

## Chapter 2

# Geographies of Hanging Out: Playing, Dwelling and Thinking with the City

Noora Pyyry

**Abstract** In this paper, I approach thinking as something that takes place in playful encounters with the city: it is then always connected to doing. New reflection emerges in everyday action with everything that comes together in a given event. This understanding is based on a posthuman acknowledgement of the capacity of the material world to produce effects in human bodies: urban spaces take part in the event of hanging out, that is, they can make things happen. I focus my discussion on the possibilities for experimentation that hanging out in the city opens up. Because hanging out is wonderfully aimless, time and space is cleared for dwelling with the city, and then *re-cognizing* the world. To deliver my argument, I illustrate vignettes from a study on young people's hanging out in San Francisco. By presenting the concept of *hanging-out-knowing*, I draw attention to the importance of young people having the time and space to be with their peers without strict plans and schedules.

**Keywords** Dwelling · Enchantment · Hanging out · Hanging-out-knowing · Learning · Thinking · Rights · Urban space · Young people

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N. Pyyry (✉)

Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland  
e-mail: noora.pyyry@helsinki.fi

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## 2.1 Introduction



As part of my research project on young people's hanging out, teenage participants photographed urban spaces that were special to them in some way.<sup>1</sup> The aim was to encourage the participants to think about their everyday spaces and geographical practices, and to better understand young people's ways of dwelling in the city. 'Geographies of hanging out' refers to research on young people's free time practices in public spaces (Pyyry and Tani 2016). To approach these geographies from within practice, and to experiment with everyday spaces and things, both the participants and I conducted *photo-walks* (Pyyry 2015b) in the city. In the walks, photography was connected to walking without a clear destination, and the city thus took part in the research process by guiding the practice: in a way, the city posed questions and pushed the photographer to think. By linking action and

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<sup>1</sup>In San Francisco, ten girls (12–13 years) took part in the research. The participatory study was conducted through school with the help of their art teacher, but separately from school work. The project started with introduction and a mind mapping session, after which the girls launched for their photo-walks. I then discussed hanging out and urban dwelling with the girls in photo-talks (Pyyry 2015b). De-briefing happened by mental mapping and the girls also put together an inspiring photo-exhibition at school.

**Fig. 2.1** A street in San Francisco. Photo by a participant, 13 years



understanding, the photo-walks fostered creative multisensory reflection about the city, with the city. The next photograph (Fig. 2.1) was taken by a girl in San Francisco on her photo-walk.

The girl later reflected on why that particular spot matters to her:

We always used to just hang out there and, just like, run around and play tag and stuff. We also used to just sit there and hang out and talk. [...] We still do it.

Looking at the photograph, very little could be said about hanging out or that location in the city. It looks like an ordinary street. Reading the photograph with the girl's words makes it possible to see teenagers on the street, running around, touching the tree, giggling and having fun. Whether or not our imagination matches what actually has been going on there, the girl's words suggest that for her, the street was a place of playfulness, friendship, laughter, movement and spatial engagement. This feeling of involvement is central to my story, since through meaningful practical engagement with one's everyday surroundings new reflection can arise. This becomes possible when things matter, even if just for a moment.

It is obviously impossible to say if, and what kind of, new reflection or learning indeed took place there and then on that street. Much of the learning that I tackle with

in this chapter goes on unnoticed, and most importantly, unverbilized. But, learning does not have to be verbal to count as important, it does not need to be a represented process of ‘rationally’ thinking about something (Thrift et al. 2010). Instead it can be an unspesific fleeting moment of looking at familiar spaces and things differently. Sometimes it is just a moment of joy and engagement that has the potential to open up something unforeseen. Most importantly this is a moment that is *felt*: something happens that attunes us to the world differently, makes us think in a new direction (Diprose 2002). It is an event of being caught up in a moment, a force that can be sensed even if not pinpointed. Bennett (2001) talks about *enchantment* when she refers to this sudden and surprising experience of wonder-at-the-world that entails a potential for change. It is an event of joy, astonishment and puzzlement—even fear. It is then not always a pleasurable experience, but it somehow challenges what is known. It is a moment of being ‘swept up by the world’ (Massumi 2011, p. 3). This *re-cognizing* (Thrift 2011) the world is not a linear process, nor does it then have a goal, as is often the case with learning within the context of formal education. It happens in being, through practical involvement with the world. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) talk about the *refrain* (orig. *la ritournelle*) to explain how change takes place in repetition: if the same song is played repeatedly, there is always space for difference in the expression. Change (as in ‘development’), per se, is not a goal, but through different rhythms and repetition, also hanging out and engaging with the same space over and over again (‘We still do it.’) can create new worlds through re-cognition (on repetition, see also Bennett 2001). This change requires time and space, and openness to new encounters and surprise.

In this chapter, I explore young people’s hanging out and the possibilities for *spatial-embodied learning* that this, often carefree and non-instrumental, way of being-in-the-world entails. When hanging out, young people usually do not have fixed plans for activities that can be labelled as ‘productive’. They are therefore open to the new and unpredictable, they are open to change. I will start my discussion by conceptualizing hanging out as creative play with one’s surroundings that fosters ‘dwelling with’ the city. I will show that this meaningful engagement with the world opens up space for enchantment and inspires new associations, and hereby connect the geographies of hanging out to the discussion that is going on within posthuman educational theorization. Finally, I make an argument for the value of *hanging-out-knowing* midst the contemporary hype of individual student assessment within formal education. The argument also relates to the tightened notions of safety and restrictions in young people’s independent mobility in Western cities. In the current atmosphere, there is often very little time and space for hanging out. I will hence conclude the paper by reflecting on the implications that approaching learning as a more-than-human event that comes together in everyday practice has for educational policy and urban planning.

## 2.2 Hanging Out Is ‘Dwelling With’: Playful Appropriation of Urban Space

Whether playing tag on the street, skateboarding on a wall (Fig. 2.2) or trying on colorful make-up at a shopping mall just for a laugh, young people  *dwell with* the city in playful and creative ways while hanging out (Pyyry 2016b). By dwelling with, I refer to meaningful practical engagement with spaces and things (see Ingold 2000). This engagement can include (1) intentional acts or just (2) habitual involvement with the city. Either way, young people temporarily break away from the seriousness of the goal-oriented adult life and claim the city as *theirs* by improvisation and experiment (Pyyry 2016b). They enter a world of playfulness, or rather, they *invent* this world. Dwelling with means opening oneself to the world. This experience of opening does not need to be a feeling of ‘belonging’, rather it is about being receptive to what is going on (see Wylie 2009). This is important, since young people’s days are often organized and scheduled to a high degree, and chances for experimenting with the world, and how to live in/with it, are getting slim. Playfulness critiques the dominant view of always having to be productive, it disturbs the dynamics of everyday life and therefore clears space for dwelling (see Lefebvre 1947/2014). More than a form of behavior, playfulness is a ‘mode’, a way of being-in-the-world and imagining new worlds: play makes it possible to *re-cognize* what is right in front you (Thrift 2000). It is an attitude of improvisation and creativity. Instead of being a means to an end, play is an end in itself, valuable as such (Bauman 1993; Rautio and Winston 2015). Understanding play this way places emphasis on the importance of being caught up in the moment. In this mode, young people are open to changes of direction, and engagement with spaces and things.

From a posthuman view, referred to above, play always takes place in the mingling of things. As in the skateboarding vignette (Fig. 2.2), the material world has an active role in hanging out, it is hence not only a background for human activity. This means acknowledging the agency of the spaces and things that are involved in hanging out and urban life more broadly. Human intentionality is only one form of power in the world, the capacities of a human body emerge from entanglements of

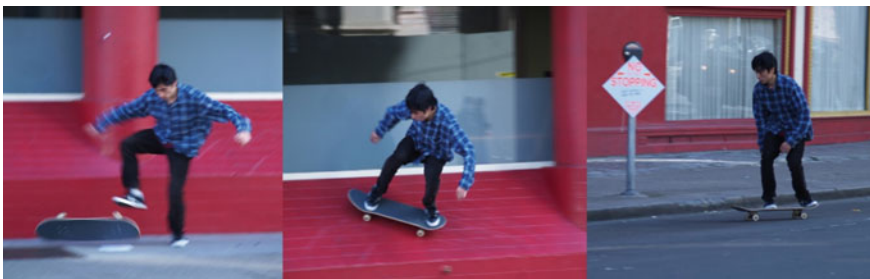


Fig. 2.2 Appropriation of urban space by movement and sound. Photographs by author

human and the non-human in a *rhizomatic* way (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/1987). The skateboarder does not just ‘decide’ to jump against the building, rather the wall invites him to do so. Bennett (2010) talks about ‘thing power’ to address the liveliness that is internal to materiality, and the capacity of things to affect human bodies. But not only does the wall actively call the skateboarder; together they become something else, something more. In the event pictured in the photographs, the young man, the skateboard, the wall, the street, sunshine, human intentionality, ideas, memories and much more mingle without clear boundaries. They take part in *intra-active* (Barad 2003) play from which new spaces and bodies are created. In this play, agency emerges relationally, from the mingling of things. Massumi (2011) clarifies this posthuman standing point when he explains the distinction between looking at the world through subject-object relations and thinking it through events. So, instead of understanding objects as being in the world, and percepts that register them being in the sensing subject, the object and subject are joined in a unity of movement. This performance is an event.

It may seem trivial to think of these passing events as politically or educationally significant, but one must remember that revolutions are rare—more often change takes place through small momentary acts, in repetition. Appropriation of urban space in hanging out is usually spontaneous, irrational, non-instrumental—and it is often unanticipated by designers and planners, managers and other city dwellers. Still, quite an amount of energy is put to keeping young people from public space. This ‘bubble-wrap generation’ (Malone 2007), especially middle-class children and young people, spends much of its time in adult controlled environments: schools, sports and youth clubs, as well as shopping malls are all under the adult gaze. Many Western cities and towns have even implemented curfews for young people, and functional urban planning appoints them to certain confined areas (skateparks, playgrounds etc.). Spaces signal who is welcome: power speaks through them. Prohibition signs (‘no loitering’, ‘no skating’), surveillance cameras, curved benches, skateboarding blockers (Fig. 2.3), the *Mosquito* device,<sup>2</sup> condescending treatment and much more take part in evicting young people from the public sphere. These practices create *tight spaces* (Franck and Stevens 2007) that are often well-suited for the planned use and appreciated by their users, also by young people. But, when the risks of random encounters and surprises are reduced, also chances for enchantment become scarce. Free, multifunctional public spaces where young people, among others, can *be* differently and find alternative means of expression seem to be disappearing from our highly organized and predictable cities.

However, even though young people often lack the power to challenge adult decision making, hanging out implicitly critiques functional urban planning. Young people challenge the urban order by using momentary *tactics* (de Certeau 1984) and

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<sup>2</sup>The *Mosquito* is an electronic device used to prevent young people from spending time at shopping malls or transport hubs by emitting a high frequency sound that is detectable only by young ears. The sound is highly irritable and forces young people to leave the place.



**Fig. 2.3** Tight/loose space: A welcoming area with unwelcoming skateboarding blockers on the benches. Hayes Valley, San Francisco. Photograph by author

expand the boundaries of everyday life often with their mere presence, by ‘actively doing nothing’ (Pyry 2016a). This goes against the norm of having to be purposive all the time. To avoid being evicted from adult monitored spaces, young people playfully question taken-for-granted rules and the strategies through which the society functions. They play cat-and-mouse games with security guards at shopping malls and make *back stages* (Lieberg 1995; also Matthews et al. 2000) by gathering at staircases, in abandoned houses, garages and other places hidden from the adult gaze. Sometimes back stages can be created just momentarily when hanging out under monitoring: one girl mentioned that noise at a food court in a shopping mall that may be bothersome to others, makes her feel like she can talk to her friends in peace (Pyry 2015b). The back stage is located on stage, within the established order. Sometimes, just by drifting at the mall, not consuming, young people appropriate places as their own. New spaces are created with play, but also just by habitual involvement. Spending time is thus making space. So, even in a tight space, there is always potential for change and the building of ‘hangout homes’ (Pyry 2015a). Obviously, in the normative environment of a shopping mall, this potential is highly limited. Still, when tight spaces are encountered in a mode of playfulness with time for experimentation, routines are disturbed and normative ways of using the space are challenged—even if just temporarily. Here lies the creative strength of hanging out: because it is pleasantly purposeless and carefree, even boring, there is time and space to be differently with familiar environments. Meaningful engagement with the environment fosters dwelling with, and clears space for the stimulating experience of enchantment. Involved activity deepens the geographical relationship, so it is worthwhile to consider the potential that hanging

out entails for creative spatial thinking and seeing familiar urban environments anew. Playfulness can be regarded as openness toward the world, and while hanging out, young people are generally moving with the event: they are ‘thinking with’.

To sum up the above, hanging out makes space for politics (in the form of momentary tactics) and re-creating the city in habitual engagement (Pyyry 2016b). Together with probing the limits of their rights to urban space in everyday situations, young people participate in making the city more open for diverse use and people. A city that welcomes hanging out has the potential to make all people a little more playful. Young people enrich urban life by hanging out in the city, by being visible and audible, and by disturbing the taken-for-granted routines of everyday life. This participation is important, since too often, young people are left with a feeling that the city is not really theirs. To a certain extent, they are left ‘homeless’. As one girl put it, when she talked about participation in urban planning projects:

I have been involved in projects where it’s, like, this will make a really, really big difference, and then next year, everything’s the same. You know the next day it’s like, wow, I made a really big difference, so how come I don’t see it.

It is unfortunately common that young people feel that their participation does not make a real impact. In the worst scenario, this will make them uninterested to take part in any later projects. This is why it is crucial to open public spaces for small-scale creative projects that transform the city there and then, for a moment, and make it more welcoming to different ways of being. Just as important it is for adults to value the ways in which young people *already* participate and dwell with their cities. This relates to what Lawy and Biesta (2006) mean by ‘citizenship as practice’. In contrast to citizenship a set of rights and duties, citizenship is also a practice through which people learn about their positions in the world. This notion that resonates with de Certeau’s (1984) ideas of how the ‘weak’ create spheres for themselves in the city through action is crucially relevant today, since through practice and engagement, people also develop a sense of care for their city. The right of access and care for one’s environment thus go together (cf. nature conservation). By the practices of hanging out, young people deepen their relationship with the city and re-imagine their positions in the world through repetition, improvisation, friendship and play. In doing so, they carve space for re-cognizing the world, i.e. for inventing future ones.

### 2.3 Learning Is More Than an Individual, Human or Cultural Business

To invent a new world, however temporary, is to find an alternative path in life. The shift can be modest, yet it is always a small earthquake (perhaps a fitting analogy in San Francisco). With a posthuman frame of thinking, I approach learning here as an inspiring event: as a coming-together of things in a unity of movement. Learning, then, is not something that an individual human subject does. Rather, it is a sudden



event of *re-cognizing* ordinary everyday environments with those environments. Ingold (2000) talks about ‘enskilment’ when he discusses knowing by *dwelling*, by being practically involved with one’s surroundings. Skills are developed in being, in involved activities and while relating to everyday situations. Theories of learning that are based on the idea of acquisition of knowledge suggest a clear subject-object division: a body of context-free knowledge that exists ‘out there’ and can be instilled to an individual learner by teaching. Practice-oriented posthuman educational theories think the world differently. Learning is a relational event in which the ‘subject’ and the ‘object’ join, and thinking happens in encounters through practical engagement (e.g. Aberton 2012; Fenwick et al. 2011; Fors et al. 2013; Taylor et al. 2013). This is in line with non-representational geographers’ (i.e. Non-representational theory, NRT) conceptualization of the world as fluid, ongoing and always in excess (e.g. Thrift 2000, 2008, 2011; Anderson and Harrison 2010). Learning is an open process and new capacities come out the rhizomatic mingling of human and the non-human. As explained earlier, this means that a human body is always linked with numerous other bodies and never exists outside of these links. Matter and sense are intertwined: there is no thought outside of the world. Being human is a thoroughly material affair and, therefore, also what we mean by the ‘cultural’ needs to be reconsidered. When agency in the world is understood as distributed between numerous different bodies, and the borders of these bodies are blurred, clear distinctions such as man/woman, nature/culture, citizen/city cannot be thought. These categories become impossible. What we often think of as culture, is in fact, a complex coming-together of things (matter, action, relations) that is continuously recreated in practice. The citizen does not learn when he/she passes through the city, rather, together they take part in mutual co-constitution. The citizen does not only take part in producing the city, but the city produces her/him, and most importantly, they exist in a shared dynamic of becoming.

With this understanding, I want to open up the concept of spatial-embodied learning and connect the geographies of hanging out with posthuman educational theorization. Valuing young people’s everyday spaces in the city as environments for thinking and learning connects this paper to place-based education (PBE), in which different informal spaces outside of school are used for teaching and community collaboration (see a special issue of *Children, Youth and Environments* 2011). When formal learning is usually teacher lead, verbal and individualistic, and it has clear measurable objectives, informal learning is a shared process that often happens without fixed plans (Cartwright 2012). Pressures of accountability and productivity create a danger that informal learning projects are left out of the educational agenda, when students are prepared for tests such as the PISA.<sup>3</sup> This leaves a great deal of learning potential untapped, since open-ended experimentation can create unexpected *pedagogical spaces of enchantment* (Pyyry 2016a).

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<sup>3</sup>PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is an international OECD test for skills in reading, mathematics and science.

Spatial-embodied learning refers to posthuman and non-representational understanding of thinking as something that always takes place with the world, with everything that comes together in the learning event. Learning is a multi-sensory event of re-cognizing the world and probing the limits of everyday life. This effective event emerges relationally. Learning is then not only a collaborative human project, but reflection in the world always takes place with spaces, things and the non-human. This understanding grants more agency to the material world than is generally the case with PBE accounts that view learning as an individual endeavor, albeit collaborative. Learning comes together in rhizomes within the complexity of everyday life: it emerges in flows of energy and matter, action and ideas. Many elements affect the event: a tree that invites one to climb, sunny weather, good friends to be playful with, a book that one may have just read, the street or new sneakers that make it fun to run—and most importantly, the relations that connect all these and more. By moving the focus away from the human as an individual learner, the complex, non-linear and rich ways in which learning emerges in different life situations can be identified. I will now turn to outline what I have conceptualized as hanging-out-knowing in order to argue for the importance of wandering and wondering.

## 2.4 Hanging-Out-Knowing

Earlier in this paper, I have conceptualized hanging out as a playful mode of being-in-the-world that fosters dwelling with. While hanging out, young people are usually ‘going with the flow’ and therefore open to the complexity of life and the many possible directions that may come into view. The world of hanging out is not fixed. Boredom and aimlessness in hanging out open up space for change through repetition. Joyous feelings of friendship (with humans or the city and more) foster imagination and creative engagement with the environment. For once, young people are free to play with urban space, or at least they attempt to do so within the limitations described earlier. Often young people’s days are organized by the minute—so much so that the participants in San Francisco were, quite paradoxically, having a hard time scheduling their photo-walks on hanging out, and many of our talks were supervised by their parents (Pyyry 2015b). Scheduled after-school activities and homework take most of their time, so they hang out with friends in *liminal spaces* (e.g. Wood 2012), when in transition from one organized activity to another. The girl, who talked about playing tag on the street with her friends, told me that those free moments of play often came up when she was on her way to a band practice with the others. Looking at her photograph (Fig. 2.1), she went on explaining:

It’s relaxing, you know. It’s, like, we’re outside and we’re not with parents, but we’re also close enough to our parents to be comfortable [close to a friend’s house]. It’s kind of like a perfect balance of [...] It’s just a place to run around, and there are not many places to run around in San Francisco, ‘cause, you know, it’s all urban.

So, even within the tight schedules and the functional urban order, young people do make space for playfulness, fun and friendship. It is obvious that with the mentioned limitations, openings for enchantment are somewhat unlikely. The girl's words suggest that this chance to be with friends is rare and that she is not very used to being in the city on her own. Still, just being and talking with friends, even if just for a moment, is important. In this relaxed mode, human bodies are susceptible to the forces of other bodies. Care for friends can cultivate care for others, it can foster sensitivity to the world (Pyry 2015a). Then, a shift is possible: new spaces are created through a change in the *affective atmosphere* (see Anderson 2009; Pyry 2016b). A joyous atmosphere of friendship envelops the girls while hanging out on that street. This fosters dwelling with. Hence, hanging out is a creative encounter with the city, one that is emergent and always ongoing. Things and spaces are encountered playfully, often in the company of friends. If there is time and space to engage with the city, young people can build hangout homes for themselves and participate in urban life, sometimes by disturbing routines and questioning the accepted ways of using urban space. In the case of the skateboarder on the wall, this questioning is easily noticeable. At other times, it may remain unnoticed, but it matters nonetheless.

When hanging out, young people navigate the city with intuitive knowledge piled up in their bodies. They are skilled and confident because of practical everyday involvement, given they have had opportunities to engage with the city. They can read the city, listen to its cues and suggestions. They are gradually attuned to the city. When something surprising happens, they generally know how to respond. Intuition is judgment based on experience, it is a highly affective 'gut feeling' that brings confidence in a complex situation (e.g. Groves and Vance 2014). This know-how cannot be transferred to the learner out of the context of use, since it is about being responsive to one's environment. It is an education of attention that takes place in everyday spatial negotiations (see Ingold 2000). Knowing how to navigate in the city can then not be learned by looking at maps, although it may be helpful at the beginning. The city is learned by foot—or by skateboarding. Learning is sparked by encounters, it is an open process of reflecting on one's place in the world. People, things, spaces, ideas and possibilities all take part in the process: reflection is something that hits us, rather than something we 'do' (Thrift 2011). But, in addition to cultivating 'street wise' behavior in the city, hanging out carries with it a power to question routine ways of being and to generate new ideas, as noted before. A creative relationship with the city enables one to both (1) re-cognize the world, and (2) be differently in it (Pyry 2015a).

Dwelling with the city in meaningful ways clears space for the powerfully affective experience of enchantment. It is an experience of re-examining the world, a moment during which familiar routine things appear strange, even dreamlike. Enchantment is an exhilarating, short-lived moment of being moved by something. Even if this fleeting moment is difficult to prove to have happened, enchantment deepens one's engagement with the world—with people, places and things. It is thus key to ethical being-in-the-world, since when you are in love with something, you tend to care for it (Bennett 2001). Enchantment makes one look at the world

anew. The experience can be life-altering, but more often questioning happens gradually in repetition and is thus easily left unnoticed. This spatial-embodied thinking that I here call *hanging-out-knowing* is non-instrumental: it emerges in joyful or otherwise strongly affectual encounters with friends, spaces and things. It is always a force that can be felt and sensed—even if not represented. It is an event of multisensory reflection about the world. It happens while meaningfully dwelling with the world. New understandings are generated in a self-feeding cycle of ‘dwelling with—enchantment—reflection’ (Pyry 2015a). Dwelling with the city thus opens up space for enchantment and reflection, which again, deepen the spatial relationship and foster care for the urban environment.

Conceptualizing learning this way makes it much more than a personal project that can be assessed by tests, and it should thus have consequences on what we value in education. The conceptualization is political and relates to a more far-reaching discussion on the instrumentalization and commodification of education (e.g. Irwin 2003; Rautio and Winston 2015). It is also relevant to the discussion on diversity and people’s rights to the city (e.g. Mitchell 2003). Hanging-out-knowing gives value to the excess of life, to things unfolding surprisingly, and makes it possible for a person to take pleasure in not-knowing. Hanging out is about being open to the unforeseen. This makes space for thinking the unthinkable. Of course, it is difficult to think of learning as something that cannot even be put to words. But, perhaps we just do not have the language yet. In a fixed order of established practices (and language) that aim for measurable outcomes, there is very little space for anything radically new to emerge. Action is harnessed for the re-production of the same. Hanging out produces alternative modes of engagement with urban space, creates openings for enchantment, and has the potential to make the city more ‘loose’, in other words, open to difference.

## 2.5 Reflections

Hanging out is young people’s time: it is a back stage that provides an escape from the pressures of productivity so prevalent today. It is a rare chance for young people to just be without plans, to play with who and how they are. My desire is therefore not to incorporate that world into the educational system in any instrumental way. Instead, I would hope for teachers and urban planners to value hanging out as a playful mode of being-in-the-world that perhaps adults could even learn from. Giving value to the playfulness in hanging out is especially important at a time when young people’s lives are often highly organized. The geographies of hanging out could be reflected upon also at school in various projects, as part of geography, art education or creative writing, just to name a few possibilities. Linking young people’s free time worlds to the realm of school, and first and foremost, equipping students with creative means of re-thinking these worlds, can bring enskilment to their everyday urban practices (see Pyry 2016a). This would support inclusion of

different learners, reduce the fear of failure and build bridges between spatial-embodied knowledges and more discursive learning. At the end of the research project in San Francisco, the participants produced an art exhibition of their photographs at school. The exhibition included mental maps the girls were drawing together during the project. Although the research project itself was not connected to formal schoolwork, the exhibition gave the participants an opportunity to show their worlds and everyday geographies in this normative, adult dominated context.

As this photo-exhibition showed, young people take part in urban life in many ways—even with the restrictions of their structured everyday lives. They make momentary hangout homes for themselves at shopping malls or on the street: they invent new worlds. They carve space for difference. Still, space for spontaneity and improvisation is limited, and functional urban planning places many (young) people as outsiders. It defines who is welcome and where. Opportunities for youth leisure are also getting heavily privatized, and free, ‘loose spaces’ where young people, among others, can be differently and find alternative ways of expression seem to be diminishing from our cities. Due to privatization, the risks of unplanned encounters and surprises are further reduced. Young people hanging out in urban space test the boundaries of public and private with their presence, action and inaction: they dwell with the city. This non-instrumental relationship fosters care for the world. This engagement can be illustrated by comparing meaningful human relationships to career networking: in the first case the person is important as such, in the second, as a useful means to an end (even if not only this).

As follows, it is crucial that young people have time and space to do nothing, to be with their friends and form a meaningful, non-instrumental relationship with their city. This is important as such, but as a playful mode of engagement, hanging out also creates openings for moments of enchantment and re-cognizing the world. Hanging out makes space for other alternative ways of involvement with the city. And this is the basis for creative urban life: the city is always multiple! As one of the participants noted: ‘In the city, you see such diversity. [...] The city is more open. I have more friends in the city, because it’s not like one type of person.’ This is what needs to be protected and fought for: the right to the city needs to cover all people, so that we do not just design homey communities for a selected few, while risking the very fundamentals of accessible, democratic public spaces. Acknowledging young people’s ways of participating and learning in the city is a step towards building a diverse, more playful society.

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