhoods but are not directly involved. If they were, the increasingly homogenising area around the traffic-reduced square could also be understood by the topology of private community; private because only those who can afford the rent in that area would be in proximity. However, as the families also stay out of these initiatives, the topology of their home is strongly rendered by the topology of the vertical capsules. The meaning of the capsule once more becomes evident when we look at the strong emphasis on the interior space and its activities.

7.2.2.2.2 DomestiCity

The figure of the vertical capsule becomes clearer when we look at the last five speakers, which includes two pairs of siblings who live in the same household. For them, the flat is an important place of retreat that does not include any other public or semi-public spaces on the scalar level of home. For them, home is the flat and whoever and whatever is in it. The difference from the previous marginal types becomes clear when we look at the spatial environment of Lisa and Lana's home, who live with their little brother and parents in Kreuzberg near Mariannenplatz.

*Figure 49: Surroundings of tenement house of Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, and Lana, 13 yr., *2006, female, Kreuzberg, B.*



Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

They also live in a Berliner Altbau, depicted here in Figure 49. As a family in the upper-third spectrum, they have a 120 square-metre flat that is located directly on the public, heavily greened forecourt of the former Bethania hospital, which is now a listed building due to citizen participation processes and is home to art and cultural projects, including exhibitions under the name *Kunstraum Bethanien*. Although this place is right on their doorstep, so to speak, and the road that must be crossed is a bicycle road, on which motor vehicles are allowed to travel at a maximum speed of 30 km/h and bicycles have priority, and even though they can cross the street at a zebra crossing (Figure 50), the two sisters do not spend time in the park.

*Figure 50: Street view and road signs in front of tenement house of Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, and Lana, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Kreuzberg, B.*

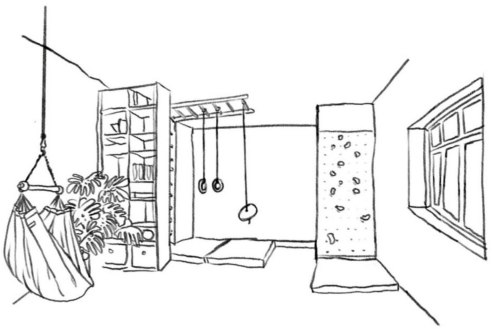
Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

In contrast, the flat is constituted as the absolute centre of life. When I entered the family's large, stylishly furnished flat, I first had to climb over a so-called balance board to then make my way through the open-plan hallway to the large kitchen-living room via

a small course made of so-called stacking stones. There was so much to discover here. In a nutshell, the ensemble had something of a showroom for children's toys that emphasised physical movement. Lisa's room was a bright room, measuring around 35 square metres with a high ceiling. A swing and other gymnastic equipment were attached to a wall bar in her room. Opposite a hanging chair suspended from the ceiling was a small climbing wall. We sat on the floor. Lisa told me what she currently does after school.

> Then [after school] I usually go home, then I eat something small, then [...] I like to draw a lot, I also listen to something. I also play with my Furby. That's the red thing in the corner. And I water my plants. I also like doing handicrafts. And I also swing a lot. Sometimes I play here, or I'm in there [points to a hanging chair]. [...] And well, I just think it's so great here [...] because of all the things that are in here, all the things you can do with them. Yes. [...] So there's a wardrobe in here, a bed, a chair, [...] a Lego castle. [...] Lots of pens. Plants [...] A cello, [...] Cuddly toys. Savings cat and lots of other things. This is a swing. And this is a hammock, like a beanbag. (Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, Kreuzberg, B.)

*Figure 51: Scene from childhood room of Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, Kreuzberg, B.*



Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

Lisa and Lana own many objects, transforming their childhood rooms into an indoor playground (Figure 51). The importance of these rooms is extremely great and, as for Stephan, is associated with a positive connotation of privacy.

> That you can just sit alone in your room [...] to do your homework. But then also to just relax, read, write with friends [...] in my room, I tend to be on my own. And yes, I keep myself busy on my own. [...] I have a Kindle [...] But I also have quite a few books [...] that I can read. [...] So, mostly [I am] in my room when I listen to music, and then I sing along. (Lana, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Kreuzberg, B.)

In addition to the function of privacy, the children's room provides numerous opportunities for (physical) activity. This too contrasts with children in private communities, who usually seek out the same (physical) activities much more in the outdoor space and

communal areas of their residential topology. In contrast to being alone, being together takes centre stage. For Lana and Lisa, as for Stephan, home also has a strong emotional connotation and protective character,

> because it's just so familiar and you can just be angry without the other person thinking: 'Okay, what did I do wrong?'. And that it's just that you're here and that you're with your family, that you're together. (Lana, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Kreuzberg, B.)

The topology of their housing and home-making can thus be characterised even more as a sort of protective capsule, which is also strongly linked to the familial cohesion described here.

7.2.2.2.3 From Capsule to Tiny Fortress

For a further manifestation of verticality, I turn to the siblings Lale and Nuhu, who live with three other siblings, their parents, and a domestic worker in a 120 square-metre flat in Maziwa, a neighbourhood located in the west part of the city between Kilimani, Lavington, and Kawangware. When I arrived at their gated estate, I had to call their father, who came down to inform the security guard at the gate that I was their visitor.

*Figure 52: Window view to the inner yard of the estate of Lale, 13 yrs, *2006, female, and Nuhu, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Maziwa, N.*

Drawing by the author, 2019.

The estate is a gated square-shaped agglomerate of the same type of building, with relatively similar-sized flats that even come with similar-looking built-in furniture and a relatively large inner yard (Figure 52). Even though this marks some typological similarities with the private community, I did not see any children playing there. I spent an ordinary Saturday with Lale and Nuhu – surely knowing that having a stranger, a white woman (even though read by the children as a teenager) from Germany, at their place

was not going to be anything like ordinary to them. Nonetheless, this day gave me insight into the practices of home-making and housing in the context of their narration. First, when I returned, I again saw that no child was playing in the yard. I arrived after breakfast, and the children and their mother got ready to go to a nearby shopping mall to run some errands and collect lunch for the befriended children who would be coming to visit that day. Their driver picked us up inside the court. As we arrived at the mall's car park, we took an elevator to arrive inside the mall. After the security check up and some window shopping, we picked up pizzas at Pizza Hut and a huge box of fries and chicken wings at Kentucky Fried Chicken. The driver was waiting for us in the parking area and drove us home. Here, Wanjiku, their domestic worker, waited for us to help carry things up the stairs.

Shortly after our return, the befriended siblings arrived. As they arrived, the father of the family got a call from the security guard, went to the balcony, from where he can see the gate, and told the guard to let the visitors in. Meanwhile, the three oldest screamed out of happiness, running down the stairs to welcome their friends. Their father stopped them, instructing them from the balcony to stay away from the gate. The children obeyed and stopped at the house's entrance. Only when the car had entered and the gate had closed were they released by a firm 'ok' from their father and ran towards their friends, who got out of the car. After screams, hugs, and laughter, they quickly ran together into the house and arrived at the TV and seating area. A loud mix of English and Kiswahili was exchanged, involving the PlayStation in front of them. In the meantime, Wanjiku had warmed up the food and set the table. The food was served and soon devoured by the crowd of children. Then, it was playtime. The children gathered around the PlayStation, and a long match began. While the older children played on the PlayStation, the younger ones played on the tablets. The families' children spend every second or third Saturday like this. Nuhu also describes what he does on a regular Saturday.

> I come and eat breakfast. I go shower. If I didn't shower at night, since I'm tired, I shower in the morning, then I change. I come to the sitting room. I, I play some games [and] watch some cartoon[s]. Yeah, that's what I do. Oh, and watch movies; that's what I do. (Nuhu, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Maziwa, N.)

Saturday is surely connected to home here, and home is connected to self-care and screen-related indoor play. All other play is not played at home and the estate but in malls, their indoor play areas, and the private school where they spend most of their day and have extracurricular activities. The emotional aspect of home also comes up indirectly when Lale explains that having a home like hers in Nairobi is not a matter of course.

> Um, most people here […] in Nairobi, um, they don't really have a good place to live in. […] It's really hard for them to make a living. So, most of them live on the streets 'cause their parents either die or abandon them or, or does something really weird to them. So, they run away from home and, like, it's really hard for them to live. But then there are also thieves on the streets. (Lale, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Maziwa, N.)

As the story progresses, the outside space is constituted more and more as dangerous. Home thus takes on greater significance as a protective space. Lale and Nuhu are part of a big family. As such, they have a lot of family-related company, even though they are extremely sheltered at home. It appeared to me as strongly restricted how they were accompanied to the mall and advised to behave in their estate's yard. To break with that confinement, they receive visitors from outside. Yet the extent to which the flat encapsulated them also features analogies with the following topology: the enclave, fortress, and island.

7.2.2.3 Enclave, Fortress, and Island

The social topology of enclave, fortress, and island represents single-family homes with an (un)gated or (un)guarded garden or compound. Regarding age, the topology is relatively heterogeneous; with regard to the socio-economic status of its speakers, it is the most homogeneous topology (third and fourth spectrum). This is unsurprising, because few in the middle-class spectrum can afford to live in a single-family home in cities like Berlin and Nairobi.

7.2.2.3.1 Enclave

Pierre was 13 when we met. He and his family were born in France and moved to Burkina Faso when Pierre was three years old. Pierre has little memory of that place. The family moved to Nairobi in 2013, and Pierre's parents separated shortly after. Since then, he and his brother have lived in the so-called exchange model, staying one week with their mother and one with their father. When I met Pierre, he was staying with his father and brother in a villa with a large garden in the Lavington district in Westlands, Nairobi. Apart from them, there is also

> one gardener, […] one housekeeper [during] the day and two at the night. [One of them is] Moses, […] he drives, he cooks, he yeah, he does lots of, lots of things. (Pierre, 13 yrs, *2006, male, Lavington, N.) (ibid.)

When Pierre and I met at his father's place, we sat on the veranda overlooking the garden (Figure 53). This is the starting point of Pierre's biographical memory in Nairobi.

> The first two years in Kenya, I always went to the, to the garden. So, I have, uh, I have things over there [that] I could play with. But, now, um, I always stay in the, in the living room and in my chamber. So, yeah, I don't really go to the garden. […] We don't really go out, we don't always go out because [we need] to take the car and, you know, see when the, when the driver can take you back or all that stuff. But, uh, so we don't really go out, especially here. […] [W]e don't like [to] go outside and come over and things like that; we, we just, we just stay and, you know, watch our phones, um, playing, you know, just in the house not doing much. (ibid.)

*Figure 53: Compound of Pierre, 13 yrs, *2006, male, Lavington, N.*

Source: Drawing by the author, 2019.

At some point during our meeting, I noticed movement on the neighbouring property, but densely overgrown bushes and trees blocked the view. When I asked Pierre who lives there, he replied,

> Uh, other neighbours, I don't, uh, I don't know them. The only moment when I see them it's when, uh, just the car comes, and that's all. (ibid.)

The day before, I had met Chola, who spent his childhood in Kibera. I remembered his story about the salt. As I sat with Pierre, I seemed to be in a place where it is unusual to ask the neighbours for salt at night and perhaps also during the day.

> So, I had a friend over there just next to me here. [He, he still lives here?] No, no, he went. Like, I think all my best friends […] left Nairobi [and] went to another place […] it's the expats. (ibid.)

Sometimes, Pierre stopped his narration, getting lost looking at the garden. I stayed quiet with him, taking that moment to feel the space's serene but gloomy atmosphere – both beautiful and isolated. When he continued, Pierre told me how different life was when he was in Paris for the holidays. He misses it. Just then, his father came outside and spoke a few words in French with him and disappeared again. Shortly after, Moses arrived with croissants and tea. The more I stay, the more I get the impression that the topology he resides in shows analogies to an enclave. He's in Nairobi, but in a way, this place seems a part of somewhere else – a place where French rules apply and French culture is lived. The detached house with a garden created a completely different space-time that is individual and connected to an elsewhere. During a break and walk through

the garden, I saw the high wire mesh fence with electric and barbed wire, barely visible because the structure was entwined with green plant tendrils. I could hear electric whirring nearby. Small, steady beats. The concert of birds and insects had drowned it out. We looked at the fish in the pond and returned to the veranda.

When Pierre and his brother are with their mother, who lives in a much smaller rented flat a little south of Lavington in Kileleshwa, everything is different.

> My mum's house just behind the Junction [shopping mall] where with my brother we go, we always go over there to [do] some shopping and watch some, uh, go in the cinema and/[…] Yeah, there is a[nother] place, a place where you can get drinks, […] some food and, uh, chips and things like that and, [a] stage in front where you can just hear music, uh, like, yeah. […] And, and, in between the bar and the, the, the place where you hear, uh, the music […] it's a hallway where, uh, where with my brother we go over there because of the hallway, and he can do skateboarding. (ibid.)

Pierre's mother works in Nairobi's cultural sector. She knows the scene well and lets her sons participate in a lifestyle filled with cultural events. Here, Pierre and his brother spend much less time at home; if they do so, friends are often invited. The activities are therefore strongly initiated by his mother, who, as Pierre says,

> doesn't like when we just do nothing so, she, she push[es] us to go to the Toi Market, to the forest and, you know, things like that. (ibid.)

Pierre has two different lives in the same city, each derived from the different topologies of home that his parents and their socio-economic situations strongly shape. The social topology of enclave does not only appear in the younger part of the sampling group. Mildred's (39 years) and Caroline's (62 years) childhoods were also shaped by protection, and the home played a big role. Caroline and her sisters were sent to boarding school for their primary years, as their parents were in Europe for education and work. When they were in secondary school, the family settled in the Karen neighbourhood in the south-west of Nairobi, an area well known for its single-family houses and villas in gated, park-sized compounds, with so-called servants' quarters and places for farming and animal husbandry. For Caroline, born in 1957 and nine years old at the time, that home in Karen was one of nine places she had already lived, and the place she finally stayed after much change related to her parents, who studied in Europe and had to leave their daughters in the care of grandparents and boarding schools. While the boarding school and the time during which her parents were abroad felt rather 'traumatising' to Caroline, because they were left by themselves at an early age, the life that continued with her parents after their return to a single family house within the nuclear family was extremely sheltered in comparison.

> My parents were very strict. […] We were not allowed just to go anywhere, and more so when we became teenagers. (Caroline, 62 yrs, *1957, female, Karen, N.)

Karen, at that time, was still predominantly white, and Caroline shared that she and her family were affected by racism within the neighbourhood. She remembers how, in local shops, 'they would always be like looked down on, you know, like "What are you doing in this neighbourhood?"' (ibid.). Here, like Pierre, the home appears as an enclave: a Black Kenyan family as outsiders within the predominantly white late colonial society of Karen.

As such, the topology of Caroline's home shows similarities with that of Paula, who was born in 1961 and grew up in Köpenick in East Berlin.

> We grew up in an old part of the city, an old villa colony, so to speak. It's on the Spree. And in a detached house with a garden; so, we were naturally quite privileged, I would say, in retrospect. (Paula, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.)

Growing up privileged in the socialist GDR system with its Marxist-Leninist principles already renders them outsiders. Even though they were not the only outsiders in that system, the exceptionality of Paula's position additionally finds expression in the meaning that home used to have in Paula's childhood. Interestingly, her mother's parental leave is also part of the importance of home, which adds up to the counter-narrative that I already pointed to in Rosi's and Anne's childhoods. Like Rosi, who also spent her childhood in the east part of Berlin, Paula had a mother who did not – as was usual – send her daughters to nursery school and kindergarten but stayed at home even when her daughters went to primary school.

> My mum started working again [when Paula started secondary school]; before that, she was at home for a long time, but she was an exception. Actually, all the mums worked relatively early on. And that meant we didn't go to after-school care [*Hort*]or anything but went home after school. (ibid.)

Here, too, we find an example in the East in which the home is of great importance and has a temporality that is deliberately extended despite the given structures of institutionalised childcare. However, the home as the private sphere also appears in a further entanglement that emphasises the enclave character of the topology and knits the counter-narrative further. In Paula's narrative, the GDR system appears more as a regime to which the family only felt a limited sense of belonging, which is why her mother sought refuge in a Christian church community, among other things to provide her daughters with an alternative milieu to that of their 'classmates[, who] were somehow infiltrated by their families' (Paula, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.). Perhaps feeling a little more at home in the west of the city, in some aspects, Paula and her family lived a rather 'parallel' life, one that belonged to an elsewhere.

> And so we were already in the Christian school early on. [...] And well, and then I had my own circles. (ibid.)

The relationship between Christian institutions and the socialist state in the GDR is by no means easy to explain. However, the Church and its followers saw themselves at the

mercy of systematic oppression. Paula's story, but also my own in the Catholic Christian community in a rural area in Thuringia, formerly East Germany, clarifies that this was not always successful with a Christian majority in the country. Nevertheless, both Paula and I (even after reunification) were confronted with the dominant narrative that there was no Christianity in the GDR – a narratives that renders the many sorts of enclave topologies within the time of Germany's division invisible.

7.2.2.3.2 Fortress

Whereas the previous examples point to a parallel world one resides in during childhood, others are marked more by isolation and fortification. To Caroline, the home in Karen had an enclave-like character, promoted by colonial racial segregation, yet to Sya and Mildred, Caroline's granddaughter and daughter, the same typology altered from enclave to fortress. This figuration must be seen as strongly contextualised by socio-political change connected to Kenya's independence in 1963, which drastically shaped the composition of Karen's residents. While the neighbourhood became much more heterogeneous in terms of colour, the socio-economic homogeneity of privileged people remained. Mildred, who was born in 1980, describes the generational order that shaped her childhood home in the same compound as follows:

> The home I grew in, grew up in, was basically/I had my grandparents, and I had my aunties. […] So, my mom is a single mom, so my grandfather was my father figure, and then there is my grandmother who was more like the disciplinarian, and then my aunties, um, who at the time they were in college and others were in high school. So, I would say my childhood was very sheltered, and I grew up alone. I have a sister, but she came 11 years later. (Mildred, 39 yrs, *1979, female, Karen, N.)

Whereas for Caroline, the danger outside her home was racism, for Mildred, it was Nairobi's economic crisis and the political unrest that developed during the 1990s in Kenya – two contexts that will be elaborated on in the following subchapter 7.3. Being sheltered and lonely is even more a topic for Mildred, as she had no siblings at that age. The way she talks about home is forging a topology of fortress – a place that protects her but also isolates her from the world.

> For me, it was my world. It was just me, you know? So, it was all about me. I wouldn't say I was spoiled. Maybe my mother would, but to me, I wasn't. But I was/I took every single opportunity to play, 'cause once I got home, there was nobody. (ibid.)

Interestingly, she home-schools her daughter Sya today, who lives in the same compound and complains about her loneliness. But Mildred is sure about the need to shelter her.

> And if anybody is to talk to her, you know, you're always like, 'Are they right? Are they okay? Is she okay?' You have to have/Like, if she's with her phone, I have to track her. If she is/I don't let her go out with her friends yet unless it's parent[al] supervision. (ibid.)

Fortunately, I was able to interview all three generations – Caroline (grandmother), Mildred (mother), and Sya (daughter). Therefore, I can share Sya's take on that amount of supervision.

> Life in Nairobi is interesting. It can also be a bit boring (laughs) […] it's better when you have a sibling. Because [in] some places where you live, it's only compounds. So, if you live in a compound, it's very boring if you're the only/If you're the only child. […] In an estate, it's more fun 'cause more kids live there, so it's more fun and noisy. (Sya, 12 yrs, *2007, female, Karen, N.)

Sya first emphasised the isolation that comes with the topology of single-family homes. Second, she described this isolation as affecting single children more than those who have siblings. It becomes visible in the following excerpt that Sya's mobility is severely restricted, because she is not allowed to leave the compound without adult supervision, and she is additionally home-schooled there.

> [The] compound is […] all fenced up. No one should get in or out without the person's/ The owner's permission. And then it's just one big house or one small house in a big chunk of land. (ibid.)

The typology of her home can be described as a kind of fortress in which she and her mother and grandmother are kept safe from the dangers of the outside world. Perhaps it is no surprise that Sya was the only speaker younger than 16 I did not meet at home. Instead, she came to mine. This is despite her mother and grandmother being speakers who all grew up in the same house.

Sya strongly describes her present life as shaped by solitude and boredom. Her relation to the world is primarily limited to her home and some islands of consumption that co-constitute and enlarge her topology of home. But despite her situation, Sya empowers and emancipates herself from her present local situation by imagining herself as a financially independent and successful global citizen in the future. However, beyond all that subversion, in the end the plans she makes are mainly dedicated to status work and her future investment in a steady home. Hence, she makes a U-turn back to where she currently is, just elsewhere. This is because, in fact, the topology of her dream home will not change. It will remain a fortress. The only change is that the danger lurking outside will not be racism (as for the grandmother) or political unrest (as for the mother) but her own 'fans' (ibid.).

> Well, I want one with at least, um, uh, um, like, uh, let's say nine bedrooms. And then I want a sitting room, a dining room, a kitchen, of course, then there's a family room, and then I want the kid's room where they have their/All their toys. And then, I of course/ Like I want, I want a big chunk of land like, um, like maybe nine acres 'cause I build a mansion and then I have the pool, then I have the pool house/And then down like far from the house I want a place where I can just have horses 'cause I love horses. And then, like, I want to have a spot, like near my house, I like want to have two peacocks. 'Cause I love peacocks. And then, like, eventually, I want to get a, a baby panther. Panther, yeah. I love black panthers. I find them amazing. And then, when it's a teen, I have to put it

> in a cage. [And will your house be gated?] It will have to have a fence. I don't want fans to come [to] my house and find them at my doorstep, yeah. (ibid.)

7.2.2.3.3 Island

But fortification does not always come with isolation or the effect of loneliness. It can also be perceived as living on a beautifully secluded island. This was the case for Pele, who grew up in Westlands Nairobi, as a child of a 'father [who] was a big shot' (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.). His family moved to Westlands when he was nine years old and settled there until recently, when they sold the property.

> It was a huge compound. […] There's a gate. There's, uh, a field this side, uh there's a veranda. It was a Spanish-styled villa […] Would we call it Spanish or Mediterranean? It had those fantastic tiles, […] the sitting room, which was quite large, kitchen, dining hall, uh, I think we had four bedrooms. […] It had an upper floor also. […] Did we have a watchman? We didn't have a watchman. It was open, open door, open gate. There was a doorbell when they [got] inside. (ibid.)

Even though Pele and Caroline's single-family homes did not have guards when they were children, they were still in highly privatised areas in colonial Nairobi. Caroline describes the recent past of these areas as 'places you couldn't come [to, otherwise] you'd be shot dead' (Caroline, 62 yrs, *1957, female, Karen, N.). Caroline and Pele are part of the relatively small percentage of children that grew up, back then, in predominantly white areas of colonial and postcolonial Nairobi. But whereas in Caroline's memory, the racism that she faced at school and in her neighbourhood in Karen overshadowed her memory, for Pele, the memory of privilege, strongly connected to the ability to eat good food, predominates and strongly shapes his topology of home as island.

> We had a cook and two servants. One to look after the kids, and one to do the cleaning. Yeah, we were many; nine children. (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.)

Beyond the children's community, Pele also remembers how his father 'gave a lot of his relatives jobs', and in that context, the family,

> 'always had at least two or three visitors staying with us [… that] would live with us temporarily. So, we got used to living with strangers and whatnot. […] Some even stayed for years. (ibid.)

As this network does not reach beyond the family or the work-related connections, the topology of Pele's home cannot be compared to the private community, as it stays highly exclusive for those who belong to the family or people related to his father's work. Yet it shows in what diverse ways life in a single-family topology can be perceived and lived beyond the single family. Likewise, this points to the limits of what can be grasped through the type alone, for example the 'single-family house', as in Pele's case it was more of an extended family house. His biographical memory of home is strongly constituted by the community within his family, which is carried by the hard work of domestic workers,

who surprisingly, for the first time in a narration, appear with personal features, even though these features relate predominantly to their work.[9]

> The one who used to do the ironing, [until] now, I still remember how he used to iron […] the trousers, mmm, and the shirts, oh fantastic. […] There was a driver. There was always a driver. […] We became very close to the driver. There was one called Nasa. He used to stay in Kangemi, an old, an old Kikuyu man; he used to drive my dad around. His sons became our friends. (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.)

Pele's entire narration is strongly contextualised by memories of eating. Eating appears as his passion, playing a significant role in the constitution of home and its scalar entanglements. As such, domestic food cultures also shape his relation to the world.

> My dad used to travel a lot, a well-travelled man. […] So we used to eat a lot of home food, but we also used to eat a lot of what I'd call *mzungu* food. Uh, like weekend, we used to have [a] full English breakfast. You know, the eggs, the sausages, the baked beans, the mushrooms, and all those funny things. Weekend now we were full *mzungu* mode. (Laughter) Weekdays African, uh, okay, milk, bread standard, a lot of porridge, uh, a lot of, uh, corn on the cob, a lot of, uh, what we call *githeri* […], chapattis and all that. […]. 'Cause we had a cook who used to cook for a British household, so we used to eat funny things like shepard's pie, steak and kidney pie. Uh, steam pudding, and, uh, bread pudding, and all, all those […]. So, we always used to love when you're playing, and you smell, 'Uh, today it's chicken. Uh, the leg is mine, the breast is mine, (laughs) nobody touches!' (ibid.)

According to Pele's narration, the practice of nine siblings eating at the table must be imagined as a lively ritual where children communally experience themselves. Pele's socialisation through eating customs, which he frames as being 'Africanised' but also 'Europeanised' (ibid.), also relates to his liberal and cosmopolitan self-world relation, in which he appears at home in a globalised world.

> [I am] Luo. But my son is married to a Kikuyu, so nowadays (laughs) it's mixed (laughs). […] He got married just before the elections.[10] And I was receiving calls, and I said, 'No, if that is who he loves, that is who he loves'. […] I was never brought up in a tribal whatever [way]. I've never. I've never seen tribe. I've never seen colour. […] We didn't even know religion. We didn't even know that these ones are, uh, Hindus, these ones are Muslims, we didn't know. Even later on in school, uh, [until] now, my best friend is a Somali, mmm, from school, mmm. My daughter has told me she might marry an Indian. I told her (laughs), 'It's your life'. (ibid.)

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9 Overall, it is shattering how many care workers and domestic labourers stayed invisible in the narrations. This is striking because, geographically or physically, they are so close to children; some even breastfed them. Regardless of this proximity, these people receive little recognition throughout the biographical memory. This finding deserves further research, which should also be contextualised by the colonial history of care-work and domestic labour.

10 Refers to the post-election violence in 2007/2008 in Kenya, which involved clashes between different ethnic groups.

This self-positioning is also conditioned by the experience of home as island instead of fortress and enclave, which is connected to the privilege of being part of a powerful Kenyan family and situated in a world where childhood memory, connected to the British, is not entwined with colonial suppression, but with community, luxury, and good food. This cosmopolitan orientation connected to the memory of eating customs can also be found in Stella's – the daughter of another 'well-travelled' father – memory of home.

> [M]y dad, he travelled, and […] he was so proper. So, in the evening, even breakfast, the way we had our/the table was set up it was set up properly in the British way. He went to a British school and afterwards/and so we'd/we'd have the proper cups, saucers, [0:15:25 unclear utterance]. If [we] had eggs, we had the egg holders and fork and knife, and everything was placed the proper way […]. (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.)

These examples show how much eating customs are part of the emotional topologies of (un)be*longing* in general and strongly co-constituted on the scale of home. Stella had just returned from abroad when I met her and explained how important it is for her to be back 'home' in Nairobi, but also Kenya and Africa. Stella coincidentally also grew up in a single-family house, which is better framed as an extended family house shaped by the topology of island, because even though it was highly characterised by seclusion, it was also highly communal.

> [We] lived in this huge house, and we didn't live alone; most of the time our/and our African culture is, you always help out your immediate family, so we always grew up always with cousins, family friends, my parents educating them, so the house was full. It was a big house, and we had/we were five girls and then extra people. […] But, I'm grateful, I'm happy for that. I had a big family and sisters that I [could] share the burden with, and we can/it was easier. And also, I'm lucky that we grew up in a family/loving family, [and] that we all liked each other. So, being around my aunts, uncles and my cousins was easier. Eh, so we had that comfort within there and again, we didn't have to go outside. (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.)

Stella's narrative clarifies how much the single-family home depends on the family's social constitution. Nevertheless, it is also important to emphasise that in the respective typological structure (single-/extended-family house), children are highly dependent on the functionality and quality of their families. This is the case in all topologies of home, but here seclusion is so strong because children have no compensational space for everyday social encounters beyond their private property, as in the case of private communities. Due to the amount of seclusion and isolation of this topology, everything that takes place here remains hidden for the time being. Unlike in the private community, it would be very difficult to hear domestic violence, for example, and even if it were heard, it is hard to imagine that, for example, Pierre's neighbours would bother. As such, the topology of enclave, fortress, and island is not only based on actions of differentiation between private and public, thus creating the spatial figure of territories. If we look at the scale of home and the social topology of the single-family house, we could think of it

as a territory. But if we listen to Pierre's narration about it, we see that the territory does not quite capture its spatial figuration. If we furthermore look at the associations this type of housing and home-making has for children, such as loneliness, boredom, isolation, fear, and unheard domestic violence, the single-family house seems to be rather an instance of void, where social life disappears.

7.2.2.4 Dwarf Galaxy

The last topology derived from the material is the dwarf galaxy. As an outer space phenomenon, it serves here as a metaphor for topologies of housing and home-making that comprise little galaxies, so heterogeneous inside that they almost appear as a miniature version of the city at large. They are characterised in rapidly growing cities by their age – they are old and thus surrounded by a history that has materialised within its matter. Layers of time are inscribed in them – like layers of cosmic matter, stars, and dust. As such, they have the same magic as stars. You never know if they are still there or their existence has been already terminated. They might still be visible from where we are but already faded from the time where they once were. As I write this today, the dwarf galaxy described in the following has already ceased to exist.

7.2.2.4.1 Patches

In dwarf galaxies, matter has altered, relations have shifted, orders have collapsed and resurfaced, people have died and been born. One and the same part has never remained unchanged, as it has served first as homes for chickens, then for humans, and now for their bees. Patch on top of patch fulfills different needs at different moments. Nothing here has only a single purpose. The purpose is manifold, as in the place installed for beekeeping in the tiny gap between a house and the estate's wall in Figure 54. Purposes coexist, co-inhabit, and co-figurate, forming a layered and dynamic environment where each element reshapes the meaning of the other. Life in such spaces is improvisational, contingent, and resilient, revealing the constant negotiation between function and inhabitant, between use and imagination.

In astronomy, dwarf galaxies are small versions of galaxies, less complex than their larger counterparts, yet retaining the essential properties that define a galaxy. Galaxies are accumulations of diverse cosmological elements – stars, dark matter, dust, gas, planetary systems – held together by gravity, some of which derives from the invisible scaffolding of dark matter that surrounds them. Dwarf galaxies, unlike their larger spiral counterparts, often take on irregular, amorphous shapes, their boundaries diffuse, their structure flexible. These cosmic features resonate as metaphors for the topology of housing and home-making I encountered in two homes in Nairobi: irregular, improvised, resilient, and shaped by the forces – social, material, and historical – that hold them together.

Just as dwarf galaxies evolve through the accretion, collapse, and rearrangement of matter, so too do these homes adapt over time. Rooms, courtyards, and makeshift additions fold into one another, creating spaces of multiplicity and hybridity. A courtyard may serve as a playground in the morning, a workspace in the afternoon, and a site for communal gatherings at night. Each layer of use does not erase the last but adds depth,

complexity, and resonance. In both the cosmic and the domestic, the irregular, the improvised, and the ephemeral emerge as vital features – testaments to survival, creativity, and the ongoing negotiation between structure and life.

Figure 54: Place for bee keeping in the compound of the author's accommodation and home to Said, Analia, and Ijhanya.

Source: Photo by the author, 2019.

The first one is Steve's home. Steve lives with his parents, one baby brother and two stepbrothers from his father's side, whom he considers his full brothers, in a one-storey house. This house is shared with another couple who stays downstairs. The building is located in a compound, with a *shamba*[11] and otherwise approximately 300 square meters of free space. The house, initially not built for such a purpose, was modified to give

11 *Shamba*, which translates to 'plantation' in Swahili (plural: *mashamba*), is an agricultural approach widely employed in East Africa, with a notable presence in Kenya. This method involves integrating various crops alongside resources like beekeeping and fodder for livestock. Through this diverse cultivation, farmers achieve increased income, food security, and employment opportunities. Additionally, this polyculture model is more environmentally sustainable and leaves a smaller ecological footprint than monoculture practices. The size of the *shamba* varies and is often practised in the confines of the compound.

the two living units separate entrances. This lengthy description draws awareness to the special constellation. But this is not all. On my way to Steve, the taxi driver started the ride towards the west from Upper Hill. Ngong Road was closed for construction, so we took a left on Kingara Road to Junction Mall, where we turned right on Naivasha Road – a road on which vendors sell huge rugs of tarpaulin for tent-making – and drove further west into the southern part of Kawangware, one of Nairobi's bigger informal settlements. The streets here are neatly cleaned. *Mabati* (corrugated iron) shacks accommodate hair salons, fruit and vegetable vendors, and little eateries. The shop fronts are colourfully painted with brandings, products, and illustrations of services. Everything is makeshift. The streets are not tarmacked. I feel ridiculous driving through them with a car that leaves the carefully decorated shop fronts in a cloud of dust. It was Monday, 8:30 am. I was tired and confused. Hadn't the contact person confirmed that Steve was growing up in a middle-class household? Looking at the landscape of rusty *mabati* shacks that unfolded behind the tidy shop fronts, I doubted he had. The ride continued, but soon, the driver stopped in front of a gate. This must be the local church, I thought. But no, Google Maps confirmed I had arrived. This was Steve's compound.

As I stepped out of the car, a man sitting in front of the gate asked me for 'ten bobs' (10 Kenyan shillings = 10 cents). As I searched my pockets, Steve picked me up at the light-blue metal gate, kindly greeting the two of us. He led me through the garden into the house, plastered in light yellow colours. The compound was around 300 square metres. There were no guards and no doorbells. Five *kassod* trees aligned the wall that bordered the road. *Skuma* (collard greens) grew in a small shamba outside the house. As we entered the house, we went upstairs. A wooden staircase led us to the top. I slid my left hand over its yellow-painted but partly worn super smooth wooden rail. It made me think of Bruno Mundari's example of the worn steps of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which form a 'strange helicoidal groove', because '[t]he angle of the tower makes you climb on the inside of the spiral staircase when the wall is leaning inwards, and move over to the outside edge when the wall slopes outwards' (Munari 1971 [1966]: 124). While the common flow of life in informal settlements is that they will be replaced by 'upgraded' structures, the scene here does not look like that. The prevalence of informal shacks and *mabati* huts rather looks threatening towards this remaining piece of the compound, which looks different in shape and size but, in terms of its age, is in no way inferior. Steve and his family live in this compound, but Steve's conception of home does not end at the gate. He feels at home in the neighbourhood and interacts with the community there.

> There's when you go straight, there's this road […] I just like going sometimes there; there are some people there who sell *maandazi*s [fried bread], yeah, and then I just stay there. […] I talk to them/I sometimes, I just sit there and think or I can go and talk to them. Yeah. (Steve, 11 yrs, *2008, male, Kawangware, N.)

Even though Steve is from a middle-income family, located at the upper part of the second spectrum of my socio-economic sampling, and lives in a double-family house within a gated compound, he is not spending his childhood secluded in the compound together with his brothers but often interacts with the wider community of the neighbourhood.

> We normally play outside this compound. […] There's even this field, this green field […] People just go, carry a ball, and play football. Yeah, there's a sewage place over there, but then there's a small path where you can walk. (ibid.)

Despite their difference (income and housing) from the rest of the neighbourhood, they do not withdraw from the outside world, nor do they shy away from a playground connected to a 'sewage place'. As Steve is growing up right next to an informal settlement, he also gets to interact with people who collect money on the street for a living.

> There are a lot of beggars in this sort of suburb. […] I don't give them money all the time; I also sometimes offer them something to eat and something to drink. Yeah, like water and a fruit. Yeah. Yeah. And then they say, say thank you and then I just continue my walk. (ibid.)

But this interaction goes beyond partial moments during everyday life, taking on a depth that must be emphasised against the background of the topology of home.

> There's actually one who lives near the gate. His name is [Ronnie]. […] We [talk] a lot: Where he lives, how he gets home and comes there. He said he takes a bus to near the gate, he makes money. (ibid.)

It became clear how much impact these encounters with street vendors and 'beggars' had on Steve when he told me Ronnie inspired him to make money.

> Well, you see, I sell sweets. […] I sell Tropical mints. Yeah, even at church, sometimes on the streets, but I don't like selling on the streets. I like selling at church to different people who are my dad's friends, who are even my friends. Yeah, so, but normally at church. […]. Well, I go almost everywhere with my sweets depending [on] who's there. (ibid.)

The special location and typology of Steve's home could easily forge it into a topology of enclave, but Steve and his family do not live according to it. Instead, they mingle within the neighbourhood's community and act beyond their position(ality). Therefore, their topology of home must be seen as part of the surrounding topology, because the walls of their compound seem more like a remnant of the past than a fortification structure. Within the otherwise segregated city, they build a little galaxy together, one with a highly irregular shape.

The second case that can be considered a dwarf galaxy is the home of Maria and Said, who are sisters, and Ijhanya. Ijhanya is from a different family. They reside in a compound in Parklands with mixed structures, some of which were added over time, inhabited by an ethnically and economically heterogeneous group of residents, which I was temporarily part of (1.5 months). Therefore, this explorative, in-depth analysis strongly involves reflections on my position(ality). During my last visit to Nairobi, I wanted to stay in Parklands, as so far I had not been in contact with the Indian community, which is one of the biggest ethnic minorities in Nairobi – one that, until today, struggles with the ambiguous position it had in colonial Nairobi. Even though Indians had been in East

Africa long before, the most significant Indian migration to Kenya began following the creation of the East African Protectorate in 1895. Many Indians, often engineers, came as what some frame as sub-imperialist agents, from then British India. In racially segregated colonial Nairobi, the Indian community was positioned in a hierarchy of power after the British colonial settlers but privileged in comparison to the African community. Parklands is part of what was the 'racial zone' for Indians, which was and is today an extremely diverse population often referred to more generally as Asians. Still today, this position comes as a both a blessing and a curse: a blessing because many Indians still own land in the city and a curse because they are also facing off with a stigma connected to the colonial past.

Figure 55: Arial photo collage of the compound in Parklands.

Source: Photos and collage by the author, 2019.

When I was looking for places to stay, I had heard that most of Parklands is owned by the Indian community. So even when I booked my Airbnb in Parklands and Layla, my host, whom I had read as a Kenyan without Indian context, communicated with me, I still assumed that she was hired by an Indian landlord. Therefore, I was quite surprised when I arrived at my accommodation in Parklands in 2019 to realise that none of this was the case and that Layla was indeed the daughter of the property's landlord. As I entered the gate, Layla told the security guard that I would be staying there. The online pictures on the Airbnb platform did not indicate the surroundings. It was pitch dark, but once I walked around the corner of the house, following Layla to my door, I was welcomed by a warm light from a kitchen window. Through the window, I saw a veiled girl looking back at me while washing dishes and putting them onto a metal shelf hanging on the pink-painted wall for drying. This captured moment stayed in my head like a snapshot. As there were no lights, I had only one piece of the puzzle of where in this world I was. It turned out that her name was Analia and that she had also wondered where in this world

I came from, and so she played a big role in opening up paths to figure out where I had landed, while I satisfied her endless curiosity about my life in Germany.

Not bigger than 600 square metres, the compound (Figure 55) was home to 22 people (including me), all sharing a backyard where the washing was done and the children could play. The residents were of different ages, and some had migrated from India and Pakistan. Others were Kenyans, like Ijhanya and her family, who had moved there from their former home in Deep Sea Slum in Nairobi, strongly altering Ijhanya's daily life.

> Um, it's fun because it is fenced well and has, it has a big compound for you to play. It has the people who live here; they are very kind and good. If you have – if you want something, you can go ask them, and they will give [it to] you. They will not even slap you, beat you like in Deep Sea; they'll just give you. Yeah. (Ijhanya, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Deep Sea Slum and Parklands, N.)

The people to whom Ijhanya refers have various occupations. They are watchmakers, tailors, car mechanics, mothers who run households, kiosk keepers, street vendors, real estate managers, beekeepers, and construction workers. Apart from plenty of birds and insects, such as glow-worms, three cats, several chickens, and a bee colony additionally resided in the compound. While the bees had one keeper, the chickens were owned and cared for collectively. Their eggs and meat were shared among the community. As I was often invited for tea and cookies or sometimes even a meal, I started a ritual of occasionally baking banana bread for sharing in the backyard. This ritual was continued by Said and Analia's mother after my departure. The community at Parklands turned around many aspects of the dominant cultural and spatial narratives I had heard about the city. Thus, the socio-material constellation of the dwarf galaxy topology and its inhabitants does not produce a clear form. Just like dwarf galaxies, its figuration is irregular and marked by differences. Part of this exceptionalism is that the land in Parklands was owned by a Kenyan family that rented the biggest building in the complex to an Indian family. This Indian family belonged to the relatively small community of Muslim Indians in Nairobi. The owners' children (my host and her brother) also lived in one of the rather small structures.

It is only recently that Layla rented out one of them on the Airbnb platform. I was only the second renter. Layla and I regularly met for lunch, and it was this first impression that led me to ask her questions about the compound. In time, I realised that being different was what this whole community was about. In addition to the differences shared by the residents, a white researcher from Germany added to the place's already existing logic. Soon, I got the impression of entering a parallel universe each time I returned home and passed through the gate. Outside, the city was shaped by colonial and racial segregation, which was not reproduced by the socio-material composition inside the compound. Boundaries were drawn differently here. Rather, they were not drawn but constantly negotiated within the residents' communal differences. A diverse group must negotiate a lot with each other, including religion-specific aspects of living together. And so, of course, I was also part of this negotiation. I realised just how profound these differences can be when I spoke to Analia about her school, a *Madrasa* (Quran school), and she answered my naïve question about her school subjects:

> We learn Quran over there. […] There is maths, sports, English and Kiswahili and, you know, all those other languages. [C.M.: And you have arts and music and stuff?] No. [C.M.: Ah, you have history?] We don't do history, actually. Our school never/Doesn't like history because, you know, our, our, our religion doesn't have to be made on history. And you know the stories of/What is that queen called? […] And, you know, they say that first we were monkeys, and then we turned into human beings, and I don't know. Yeah, so we don't believe in that. (Analia, 13 yrs, *2007, female, Parklands, N.)

On another occasion, I decided to go to the public swimming pool and asked if any of the children wanted to come along. While the Kenyan children were allowed to go, the mother of the Indian Muslim family explained to me that Said and Analia are not allowed to go to public swimming pools, because they cannot cover their bodies properly from men's gaze. When we met again after this occasion, Analia explained the restrictions and rules she follows as a Muslim. She also told me about the gendered order of her home connected to her religion.

> [C]hildren stay together, divided by female and male. Because they can't sleep together. Like, you know, in our, uh, our Islamic thing, we, we can't sleep together with boys and girls together. […] When my brother [who stays in a boarding school in Mombasa] comes, he has to sleep in the sitting room. He can't sleep in the/Where I sleep. [And you said you're going for prayers. Where do you go, like in a certain room in your house?] No, there's/You can pray anywhere. [Ah, you don't go to the mosque?] The men have to go to the mosque, and then the ladies have to pray at home. (ibid.)

Analia's father only slowly warmed up to me. Her mother told me he was very strict with clothing, and he thought I was showing too much of myself. Feeling very alienated by this information, I decided to meet him for tea, during which I had a surprisingly differentiated talk with him, sharing my experience of religion in the context of growing up in a Catholic village. He clarified that, to him, Islam is the only sensible alternative to capitalism, explaining that asking his daughters to cover their bodies is not just following a religion but meant as a critique of capitalism and its sexism. Another frequent interaction I had in the compound in Parklands was with Aleezeh, a woman from Pakistan who rented the flat beneath mine. She frequently called me and served tea and biscuits in front of her flat (Figure 56) – a space, part of the backyard, which she had beautifully decorated with scented geraniums the children loved to smell. Aleezeh did not speak English, and I do not speak Urdu, or enough Kiswahili to deeply converse with her, so our conversations were full of gestures and pantomimes. Sometimes, her son translated for us. From this I understood that she has a daughter who lives in Pakistan, whom she misses very much and whom I apparently reminded her of. This is how I came to understand her motherly care for me.

Figure 56: Tea and biscuits from Aleezeh.

Source: Photo by the author, 2019.

The openness with which I was welcomed is part of a long-established communal way of life in which the children are also welcome everywhere and feel safe.

> [I] [would] go to [Layla's] and disturb her (laughter) when I was young. And then come over here to my aunt's house. She used to live here before she went over there. So, I would come over here. I would go over there, disturb her a bit, and come back downstairs, and then disturb [Layla] again, then play outside with [Ijhanya], and [Said] was not yet born [at] that time. Yeah. […] Over here, there is a lot of peace. Like, there's no shouting [or] robberies. We have never had a robbery over here, so we are safe. (Analia, 13 yrs, *2007, female, Parklands, N.)

7.2.2.4.2 The Mortality of Dwarf Galaxies

Everything sounds idyllic, and yet a sword hangs over the property. A conflict is constantly being negotiated and is greater than those arising due to the differences in daily life. Layla's father wanted to sell the property for many years and found himself in conflict with the residents. Nevertheless, matters were handled respectfully, as the project had been transparent for a long time, and its realisation has been repeatedly pushed back. Layla explained that it is important to find the right moment for everyone and that this must be decided mutually. In galaxies, also their dwarf versions, the black holes are held

responsible for the decrease in the production of new stars, which causes the galaxy's death at some point. Even if all topologies must be understood as processual and as part of figurations, against the background of the growing neoliberal governance of cities, it seems to be the dwarf galaxy that is in particular danger. Therefore, another characteristic of the dwarf galaxy is that it is vulnerable and temporal.

*Figure 57: Wall in the corridor of the home of Said, 4 yrs, 2011, female, and Analia, 13 yrs, *2007, female, Parklands, N.*

Source: Photo by the author, 2019.

When I visited Analia and Said's family for the first time in their house, I was allowed to capture a beautiful artefact of biographical time, which is portrayed in Figure 57. Here, the topological memory that materialises in a house throughout time becomes visible. Analia knows that one day, this wall, documenting the figuration of the family member's body height, will be demolished.

> All the other places that he [the owner] had have already been demolished, and they have already started building, building. So, the last place that they are building is gonna be here. You know, once they finish that building, they will come over here to demolish it. […] [How do you feel about that?] I don't know, 'cause this place has been

here all this time. And I think it needs to be demolished. It's really an old place, you know? […] I have been living here, so it's actually gonna be sad moving out of here. And I feel bad for this place, and he/Yeah. […] this house really matters to me, actually. Because, you know, we've been staying here, and there's so many of my friends that stay here. And then if we shift, I don't think we'll meet again actually, 'cause, you know, we can't just move to the same place, maybe. (Analia, 13 yrs, *2007, female, Parklands, N.)

Figure 58: New building behind the wall of the compound of the author's accommodation and home to Said, Analia, and Ijhanya.

Source: Photo by the author, 2019.

Analia also knows that it is the place that holds the community together. And it is true: Things are not shiny here, and if they are, it is because the body oil of the hands that have used it over and over has made it smooth and shiny. There are no sharp edges left. The compound in Parklands does not look like it has been photoshopped into the city. What is specific about this topology is that it has a highly biographical effect – and not only because of the wear and tear inscribed in their materiality but also because they simply stand out in their surroundings and their appearance seems threatened, for example between other vertical new buildings, with facades smooth and shiny, so that no dust

sticks to them (see Figure 58). As solidarity systems, they are also 'eyesores' threatened by investment in neoliberal urban imaginations.

7.2.3 Growing Up Global at Home

On the scale of home I illustrated how housing and home-making practices play an important role in children's lives. Even though most speakers marked home as the most important place of their childhood, the actual constitution of home has produced heterogeneous social, geographical, scalar, and material constellations. These heterogeneous topologies are furthermore classed and, based on that, establish different spatial figurations. In that context, the findings indicate that middle-class topologies of housing and home-making are more likely reproducing the spatial figures of voids, territories, and fluids, compared to the low-income cases, where the figure of place and network is more common and where housing is much less connected to the degree of privacy and seclusion. Therefore, when we look at the quality of spaces that connect to middle-class families' lifestyles, we note that these figures are closing space rather than opening it. Connected to this are increasing security measures in the narrations and the architectural ethnographic observations. The material agents installed to secure middle-class family life and property are manifold. There is some evidence of a shift from securitisation based on fixed materials, such as walls and barbed wire, and security labour, such as guards, towards a (digital) tech-based security industry, which makes human trust obsolete. Such as for Rebecca, whom I thanked for sharing her precious time with me, even though she has a little baby, and who then promptly assured me this was no problem, opening an app on her phone showing me a live monitoring of her child in the living room with her 'nanny'.

The findings elucidate the inseparability of housing and home-making practices. They show the process in which a house (dwelling structure) becomes a home (house as home). But they also inform us about how home can be conceptualised beyond the material confinement of a house, a flat, or a building on multiple scales. On the one hand, the results point to the important role of the built environment in the constitution of home, the ways of living and the specific spatial order of childhood across generations, scales, and locations. On the other hand, they show the material aspects of the global middle-class discourse by giving insight into the types of housing structures designed or affordable for the middle classes, while home-making practices show how they appropriate these structures.

The results show that the practice of living in certain types of housing plays an important role in shaping childhoods across generations, scales, and locations. In some cases, the typology of housing is therefore even more involved in the production of specific childhood experiences or memories than, for example, a child's age, gender, or place of residence. Therefore, this figuration of childhood on the scale of home, introduced through the topologies of 'private community', 'vertical capsules', and 'enclave, fortress, and island', can be seen as consisting of situated globalities of middle-class childhoods. As such they offer a differentiated translocal insight into what is often reduced to or overseen by the notion of gated community.

These findings stress the need for a deeper engagement with global architecture transfers based on an architectural ethnography that is actor- or inhabitant-centred and takes into account the subjective and collective practices of home-making connected to different architectural types. Through this perspective, it is possible to trace how these 'travelling architectures' also circulate classed ideas of a good life, thereby rendering geographically distant lives at times very similar through their form. These situated globalities, on the one hand, make us aware of the translocal agencies of the built environment and their effects on the spatio-temporal order of childhood. On the other hand, they point to the importance of local cultures in shaping and reshaping life within these environments. Furthermore, the findings promote the topological rationale, which stresses the need not to ignore the importance of Euclidian space in relational spatial theory. As the findings show, the spatial constitution of home can also perfectly end up looking like a container space in which, for example, the gendered, generational, or private/public built-in topo-logics directly structure the culture of living in a house. This strengthens the spatial theoretical foundation I developed and shows that topology matters within sociological spatial inquiry. This is because it makes us aware that Euclidian space is one possible social topology amongst all the others and becomes visible in the examples of house as home. With regard to the transgenerational comparison, the findings show that living in the same typology (e.g., semi-detached house) does not mean that the topologies of housing and home-making of the 1970s are equivalent to those of the 1990s. It is important to note that in some cases the communality between the families and children of the 1970s was also connected to the condition of being the first generation of residents moving into these newly built middle-class structures.

7.3 City: A*void*ant Mobilities

The scale of the city will be the last scale on which I will reconstruct the spatial figuration of middle-class childhood. While the first subchapter, 'Insularization', is concerned with aspects of figuration based on children's spatial (in)dependent mobility, the second subchapter, 'DichoCity', engages with the dichotomies on which the city is constituted, some of which are connected to borders, which were highlighted as important socio-material processes of children's subjectivation within the biographical narrations and maps.

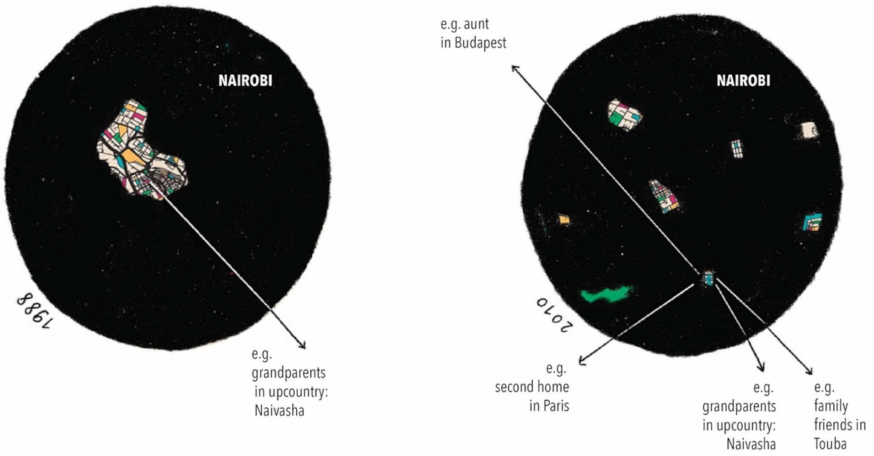
7.3.1 Insularisation

> So it was home, church, school. [All in walking distance?] My dad is a big shot; we used to be dropped in the Mercedes Benz in school we'd not walk. […] It was the thing those days. Everybody had to be dropped in a car. […] I even remember the number plate. It used to be called KMV. […] All my friends used to call it the King of Motor Vehicles has come. [And your dad would come pick you up and drop you or you had a driver?] There was a driver. There was always a driver. (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.)

Pele indirectly points to what Helga Zeiher (1990) has termed the insularisation of childhood (orig. *Verinselung der Kindheit*). Insularisation, as introduced earlier in my discus-

sion of the state of research, describes a shift in children's access to the city that became increasingly visible at the end of the 1960s: from independent mobility in small areas or zones that children appropriate by time towards accompanied and motorised mobility in which they are transported to several islands often institutionalised and splintered over the cityscape. The illustration in Figure 59 illustrates this phenomenon and additionally points to the possibility that these islands might stretch further than the city's boundaries and, at times, also reach a global scale. Since I have already elaborated on what insularisation describes in subchapter 2.1.1, I will concentrate in the following mostly on how insularisation appears in the childhoods of the speakers.

Figure 59: Insularisation of childhood.



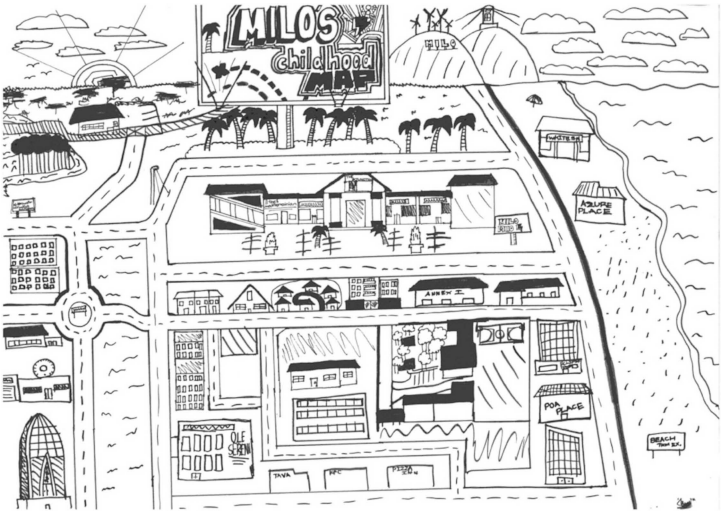
Source: Illustration by the author.

As I said before, Helga and Hartmut Zeiher have been criticised for the spatial conception that lies at the bottom of their work, which imagines space as a 'territorial, physical-material, delimitable place' (translated from Kogler 2015: 48).[12] As such, it is not sur-

12 A deeper look into Helga and Harmut Zeiher's work shows that their spatial theoretical reflections lead to an action-based concept of *Umwelt* (surroundings, environment), in which they conceptualise space beyond something that just contains the social, towards an idea of environment that is neither merely objective ('everything that exists around the human being in terms of physical conditions and that can be grasped in a physical-geographical object language') nor primarily subjective, which 'renounces "the world in itself" and sticks to – what is represented as an image, – as a conception of the world in the human cognitive system.' (translated from Zeiher/Zeiher 1994: 57), but subjective objective. Despite Raphaela Kogler's criticism, which is crucial against the background of the insights social sciences concerned with spatial questions have gained over the last 20 years, a closer look into Helga and Harmut Zeiher's space-time approach shows how much groundwork they have already done in conceptualising social action as constitutive of space and time and vice versa. Furthermore, both studies are crucial for the recognition of children as actors in urban environments. In that tradition, equipped with the insights gained by empirical and theoretical spatial inquiry from sociology, psychology, and human geography over the last three decades, I

prising that they speak of the loss of a 'uniform life space' (translated from Zeiher/Zeiher 1994: 27) of children that takes place in the insularisation process. I agree with Raphaela Kogler's criticism and argue that even though this rather geographical imaginary is important, simply because it is a spatial perspective that matters, a topological perspective can bring much more insight beyond an imaginary that measures connection by geographical distance, because it additionally looks at the intensity of social encounters between islands. Geographically speaking, Heinz and Helga Zeiher's islands are disconnected, but from a relational or topological perspective it is highly questionable whether these islands are unconnected and whether a bus, subway, or car ride do not count as space and spatial relations. This becomes vivid when we look at Milo's map, where the visualisation of the urban figuration of the city he resides in shifts into a virtual continuation of his urban reality co-told or co-visualised by the video games he plays. As such, Milo's childhood map (Figure 60) could also be drawn by a child who lives in Santa Monica in Los Angeles County and spends their childhood between Hollywood and the beach. Milo's childhood map accurately portrays his spatial access to the city where he lives but also connects that city to the visual cultures and representations of Los Angeles and New York, which he regularly visits when he plays *Call of Duty: Black Ops* or *Watch Dogs* on his console.

*Figure 60: Map by Milo, 15 yrs, *2004, male, Kileleshwa, N.*



Source: Map by speaker Milo.

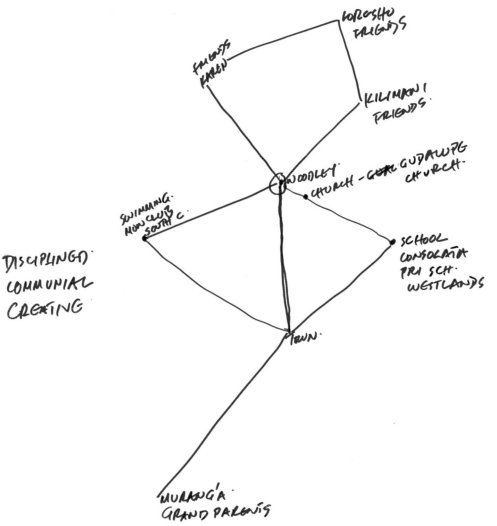
The connections between these fragmented islands are not just empty space; they can, as shown in Milos case, be virtual continuations between real and animated cities,

would like to build upon their magnificent work and further stress the importance of class as a category of social inequality for understanding the processes of *spatial becoming* from the perspective of childhood in cities under the global condition.

but they can also be tiny time-spaces, such as rides, during which important events are happening. In this context, I would like to point out the touching work of Carla Shedd, whose research draws on the experiences of racism, violence, (in)security, and (un)be*longing* of black Afro-American youth on the daily routes between their school and home on Chicago's south side (Shedd 2015). In relation to the experiences that these young people had, a place like a bus seat could become one of the most memorable spaces of one's biography – something that we already know from the story of Rosa Parks.[13]

7.3.1.1 Islands and Trajectories

*Figure 61: Map by Matthew, 51 yrs, *1968, male, Langata, N.*



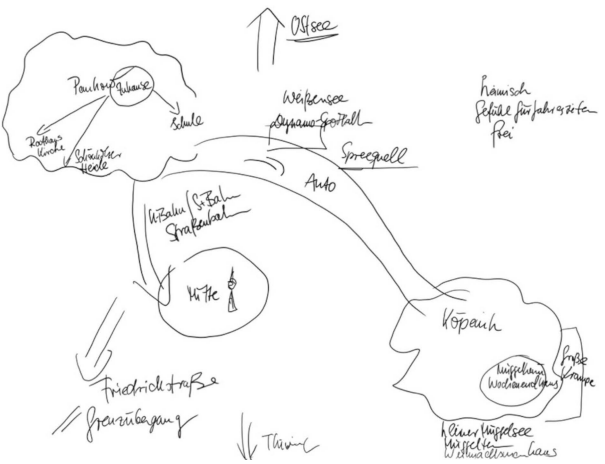
Source: Map by speaker Matthew.

In view of the research on the spatial change of childhoods in European contexts discussed in subchapter 1.1 and the prevailing assumption that childhood is becoming more and more insular, I have shown that an increasing insularisation of childhoods similar to that found in the European context can also be observed in Nairobi. Even though there are many differences regarding the specific spatial characteristics of insularisation, the social topology of islands and the fact that children are accompanied by their parents or other adults in a car or other means of (public) transportation to reach them prevail in both urban contexts. On the scale of the city, this figuration of children's mobilities is

13 The African American activist of the civil rights movement, Rosa Louise McCauley Parks, refused to give her bus seat to a white person and was arrested on 5 December 1955. Her act of civil courage inspired the Montgomery bus boycott, for which she has been honoured as 'the first lady of civil rights' and 'the mother of the freedom movement'.

therefore not a specifically European urban phenomenon. This finding is also strengthened by the recently published outcome of a study about children's spatial knowledge based on a meta-analysis of global childhood research by Ignacio Castillo Ulloa et al. (2023). Thus, the above findings point to the global plurality of childhoods and break away from the prevalent stereotypical figures of childhood often ascribed to African contexts. I explain and illustrate in the following why it is nevertheless important to understand these islands as situated globalities instead of framing them simply as a universalising global figuration of childhood.

*Figure 62: Map by Paula, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Köpenick, B.*

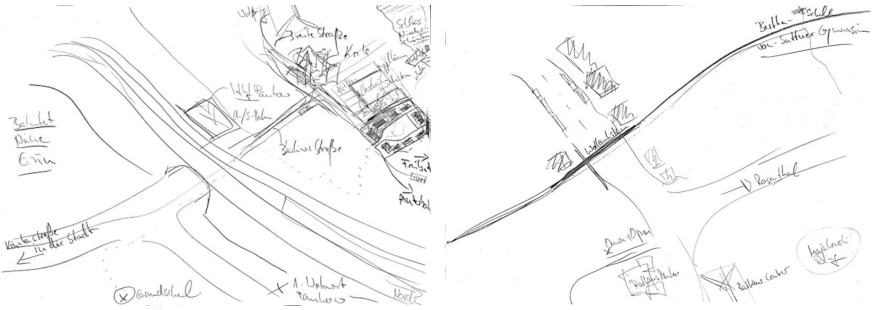


Source: Map by speaker Paula.

Matthew (Figure 61) and Paula (Figure 62) spent their childhoods during the 1960s and 70s. Even though both say they still had access to a zone around their home, within which they could move independently, every other place on their maps refers to islands. Some of these islands were within walking distance, while the others could only be reached accompanied by adults and often in the family car. These maps are characterised by movement, some even indicated by arrows.

Although the spatial mobility of Paula and Matthew in the 1960s is characterised by zones and islands, the line is already dominant. Rather than depicting the city as a non-linear network, the focus is on trajectory-based spaces. Paula and Matthew do not drift through the city; they traverse it.

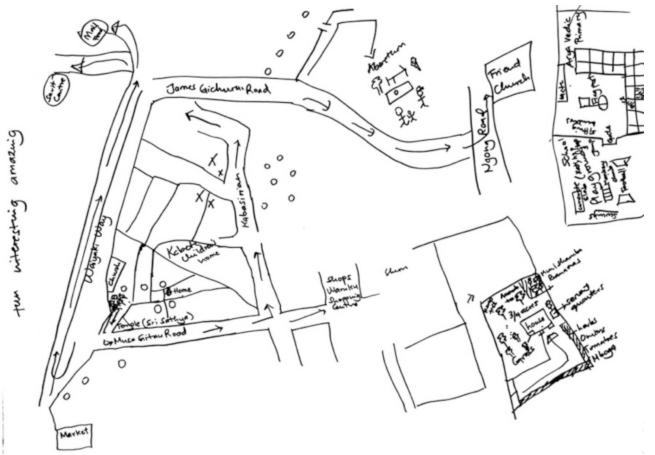
*Figure 63: Map by Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.*



Source: Map by speaker Raphael.

In Raphael's (Figure 63) and Rebecca's (Figure 64) childhoods, in the 1980s and early 1990s, these zones still exist but are reduced to the very surroundings of the home (garden, private street, compound, etc.) and are therefore dependent on the housing type. More islands appear, which are further away. Additional paper is required, as the speakers try to illustrate the distance between the islands.

*Figure 64: Map by Rebecca, 38 yrs, *1982, female, Lavington, N.*



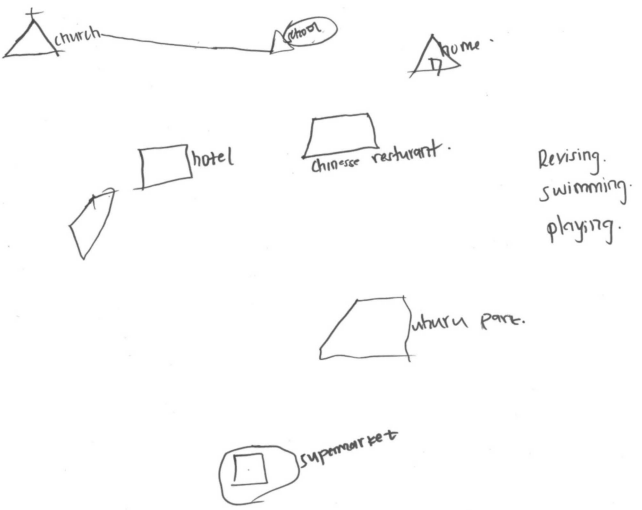
Source: Map by speaker Rebecca.

Movement grows over longer distances, while at the same time children's mobility becomes less independent. Streets become more dominant and cut through the topology of the city, simultaneously producing empty areas. Empty, but visible as such. The city is fluid. Trajectories cut through the cityscape at large, yet there are also indications of routes that are less straight, less linear, and less planned here and there:

> And then I set off on my bike, and it was a combination of self-made routes, shortcuts, and official roads. I always tried to avoid traffic lights. So, over the years, I tried to find the fastest way through everything. And that was a route that led through a lot of greenery. (Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.)

Nonetheless, these routes are exceptions and, in Raphael's case, must be seen in the context of the suburbanisation of middle-class families during the 1980s and 90s, which his family was part of.

*Figure 65: Map by Rehema, 8 yrs, *2011, female, Langata, N.*



Source: Map by speaker Rehema.

As illustrated in the map of Rehema (Figure 65), in the 2000s, we see that these routes disappear. Insularisation has increased and displaced most other social topologies. Yet, we still notice these empty areas – not accessible to children.

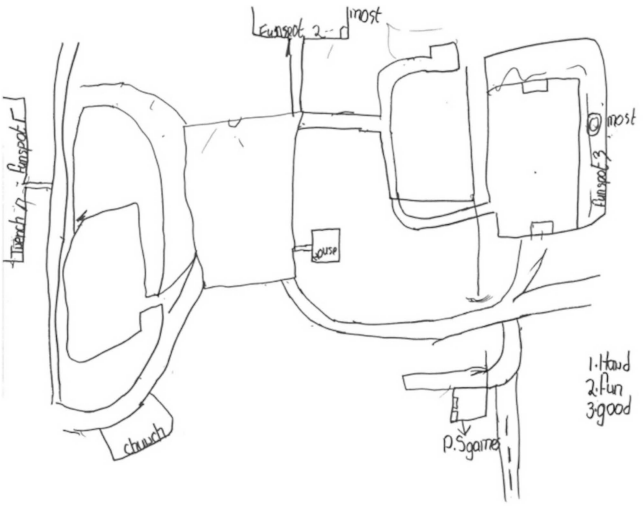
Routes and Fields: Whose Insularisation? Generally, zones and routes are something that appear less frequently over time in the material. Yet this does not apply to the first and second spectrum of the sampling, regardless of age. Regarding the material, which dates to childhood during the mid-1960s, we cannot assume that insularisation only started to become tangible as a phenomenon in cities during the 1960s. My findings suggest that social differences of that sort have existed ever since. However, as my sampling does not allow me to 're-figure' beyond this period, I cannot prove this, but I would suggest that further biographical research is necessary and crucial here.

What I was able to reconstruct with the material was that there are great differences in children's mobilities regarding their classed situations. Even if insularisation affects everyone – for example, fallow land that was previously accessible for children's play disappears in the urban landscapes as cities become increasingly dense in population and

traffic during the course of urbanisation – there are clear differences regarding the socio-economic comparison but also other aspects, such as gender, religious affiliation, and specific material contexts (as shown in subchapter 7.2).

Insularisation instead turns out to be a distinct spatial signifier of middle and upper-middle classness and also characterises the childhoods of the wealthy sampling on the scale of the city. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, it is crucial not to apply the spatial topology of children from working-class contexts found in the studies of Martha Muchow in the 1930s as the past of children generally today. So far, the island has been seen as the social topology of urban childhoods that historically follows the zone. But this linear figurative depiction no longer applies when children from lower-income families play much more often in outdoor spaces, and in 2019 they still have independent access to (more than) a zone around their home as visible in Figure 66.

*Figure 66: Map by Yao, 10 yrs, *2009, male, Lumumba, N.*



Source: Map by speaker Yao.

Yao is the speaker in the sampling with the smallest family income. He lives in a tiny one-floor stone house with his mother, aunt, uncle, and grandmother. 'Lumumba', his neighbourhood, he says, 'has three fields', also called 'fun spots'. To be certain what that means, I ask, 'When you say fields, you mean this, uh, what's, what's in front of us outside? Like, it's free open space?' and point to the brownfield outside his home. Yao nods, '[y]eah, this one'. He adds, 'there's another one, that one where I can stay with my friends, and there's this one, which I like playing [in], and there's this one, the casual one, where everybody is there' (Yao, 10 yrs, *2009, male, Lumumba, N.). It becomes clear that the fields are very important to Yao when he explains the freedom he enjoys: 'Every time I go to that field, I find my friends [and] everybody there. […] I know just I can be [free] to [do] what I want. When I come back here [home], you know, they tell me: go there! Do this! Don't do that! […]' (ibid.). Yao's map portrays a topology of fields surrounding his

house, connecting different and strongly body-related social activities, which connects to the church where he goes to Mass on Sundays. During the narration, he only names one more place beyond what is depicted on the map: The school is the only island 'located in Makadara', about six kilometres from his house. He says, '[w]hen I walk there in the morning, which is usually dark, […] I see nobody has opened, so just quiet around, and you just go to school. In the evening, there's a lot of people, interactions, business, just like that. So, that's why I like walking' (ibid.).

The social topology of the field does not only appear in Yao's map. Fergusson too marks a field between his house and the river as 'the origin of so many other adventures' (Fergusson, 24 yrs, *1995, male, Langata, N.). Fields are, moreover, social topologies that appear as public spaces with a high amount of access for children.

> There's even this field, this green field, this one, yes. […] People just go, carry a ball, and play football. […] Yeah, but there are like a few times when it's not [a] holiday, and you can only see like one kid there. Yeah, [they] just play by themselves, bored and lonely. Yeah, but once it's the holiday, we normally go. […] When they normally come, like at 1 o'clock. 1, and then they play like […] to around 4 [o'clock], and then they go home. The person who has the ball, if he goes home, everyone just goes home because there's no ball to play with. (Steve, 11 yrs, *2008, male, Kawangware, N.)

As Steve's narration clarifies, these spaces are also characterised by their informality and spontaneity. Children do not need to make appointments there, because these spaces are visited by groups of children at daily reoccurring times anyway. These spaces should, therefore, be understood in the sense of Doreen Massey's 'global sense of place' (2005: 131), and thus 'as integrations of space and time, as *spatio-temporal events* [emphasis in the original]' (ibid.: 130) which are 'woven together out of ongoing stories, […] as in process, as unfinished business' (ibid.: 131) 'and where the successions of meetings, the accumulation of weavings and encounters build up a history' (ibid.: 139). This renders fields as some of the very few examples of the spatial figure of place and places as spatial figures that appear as rather scarce in middle and upper-middle class childhoods, while they are much more dominant in the first and second spectrum of the socio-economic sampling.

> So, yeah, that was it, growing up in Eastlands, going to school by foot. […] But walking to school was fun. You will come out of your house, and then you walk two [or] three streets. Someone else comes out, and you're walking to school together. […] And we were so many children going to different directions, you know, so again, at that point, friendships were made. Yeah. So, we go talking about what we ate yesterday for dinner, talking about what we watched on TV. You talk about your family like, 'Oh, this is what happened: …' [There were different] routes to school of where we used to pass […]. Of course, there was the option of using a main road but, um, we, we loved going through other routes, you know? Because they were hilly or muddy, so we'll play with the mud a lot. (Martha, 28 yrs, *1991, female, Umoja I, N.)

Yao's and Martha's examples show that children from less affluent backgrounds have a few islands within their city topology, such as the school, yet in that context, it is necessary to differentiate between the type of movement between these islands – the social

topologies that constitute the fluid space between them. While the middle-class children move through the city in social topologies of trajectorial space, the movement of less affluent children can be better described by routes, as in Yao's case. Even though both figures are based on movement towards a destination (for example, school), Martha's and Yao's examples show that their movement is much less characterised by the strict linearity of a trajectory, because they stop here and there, pause and explore. In that context, Amina says, '[I was] eating my bus fare at times to eat mangoes according to the season, and then I have to walk home. It was/it was really fun' (Amina, 21 yrs, *1998, female, Ruai, N.). On routes, you interact. When the sun is up, you sweat. You take a break and do something unordinary, at times even risky, because '[g]rowing up poor you [can't] afford [to go] to the swimming pool, so you invent your own kind of fun [swimming in a quarry]' (ibid).

In Nairobi, most speakers from the first and second spectrum of the middle-class sampling walk, but they also take a matatu from time to time. The matatu culture is a means of transportation that comes from less affluent communities based in Eastlands, bringing along a culture of re-using, repairing, and patching old buses again and again, over and over. Matatus are tightly packed means of transport, equipped with televisions and (super loud) stereos. They are packed mobile living rooms filled with visual cultures of stars and celebrities (for more, see Mutongi 2017). Matatus are sweating and screaming machines that scramble people together and throw them onto one another. A matatu does not beam you from one end of the city to another without friction, like a subway. It bounces, shakes, and brakes. They take routes where a Kenyan city bus would not transport you, routes that pass through areas where there are fewer gates and where life is visible on the streets. As such, in the Nairobian context, class and the quality of space are highly different on the scale of 'public'[14] transportation, as matatus drive on routes while the city bus moves on trajectorial space.

Although the spatial figure of fluid space, which is constituted by linear movement on the social topology of trajectorial space, such as in the family's car, train, or bus, appears in middle-class childhoods of both cities as a translocally connecting element, it is still important to point out the differences that come with the context-specific features of each city. In this sense, the socio-material fabric of the cities and their atmospheres are so incredibly different that it is important not to equate a ride in Nairobi with a ride in Berlin. In this way, even traversal and trajectorial movement creates spaces that must be understood in connection with specific local socio-material features. Whereas in Berlin the linearity of moving is carried more by the given order, in Nairobi movement is shaped by the potholes and chaos of traffic that rule the street, at times cutting through your plan of being on time, sending you on detours, and catching you waiting in the lanes leading to 'roundabout[s] of death' (Pierre, 13 yrs, *2006, male, Lavington, N.). It is important to trace these differences in the spatial figurations of childhood more precisely to understand global social inequalities better and without reifying the social category of class by overlooking its specific local expressions.

14 Matatus are privately owned, but their fares are still much cheaper than those of the state-owned city buses.

When we compare how one travels, for example, in the matatu in Nairobi, to how Rosi describes the type of movement in her family's car in Berlin, it becomes clear how different fluid space can be depending on the classed social topology that constitutes it. Rosi's description of the things she saw on her regular car rides between Pankow (home) and Köpenick (summer house) can almost serve as a metaphor for the connection between class and social topology: 'As a child', says Rosi '[I] also grew up with car driving [and I've] always paid attention to certain things when [driving] anyway' (Rosi, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.). When I asked her what she observed during the car rides, she referred to 'two points that were very important' when she drove through Alt-Köpenick:

> One point, on the left, was an old house, and an old woman lived in it. And if we were lucky, she was at the window. And that was the best thing, when they were at the window. […] And on the other side, a little further on, there was a square. I don't even know if it still exists or [if] something has been built there. And there was an old pub, and in front of it were two […] streetlamps. And you could always see someone sitting in there […] and they were these bald heads who always looked like Zille figures, really like that. And I always thought they were still sitting there from some other time. (ibid.)

'Zille figures' refers to so-called Berliner originals that were portrayed within the visual milieu studies of Berlin's proletariat by the artist Heinrich Zille at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. What Rosi sees through Zille's eyes, or more the fact itself that Rosi sees through Zille's eyes in some ways, also points to her classed gaze at the city. Raised in an academic household, with two parents interested in arts, her background shapes her in how her gaze on the city receives a certain bourgeois confidence, with which she looks at the life worlds that display themselves to her through the car's trajectorial movement, a movement within a certain distance of the city and its social life. From the car, scenes of city life appear as caricatures, scenes that repeat in the exhibitions she visits with her parents and the books she finds on the living room shelf. Moving through the city in her parents' car differs drastically from walking. The city becomes a screen to watch and to connect to what has been seen or read in the books or heard in the stories, stories that have no smell, no sound, and no taste. The sensory experience of car rides is at most connected to the overarching smell of traffic. Once again the body is cut off from the experience in space.

But again, exceptions also cut through the class as well as the age comparison; they appear in both cities, and some are very specific to the respective urban context. One example comes from Nairobi from the 1970s. When Falak was born, his family was not well off. They used to live in Ngara in the Starehe Constituency, which he describes as 'one of the lowest, uh, kind of a place to be, in the way people look at it, in the Asian community kind of way. But I, I don't feel ashamed of it. It's taught us a lot' (Falak, 49 yrs, *1971, male, Ngara & Parklands, N.). Later, when he was eight, his parent's jobs and business improved, and the family moved to a middle-class residential area in Parklands. Interestingly, this did not change much about his spatial independence; on the contrary, he must be seen as the speaker with the largest independent spatial mobility in both cities.

> We used to walk down into the alleys, small streets in Nairobi, you know, quite a bit of walking […]. [W]alk into the farming areas, you know, and go down the stream – the Nairobi River – sit back and, you know, just watch the, the, you know, the water flow by […]. Nairobi River was quite clean, uh, quite healthy. […] So, people would go and have a swim in it and all. We did all that. We used to make little paper boats. And put them into the river, you know, watch them float down, flow into the river and all that. […] We used to do, you know, high long-distance bicycling or like hikes carrying the bikes. […] Spring Valley, Thika Road, just drive down straight for miles and come back home in the evening, you know. […] Mum would have made a lot of fries for us, you know, for my mates. […] [W]e'd just go sightseeing. We'd stop/And at that time, in Spring Valley, I remember we used to […] just sit back and watch the horses and, and, you know, spend our time. […]. We used to go to [the] CBD [central business district]. We used to take […] the local bus, Kenya Bus Service; it was a yellow bus; I still remember that. […] uh, we'd go to the modern buildings and get into the lifts and run up and down with the lifts, yeah. […] and look at the view and say 'wow!'. And look down and look at the little, tiny, you know, people from [that] height and come back down again and go back up again and come down. That's all. Come back home, venture into the stores and see the new matchbox cars, you know and, and get fascinated with the toys. Well, we couldn't buy them at that time. […] So that's, that's the kind of thing we used to do. (ibid.)

Falak's spatial mobility is largely unrestricted. It exceeds Martha Muchow's zoning model, which stands as the ideal-typical model complementary to the islands. Falak finds himself in all possible kinds of topologies. He traverses several spatial figures. His movements synthesise all of them. Together they create a thick, multilayered, and multisensory experience of the city. The family's past and their experience of being poor seem to come with spatial mobility that does not change with their improvement in socio-economic status. Additionally, his Punjabi[15] culture plays into the consistency of his spatial freedom.

> We [Punjabi's] live for now. We don't do any kind of savings. We just say okay, whatever the Lord provides us, we take it from there and move on with our lives. (ibid.)

This life mantra might explain why his independent spatial mobility has not changed, even though his family experienced a shift in economic mobility. Investive status work seems to be eliminated by this mantra – what counts is the here and now. Status work always comes with a certain need or urge to secure one's status by, for example, investing in the future. As such, status work does not just materialise in the gated community but also in the subjective spatial order of (in)security and (un)safety, which is also connected to children's spatial mobility.

Whereas in Falak's case ethnic and religious belonging cuts through the economic comparison, in Ben's case his map (Figure 67) indicates another type of belonging that does the same: that of a sprayer.

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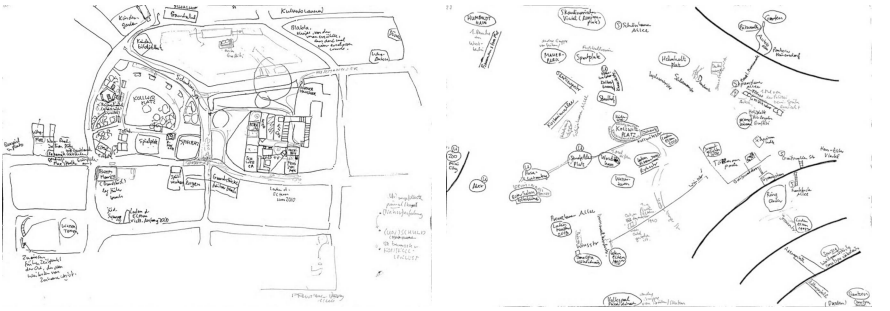
15 In this context, Falak tells me that 'the majority of people in Kenya, the Asian community, [are] all Guajaratis. It's, it's ninety percent them. Or probably you can say ninety-nine per cent of them. The Punjabis are only one per cent. So the lifestyle we have, the lifestyle they have, is quite, is quite different" (Falak, 49 yrs, *1971, male, Ngara & Parklands, N.).

> And then, of course, when we started spraying, you had to get spray cans from somewhere. There were no spray can shops in East Berlin. […] And that just really expanded the urban space. […] We went everywhere trains went. And we looked somewhere along the S-Bahn lines to see where there were still vacancies. Or where something was so bad that you could paint over it. […] And somehow, we unlocked the city like that […] And I did that on my own quite early on (Ben, 35 yrs, *1984, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.).

*Figure 67: Map by Ben, 35 yrs, *1984, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.*



Source: Map by speaker Ben.

As Ben puts it, the practice of spraying played a major role in how, to him, the 'city [was] unlocked'. This freedom was by no means just given to him, but for a long time it remained unnoticed, as Ben, like many other kids, was a so-called latchkey child (*Schlüsselkind*) – a child with parents who worked beyond the opening hours of daycare institutions and who had a key to the house to go home independently after school.

7.3.1.2 Voids and Dark Matter

After this excursion into the economic as well as culture-specific differences connected to children's spatial mobilities, the following part will centre the middle-class childhoods again and elaborate on the quality of spatial relations within the figuration of the mobility pattern of insularisation. As highlighted earlier, the proliferation of islands is connected to a shift in mobility that is characterised by escorted rides in motorised vehicles, where children move across the city on trajectorial lines. But now what happens when children move on these trajectorial lines instead of walking through the city? Paul Virilio puts this very vividly:

> The faster we go, the more we look ahead in anticipation and lose our lateral vision. Screens are like windshields in a car: with increased speed, we lose the sense of lateralization, which is an infirmity in our being in the world, its richness, its relief, its depth of field. […] Screens have become blind. (Virilio 2012: 36–37)

This blindness created by the social topologies of trajectorial space is what I refer to as the social topology of dark matter. Children know that the areas beyond their trajectories

exist, but they have no contact, no actual real evidence of it. This relates to the quality of dark matter in outer space, which we know is there, but since it plays these tricks with light, we cannot see it. As such, its spatial quality fosters the spatial figuration of voids in the city.

> [Do you know Nairobi well?] Not so much. But I went out of the country. I went to Dubai once, and also I went to Malaysia and I also went to Uganda for holidays. (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.)

The mobility of middle-class children is becoming less characterised by their neighbourhood than by either pedagogically guided or commercial and consumer-oriented fragments of the city, including other such fragments of other cities connected to tourism. Exceptions are neighbourhoods characterised by public spaces that are used extensively by a relatively homogeneous group of local people with children and social cohesion, such as the Böhmischer Platz (Neukölln), the traffic-calmed space in Neo's childhood narration, or Stephan's football pitch near the school in Prenzlauer Berg. When we look at the maps in the age comparison, we note that while in some instances (like Rehema's map earlier in Figure 65), the empty areas increase, in others, they shrink, and in some cases, they even seem to disappear as visible in the maps of Nuhu (Figure 68) and Lisa (Figure 69).

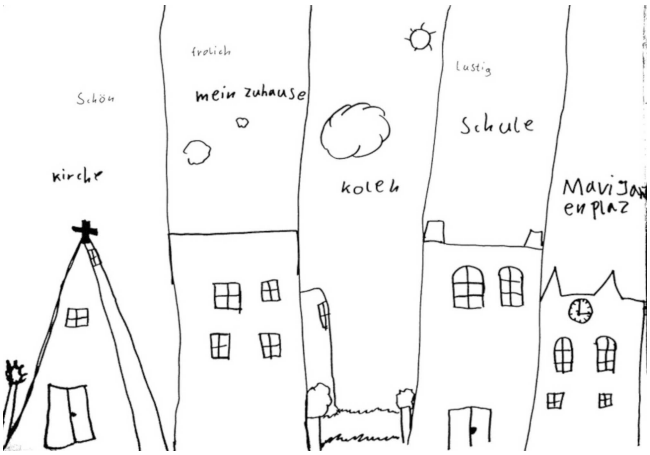
*Figure 68: Map by Nuhu, 9 yrs,*2010, male, Maziwa, N.*

Source: Map by speaker Nuhu.

This disappearance does not indicate that children regain access to a zone where they can move independently. Instead, the splintered, the fragmented, and the sequenced become the new normal. The islands are the dominant spatial figures that children have access to, while the rest of the city, and with it public space, is swallowed and appears as a

void. These voids are both immaterial, as in the children's mental maps, and material, in the sense that public spaces quite literally disappear and get replaced by private spaces.

*Figure 69: Map by Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, Kreuzberg, B.*



Source: Map of speaker Lisa.

At this point I want to stress the need to include the void in the typology of spatial figures of territory, place, network, and fluid space. The void allows me to describe places that disappear over time in both imagined and materialised spatial realities – spatial processes that cannot simply be grasped by the spatial figure of the territory – as every territory must always be actively constituting its borders by differentiation. Voids, on the contrary, describe the other side of it, and therefore the loss and emptiness that might be caused by territorialisation. The void is a spatial figure in itself. Voids are all the unknown spaces that lie between the islands. As such, they can be fully unknown without being tangible, or they can have the agency of 'dark matter' – something that cannot clearly be seen or reached but is known to be out there. Matter that is unknown and inaccessible beyond the windscreen of the car or bus, which cuts across the city space in trajectorial movements. As is known from research and explorations to outer space, the void itself does not lead us to a non-space. Rather it leads us to something not visible and often not even tangible. This dark matter is there because it has a force or gravity that is indirectly visible, because we assume that it holds things together that would otherwise fall apart (for example, rotating galaxies). I would like to use dark matter metaphorically as the social topology to refer to everything that is swallowed up by the straight lines that create the sections in Lisa's map (Figure 69), or by the voids between the islands in Nuhu's (Figure 68) and Rehema's (Figure 65) maps. If we look at the figuration of space guided by spatial figures, we must no longer only look at what is visible and what we can perceive, as there is more that matters and the void is one more figure that can help us to grasp it. These spatial figurations are not visible but indirectly tangible, such as the changes of the vegetation in the neighbourhood caused by the pollution of the dumpsite elsewhere or spaces

that are indirectly visible to us from cartographical maps, movies, and stories. They have gravity in the sense that our imaginations are drawn to them. Just as they hold together the galaxies that rotate in the universe, they also affect children's spatial relation. This is because the voids are also the source of fearful spatial imagination.

Topologies of Fear and Risk The void is a spatial figure that holds the ambiguity of space that is there but not, and therefore open to all kinds of imagination. Although this space for imagination could spark utopian urban visions (e.g. brownfields [*Brachen*]), it also includes scenarios in which fear is projected onto it. On the scale of the city, childhood narrations are highly contextualised by discourses of fear and risk. The following analysis shows that fear and risk have always shaped city life. While some threats, such as dense traffic, appear mostly in the narrations of the younger speakers, others, such as the threat of child abuse and kidnapping, have always been there. It is striking that the young speakers talk much less about the real threats they have experienced. On the contrary, the anticipation of threats is much more present. This is different for the older speakers. Some, even though very few of them, have been caught up in dangerous situations. From the analysis of the subjugated body we know that it is especially the islands in which children are subjected to all kinds of threats and danger, yet it is the space beyond these islands that children and their parents fear most. Unsurprisingly, parents appear prominently as co-constitutive for children's perceptions of threats. In the narrations, the fear of mothers is much more present than that of fathers. Even though this gendered aspect is visible in both cities, I would refrain from jumping to conclusions here. Overall, women do not worry more about their children and are not generally more anxious than men. According to the findings, the family's care-work is often the mother's responsibility. This means that even if there are domestic workers who support care-work, mothers are responsible for coordinating, distributing, and at times mediating it and additionally tend to spend the most time with the children in the early years. If we keep that in mind, it does not come as a surprise that it is mothers whose worries children remember, as mothers are predominantly responsible and present. Additionally, the fears that mothers express towards their children are often social threats that statistically happen much more often to women than to men.

In the narrations of both cities, the street is the social topology most connected to the discourse on fear and risk. In Nairobi this became very present in the 1990s, when streets in the central business district and politicians' residencies appeared particularly dangerous. Mildred finds reasons for this shift in the 1990s in the 'dictatorship from Moi' and the 'one-party system', which caused 'the fighting for multi-partyism' that sparked 'random riots in Nairobi' (Mildred, 39 yrs, *1997, female, Karen, N.). On 7 July 1990, when a nationwide riot (today remembered as Saba Saba Day) broke out, Mildred, her mother, and her aunt 'got caught in the middle of it' on their way 'to town'. The aftermath of these nationwide protests took so long that

> for about a week or two I couldn't go to school because there was literally no transport [and] nothing was safe, 'cause you're finding most of the affluent politicians were living in this area in Karen. So, nothing was safe. No one was safe. You couldn't even speak. Even a gathering like this. Everybody was on high alert. (ibid.)

Many Nairobian speakers mark a shift in the 1990s, when, under the 'dictatorship' of Daniel arap Moi (the second Kenyan president from 1978 to 2002), the economy also stagnated and, according to Stella, 'Nairobi got the nickname […] *Nairoberry*' (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.). In that context, she remembers:

> When you were walking downtown, you couldn't walk with, uh, any expensive earrings, jewellery, even in your cars. A few times, we were robbed of our cars. And like, people come up to you and snatch stuff off […] from the window or when you're walking grab your handbag [… or] a lady would come with her kids, and she'd carry shit in her hand, and she'd walk up to you and say, 'Give me money or I'll apply this on you!' (ibid.)

Also, Rebecca remembers that

> it used to be very secure until I think […], I'm trying to remember when there was/'97 or '92, I think there was a, a political shift. That's when […] security started becoming something different, unlike in the late '80s when you would just walk to the neighbour's house and play […]. So I think in 1992 is now when we would not even go out to the church without an older person going with us." (Rebecca, 38 yrs, *1982, female, Lavington, N.)

This shift in security standards as part of an active memory of the speakers during the 1990s is context-specific in Nairobi. In the context of political unrest in Berlin, Raphael remembers 1 May in Berlin:

> The only time I know that I was forbidden to go out was first of May, or 30 April 2002, 2001. And that really sounds like a miracle today. The whole of Kollwitzstraße was on fire. You can't imagine that nowadays. There was still a squat in Kollwitzstraße, and then there was a massive battle [….], and I wanted – for whatever reason – I wanted to go somewhere. And they said: 'No, you're not going out today.' (Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.)

Besides occasional political protest that renders streets potentially dangerous, streets are also perceived as threatening topologies when they are connected to drug consumption and sex-work. Fabian remembers that

> on Lützowstraße and Kurfürstenstraße and on all the neighbouring streets [there was a] street prostitution hotspot […] I still remember it. […] So there were always condoms and syringes in the playground and things like that. Then, one day, some kid touched a syringe and things like that. And then you were afraid that you'd somehow get infected with something or so. (Fabian, 38 yrs, *1982, male, Tiergarten, B.).

In the younger speakers' examples, streets appear as risky topologies, most generally because of the traffic. Steve, for example, told me:

> Those motorbikes over there […], they go really fast, and I don't think that's l-legal. There's like a specific limit [… but] they don't think about it, they just go. Well, some-

> times motorbikes can also not give you way. Like, they'll, you're here, you're walking, and then it will come, but then it takes a while for it, for the person who's riding to turn, so you get like sort of scared, and that's quite annoying. Yeah. (Steve, 11 yrs, *2008, male, Kawangware, N.)

Such examples appear multiple times in the narrations. As such, traffic is often perceived as destructive and evil, not only cutting through one's city but also capable of cutting through one's life, as Fergusson remembers:

> As my mom was going to get off this matatu, you know, we get out of this side, this other matatu came swooshing past like whoosh. […] He almost hit her, and that was a very traumatic moment in my life. (Fergusson, 24 yrs, *1995, male, Langata, N.)

Besides the traffic, it is also the so-called stranger-danger that is feared on the streets. This also connects to public discourses about Kreuzberg's security issues, concentrating on the area around the subway station Kottbusser Tor, not far from Lisa's home.

> I don't feel particularly comfortable without company either […]. I'm sometimes scared because there are strange people walking around […] So once, I think someone approached me, but then I ran away very quickly. (Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, Kreuzberg, B.)

Lisa's older sister Lana also feels unsafe on the streets. When I asked her what scares her there, she replied,

> so that you somehow do something wrong and then someone is angry with you. Or that you are the way you are and the other person doesn't accept you. Or that you are somehow […] judged because of your actions. (Lana, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Kreuzberg, B.)

According to Sya, some of these 'strangers' could also be thieves; this is why 'whenever [her] mom is on the phone on the street, [she] keep[s] telling [her]: "Not on the street! Because it's dangerous"'. Sya is very fearful of being robbed on the streets, so she carries her 'bag cross-body […] I like carrying it on my one shoulder [but] I do cross-body for safety' (Sya, 12 yrs, *2007, female, Karen, N.).

Often streets are also perceived as more dangerous in connection with voids. This is the case in extremely gated neighbourhoods, where people mostly leave their house by car and where the gates are so high and the streets are so empty that social cohesion on the street itself is very poor. This void characteristic is also connected to nighttime.

> In the evening, when there aren't many people there, I sometimes get scared. But during the day you can also see that there are a lot of people there. That means that if something happens to me, there are a lot of people there. And, yes, I'm not actually afraid during the day. (Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.)

The darkness also makes the atmosphere 'creepy sometimes, because there are so many strange people on the street. And personally, I'm quite a scaredy-cat (smiles). Especially at a certain underground station or generally when it's dark. Or when I'm travelling alone; in other words, when it's dark during the day. It's good to be in a group or with a friend or with your parents. You just have people around you that you know and trust.' (Lana 13 yrs, *2006, female, Kreuzberg, B.) In Nairobi, one additional specific type of stranger is feared. When I asked ten-year-old Tatiana if there are 'other places in the neighbourhood that [she can] go to alone?', she replied 'No, my mom is afraid I can get stolen' (Tatiana, 10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.). Tatiana is not the only one who brings up this topic. When I reassure myself and ask Sya, 12 years old, 'and you said you can't go out?', she replies, 'No. It's not safe. You can get kidnapped. […] I was never allowed to walk alone.' (Sya, 12 yrs, *2007, female, Karen, N.)

While the street appeared as the most prominent, the social topologies of slums and forests were only occasionally mentioned in the material concerning threats.

> [W]e did go exploring over to, it was called, *Kibera Line Saba*. So, we would climb over the wall. That's a bit later, from probably at around 12 to 13 [years] […] at that time […], we didn't think that there's any difference between, between me and this person from *Kibera*.[…] So, I met children from there, played with them […] and then we got, we got familiar with these kids, and we're thinking 'Hey, we're not different, […] we're the same.' […] So, what happened is, um, at some point some, um, we went back and climbed over the wall, and some of, uh, the kids followed us, and they pelted us with stones, and we were wondering […] 'Why are you throwing stones at us?' […] So, like the stone, the stone hit my upstairs bedroom window and broke it. […] I remember my big sister was like, […] 'Why did you go down there? What were you doing? What were you thinking?' And as she's […] telling me, […] a stone comes over and hits me square on the head, and it was a big stone. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

After sharing this story with me, Kili continued, thinking aloud, admitting that children can sometimes be naughty. But to him, what he had experienced 'seemed different – […] it wasn't being bullied. It seemed like it was a vendetta that there was something. So, at that point, that's when it hit me: "Hey, I think we're different. These guys don't […] think like I do." So I/From that point, um, we never, I never, like we never went over to go and interact with the children from that side.' (ibid.) Kili described how this childhood event had a biographical effect on him, that not only a stone but a realisation 'hit' him about the otherness of people from 'that site' – a space-related experience that still shapes him and his feeling of (in)security in the city today. While some of the speakers had traumatic experiences, for many others, stories like Kili's serve as reference points.

Forests are another social topology of fear and risk. The threat experienced in or ascribed to such topologies comes from various actors. In this context, Caroline says, 'Ngong Forest is just there [outside the house]. […] And a lot of the land was not even occupied yet. So you'd find animals would come up to/Yeah I think even can come up to these areas, yeah. […] I remember times when we'd be in the house, and you hear the hyena just passing outside. […] Or you see prints of, uh, maybe a leopard […]. Yeah, that's the other reason why you couldn't be out at night.' (Caroline, 62 yrs, *1957, female,

Kileleshwa & Karen, N.) Another fear that is related to places like forests in the city is the fear of being raped.

> [T]here was actually a family of friends who lived in the street [...] they had a daughter who was my age. She was actually raped there [in the little forest] when she wanted to go swimming at Krumme Lanke in the summer. Several times. And she was actually severely traumatised. My mum told me all about it years later. She actually [was] left dying on the way there and will never have children in her life. [...] So she was really ruined. [...] And that in super quiet Zehlendorf, right? So what used to be considered a neighbourhood with/People have money there, nothing happens there. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

Anne's story makes it clear why it is so hard to resist the constant production of children at risk; as Anne says, experiences as such have effects on children's lives that can never be reversed, because they accompany and restrict them throughout their lives and sometimes even 'really destroy' (ibid.) them. What Anne's story also clarifies is that these things should no longer be attributed to stigmatised and often disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city. They can happen anywhere, regardless of a neighbourhood's status.

If we compare the number of personal experiences of threats that the speakers shared with me contextualised by the social topologies of home and educational institutions and also consider current studies about child abuse in Germany, which indicate that it is actually on these islands that children most often fall victim to, for example, abuse (see The Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues),[16] then it is striking that these islands are seen as the spaces where children are safe, whereas the public space outside is perceived as highly dangerous. Given all the highly transgressive experiences that children have had on these islands, it would be perfectly legitimate for children to say, for example, that it is too dangerous to go to school.

Risk discourses are discursive matter that somewhat grants the urban space itself an agency – one that holds the possibility for all kinds of dreadful imaginary and, as such, relates to the omnipresence of the void topology in the younger speakers' narrations, in which the city sometimes appears so unsafe that it could swallow you up at any moment, such as in the case of a kidnapping scenario. The examples introduced here highlight that older speakers tend to have more direct or indirect experience of threats in public spaces. Over time, however, the discourse of risk becomes more central to younger speakers, but also more speculative. Even though I do not want to doubt that there is real danger connected to the social topology of dark matter, the anticipation of danger is so high that fear seems to become an omnipresent atmosphere regardless of any direct danger. In this context, it is important to acknowledge the figuration of fear itself that becomes visible in the generational comparison. Not getting into danger and preventing risk must therefore also be seen as a globally connecting pattern of middle classness as a form of status work.

16 Available at https://beauftragte-missbrauch.de/themen/definition/wo-findet-missbrauch-statt [Accessed 23 February 2024, 16:00]

From a critical perspective that takes children's right to the city into account, it is important to highlight the practice of a*void*ance in that form of status investment: The more middle-class people avoid being in in public spaces, the more the dark matter can grow in cities, which then again serves as projection surfaces for fearful spatial imaginaries. The a*void*ance itself then leads to a loss of control through a loss of connection. At the same time, these voids create a weak spot that a whole industry of risk and fear addresses by selling insurance, security services, geo tracking apps, and CCTV, as well as fortification hard- and software. Through this vicious circle, fear manifests and materialises in cities by fostering 'an expansion and normalization of security culture, as urban residents rehearse daily their evaluations of this or that checkpoint, share their annoyances, encounters, fears, and frustrations – [a state in which] [w]hat is produced is a shared social and affective environment in which security is a constant touchstone' (Glück 2017: 43).

7.3.1.3 The Problem with Safe Spaces

The material shows that the problem of (real/perceived) growing insecurity and the lack of public spaces for children in cities is addressed by the creation of safe spaces (e.g. islands). Thanks to the wide biographical lens, I can describe further the quality of these islands and trace which spatial figure they uphold, relate, or connect to. If we look at Nuhu's building blocks connected by thick roads and Lisa's sharp boundaries, which appear as if the city is cut into sequences with clear linear boundaries, rather than an interwoven fabric or texture of human and more-than-human assemblage, then we see practices of differentiation and exclusion. Lines are very prominent in these maps, but unlike in the examples of the 1980s and early 1990s, they indicate much less movement. The outlines which are portrayed in Lisa's and Nuhu's maps are solid. The figure of a network of islands erodes, as the islands seem rather territorial. With the network, the topology of safe spaces disappears; for a space to be safe it must be inclusive – but these places do not include all children. This becomes clearer when we take a closer look at Nuhu's map again (Figure 68), where we see islands such as 'home', 'school', 'grandma's' place, 'Junction' (shopping mall), 'The Hub' (shopping mall), and 'church'. These places are either family related, private institutions or highly commodified consumer-oriented spaces and, as such, constitute themselves by practices of differentiation and social exclusion, because not everyone can enter the same church, and not everyone can pay for private schooling or can afford something in shopping malls. Most of these spaces work either with highly institutionalised safety and security regulations (especially in the Nairobian context) or with otherwise coded classed aspects of belonging: material objects, such as clothes. What becomes clear is that these islands are highly exclusive in terms of class-related accessibility (for example, entrance fees).

The class comparison shows that economic status also raises the degree of temporal structuring during the week. The third- and fourth-spectrum children are much more likely to perform and participate in a programme of extracurricular activities that repeat every week. In Nairobi, these extracurricular activities are often part of the offers of private schools, where children can 'choose a club, like horse riding or first aid or other stuff' (Lale, 13 yrs, *2006, female, Maziwa, N.). Lale's example points to the context-specific difference in how these islands are related in the two cities. Whereas in Berlin, we can

describe the islands in their sum as an archipelago – a network of territories distributed over the city; in Nairobi they are more and more concentric. The private schools in Nairobi cover most extracurricular activities within their facilities, but in Berlin these islands are spread all over the city. Therefore, the island figuration in Nairobi is more and more transformed by the simultaneously growing materialising concept of gated communities or private cities. Gated communities increase their inside worlds, offering facilities and services, such as supermarkets and hair salons. Private schools do the same. As such, the islands in themselves grow bigger and function like private neighbourhoods in which children again regain a certain degree of independent spatial mobility, not within the city but within a gated homogenous social group. As these places reproduce the uneven landscapes of social life in cities and are additionally strongly fortified, they are based on differentiation – of private and public – and must be understood by the spatial figure of the territory.

The findings show that middle-class childhoods are strongly affected by discourses of risk. Throughout the generational comparison, childhoods in general, but urban middle- and upper-class childhood in particular, appear to be a period of spatial crisis. This crisis is answered with the proliferation of safe spaces as well as security technologies. Both of them often instrumentalise and commodify the globally trending discourses of child-friendly spaces. The findings highlight to what degree this discourse is already being appropriated by neoliberal city planning and integrated into the marketing strategies of consumption-centred spaces, such as shopping malls. Most of the safety measures are motivated by dangers and benefit individual physical health, rather than being part of a radically transformative approach guided by visions of intergenerational spatial justice. My research strengthens this criticism, because building more child-friendly places as safe spaces also a*void*s necessary conflicts over space. Furthermore, it (re)produces the figure of the child at risk and confirms the need for securitisation and the limitation of children's urban mobilities, thus reinforcing the child-adult binary.

Currently debates and discussions about child-free spaces started to intensify. To me, this highlights the condition of childhood in the middle- and upper-class milieus where these spaces exist. Encountering these exclusive spaces in postcolonial contexts furthermore raises connections to the history of apartheid with the colonial spatial practices of racial segregation, where now (or again) children are somewhat drawn as the so-called wild other, highlighting the need to rethink intergenerational spatial justice in cities from the ground up.

7.3.2 DichoCity

In the last subchapter of the analysis, I explore how social differences are spatially constituted through 'borders that relate' (Löw/Weidenhaus 2017: 553) and draw out the figuration of these bordering practices in the lives of children. I will introduce the figuration of the social topology of spatial dichotomies, which in the following I refer to as 'dichotopias'.[17] In three subchapters, I will introduce these dichotopias, framed as 'west vs

17 Whereas Martina Löw and Hubert Knoblauch (2020) use the term dichotopias to describe the tension between specific spatial logics that open and close simultaneously, I use the term here to cap-

east', 'urban vs rural', and 'nature vs. technology' – which are the scalar entanglements they rest on. On this basis, I will elaborate the spatial figuration of middle-class childhood and middle-class subjectivity, connected to the social differentiation practices that come with them. Thereby I will show how it is not only islands but also these dichotopias that shape urban middle-class childhoods across locales. Besides highlighting the powerful structure inherent in them, I will also shed light on moments in the narrations in which these structures are irritated, resisted, and subverted.

7.3.2.1 City Spheres: East vs West

> 'The colours were somehow different in socialism, maybe' (Ben, 35 yrs, *1984, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.).

The biographical narratives clearly reflect the historical processes of establishing political and socio-material boundaries. In connection with this, a scale that has received little attention in social science spatial research became visible: the 'city sphere'. Interestingly, city spheres are prominent in the spatial biographies of both cities, and even more surprisingly, the division refers similarly to east and west. This dichotopy of spheres simultaneously reflects the discursive inscription of geopolitical polarisation practices into space, such as the racial zoning and its apartheid structures in colonial Nairobi, but likewise the erection of the Berlin Wall with the spatial division of the city into allied territories in post-war Berlin. The following examples show that both historical processes have left the cities and its inhabitants in some ways divided until today. As the following analysis points out, these borders matter most prominently in the school and the home context for children.

In the context of the school, Raphael, who grew up in Pankow (former east) in the recently reunified city of Berlin, recalled a school trip during which he and his parents realised that the borders had not yet disappeared from the minds of the teachers.

> The most western thing that we saw in the whole of Berlin was the Red Town Hall [*Rotes Rathaus*]. That was as far as we got. And then we were told: 'Yes, that was our Berlin trip.' And my parents said: 'Oh, those damned Ossis. Why can't they just do a little bit?' And then they said: 'Okay, you have to go to school in West Berlin so that your horizons [are] broadened a little bit.' (Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.)

Raphael's quote highlights the critical stance of his parents towards the political system of the GDR. Even after reunification, the system's spatial relations are reproduced by the school, as they mourn. However, Raphael's narration also illustrates the enduring impact of these borders, with The Berlin Wall playing a central role in his narration. It becomes clear how his sense of belonging was constructed throughout his biography when he says:

> Until I got to high school it had no meaning at all. And the moment I crossed the border, and it was reflected that [I] come from the East, it suddenly became important. [...] And,

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ture the various spatial constitutions that have an inherent polarity which scales and reciprocally produces space and spatial action into subcomplex counterspace.

> therefore, the border had a great meaning. But now, not necessarily THE [emphasis] border. It was rather this form of border, which could be felt in school when the West children said: 'You are from the East.' (ibid.)

Like Raphael, Martha, who was born in 1991 and grew up in Donholm in Nairobi Eastlands, experienced the meaning of belonging to that side of the city sphere in her transition to a new school.

> [I was] [g]rowing up in Eastlands […] So, later, I come to boarding school and [met] other kids who come from other areas. I see noodles for the first time, and I call them spaghetti, and everyone just laughs at me. So, I'm told it's called noodles. And then, um, I got to learn slang. So, slang is a mixture of English and Kiswahili. It's a bit more sophisticated, and it shows […] you are very urban, and you come from [the] above-average class of citizens who live in Westlands. You've gone to a private school. You live around Kilimani or, uh, Muthaiga […] and, uh, Hurlingham. So, yeah, high school was a bit difficult because it meant adapting to this new kind of life. This new kind of language. (Martha, 28 yrs, *1991, female, Umoja I, N.)

These two excerpts illustrate how east and west are conceptualised through the relational boundaries of dichotopias. The negotiation of east and west appears in these narratives as emotional topologies of (un)b*elonging*, of experiencing being subjected to otherness. This otherness is highly classed and constitutes itself via language and material cultures, such as status objects. The following example from Amina elaborates on this class aspect and also connects it to school.

> I was born in Njiru. Njiru is in Eastlands – the Eastlands part of Nairobi. I went to [primary school in] Ruai. […] I went to Hospital Hill in high school. That's in Westlands, and that's when I came to terms with, uh, the suburb part of Nairobi where rich people stay (laughs). (Amina, 21 yrs, *1998, female, Ruai, N.)

In most passages that touch on the dichotopias of east and west, the speakers from the (former) east feel disadvantaged against the west. The wealth and privilege connected to the west strongly reverberates in the narrations. Some of the speakers have even directed their future anticipations as children towards the wish to be part of that 'western other'.

> I remember […] the road we used to take to school. […] It's called Peponi Road. […] Um, there were very wealthy people. You know, Westlands is a very wealthy area. […] I was always curious who lives in these homes? You know, why not me, right? […] And I keep driving there, and I'm like, I'm still thinking yes, I'm yet to make it. (Ruby, female, 39 yrs, *1980, female, Kabete, Kiambu County[18])

The political dismantling of these borders with the fall of the Berlin Wall and Kenyan independence did not lead to a dissolution of the borders that (re)produce the spheres. Their boundaries are still unfolding and hold a strong meaning for the practices of

18 Kiambu County borders Nairobi in the north-west.

(un)be*longing*, also determining people's accessibility to the city. This also quite literally touches on infrastructures that remain within these respective dichotopias even today. Raphael, for example, describes how it took him '45 minutes by public transport […] and nine minutes by bike […]' to get to his new 'west school' in 'Reinickendorf'. In this context, he draws attention to 'an urban space problem that is still no concern for urban planners today: […] the direct connection between East and West Berlin [which] still does not […] work' (Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.). As such, these borders have both hauntological power – as walls in people's minds – and quite material borders, such as the dichotopic public transport system that remains in these divided orders.

Paradoxically, it is the education system – i.e., the social topology that is arguably best placed to ensure the reunification of the spheres through education – that appears to be the most haunted by the ghosts of this past. At the same time, this is not surprising, as schools were probably the most strongly contained (*eingehegt*) by the systems of the respective spheres.

> Tigoni Primary [School in Westlands, Nairobi] at that time, they were all whites. So, when he [her father] tried getting [us] in – you know, […] my dad coming from Europe, he'd already broken that barrier of white, black […] so when he came back, he didn't see why his kids cannot go to an all-white school – […] and he [director] says, 'No, we can't have African children'. (Caroline, 62 yrs, *1957, female, Karen, N.)

The example of Caroline, born in 1957, tells us why these borders and boundaries still matter after Kenyan independence from the British and still today and why they are so deeply intwined with other categories of social inequality. It is, moreover, an example of how trajectorial spaces, such as borders, cut not only through terrain in the sense of a here and now. In addition, they inscribe themselves deeply into historical process and might never – in the most literal sense – stop mattering in people's lives. This is because they have been, as Caroline described, denied access to education and, for example, affected by racist colonialism directly, but also because they have created a 'we' and a 'the others' and forged many people into coalition, creating a sense of (un)belonging that extends into the future.

In addition to the social topology of school, the home also received attention in the context of the dichotopias of east and west. Falak, who was born in 1971 and grew up in both spheres during his childhood, describes moving from Ngara (Eastlands) to Parklands (Westlands) as follows:

> It's like how you can say? You see Sylvester Stallone and you see the Rocky movie, him moving from now from, from the rags to the riches, it's similar to this way. […] So, this is what happened with us. So, when we went into that kind of society, we needed to sort of adjust ourselves. (Falak, 49 yrs, *1971, male, Ngara & Parklands, N.).

This example shows that the classed dichotopias based on the scale of the city spheres are, at times, much more important than even ethnic or religious belonging. Even though Parklands has the highest Indian population, the fact that Falak came from 'the rags' on the 'other side' made it hard for him and his family to be accepted by Parkland's commu-

nity, which, as he remembers, 'looked down at you living in *Ngara*' (ibid.). In Rosi's narration, this is even taken further, when the social differences connected with the spheres are powerful even within family relations in which the culture connected to one's own sphere is seen as the norm.

> My grandmother from Hamburg used to visit us every year, yes. However, she was just a, yes, a little *Westomi* (laughs). [...] She was just never a grandmother like that, like the one of my husband, for example, who somehow stood there in the Spreewald and somehow made yeast dumplings for the children or something like that. No, my grandmother was just a chic grandmother who had different underwear on weekends and holidays than during the week, and somehow, a little bit, yes, she came with her west side, and then you smelled it. Still nice and all. But a different kind of distance, I would say. So, not this normal grandma, yes. (Rosi, 58 yrs, *1962, female, Pankow, Berlin)

With regard to Rosi's passage, it becomes clear that she can refer to collective discursive figures such as *Westomi* in telling her story to me, who also grew up in East Germany. What is also visible is that Rosi speaks from a position(ality) that associates her with the east in a positive way. This is the place where 'normal' grandmothers, who are humble (with their clothing preferences), 'make yeast dumplings', and provide emotional connection, are from. What I mean is that the sheer fact that I – as a researcher who was born in 1987 and who has little memory of the divided Germany – can still be addressed with these discursive figures during the interview speaks for the extent to which these dichotopias are still anchored and legitimized in our thinking and speaking today.

From City Spheres to Global Hemispheres If we examine the passages that thematise city spheres, we see that the west dominates in the narrations of both cities. While the speakers from the former east speak about the east and the west, the west only speaks about itself.[19] It seems hard to find a universal explanation for this asymmetry, especially because in Berlin, most speakers are growing up or grew up in the (former) eastern sphere. But it is visible that many speakers aspire to a good life, and for some accomplishing these aspirations is often experienced or imagined in the west. In these examples, the scale of the city sphere becomes highly entwined with the global hemispheres. This means that most of the speakers' global orientation or attraction is directed to only one 'side' of the planet. This attraction can also be noted in Anne's narration and her childhood memory of growing up in the American sector:

> That's an extreme childhood memory of mine. A super positive one. [...] And not far from us [...] were the barracks. [...] And this image of the American soldiers with their families shaped me extremely [...]. So Zehlendorf was made up of 80 per cent Americans. [...] How am I supposed to explain that? That sounds totally silly. I don't even dare to say it. But I developed a [...] how should I put it? America mania. That's when I started listening to the music. Then I started watching the films. I had an English ad-

19 In Berlin this finding must be seen as contextualised by the much smaller sampling, in which there is only one speaker who spent her childhood in the former West Berlin.

> vanced course; I was extremely good at English. […] So I really thought: 'Wow, if I can emigrate to America one day'. (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

It is interesting that this image of American family life shaped Anne's future aspirations as a child, even though she grew up in a very leftist capitalist-critical household that perhaps portrays the opposite of the American middle-class family dream.

> Well, my parents are both academics. […] They brought us up with an artistic, left-wing attitude, and I grew up with that, too. We didn't have any furniture. So we spent all our money on travelling. My parents travelled a lot with me. We travelled to Morocco and Yugoslavia by car and so on. So, we really poured money into it. But at home, we had […] boxes of oranges that my father just put there. And on top of them some cushions, sheets, I don't know. And that was just our sofa. There was no television either. I wasn't allowed to watch TV during the day until I was 16. Instead, we had other things to do. So, then you had to read. Or my father was really into political discussions. (ibid.)

Against all attraction from the West, which seems to supersede even the primal parental education, it is also important to note here that Anne's narration of her childhood family is very ambivalent and filled with memories about the importance of her parents' political orientation, which was paired with a lifestyle and a failed parental relationship that, as a child, Anne experienced as extremely overwhelming and stressful. I suggest that it is also important to see this aspect as a possible reason why the opposite model of family life became her ideal. Anne's case already points to a shift in the spatial figuration of dichotopias that can be observed in the age comparison. In this context, I noted that the younger speakers do not place as much emphasis on these city spheres in their narrations – this might be simply because they have not quite left their sphere yet to realise an otherness or be subjected to othering. However, there is also evidence in the material that the younger middle-class generations are shifting their orientation beyond the city scale towards the global. The attraction of the West, which appears in many shapes, such as the American core family (Anne), the British colonial homes of the affluent (Ruby), the global (northern) design company and dream home in Greece (Sya), and the importance of already travelling as a child to 'discover places, in case you want to work abroad' (Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.). These are just a few examples in which the West is the 'global attractor' (Latour 2018) to which aspirations are often directed towards a more global citizenship (also see Mock/Weidenhaus 2022). Further research is necessary here, especially as being from the East connected to socio-economic status is already found to be influencing the global future trajectories of children (Hörschelmann/Schäfer 2007).

7.3.2.2 Urban and Rural

Many speakers from both cities describe growing up in the city by contrasting it with the rural and vice versa. On the scale of home (Subchapter 7.2), I elaborated the historical processes that foster such a dichotopic narration in the case of Nairobi and its history of the 'one family, two households model' that connected and at the same time kept apart the rural and the urban during colonial times. The dichotomy of urban and rural also appears in the Berliner narrations and is contextualised by processes of sub- and reurbanisation

and, more generally, with city escapism. Interestingly, most Berlin middle-class speakers I found, or who were referred to me, grew up in the suburbs. As such, they must be seen as part of another spatial figuration of urban middle classness: suburbanisation, which led to a situation in which 'in the mid-1990s […] there was still talk of "urban exodus, the dissolution or even the disappearance of cities"' (Herfert/Osterhage 2012: 86, cited in and translated from Frank 2014: 157). In contrast, all the young speakers in Berlin are growing up in much more central areas. This could also be seen in the context of the trend that follows, which Susanne Frank frames as 'inner suburbanisation' of educated middle-class milieus (translated from Frank 2014: 158). Inner suburbanisation describes when middle-class families lead a suburban lifestyle in the middle of the city but in some sort of homogenised bubble, often supported by the material and architectural characteristics that make such a life possible, such as traffic-reduced zones and so-called *Kiez* (small neighbourly units) structures, which are available to Neo in Neukölln-Rixdorf – a partly intact village under cultural heritage protection, as well as Stephan in Prenzlauer Berg, known for a middle-class family-centred gentrification. But not only do the rural and urban stand in a dialectic relation in these Kiez structures in Berlin; they also describe the fragmented omnipresence of the rural in Nairobi's urban.

> Um, so I grew up about ten minutes from [the] Westlands area. Um, so what's interesting about Nairobi is it can be very city or very rural, but still Nairobi. You can meet cows and very nice malls at the same time. So, where we were was a bit rural, and my mom was a farmer, and my dad was an accountant. So, we would come from home to school in the city and go back in the evening. (Ruby, 39 yrs, *1980, female, Kabete, N.)

However, we also find clear differentiations between urban and rural, where it becomes clear that growing up in Berlin does not necessarily mean that one grew up in a city.

> Well, I would say I'm not so much shaped by big city life; instead, somehow, nature has always played an important role. I would say it's also a normal part of the city, of course, with, I don't know, shops and so on. But, of course, everything is much closer to nature than if you lived in the city centre. (Paula, 58 yrs, * 1961, female, Köpenick, B.)

Paula, who grew up in Köpenick, a district in the south-east of Berlin, notes that her childhood was strongly characterised by a 'sense of seasons' (ibid.) – a context in which she remembers these 'bushes with these berries that you could pop like that [with which she] spent afternoons' (ibid.). However, when the family 'had a friend in [their] house, a boy who lived with [them] for a few years', Paula recalls that 'he really came from the village […]. And he felt that this was a big discrepancy to what he had experienced', but she 'didn't understand that', because she 'didn't perceive this difference at all' (ibid.).

Sometimes, urban-rural dichotopias create a transition out of and into the city in which questions of (un)be*longing* are rendered important, in which not being from the city centre makes it hard to belong anywhere (limbo):

> You said, literally, that you're driving into the city, although, of course, you're in the city, but it's clear that you're outside. You are aware of that. I would say it's more of

> a demarcation inwards, so to speak, rather than outwards. So, you don't differentiate yourself strongly from the rural area because even in Pankow, you're far too far inside the city to have a connection to the countryside. It's more of a demarcation towards the city centre. […] We would never say we were on the outside, but we travelled into the city. […] And in that respect, let's say when we were 12 or 13, it was already clear that there was this connection between outside Berlin and Berlin. (Raphael, 31 yrs, *1988, male, Pankow, B.)

Interestingly, this example shows that even though Pankow at that time belonged to Berlin and the symbolic border constitutes Raphael as a Berliner, the geological characteristics of the of the place forged in him a sort of Möbius identity – where he belongs to both sides at the same time, but never just represents one.

Upcountry: From 'Hard Life' to Recreation In Nairobi, in contrast to the city, upcountry is connected to cultural aspects, such as specific festivities and annual meetings that are held to maintain the relationship with the extended family and one's rural, ethnic, or 'tribal' (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.) self. Upcountry must be seen as a model historically grown out of a specific milieu of Kenyan workers who were working for the colonial government. Before the colonial administration built houses for the African railway workers, many of them were commuting between urban (place of work) and rural (place of residence). Even today, the urban and rural divide stands for a cultural divide and as such also connects to the ambivalence of colonial conformity and resistance. This is because, historically, those commuting or almost oscillating Kenyan workers also had to negotiate their subjectivities amidst their own 'privilege'[20] of having restricted access to what they were once deprived of at the price of 'cooperating' with the perpetrators. As I elaborated on the scale of home, up until today there is a 'one family, two households system' in Nairobi, which connects the urban with the rural, commonly referred to as 'upcountry' or 'ancestral land'.

> Upcountry is where your grandmother lives, where your grandfather lives. […]; it's where you're from. So, like, I'm Luhya. I'm from Western Kenya. […] It's where your parents originated. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

However, the following example from Kili also shows that the traditions connected with upcountry are still practised by middle-class families, but not without certain modifications.

> So, I grew up in an urban area in Nairobi where basically, um, we don't follow the traditional, we don't follow the traditional practices as much, but certain things still remain, still are constant, still are important. One of them is initiation – being, being circumcised. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

20 'Privilege' is in inverted commas here because the act of colonial exploitation, land grabbing, and racial segregation, to which some of those exploited indigenous groups were given restricted access, is not framed as privileged, as these people were already deprived of their rights. Yet those who worked as civil servants were privileged over the other Kenyans.

Kili vividly recalled an initiation ceremony he witnessed in his upcountry in the Luhya community. It shows that cultural practices of initiation for Luhya are strongly connected with nature and therefore tend to be somewhat harder to practise in urban environments. He describes the rite of passage as an event that starts with being 'completely naked top to bottom' and being 'dipped in the river' so that 'the cold will numb' the body in passage. Another important element is soil, as 'mud is put on their head' with 'a stick at the top and then a piece of meat is kept there'. Once they reach the homestead, Kili says, the boys will 'get circumcised with […] the same knife', so that it would 'bond them' as 'blood brothers' (ibid.). It is hard to imagine the same ritual in Kili's home in Nairobi. Even though all the elements that constitute the rite (for example, river, mud, meat, knife) are available there, they are simply not the elements of the ancestral land. For him, as a Nairobian middle-class child, it is still important to create a sense of belonging to his Luhya culture, but it is also important to be 'modern' and express the danger of 'transmitting diseases' (ibid.) that lie in how the ritual is performed with the same knife. Therefore, his initiation took place at the hospital in Nairobi, where they 'still followed kind of traditional practices but from a modern perspective' (ibid.).

> Every year we meet, and we go to […] the rural area, and the whole extended family meets. […] So, if they're Kamba and they know, oh, we're from the same place they have a relation, we understand each other. […] They're very close and close-knit because I guess it's also with the tribal thing. (Stella, 41 yrs, *1978, female, Kileleshwa, N.)

In opposition to the urban, the rural appears as the melting pot of culture, language, rituals, and traditions. It is where life starts or at least originates from ('ancestral land'/'roots'), where life transitions are performed (initiation/marriage), and finally, for many, life ends and transcendence begins when they are buried in the ancestral soil.

For a long time, children were sent there to 'learn the hard life [because their] parents didn't want [them] to get spoilt' (ibid) in the city. But there lies even more functionality in the upcountry. Not only does life in the rural teach children things they would not learn in the city, but children would also be sent there during the school breaks, a time when parents have to work and need additional support with childcare. In that sense, the extended family meant extended support in reproductive matters.

During the 1980s, it was still common for middle-class children to be included in the harvest work during school breaks. Today, however, the narration of the hard life seems to be losing its centrality, at least in the narrations of the younger middle-class speakers, who associate upcountry more with holidays and recreation. For upper middle-class families, upcountry is increasingly losing its function as a solidarity system that helps people in times of financial, social, and health-related crisis but retains the function of being a retirement home. Today, upper middle-class families increasingly manage their care responsibilities with the help of domestic workers or within the hetero-normative single family model, where the mother stays unemployed on the market and is responsible for the reproductive work. If we look at the age comparison, upcountry is still important, but its role is shifting towards a place for leisure time, city escapism, and recreation. As such, it is becoming similar to the role of the rural in the Berliner context.

Even though in the Berliner context there is no such historically grown rural-urban household model, many children have grandparents in the countryside. And many of them regularly pay them visits. Beyond the grandparents, there are also diverse holiday places that children go to with their families, motivated by the idea of being away from the city. In the Berliner narrations, the rural does not imply hard manual labour but physical and mental regeneration. Unlike Nairobi, this applies not only to the younger speakers but to the entire sampling. This is also because the chance that middle-class children in this age range have grandparents who have agricultural businesses is much higher in Nairobi than in Berlin. There are few references in the Berlin narrations to tradition in connection with the rural, such as work traditions. This is, for example, the case for Neo, who told me that when he goes to his uncle, who lives in the 'mountains', he has 'a few mining tools – picks and such, hammers [and where he has already got] a mica collection – very thin plates that shine really nicely and look a bit like silver' (Neo, 10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.). As children today tend to visit rural areas predominantly for recreation, visions of the rural are forged that are shaped by the experiences of the exceptional. This perhaps leads to a romanticised vision of rural life in which the countryside appears as an 'idyll', which can be seen as an important social topology that also reappears in the future aspirations of children longing for a better place to be(*long*).

> Well. I'd actually quite like to live in the countryside or something, because it's just quieter there and there aren't so many cars. [And how can I imagine it there?] All grass, parties [once] in a while. Drinking coke all night long. Going to some kind of pub and watching the football match there. And fishing. (ibid.)

Besides imagining the rural as predominantly connected to fun and leisure, Lisa also connects it to natural resources and ecologies free of certain chemicals. In her narration about her grandmother's place in Kallinchen, a village '40 kilometres outside Berlin', she says, 'you can make a campfire, which you can't do so well here [in Berlin]', and there is a 'beautiful lake where you can jump in', which is 'just better than in the swimming pool because it's not all full of chlorine' (Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, Kreuzberg, B.). Many young speakers expressed the urge to leave the city and imagine rural places as the better place to be 'because, you know, they are so peaceful, not like Nairobi' (Analia, 13 yrs, *2007, female, Parklands, N.). In the urban-rural comparison, the city sometimes appears like an abyss that devours life-sustaining elements., whereas the rural is imagined as well as experienced in short visits as a life-sustaining idyll.

A peek into interviews that I additionally conducted with children from rural Germany renders the rural much less idyllic. Marlene, a nine-year-old speaker from a small town (3,710 inhabitants) in Thuringia, told me about the environmental threat to the most important place in her life, her family's garden, which she refers to as a 'ranch'.

> 'There's a cycle path, and Elli [dog] found a huge pig's leg there. I thought it was really disgusting and we were eating cake and she arrived under the table with this huge leg […] she had found it on the cycle path. Because lots of people throw their rubbish there too. […] and there's a huge mountain of rubbish here. And they dump it there, and nobody cleans it up, and I think that's really bad […]. There's plastic rubbish and leftover[s]

> from the slaughter and stuff. […] They always do it in the evening when nobody sees it because, er, they don't want to be reported. (Marlene, 9 yrs, *2010, female, small town in Thuringia, Germany)

In summary, the age comparison shows that in Nairobi, the meaning of rural for middle-class children shifted from a place where one who was 'spoilt' by the city was sent to learn the 'hard life'. Today, city life, on the contrary, often appears as 'hard' in the narrations, whereas the meaning of the rural has shifted to a place for leisure and recreation. Strikingly, the children view the cities as being in constant decay. Last, and very importantly, I must note that the romanticisation of the rural and the wish for nature and recreation, which sometimes even causes one to long for a life in a better place, does not appear as middle class-specific. The melancholia about the city's environmental decay can always be found, despite the speaker's position(ality), and even in the rural itself.

7.3.2.3 Nature- and Technoscape

As the previous subchapter showed, urban and rural are often entangled with nature and technology; therefore, it is hard to differentiate them from one another. Yet the dichotopia that rests on the nature versus technoscape goes deeper than the scalar conceptualisation that the rural and urban suggests and indirectly points to the hybridity of nature and culture. What will follow in this subchapter is a deeper engagement with this dichotopia, contextualised by many facets of environmental decay – a loss of nature in the city that is countered with a hyper-real (un)happy end for middle-class children.

> 'Back then, we still had real winters with real snow.' (Anne, 49 yrs, *1970, female, Zehlendorf, B.)

Environmental decay is a topic in the narrations of both cities. Whereas speakers like Rubi, who were born in or before 1980, refer to this decay in contrast to the past, since the 1990s, environmental destruction has been part of the childhood experience in both cities, regardless of socio-economic status.

> So, I grew up in the [19]80s. Nairobi was stunning. It was like [a] green city in the sun, trees everywhere. Um, there are not that many tall buildings […] I wish my city would go back/go back to the Green City in the Sun. We had rain; we had fog because it was so cold. It was beautiful. (Ruby, 39 yrs, *1980, female, Kabete, N.)

Examples such as that Anne's or Ruby's point to a type of collective melancholia in the narrations. Ruby's furthermore relates to the colonial vision of the 'green city in the sun'.As such, this melancholia is highly ambivalent, because it refers to the loss of something that was doomed to destroy itself: colonial forms of dispossession and extraction. The British had not just created the green city in the sun but also inscribed a deep dichotomy between nature and culture within the grounds from which everything else was going to soar up – unequally bound to the modern capitalist world economy. The Kenyan feminist environmental activist Wangari Maathai notes that

> 'the cultural values and systems of indigenous Kenyans were eroded, trivialized and deliberately destroyed in the process of colonization. As a result, many people are less appreciative of the environment because they now perceive it as a commodity to be privatized and exploited' (Maathai 2006 [1985]: 48).

What Wangari Maathai says directly reconnects to Ruby's narration. This is because Ruby shared her melancholia in the context of her strong memory of Peponi Road – a street where the 'wealthy' reside that she used to pass by on the school bus every day – during a time when the materiality of these private homes became the leitmotif of her vision of good life. Even though she notes that 'it was not so much the material wealth' as the 'tranquillity and peace' (Ruby, 39 yrs, *1980, female, Kabete, N.), she still connects to a relation that the British had also left and that connects with the nature-culture divide they had inscribed there: the architectures of racial zoning and social inequality. In Nairobi, those who are wealthy can afford to live near nature in tranquillity and peace, whereas the poor must reside next to the city's dumpsites. Wangari Maathai notes that '[e]ven after colonization, it is unfortunate that cultural values still continue to be suppressed today in the name of modernization, civilization and Christianity', something that causes the loss of 'indigenous biological diversity, knowledge, practices and wisdom' (Maathai 2006 [1985]: 48).

7.3.2.3.1 Ecological Ruins – Romanticising the Past?

In the context of environmental decay, the melancholia about Nairobi River and Nairobi Dam refers to two examples of dying ecological systems that many of the older speakers can relate to, as these were important sites of their childhood topologies. These social topologies no longer appear in the narrations of the younger speakers.

> That time, Nairobi River was, was clean. So, there's a section of […] that was up there in Riara. […] We used to go there we/And then we, we take lobsters from there, like small ones. And then the fish, we take them up. Then we go back home; we put them in our pond. (Chola, 26 yrs, *1993, male, Kibera Ayani, N.)

Nairobi River is part of a water network that has several streams. This network is highly polluted, which is crucial for the local environment, because it connects to the Athi River, which flows all the way into the Indian Ocean.

> In the 60s, um, I discovered this later, uh, uh, a neighbour of mine was showing me photos that actually have, um, boat rides on the, um, Nairobi Dam. I mean, literally from the photos I was shown. […] They actually used to sail on the dam. But, like right now, it's not there. There's something called hyacinth. You've heard of hyacinth? Hyacinth is a plant, uh it, it grows on water. […] I never saw Nairobi Dam as in its all, in all its glory. (Kili, 32 yrs, *1987, male, Ngumo, N.)

Nairobi Dam was commissioned by the colonial administration of the city as an embankment dam in 1953 (reliefweb 2004). Serving as a water reservoir and recreational site in the past, today the dam has become polluted by water hyacinths and dried out over time. Kili's story about the Nairobi Dam shows that the city also consists of the social topology

of ecological ruins. In the past, Nairobi Dam and Nairobi River could be described by the spatial figure of 'places', but over time and through their constant decay and the loss of their biodiversity, their spatial figuration has changed. This is because their place-based spatial figuration pairs more and more with that of 'voids'.

Connected to the pollution of the city are not only natural sites, which decay over time, but also increasing traffic. In this regard, the intergenerational comparison makes it really visible how the children today are already paying for the comfort related to the motorised mobility of the older speakers. Until the 1990s, middle-class children were 'growing up with riding the car' (Rosi, 58 yrs, *1961, female, Pankow, B.) – a place that appears in the narrations as an expanded living room with a constantly changing view. From the third to the fourth spectrum, the memory of the family's car even comes with some sort of euphoria. Especially in Nairobi, the car appears here as a positive status symbol. Many speakers vividly remember and share the type of their family car with me: from a 'small [red] Fiat' (Caroline, 62 yrs, *1957, female, Kileleshwa & Karen, N.) to a 'sky blue' 'Volkswagen Beetle' (Morris, 57 yrs, *1962, male, Embakasi Village, N.), a 'Mercedes Benz' (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.), and 'the most common car[, which] was a Peugeot 504' (Martha, 28 yrs, *1991, female, Umoja I, N.). For the speakers from the 1960s until the 1980s, the car was part of very positive childhood memories, where they were taken 'on road trips' (Caroline, 62 yrs, *1957, female, Kileleshwa & Karen, N.), or 'dropped in the Mercedes Benz [the King of Motor Vehicles] [at] school' (Pele, 62 yrs, *1958, male, Westlands, N.), or spent 'fantastic […] Sundays [where] we'd all go to church […] and all squash in [the small car] […] siblings carrying the other' (Rebecca, 38 yrs, *1982, female, Lavington, N.), or would 'just take the Beetle and […] go into Bellevue [drive-in cinema] […] and just sit on the outside of the car and watch' (Falak, 49 yrs, *1971, male, Near & Parklands, N.).

Since the 1990s, the connotation of cars has changed drastically in both cities. The problem of traffic dominates the narrations. Motorised vehicles are connected to dangerous 'traumatic' events (Fergusson, 24 yrs, *1995, male, Langata, N.) or threatening because of the driving style of the person who drives it (Steve, 11 yrs, *2008, male, Kawangware, N.). Besides the danger that comes from cars moving across the city, air pollution was marked as a central reason that makes it 'bad to be here [in Berlin], because there are just so many [cars]', and 'sometimes I wish I was somewhere else […]' (Lisa, 9 yrs, *2010, female, Kreuzberg, B.), because 'actually it's pretty disgusting in Berlin because of the cars', which is why Neo 'would actually quite like to live in the countryside or something because it's just quieter there and there aren't so many cars' (Neo, 10 yrs, *2010, male, Neukölln, B.). One thing is clear among the young speakers: without cars, there would be 'less pollution' and the 'weather [would be] better' (ibid.). Nonetheless, many of the younger speakers' families have a car.

> For us, the car is also very important, even if it produces a lot of pollutants, but we also travel a lot, and a car is actually quite good for that, but we only really use it for long journeys. (Stephan, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Prenzlauer Berg, B.)

In the methods chapter (5), I pointed out a discourse which claims that aged people often romanticise the past, distorting their childhood memories. Interestingly, I noted when

working with the older speakers' biographical narrations that many of them differentiate between environmental and social aspects of the past. In that regard, there is rather little evidence of the social that is mourned or missed and that they would like to return to. Instead, it is the environmental condition of the world, such as the access to space and resources for recreation, that indeed appears much better in the past to them. That means that it is not so much the social position they had as a child in the society; it is the air they were able to breathe, the waters they swam in, and the tranquillity of less polluted nature that constitute the past as better. And who would doubt that? This finding, here only touched on briefly, is highly meaningful for biographical and oral history research. It highlights the danger of resting on the generalising and additionally age-stigmatising discourse that claims that older people tend to romanticise the past and to overlook important evidence about the devastating environmental as well as social effects of anthropocentrism.

7.3.2.3.2 Towards a Hyper-Real Nature

But what if nature is no longer easily accessible in cities, and city life stands in conflict with the romantic vision of a good childhood? While some move to the suburbs at the price of the trajectorial spaces between their islands growing bigger, others stay and participate in the growing compensation of the nature-scapes in cities. Here childhood itself appears in a romanticised relation to nature and as a site for the hyper-real nature industry, which strongly connects to the visual cultures of Disney World. Jean Baudrillard already connected Disney to the hyper-real in the early 1990s and prophesied an ongoing Disneyfication of the world, when he claimed that '[a]t Disneyworld in Florida, they are building a giant mock-up of Hollywood, with the boulevards, studios, etc. One more spiral in the simulacrum. One day they will rebuild Disneyland at Disneyworld.' (Baudrillard 1996 [1990]: 42) Whereas in the past, theme parks promoted themselves as being for everyone, on 12 June 2015, an article published in the Washington Post claimed that 'theme parks like Disney World left the middle class behind'. The article's author writes that since 1971, 'Disney has raised the gate price for the Magic Kingdom 41 times […], nearly doubling it over the past decade' (Harwell 2015). Neither Berlin nor Nairobi has a Disneyland, but there is an increasing amount of institutionalised play spaces, some of which have Luna Park characteristics. Many of them simulate ecological sites and seem to respond to the growing melancholia about the loss of nature in cities, thus also often presenting themselves as safe spaces for children. The term safe space originated in the queer and feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s. These spaces were places where people could gather and freely express their sexual as well as political orientations and connect with like-minded people – (possibly) victims of stigma and even attack – who were seeking a safe environment. As such, many of these places developed into translocal networks of solidarity. Ever since, the term has been used but exploited in many ways, shifting its spatial topology of single places or plural networks towards rather exclusive territories.[21]

21 Queer *safe spaces* can be perceived as *territories* in which other strictly coded behaviour can exclude queer people themselves, as shown by the magnificent biographical research of Marc Thie-

The discursive figure of safe space is often also connected to playing grounds for children: In Nairobi one such example is Funcity, a sort of amusement park in the eastern suburbs of Nairobi, where Tatiana (10 yrs, *2009, female, Donholm, N.) likes to go on the weekends. In addition to roller coasters, restaurants, swings, race car rides, a trampoline, a 7D cinema and a children's casino, Funcity provides birthday packages and swimming classes. It calls itself the 'ultimate kid's paradise' and has a 'Fun Garden' where one can find 'a dragon swinging boar, a blood-curdling round swing, a merry-go-round, a big kid's swing and a play area. It also has a swimming pool and a baby pool. The bouncing castles and Shark Slide finish off this amazing collection as you sit and eat around the set-up.'[22] Luna Park 'is a utopia for kids that love gaming and rides. The spacious indoor amusement park comes with 3D arcade racing, shooting and strategy games. You also get to ride motorbike simulators and play hoops. There are hoover boards and toddler rides that babies will love.' (ibid.) Besides Funcity, Tatiana also likes to visit malls, because she is 'a fan of shopping'. In Nairobi, children visit malls not only for shopping but also for playing. At 'TRM [Thika Road Mall]', Steve also visits Funscapes East Africa, 'Nairobi's 1st Family Entertainment Centre' (TRM n.d.: para. 1.) where you go whenever you are 'looking for good clean wholesome' fun (ibid.: para. 2.). All these places promote themselves not only as being fun but also in relation to children's development, as they 'enhance the skills of children' with 'specific games and activities [...] designed to teach toddlers better hand-eye coordination; [enable] young children [to] take out their energies in the soft contained play structure which replicates the outdoor play area like climbing, sliding, obstacle crossing in a safe indoor environment' (ibid.: para. 2, 3).

It becomes visible that not only the queer vision of safe space but also the Marxist vision of utopia is appropriated here and thereby turned into a capitalist dystopia when we look at the major elements of the previous promotion: violent virtual games, consumer and shopping culture, extreme sensory stimuli (perhaps compensating for the passive bodies of children on car/bus/subway rides and on school benches), child development propaganda, control and surveillance, and commodification and exclusion (of children who can't pay the entrance fees). Another example comes from the prestigious Village Market shopping mall in Nairobi. It features the 'Family Entertainment and Recreation Centre Under The Sea' (Figure 70).[23]

> Under The Sea is a safe space for toddlers and preschoolers for their play dates, themed parties and school trips. It's a fun, engaging and exciting place to grow your child's fine and gross motor development activities. Under The Sea is the perfect way to develop their colourful imagination and their social and coordination skills. Under The Sea includes Marine Mountain which is the main play area, interactive games, Kids Craft Workshop and Love the Ocean program which is an environmental education program. (Village Market n.d.(a): para. 1)

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len (2006) on the experience with Berlin's LGBTQIA+ scene of gay Iranians who fled the repressive politics of their country.

22 Available at: http://funcity.co.ke/2017/10/30/the-ultimate-kids-paradise/ [Accessed 10 December 2025, 12:34]

23 Available at: https://villagemarket-kenya.com/store/under-the-sea/ [Accessed 10 December 2035, 14:07]

Compared with the safe spaces of queer and feminist communities, Under The Sea only keeps safe those who can afford it. From Friday to Sunday, "[a]ll children pay KES. 1,000[24] for the 2 hours of fun activities' (Snippets of Nairobi n.d.: n.p.). Additional costs are charged for those who want to play 'Arcade Games', which are 'KES. 200 per game' (ibid.). When taking a closer look at the visual publicity work on their Instagram feed, we get an idea of what children are protected from. Hygiene seems to be a top priority here, as one staff member is portrayed disinfecting the slide's handle (Figure 70, right). Unlike safe spaces in queer and feminist communities, Under The Sea does not protect children from being addressed as children. On the contrary, this safe space directly works by constituting children as children and as becoming (for example, developing skills, protection). From that perspective, the safe space promoted here rather forges spatial figures of the territory. As such, they successfully cover the main goal of including affluent children in the topologies of malls' consumer culture by using the constant dwindling of accessible public space for children in cities paired with the growing discourses of fear and risk.

Figure 70: (left) Ball bath, (right) staff member cleaning a slide at the Family Entertainment and Recreation Centre Under The Sea.

Source: Photographs posted on Under The Sea Instagram feed, 2023[25]

A closer look at the visual imaginaries of these safe spaces shows that nature often becomes incorporated. To answer these spaces' aspirations of being sites for 'Family Entertainment and Recreation', they address children with(in) a hyper-real nature. In the biographical narrations, different types of play spaces for children simulate experiences in nature. In these play spaces, nature figurates more and more towards a hyper-real environment. When we look at the age comparison, we note that these places figurate from an artificial nature-scape, such as an open-air water fun park, towards a hyper-real simulacrum of nature-related experiences. This nature simulation must be seen in connection to the fact that a few speakers mentioned barely any contact with nature in their

24 1,000 KES are around 6–6.50 EUR

25 (Left), post from 28 January 2023, available at: https://images.app.goo.gl/HiXFfkzixwVFvF1v9, (right) post from 06/07/2023, available at: https://images.app.goo.gl/7DNxcVnP2W3YApXw6 [Both accessed 5 March 2026, 10:25]

childhood narrations. One of them is Nuhu, born in 2010 in Nairobi. Nuhu, similarly to most young speakers in the sample, is not allowed to leave the estate without the company of an adult. When I asked him if he ever plays outside of the flat in the inner yard of his estate, he responded,

> We play, but not that much 'cause most of the [time] we're busy with homework. And then we have to buy some stuff. (Nuhu, 9 yrs, *2010, male, Maziwa, N.)

To 'buy some stuff', Nuhu's family regularly visits malls. Nuhu does not mention any contact with nature in his weekend routine either.

> I come and eat breakfast. I go shower. If I didn't shower at night, since I'm tired, I shower in the morning, [and] then I change. I come to the sitting room. I, I play some games [and] watch some cartoon[s]. Yeah, that's what I do. Oh, and watch movies; that's what I do. (ibid.)

Indirect relations to nature appear only when he talks about what he and his family do at the malls:

> We go there [Village Market mall] to buy stuff and play games. And then we go there to have, uh, dinner or lunch. There are, like, there are these slides you go. You climb, and then you go down from a very high spot, and then there's a sand pit, then a Lego pit. (ibid.)

The games that Nuhu plays are in the 'VR Gaming' section in Village Market mall. On the mall's website, the VR Gaming site literally advertises with escapism to compensate for or even 'escape' reality through gaming, in which five of six games recreate nature-scapes.

> VR Gaming is the virtual reality arcade designed to take you to a different universe ideal for fantasists and gamers looking to escape reality. VR Gaming is fitted with Xtrematic VR and KAT VR equipment of the highest quality. A variety of games are available, including Skydiving, Bungee Jumping, Skiing, Motorcycle Racing, White Water Rafting and the Pump-It Up Dance Machine. Special surround sound effects add on to the feel of the gaming area. It is safe for players above the age of 10. (Village Market n.d.(b): n.p.)

When we look at the figuration of spaces for children that aim at providing 'entertainment and recreation' on the basis of the age comparison, we see that artificial nature spaces have been part of the figuration of childhood at least since the 1990s. Yet these spaces have changed from a rather artificial to a hyper-real nature. One such artificial and not yet hyper-real example is Splash, a former open-air water fun park, which was the favourite place of Eddah, born in 1988. Splash combined nature and technology within the city. Splash consisted of swimming pools and water slides and areas of trees and other kinds of plants. In cities with no sea, water is precious and often becomes an element to which less affluent people have restricted access. Therefore, water has to be understood

as a classed element of urban social inequalities and also appears as such in the narrations.

> If I was a good girl or I performed well in school, my parents would occasionally take [us] to swim. […] There were three pools [at Splash], and they had water slides. Of course, the water slides weren't free; you had to pay. And also/also getting into that complex was, um, you had to pay a little something. So it was, uh/it was a treat for an occasional Sunday after church. (Eddah, 31 yrs, *1988, Ngumo, N.)

While to Eddah, who is situated in the third spectrum of the socio-economic sampling, Splash was the favourite childhood place, to Amina and Marta (first and second spectrum) it is the quarry. Martha, born in 1991, remembers how 'if the rains came […] there will be pools [quarries]. So, we loved going to the pools to swim. Yes. (Laughs)' (Martha, 28 yrs, *1991, female, Umoja I., N.). Amina too talks about her 'most favourite place[, which] was […] this big quarry', in which she and her friend 'used to go swimming when it rained' (Amina, 21 yrs, * 1998, female, Ruai, N.). Amina also remembers that she was

> not supposed to go here because you'd fall, and you can even die. But if it rains, and we'll go because it's filled with water and you can swim, and then it's like a big place. But it was risky. Some kids used to die. […] We were not supposed to go near any quarry at all. (ibid)

Indeed, a search for 'quarry in Nairobi' on Google brings up plenty of articles reporting people who died while swimming. Interestingly, the same applies to amusement parks. Although there might be different types of quarries and amusement parks, some safe and some not so safe, I would like to point out the price – symbolic or material – that a child has to pay in cities to fulfil one of the most basic reproductive needs, which is swimming for recreation. While children from less affluent backgrounds in cities like Nairobi swim in freedom but are at risk of drowning or swimming in toxic waters, children from more affluent backgrounds swim inside a hyper-real nature filled with, as Lisa reminded us earlier, 'chlorine'. Splash and the quarries illustrate that natural resources accessible for children in such cities are diminishing drastically. What is left are the basements of shopping malls, which are turned into undersea worlds made of plastic hyper-real adventure, where nature increasingly turns into a product that compensates for the ecological ruins caused by urban extractivism.