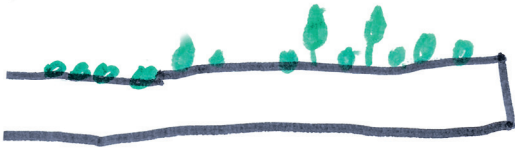
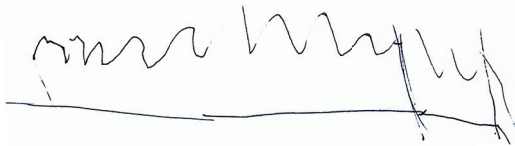


# Another Miracle



for Fritz,  
because you've always been a child.

# Another Miracle

The significance of play in  
a child's relationship with  
urban space

4

Jonas Müller

Master Thesis in  
Architecture

Groupe de suivi:

Yves Pedrazzini

Dieter Dietz

Aurelie Dupuis

“To consider the city is to encounter ourselves.  
To encounter the city is to rediscover the child.  
If the child rediscovers the city,  
The city will rediscover the child – ourselves.

LOOK SNOW!

A miraculous trick of the skies – a fleeting correction.  
All at once the child is Lord of the city.  
But the joy of gathering snow off paralyzed vehicles is  
short-lived.

Provide something for the human child more  
permanent than snow – if perhaps less abundant.

Another miracle.”

- Aldo van Eyck

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# 0 Foreword

How come I dedicate this thesis to the children and their play?

First about play: Playing is an action, very difficult to grasp and yet everyone knows exactly what it is. Many theorists have tried to describe and to define it. However they have come to no agreement on what the game is exactly. Perhaps that's why I'm personally so drawn to it. One thing will quickly become clear, the game is defined rather by a playful tinting, than by an absolute character.

10 Now to the child: It is not a question of infantilising the children, nor of presenting them as "always playing". We have to look at the child as a rational thinking being just like adults. It is important to know that not everything a child does is a game. By the way, "the child" as such does not exist, and I apologise in advance for using this term anyway. The sum of all children, if you will, is a very heterogeneous group. The children I worked (or played) with for this thesis are between six and eight years old. The main reason for this daring limitation is that in Switzerland children of this age begin their mandatory school years, with which an important new phase of life begins. During this period children often take a big step in the direction of self-responsibility, as will be mentioned multiple times in this paper, on the example of the independent journey to school.

And now, what does this have to do with architecture? The architect's (or urbanist's) work interferes with the site the children are using for their particular game. The field of research of this thesis is therefore the collective way to school, i.e. all non-institutionalized places that children encounter when they move freely in the neighbourhood, between school, playground and home. What I would like to attest is the use of playfulness and games as an act of appropriating places, and I presume that children do this more often than adults. The three factors of child, play and space, lead me towards the guiding question for this thesis:

*What is the significance of play in a child's relationship with urban space?*

The thesis is structured in two parts: The first one covers the historical understanding of where childhood originates from and looks into the terminology of play and game. Both chapters are serving as a background knowledge that I will use later in this paper. The second part consists of a series of exercises carried out with a group of children in a specific context. This so called "Fieldplay" is an attempt to walk the thin line between the objective (real) and the imagined (real).

# PART ONE

## II City Children



# I City Children

This first chapter deals with the discovery of childhood and its development along history, to finally arrive at the child's position in today's Swiss, urban context. The overall focus lies on the children's game, where it takes place and what role it takes in their lives. It has to be noticed, that this chapter does not try to give a historical recapitulation of all child's history, but rather punctual interest points along our past, to better contextualise and challenge today's condition.

Philippe Ariès, a French historian from the twentieth century wrote a remarkable contribution for today's understanding of where the idea of childhood originates. In his 1960 published book "*L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*", and especially in the chapter "*la découverte de l'enfance*" (the discovery of childhood) Ariès gives us, mainly through examining the reproduction in paintings, an idea of what the position of children in the respective society was. He makes clear that until the 17th century childhood, as we understand it today, did not exist.

In medieval representation children were not depicted as children but rather as small adults, with the body configuration, the clothing and the characteristics like grown-ups. Since this cannot be due to the clumsiness of the outstanding artists of this time, Ariès makes the

<sup>6</sup>Ariès, p. 127

<sup>4</sup>Noschis, p46

<sup>3</sup>fig. p. 10

<sup>1</sup>Ariès, p.92

assumption that there was no place for childhood in that world.<sup>1</sup> Thus Children were portrayed in the middle of their daily labours with their masters and caretakers, who often were the same person at the time, since the relationship between adult and child was rather one of a master and apprentice, than an emotional one like we have it today. Children were depicted in the midst of adult life, at work, while strolling around, but also, and this is especially important for this thesis, participating together with adults in the same games.<sup>2</sup>

An exceptional example, where nearly only children are shown, is Pieter Bruegel's *Children's games*.<sup>3</sup> It is remarkable, that one can, still today, identify all the eighty-four games presented in this idealised scenery painted in 1559. As we see, children's games remain essentially the same throughout the centuries. But to imagine them in streets and squares of a today's city centre, as it is in this painting, would appear unrealistic.<sup>4</sup> From the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, underlined with the upcoming taste for cuteness and picturesque, two new types of child representations start to appear, the portraits and the putti. From some illustrations of the Putti we know a lot about the children games at the time as they were shown in everyday playing situations, playing dice, the hobbyhorse or catching balls.<sup>5</sup> Concerning the children games during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is particularly remarkable how early the children were introduced to music and dance. From the age of two they learned the violin and all kinds of dances.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that we're talking about children of the aristocracy, since not much has been handed down from other classes. This specialisation of children's games only applies to early childhood. From the age of three or four, as said before,



children played the same games as adults, whether with other children or with grown-ups. Vice versa adults practised games which today are considered only suitable for children like tag games or disguising.<sup>7</sup> Only throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, the differentiation between the games for the aristocracy on the one hand, and the games for the little children and those who do not know how to behave on the other hand, became more and more clear.<sup>8</sup>

It all started from a situation where all ages and all classes played the same games. The phenomenon to be emphasized is that the adults of upper classes of society distanced themselves from certain games, which lived on with the lower-class people and the children. In England the gentlemen of the old games did not get tired of them, but they modified them and only in this modern, unrecognizable form did they find their way into the bourgeoisie as “sports” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ariès concludes it to be remarkable that the old play community of children and adults broke apart at the same time as did the people and the bourgeoisie. As a result of this coincidence, we can now see a similarity between the attitude towards childhood and the sense of class difference.<sup>9</sup>

But where were the city children during this changing period?

In parallel to the discovery of childhood with a unique personality, they were more and more excluded from public life of the city during their infancy, and when they returned, it was to be confined in schools or workshops. In the context of large, fast growing cities there was no place for the little ones from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the

19<sup>th</sup> century. It was frowned upon to raise your own child in the city, mostly due to the very poor living conditions with bad air and dirt roads. Most of the children therefore were fostered in the countryside.<sup>10</sup> The possibility for a family to place their children in foster care, was a sign of ease and a certain position in the social hierarchy. Even parents with a lower income undoubtedly have the feeling that young children cannot be raised in the city. Even Orphanages were placed outside of large cities to accommodate the children left alone by parents who couldn't afford a place to raise them. When new-borns are placed in foster care, they leave the city as soon as they are born and baptised. Only towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the child found again her place in the city, due to richer families beginning to have a private foster mother in their homes so that the child can be in their proximity. These children of the aristocracy lived mostly in the family house or hotel, without any contact with the city fabric. For the lower income families, the change toward the city centres came only towards 1900, thanks to sterilised bottles and the use of boiled or condensed milk. From there on, children could stay near their mothers in the urban area.<sup>11</sup> Because of even worse living conditions, where poor families often lived in only one room together, children spent a lot of time on the streets and came back only to sleep.<sup>12</sup> Many children are so left to themselves that they end up losing track of their parents, gathered in gangs of beggars and vagabonds. Elders and religious authorities soon started teaching those left alone children the first rudiments and put them to work. First public urban schools were founded already in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and primarily intended to educate

and moralise the withdrawn young vagrants. The school space therefore materialises this taming of the child's temperament, as the classroom room must be as isolated as possible from the street, designed on the model of the convent.<sup>13</sup> The children of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie on the other hand were educated by the family themselves at home.<sup>14</sup> As Philippe Ariès wrote, it was the entire adult society which, in the Middle Ages, educated the child by accepting him and her in its midst. On the contrary, school practices from the 17th to the 19th centuries aim to separate children from the adult world in order to lock them into a world apart for a better education.<sup>15</sup>

How do children inhabit today's cities, and where do they play? To answer these questions, I'm going to look only on a Swiss context, since it is the only one, I feel personally capable on commenting, and because the second part of this thesis, the fieldplay, is accomplished in the city of Bern.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, children are being expelled more and more from public space, where motorised traffic takes up to a large extent the possible play area. Today in Switzerland, between a quarter and a third of all children up to the age of five cannot leave their flat, house or garden unaccompanied, both in urban and rural areas. Eighty-five per cent of parents in the city and seventy-six per cent of parents in the countryside mention road traffic as the most important cause for the ban of children playing outdoors on their own.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly enough, children do not consider the risk of having an accident with a car or other ve-

hicle to be the most serious.<sup>17</sup> This fear of the parents, however, leads to a constant need of accompanying the children, which results from early on to deficits in physical and social development as well as in their independence and perception of their environment. This situation also intensifies the interdependence between parents and children, and this leads to a delayed integration into a child's own social environment.<sup>18</sup>

Also, the separation between car traffic and pedestrian traffic (with the child in the backseat of the car as or on the sidewalk) results in less frequent encounters, a mobility that privileges everyone for themselves. This privilege of private mobility has its price, and we, the adults, are not the only one paying for it. Certainly, we can say that this is an advantage: saving time, concentration, and optimisation of resources in relation to a goal, but one can say it is a loss of meaning, or even a loss of what the city truly is about - encounters.<sup>19</sup>

But coming back to the question, where and how can children play in this environment?

One solution is the playground, the protected area where motorised traffic is banned, and children are enabled to play in safety. The origins of playgrounds date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with exactly this traffic getting more and more space taking on the streets, public playgrounds became an important element of mostly neighbourhoods with dense residential quarters. Play has two main functions, therefore the playground needs to do justice to both of them. It is an occasion to appropriate the adult world, but it is also an opportunity for socialisation with other

children.<sup>20</sup> Thus, playgrounds work only if they fulfil the two functions of making friends and imitating the adult. The question of integrating a playground with the rest of the neighbourhood is therefore crucial.<sup>21</sup> As this thesis does not concentrate on the playground as the condenser of social interaction between children (and adults), but rather on the play as a mean of appropriation of public space, I won't go more into detail about the playgrounds. This is not due to an opinion that playgrounds are not necessary and important, but rather because of my interest for the "in between" spaces, that are "not-thought-as" playgrounds, as already mentioned in the introduction. The child is not looking for the protected place to "romp around freely", on the contrary he or she is looking to be in the middle of urban life.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, this thesis concentrates on the spatial context of the way to school. The importance of the independent journey to school lies in the experience with the environment, animals, plants and the built environment, but above all in the social sphere, where the children discuss with other children, argue and solve conflicts themselves, and also meet strangers.<sup>23</sup> The accompaniment of an adult radically interrupts these social contacts, as well as the strolling around and the playing.<sup>24</sup> The road scape has the potential to serve as playable field. Therefore, it implies that the children can move, observe, imitate, play and run around, or in other words, that they can play their role as an urban actor.<sup>25</sup> In the second part of this thesis I observe how the children use the game as a tool, to make use of these streets.

To close off the chapter, again a quote from Aldo van Eyck:

"The city's growing impersonality is at any rate his doing and undoing. An impersonal city has no room for persons and is therefore not a city. If it has no room for persons it has no room for children, no room for the child's particular rhythm. Now a city that has no room for that – for the child – is a diabolic thing, a silly paradox – all the more diabolical since the neglect is not inflicted by the child upon itself."<sup>26</sup>

# II Play

It seems fundamental for this thesis to give a certain context in the definition of play as well as to clarify the differentiation of play and game. I will rely mainly on two authors who have written significantly on the history, the definition and the importance of play. In this regard, I would like to briefly present both authors and the points of their respective theory that are of importance for my purpose.

The person to start with, is Johan Huizinga, who considerably changed the awareness of play with his book “*Homo Ludens*”, published in 1938. Besides a first definition, it seems important to Huizinga that the game is not *one* kind of culture but is at the origin of all cultures.

The second book I present is “*Les jeux et le hommes*” (*man play and games*) by Roger Caillois, first published exactly 20 years later in 1958. In strong reference to Huizinga, Caillois writes next to an own definition of the game also a classification of all different kinds of games as well as a sort of barometer of playfulness, which lets us later understand the nuance between play and game.

First, Johan Huizinga, a Dutch cultural historian held a lecture at the university of Leiden in 1933 with the title “over de grenzen van spel en Ernst in de cultuur” (on the limits of play and seriousness in culture). In 1937 at a conference in London he gave it the title “The Play

Element of Culture”, and deliberately not “The Play Element in Culture”, thus already making clear where his main interest lies, one year before he publishes his magnum opus *Homo Ludens*. Accordingly, it is not a question of the role that playing takes in other cultural phenomena, but of the extent to which culture itself has a character of play.<sup>1</sup>

Huizinga replaces the homo sapiens with the homo ludens, since “we play and know that we play, so we are more than reasonable beings, because play is unreasonable”.<sup>2</sup>

The game, both of the child and of the adult, can be played with an extreme seriousness. We are accustomed to seeing the contrast between play and sincerity as absolute, but when the child is “just playing” it does not mean that he or she cannot do it with a sacred seriousness.<sup>3</sup> But also the sportsman, the musician or the actor play with a devoted earnestness, with the courage of enthusiasm and full delight, but at the same time they know that they’re playing. So, by no mean is the play an action that cannot, or even must not be carried out with an utmost seriousness. One can devote the whole of one’s being to the game, where the consciousness of “just playing” moves totally into the background. However, the game is a very fragile action. Every moment the “ordinary life” knows how to reclaim its rights.<sup>4</sup> This can happen due to outside disruption, but also from within by the event of a rule violation. Huizinga sums up the characteristics of the play in a definition as follows:

<sup>1</sup>Huizinga, p.7

<sup>2</sup>ibid, p. 12

<sup>3</sup>ibid, p.27

<sup>4</sup>ibid, p.30

<sup>5</sup>Huizinga, p.22

“In form terms, the game can be summed up as a free action which is perceived as “not meant like this” and outside ordinary life, yet which can take the player completely into its own hands, to which no material interest is attached and with which no benefit is acquired, which takes place within a specific time and space, which proceeds according to specific rules and creates community associations, which in turn like to surround themselves with a secret or stand out from the ordinary world by disguising themselves as different.”<sup>5</sup> The game is therefore:

Free, with no obligation,  
not meant like this,  
outside of ordinary life,  
captivating,  
without any material interest,  
nor benefits,  
within a specific time and space,  
according to specific rules,  
evoking community associations,  
disguising as standing out from the ordinary  
world.

<sup>6</sup>Huizinga, p.184

Huizinga deliberately leaves the psychological subject aside and accordingly pays little attention to the child’s play that he places in the “lower categories of the game”. Since the toddler still “completely lacks any higher structures of organised social play.”<sup>6</sup>

Now to Roger Caillois who was a French sociologist, literature critic and philosopher. He wrote with “Les jeux et les hommes: le masque et le vertige” (Man, Play

<sup>7</sup>Caillois, p.16

and Games) a considerable contribution to the definition and classification of the games. Caillois defines the game based on the following six characteristics that are, as he insists, purely formal and he does not say anything about their content:<sup>7</sup>

a *free* activity that the player cannot be forced to do without the game immediately losing its character.

a *separate* activity carried out within precise and predetermined limits of space and time  
an *uncertain* activity, the course and outcome of which are not a priori certain  
an *unproductive* activity that creates neither goods nor wealth nor any other new element  
a *regulated* activity which is subject to conventions which abolish the usual laws and introduce, for the time being, new legislation which is exclusively valid

a *fictive* activity accompanied by a specific consciousness of a second reality or a free unreality in relation to ordinary life

<sup>8</sup>Caillois, p.9

In his definition, Caillois emphasised less than Huizinga on the ability of a game to build communities, but stresses much more the individual, spontaneous and uncertain characteristics of play. Caillois refers significantly to Huizinga’s oeuvre, but criticizes the lack of description and classification of the games, “as if they all shared the same needs, or as if they expressed indifferently the same state of mind.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore he classifies the content of the games in four main categories. These

<sup>9</sup> Caillois, p.21 fff.

categories are to be understood as a help to order the enormous variety of games. One game though can be part of several categories simultaneously, where the first and the second are on the opposite ends of the same axis, the third and the fourth are independent. The categories are as follows:<sup>9</sup>

*Agôn* is the embodiment of the competition in which an artificial equality of chances is created at the beginning, in order to measure each other's strength under ideal conditions. It is therefore a rivalry on one, to this game specific, property, like speed, force etc. It requires full attention, appropriate training as well as the will to win. This category resumes all competitive games like tennis, football or boxing, but also billiard, chess or go.

*Alea*, on the opposite side, is totally dominated by chance, where the player does not have any influence on the decision who's winning. Instead of the opponent, one is supposed to defeat "fate". This category includes all gambling and lottery games.

Most of the games lie on the axis somewhere between *Agôn* and *Alea* as they are hybrids of competition and chance. Some games are somewhere in the middle like domino. Others are only based on hazard like roulette, others only on competition, like go, the oldest continuously played board game. In all these games though the player creates another world, with other rules.

*Mimicry* is a temporary assumption of an illusion, transformation or imitation. It includes all the games where the player is misleading the spectator (this can be himself as well) of him being someone else than in reality. The game consists therefore to simulate and

to maintain this other personality. All kinds of imitation and theatre plays are resumed in this category.

*Ilinx* is the desire for rush and sums up those games, where one tends to deconstruct the moment of stability in one's perception. It is about getting into a trance-like state which challenges the reality, for example the accelerating turning of one's body in circles, with the goal of changing its perception of the environment.

These designations are to be understood as sectors in which the games of a same type are grouped together. Within this sector, the different games are ranged according to a certain order. This order is defined by two poles of the same axis. On the one side determines the principle of pleasure, free improvisation and *joie de vivre*, which Caillois calls *paidia*. On the other side, a growing need for conventions suppresses the anarchic and capricious nature and more and more prevents its arbitrariness by adding difficult obstacles to make the way as uncomfortable as possible. He calls this pole *ludus*.<sup>10</sup>

To the use of play and game: The two terms *paidia* and *ludus*, correspond vaguely with the English use of the terms *play* and *game*. As nouns, both words, play and game, have multiple uses and therefore multiple epistemological definitions. I am leaning my use of them in this paper on the definition of Caillois theory from above about *paidia* and *ludus*. "Play" is therefore used more for more improvisational, unplanned and uncontrolled activities. "Game" on the other hand, is used to describe playful activities where the rule (or the agreement) on the procedure is predefined.

<sup>10</sup> Caillois, p.36ff.

The two authors emphasize the complexity of play. As far as the definition is concerned, both share the opinion, that play is not absolute, in which one can clearly distinguish a playful from a non-playful activity, but it is rather a tinting of playfulness of an action. Therefore, I am searching the tinting of playfulness of the child's action in urban space, thus the appropriation of urban space. Or with other words, how much are children playing while simply discovering and using their environment?

For this thesis, I am more interested in this tinting of an action that was maybe not foreseen to be playful. My focus lies therefore on the theory of play and the freedom children take in exploring their surroundings, rather than on games, which are well defined within its spatial and temporal limits. The use of *paidia* appears to be more appropriate than the *ludus* type of games.

# PART TWO

## III Fieldplay IV Debriefing





# III Fieldplay

The core part of this thesis is dedicated to a series of exercises presented in this chapter. The aim of these exercises is, firstly, to discover the child's use of urban space from his or her point of view and secondly, to find out how playful this use of urban space is. In other words, what games are the children playing as a tool to appropriate their urban environment.

The fieldplay consists of four "Rounds", namely *the imagined reality, the perceived reality, the objective reality and the imagined reality*. In each of the realities the same area serves as the playing field. With every Round we return to the same places over and over again. The field is accessed either mentally, as in Round one, or literally, as in the following Rounds. The field of analysis in this thesis is the way to school, or more precisely the sum of all children's ways to school. It is in this sense not defined by a spatial limitation as we know it from an urban plan of a quarter for example, but by a collection of movements, the movements performed every day by the school children. The field is therefore organised concentrically, with the school as its heart. The school is the place where the ways of the different children obviously come together, and from where the ways home depart from. However, it should be emphasised that the school is not in the focus of this particular fieldplay. On its contrary, it looks at anything else but the school, homes and official playgrounds, basically anything un-institutionalised. The way to school was chosen to give

a context in which the children move independently, as an important place, or series of places, where they discover more and more their environment, as already discussed in the chapter of city children.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the four Rounds in situ, the fieldplay also includes two "Time-outs", taking some distance from the field and introducing a pause from the action itself. The Time-outs serve on the one hand to discuss what happened in the previous Rounds, on the other hand to introduce further theoretical background. This knowledge is directly related to the preceding exercises, as well as the ones to come. In a concluding debriefing, the entire content is discussed, and key interests are worked out.

Specifically, I worked together with a class of second year pupils from the primary school Hochfeld 2, Muesmatt. It is located in the Längasse Quartier, a residential and university district in the city of Bern. The twenty-two pupils in the class are between seven and eight years old. Most of them grew up in the neighbourhood and went to one of the nearby kindergartens and therefore know the area already quite well. All graphic content (except for the axonometric drawings in Round Three) are made by the pupils of this very class.

<sup>1</sup>City Children p.14

# Round One

or the drawing as  
an imagined reality

Round One is about getting familiar with the terrain, especially for me, but also for the Kids. It identifies for a first time the context in which we operate, the context of the collective movements of the ways to school. We visit the places mentally by imagining and drawing how and what one encounters every morning and afternoon walking through the streets.

Where do they go? What do they see? And with whom do they socialise on the way? These were the basic questions the children were asked to draw on a sheet of paper. This exercise is intended to give an understanding of the spatial context that was chosen as the way to school. What is the radius in which the children move? What are the most important points of reference for each one of them? Where do they take detours and why? But also, where do the children find shortcuts?

For this first Round I went to class during a Friday morning where I asked the children to draw me their way home from school. I asked them the way home, and not the way to school, because in the morning more of them come guided with one of their parents, and also, I made the assumption that in the morning they're moving in a more direct way to school. In the afternoon, however, when walking home, there can happen more actions beside just walking, and those side actions are what interested me most after all. But this was an assumption I took, inspired by my proper memories of my way to school. After a little introduction and the explanation of the assignment, there were a lot of follow up questions, as listed below. The children were given a forty by sixty cm sheet of paper to start. Very soon some

of them needed a second or third sheet, that we glued on the first one, to continue their drawing. Some pupils finished the drawing after ten minutes, others took two hours to complete it.

Because of qualitative, but also quantitative reasons I made a selection of ten drawings (out of the twenty-two), which I would like to show and further develop in this thesis. On the following pages there are first all the ten chosen drawings, followed by a very short observation and description of each one. The description is structured in three parts: How is the drawing attacked formally: Where does one start to draw? Where does the way go? Where is a second paper added for space shortage reasons? Afterwards I describe how the movement was represented and thirdly, I cut out important elements of the drawing in order to look at them separately.

Follow-up questions to the introduction of the exercise:

“The school route is way too long, how should I represent it on this small paper?”

“Should I draw the secret path I take sometimes?” After an approval from my side he responded: “But like this it is not secret anymore.”

“Does it matter if we start at home or at the school?”, whereas another pupil asked: “But, in the end this should give the same result, shouldn’t it?”

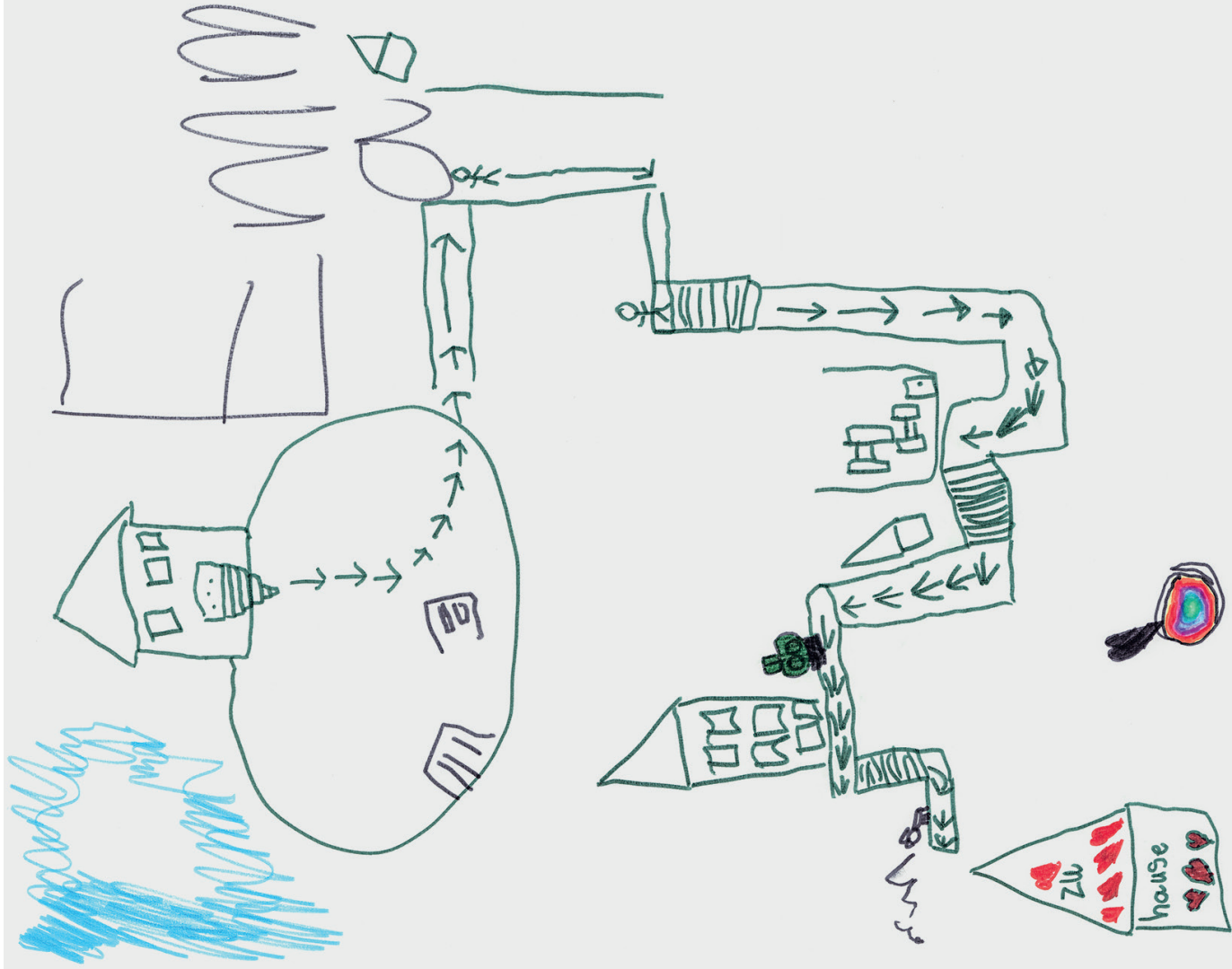
“I do not take every time the same path. What do I draw?”

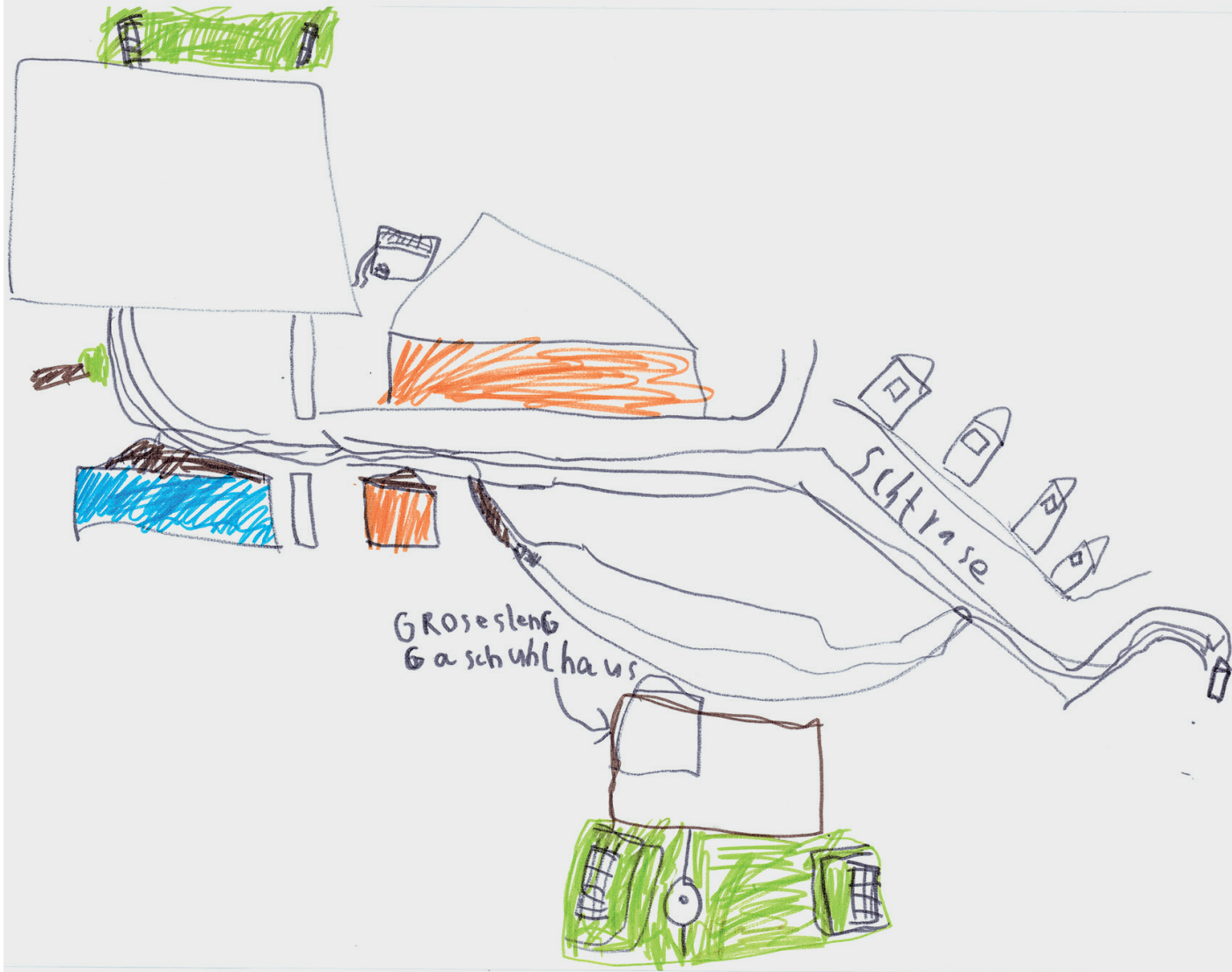
“How do I draw the slope?”

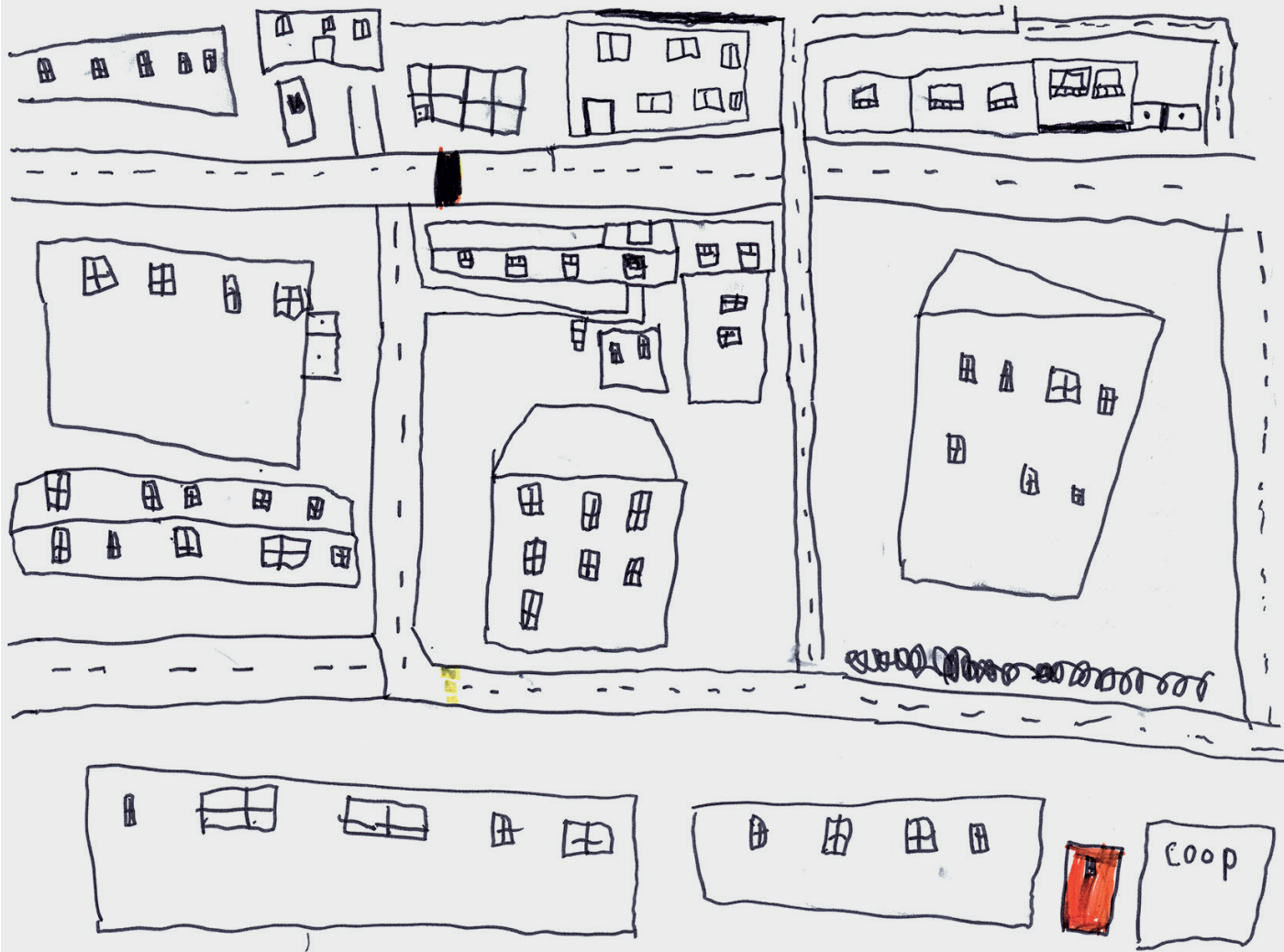
“I want to continue the path behind the school, how do I draw it? Should I just turn the paper?”

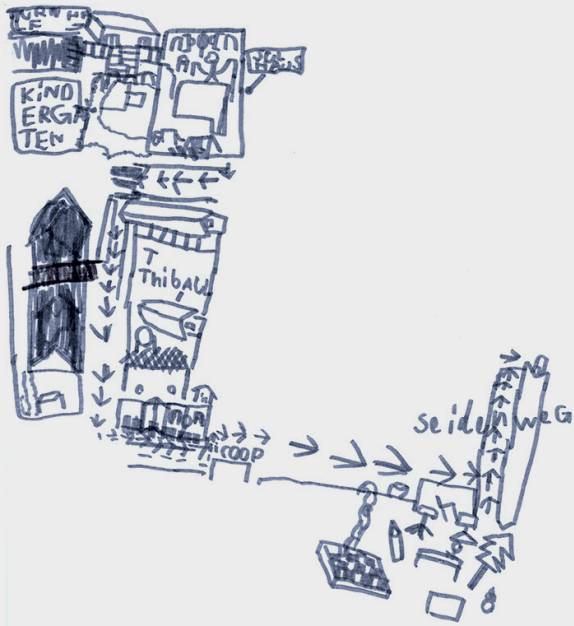
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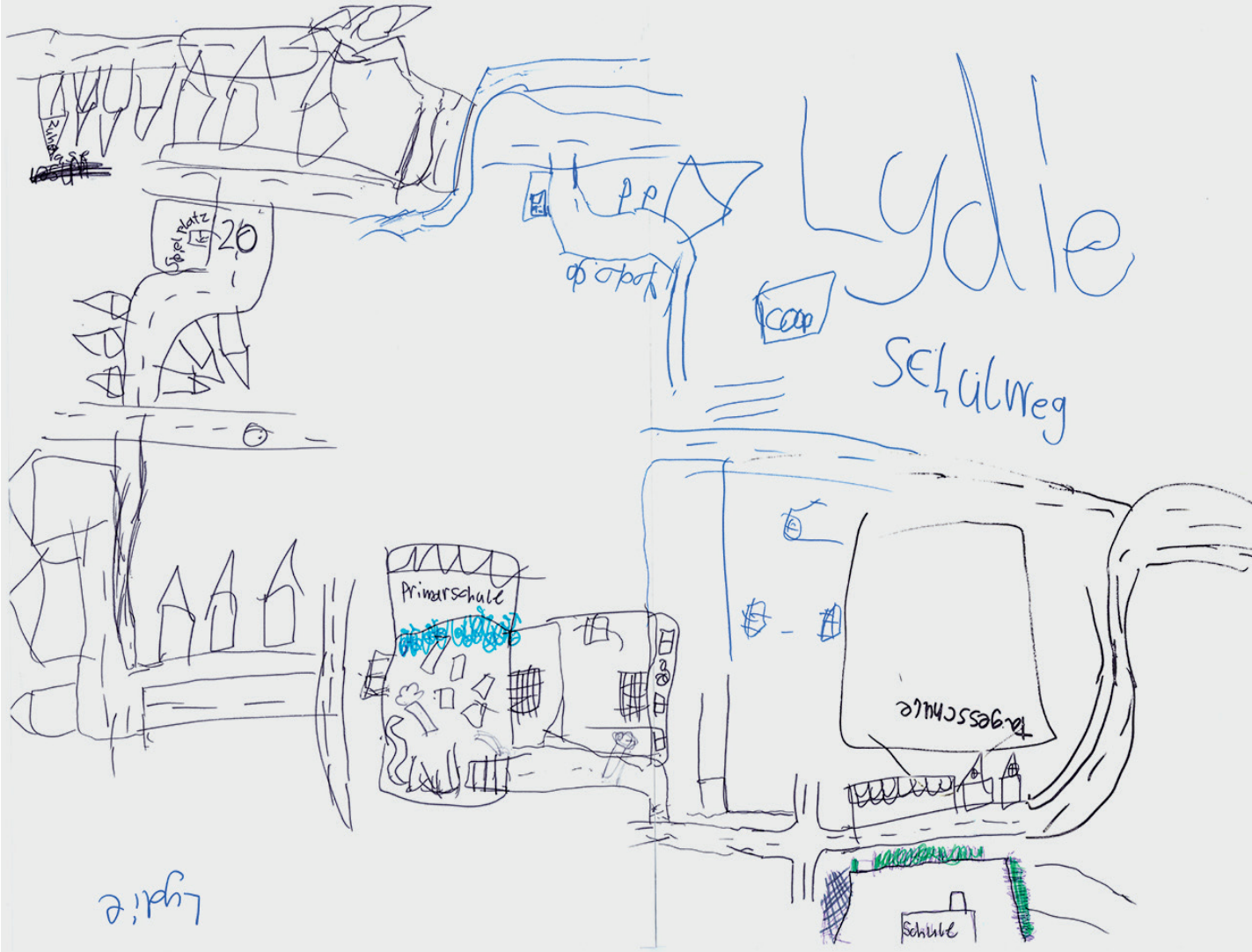




~~MATS~~

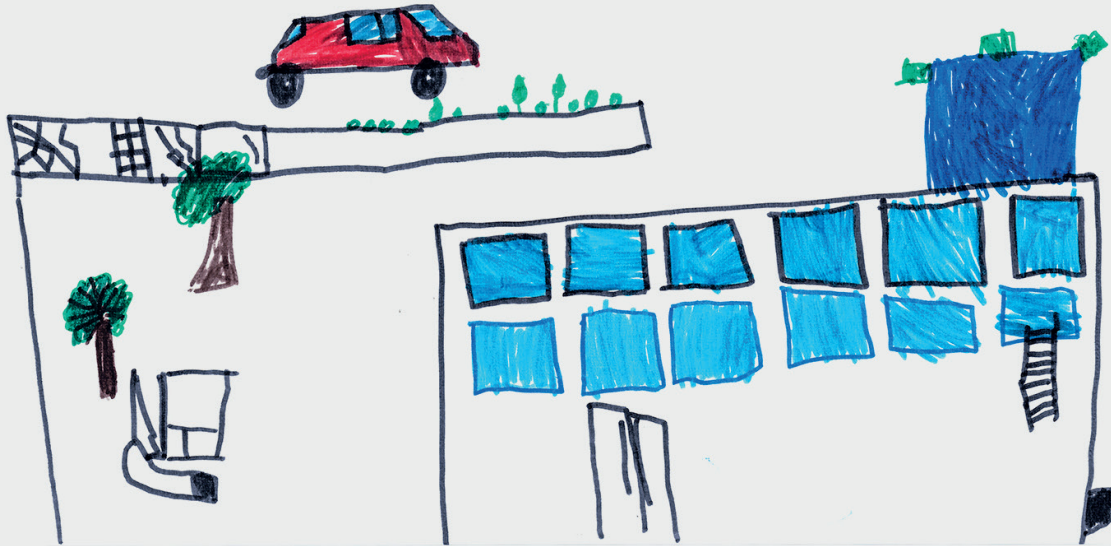
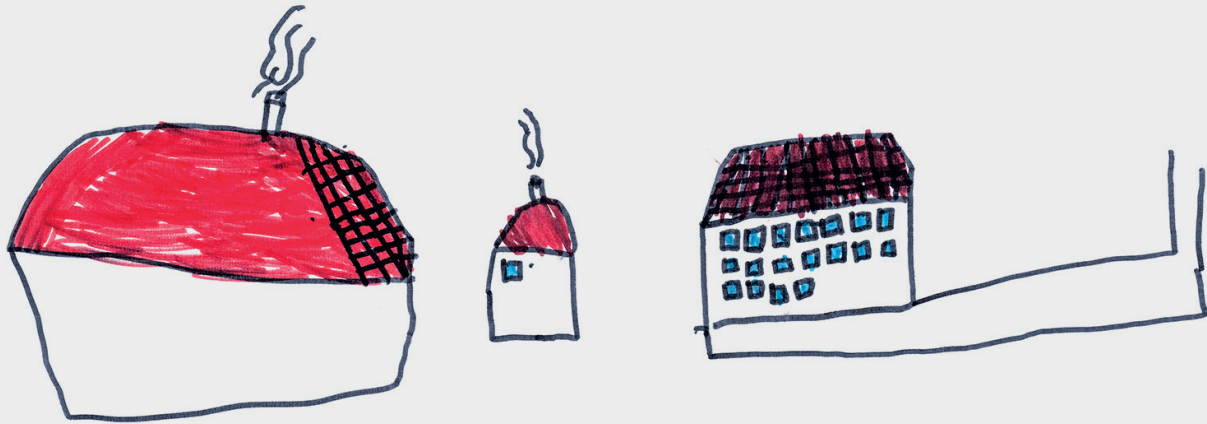


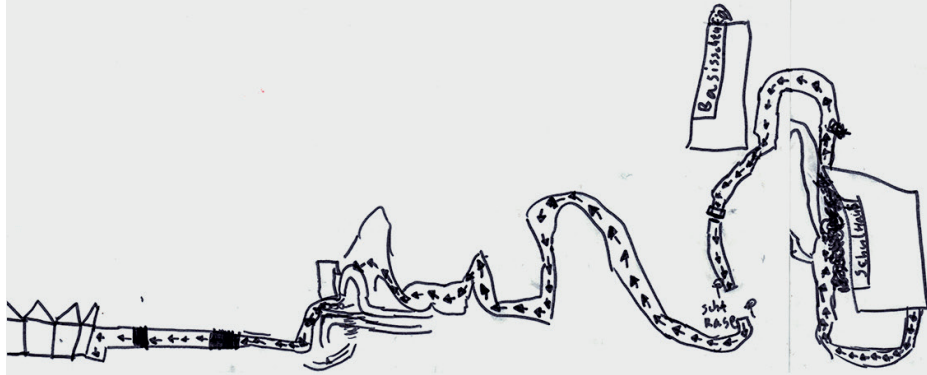




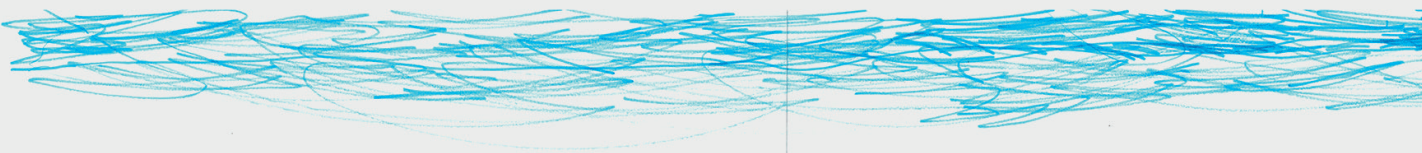


Finn



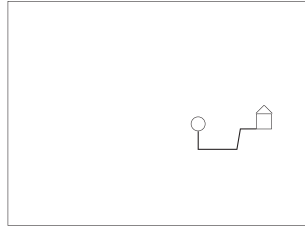


LIONEL



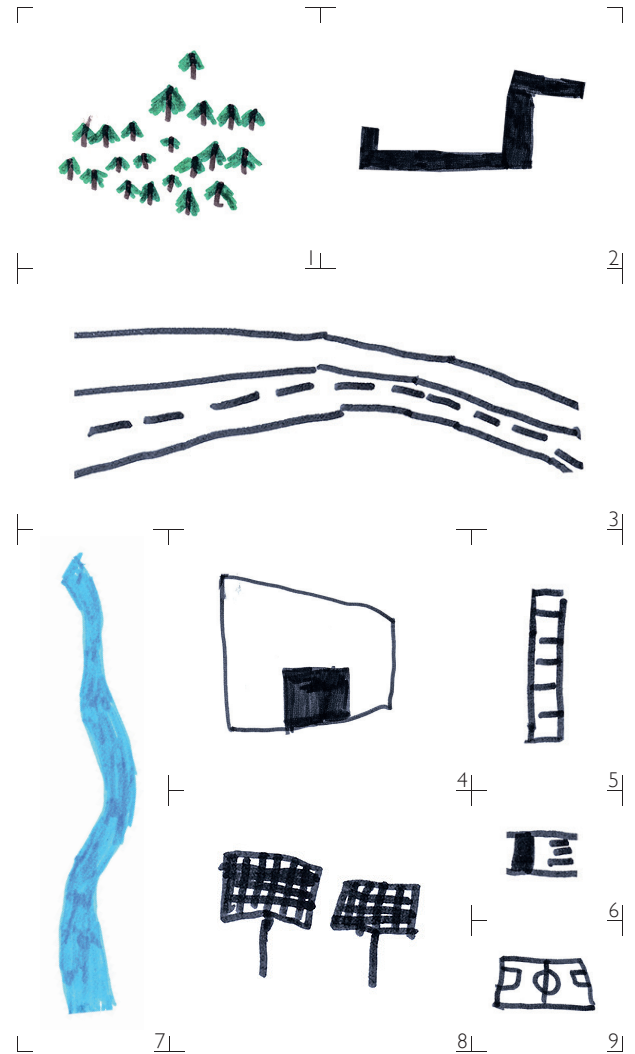
Charles

Drawing: The school is centred in the landscape format drawing from where the way goes to his home, which is on the right third of the paper.



Way: Charles draws the way he walks, like the houses, in hatched black.<sup>2</sup> There are no differentiations between the streets he's walking on. There is one main street (the Hochfeldstrasse, on which the school is located) which is represented with two parallel lines with a dashed line in between, followed on one side with a line to indicate the walkway, on which his path is marked.<sup>3</sup> In front of the school he draws one crosswalk<sup>6</sup>, as one black rectangle with three lines next to it.

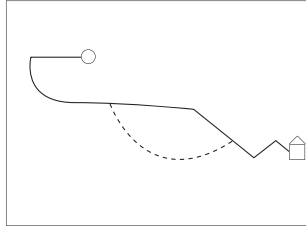
Elements: Some houses seem to be in top view whereas others in elevation. The ones in elevation are unfolded from the street to the outside. All except his own house, which is indicated with "ZIEL", are hatched black. Other elements in his drawing are the football court behind the school, where he plays with his friends during all the breaks.<sup>9</sup> Behind it is the forest<sup>1</sup> and next to it there are two light towers<sup>8</sup> of the stadium not far from the school. On the way to his home he comes by some buildings, the one just over the street with the tunnel, the "grosses Längassschulhaus" with its playground space around<sup>4</sup>, the high school named "Gimnasium" on the drawing, and some nameless buildings. Just before the last turn to get home, he mentions some parking lots<sup>5</sup>. On the other side far away from the rest he draws the Aare river<sup>7</sup>.





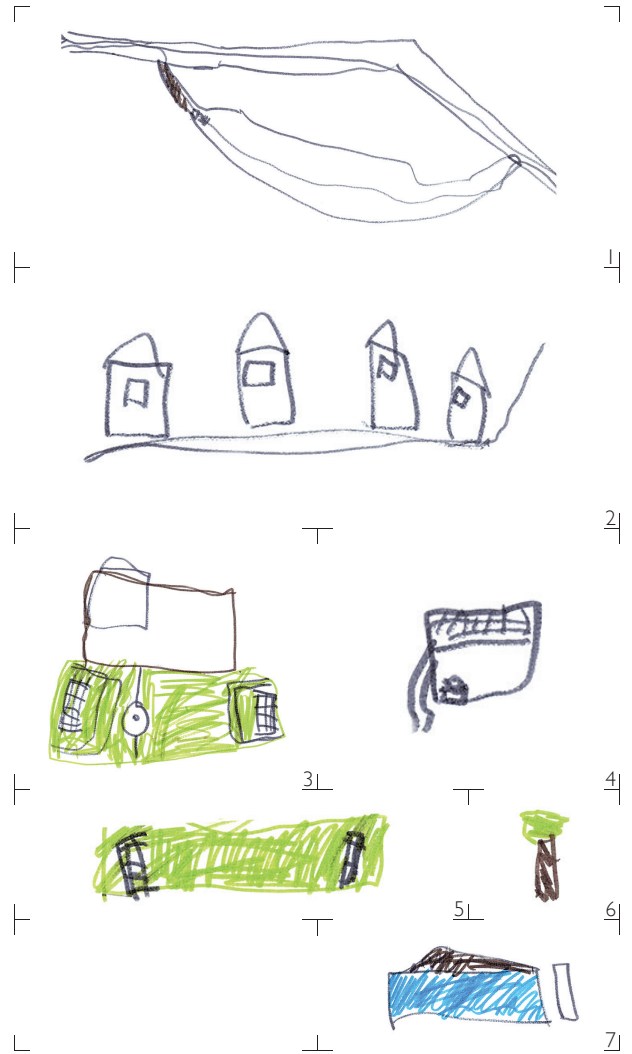
Yannis

Drawing: Yannis draws the school in the upper left corner, and uses the whole page to draw his way home. All the buildings are shown in elevation view whereas they are more or less oriented the same direction.



Way: The way is represented with up to four sketchy parallel lines. The path has some turns and a curvy ending but no interruptions.<sup>1</sup> There is a shortcut alternative way that leads to the “grosses Längassschulhaus”.

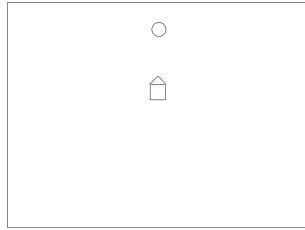
Elements: It seems that the football courts are the most important elements in this drawing, as both of the two schools are drawn very precisely drawn and important in size.<sup>3,5</sup> The buildings on the way are simplified.<sup>2</sup> Yannis draws also one tree in front of the school.<sup>6</sup> There aren't a lot of other elements.





## Thibault

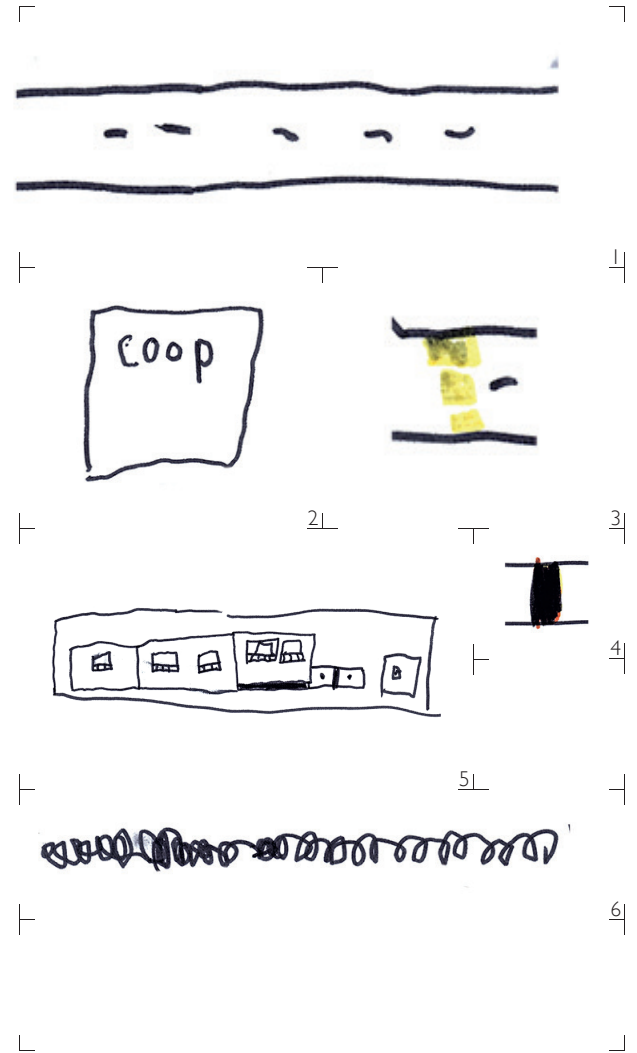
Drawing: The drawing of Thibault is an exception within the whole class. He doesn't draw the way to school in a linear, path-like way, but in form of a plan that



reminds very much of urban plans. This is mainly due to the fact that he lives right next to the school and therefore enjoyed drawing the whole area instead of only his way to school. The drawing spreads thus until the limit of the paper size and develops itself on the surface.

Way: As mentioned Thibault doesn't draw the way as the other children, however he does draw streets.<sup>1</sup> They are represented with two parallel lines and a dashed line in the middle. At two places he introduces crosswalks.<sup>3,4</sup>

Elements: Most of the buildings are shown in elevation as the "Tagesschule" and the "groses Länggassschulhaus". Other buildings he identifies are the Coop<sup>2</sup>, the building with the tunnel, which he crosses every day to get from his home to school, or the kindergarten next to the school. The rest of the buildings still have some unique characteristics, as for example the garages or balconies.<sup>5</sup> Also does he draw some vegetation<sup>6</sup> behind the "groses Länggassschulhaus" and the bike stand next to the school.

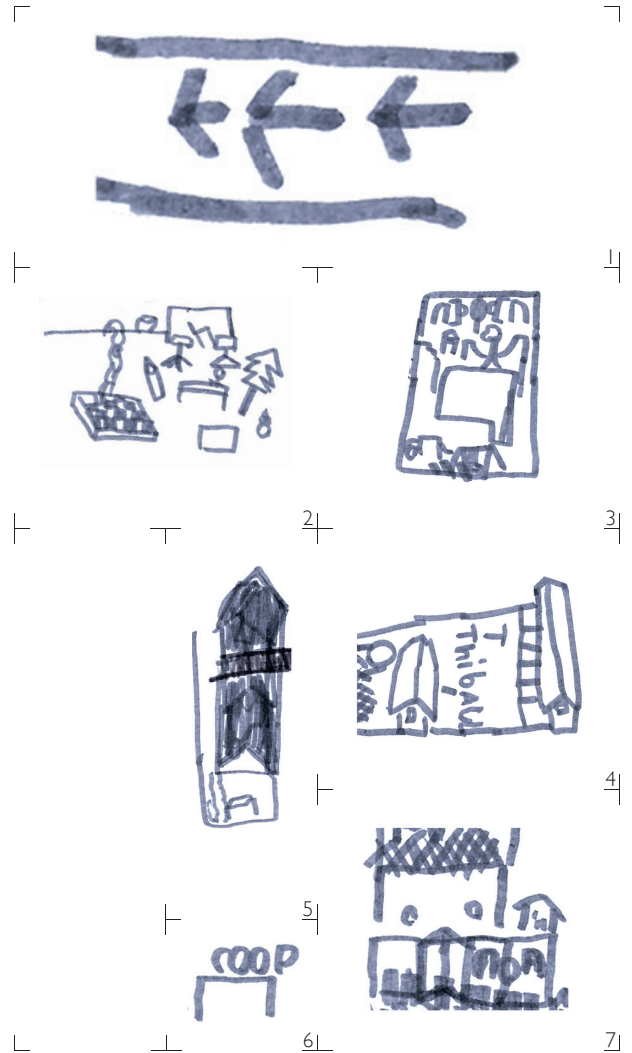
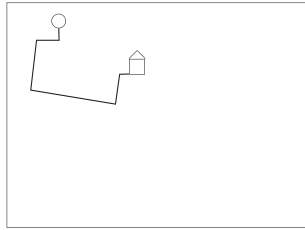


Mats:

Drawing: Mats starts his drawing on the top left corner and finishes in the centre right at his home.

Way: The journey is represented with a succession of arrows, sometimes guided by two parallel lines,<sup>1</sup> sometimes only one. A crosswalk interrupts the way once just after the school.

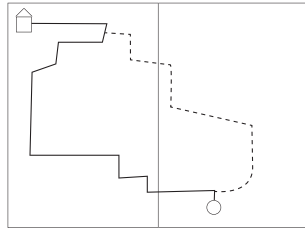
Elements: Except the school and the “Tagesschule” he draws all the building in a quite complex axonometric view, the school<sup>3</sup> is shown in top view and the “Tagesschule”<sup>7</sup> in a facade view. Around the school building, drawn in a top view, Mats shows all the different playgrounds<sup>3</sup>, the football court, the little half pipe and the swing. Next to the school he draws the kindergarten and the bicycle stand just next to it. He draws the block next to the school with Thibault’s home<sup>4</sup> and the “Tagesschule” with its playground. Afterwards he comes across the Coop<sup>6</sup> and later another playground<sup>2</sup> with a chess board, a tree and some toy objects laying around. Just before his home he indicates “Seidenweg” as the address and draws a long building.<sup>5</sup>





## Lydie

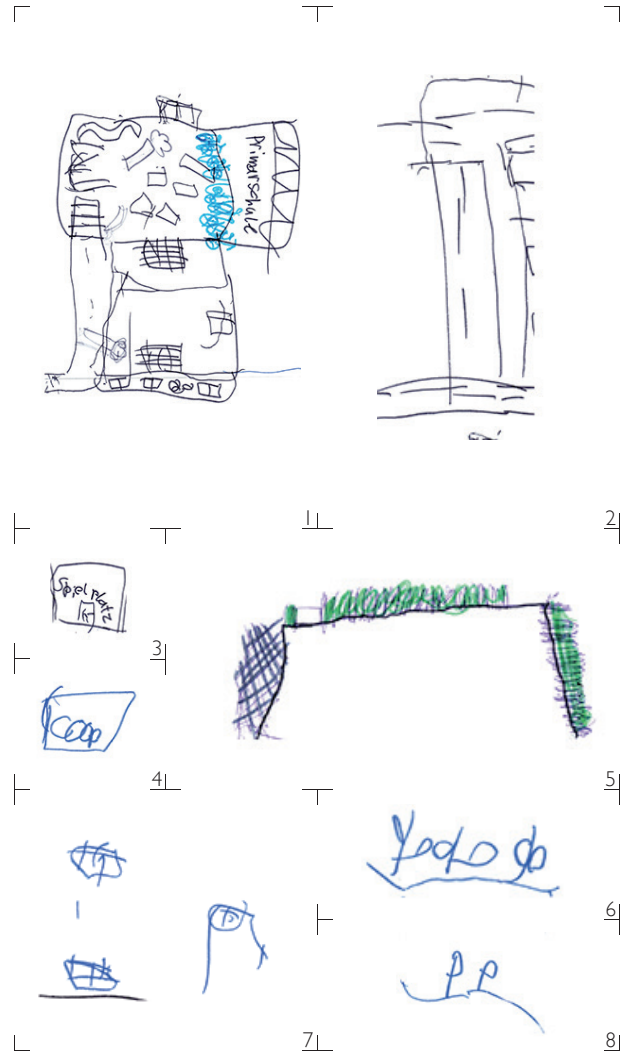
Drawing: The school is placed, standing on the short edge of the first paper. Going directly to the left, Lydie has to glue a second paper, where she's finally



ending in the opposite corner. Secondly, she draws the way home via the “Tagesschule”.

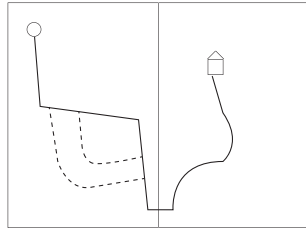
Way: Lydie draws her journey mainly by the streets she follows, indicated with two parallel lines and a dashed line in between.<sup>2</sup> Most of the time with one parallel line to illustrate the walkway.

Elements: The playground of the school is surrounded with some vegetation and fences.<sup>5</sup> She crosses the big playground of the “Primarschule” where she draws very detailed all the playgrounds she knows.<sup>1</sup> The ping-pong tables, the football field with the basketball hoop, the big stones, the climbing structure, the big slide and on the right side the bikes, standing in front of the school. She's leaving the playground through a gate on the other side. Further the way continues on the street with some context houses along it. At one point Lydie comes by a little playground<sup>3</sup> with a “20” sign on the ground next to it. She takes a little path just before arriving at the little street where her home is located in a row house. The second way goes to the right after leaving the school and leads to the “Tagesschule” with a playground with soccer field and basketball hoop just next to it.<sup>7</sup> Further along there is the Coop<sup>4</sup>, where she takes a little street with a lot of trees<sup>8</sup> and a bicycle stand<sup>6</sup>, to finally arrive at the same end as the first way home.

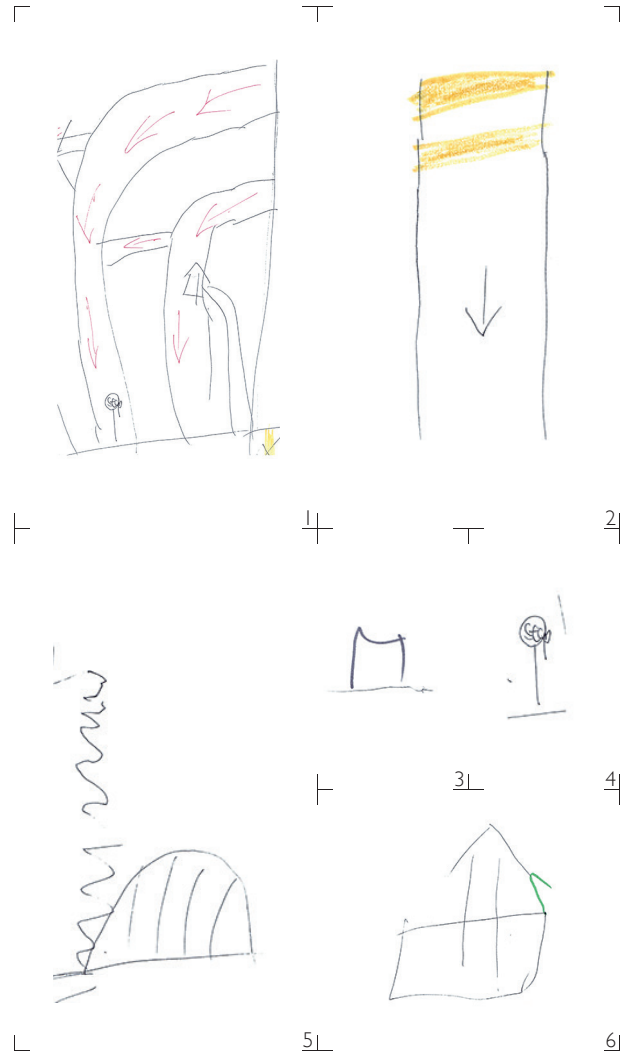


Aaron

Drawing: Aaron draws the school in the upper right corner and makes his way towards the opposite corner, where he adds a second paper to finish the journey. The orientation of the buildings stays the same until the end.



Way: He draws his way with two parallel lines like a road<sup>2</sup>. Not all of them are indicated the same way though, some are well defined as streets, others are sketchy as they are little paths. Three times the way is interrupted by a crosswalk drawn with two yellow thick lines.<sup>2</sup> The slope that leads down, is indicated with an arrow. There are also some alternative ways, the “Geheimweg” (secret paths)<sup>1</sup> as he calls them, a sort of shortcut. These shortcuts are indicated with red arrows. Elements: Apart from the paths, there are few elements in the drawing. Just next to the school Aaron draws a bike stand very simplified as a shelter<sup>3</sup>. The “Tagesschule” is shown as a thin little house with the playground around it.<sup>6</sup> He draws as well some vegetation along the street and the climbing structure on the backyard of it.<sup>5</sup> At the end of one of the shortcuts, there is a “stop” sign.<sup>4</sup>



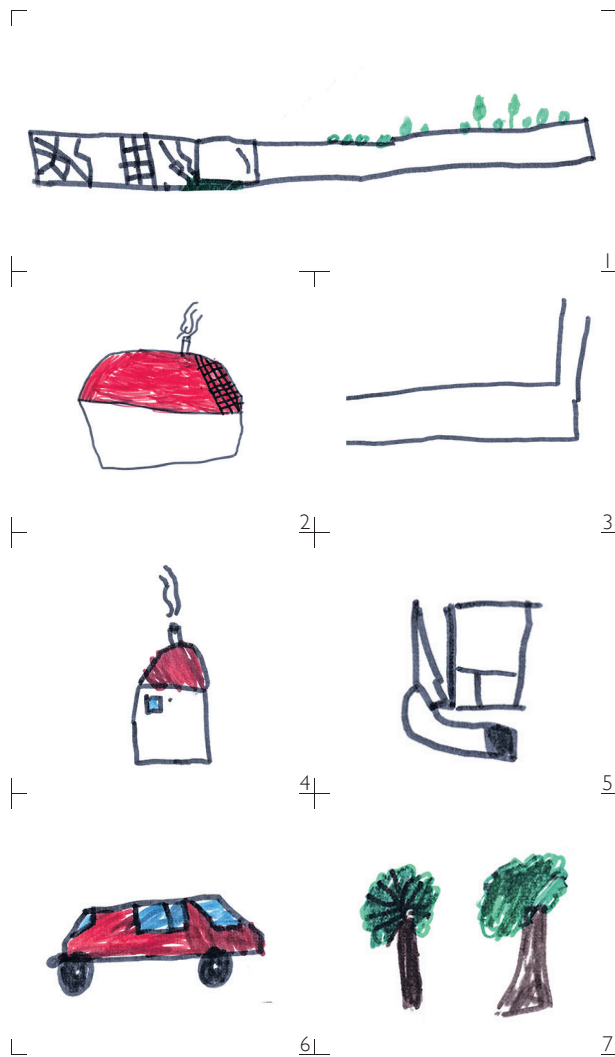
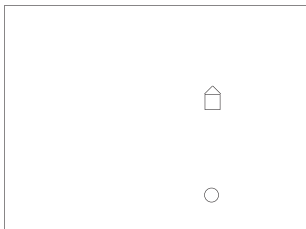
Finn

Drawing: Finn's drawing is an exceptional one of the class, as he is not showing the street he is walking on. The buildings are placed without their context on the drawing.

He places the school at the bottom of the sheet and his house in the upper part. All buildings are drawn in the same orientation.

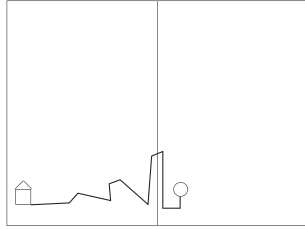
Way: As already mentioned is Finn not drawing his journey. Rather it is represented as a void along which he makes several encounters.

Elements: Besides the school and his home, there are two other houses drawn with smoking chimneys.<sup>2</sup> Next to the school he draws the schoolyard with two trees,<sup>7</sup> a playing object<sup>4</sup> and the fence around.<sup>1</sup> A car is driving by.<sup>6</sup> In front of his home, he draws partially the street that he lives on,<sup>3</sup> where he's playing often with his brothers, as he told me.



Lionel

Drawing: Lionel starts his drawing in the upper left corner and instantly wants to continue behind the school, as he has to add already a new sheet of paper.

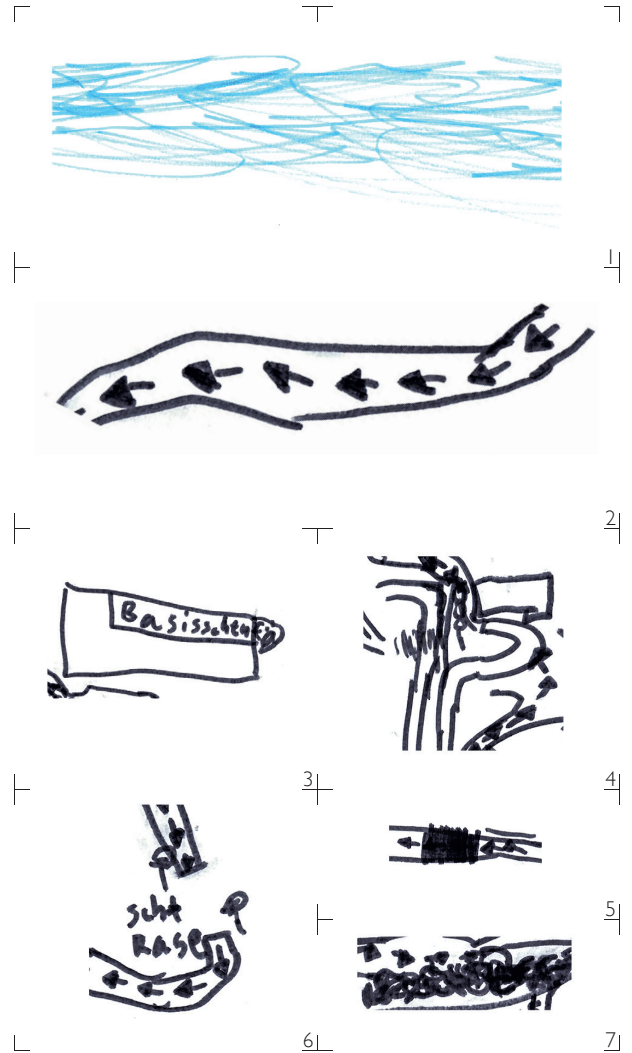


After some turns he arrives at the upper left corner of the second drawing at his home.

Way: the path is indicated with a succession of arrows and two parallel lines guiding on both sides.<sup>2</sup> It is interrupted by a crosswalk<sup>4</sup> just on the beginning and later by the “Schutirase” (football field).<sup>6</sup> Just before his home he draws again two crosswalks, this time as black rectangles on the way.<sup>5</sup>

Elements: Behind the school he draws the hedge that goes around the schoolyard.<sup>7</sup> Afterwards he passes by the “Basisstufe”<sup>3</sup> and the already mentioned football court. At one point he draws the bus station where he indicates himself walking over the crosswalk.<sup>4</sup> In the end, as the drawing is quiet empty, he adds a blue sky at the upper side of the two papers.<sup>1</sup>

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# Round Two

or the photo as a  
percieved reality

Round Two is a view of the children's way to school and thus a glimpse of the neighbourhood, a look literally at the child's eye level. The same class was asked to take pictures of things and places they like or dislike, as well as places that seem important to them on their way between home and school. This exercise seems important to me to understand again, as in the drawings, their points of interests, but this time in a more active way. The freely chosen motifs, reveal in some sort the affection to certain objects and situations. Looking at the results, we can see where and with what they come in contact, an interaction they choose themselves. Without direct contribution from my side it is the first turn on the field. It is like putting on the glasses of the children and being guided through the neighbourhood by them. For this second Round each pupil was given a disposable camera to take home. During one week they passed the cameras from one student to the other. After the introduction of the exercise we went to make some test shots as most of the pupils did not know this type of camera where the photo is not immediately visible after it is taken. Quite some photos were too dark for development because of poor light conditions. One student took four pictures of his eye, as he is left-handed and therefore held the camera in the wrong direction. These pictures were entirely black as well. Others are very blurry and not shown here. Out of all the rest I made a personal selection, as already for the drawings, because of quantitative reasons. These are not necessarily the same pupils as in Round one but chosen independently.



































# Time-Out

## One

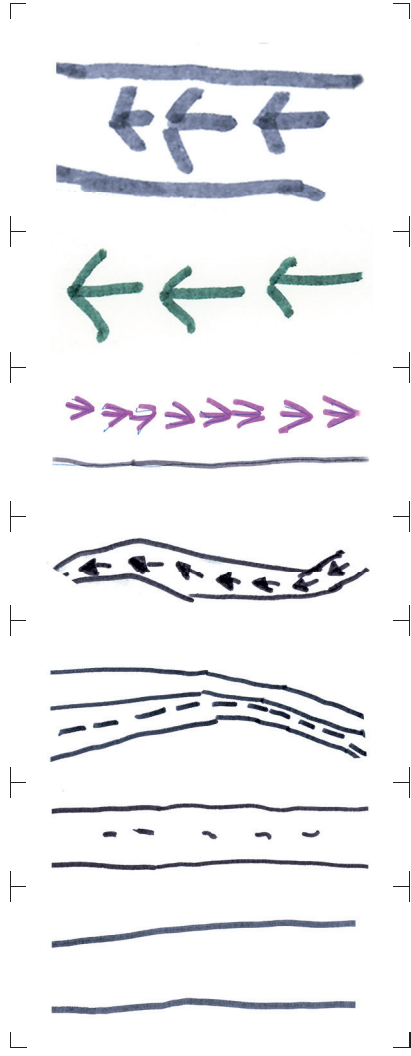
or the concept of affordances and the subjective objectivity

The Time-Out is meant as a little break from the action to discuss what has already been experienced and to introduce a new theoretical input, as a sort of strategy. In this particular case of the first Time-Out it is the strategy of affordances. In the two prior Rounds, the children had already visited the terrain twice: Once imaginatively, by drawing the places they already knew by heart, and the second time with a lens framing places of interest to them. In round one, several themes seem to be important for the continuation in the next rounds.

Firstly, the way how the drawings were tackled graphically: A lot of the children placed the school at the very edge of the paper and wanted to depart their journey in the direction away from the page centre, which led them either to start again with a new drawing or to add a new sheet right after having drawn the school. One pupil also asked if she could continue on the back of the page, as the way continued behind the school building already drawn, which I found a quite innovative proposal. The theme of the shortcut or the “secret path” reappeared in many of the drawings, and especially in the conversation with the children it appeared to them to be something fundamental, when talking about orientation in the neighbourhood. In the further development of this thesis, especially in the introduction of the playful use of space, this seems to me to be an important topic, since it is already a kind of game when someone is looking for alternative, new or hidden paths. The same confusion also occurred when trying to draw a slope. (As there is a little slope just next to the school leading away from it, this occurred quite often.) Some of the pupils represented it with arrows or even with written text next to it, like in the cases of Aaron,<sup>1</sup> others tend

<sup>1</sup> Drawing Aaron, p. 52





<sup>7</sup> fig. trees, p.117

<sup>5</sup> fig. crosswalks, p.114

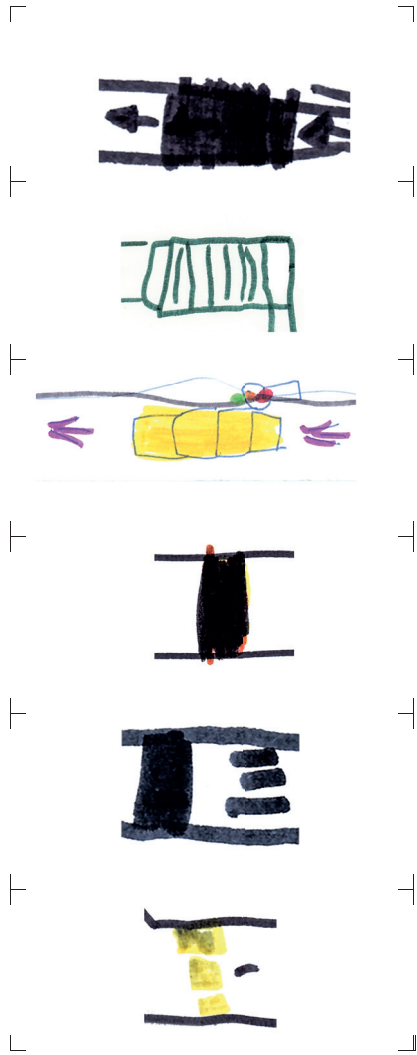
<sup>3</sup> Drawing Mats, Lydie, p.50

<sup>6</sup> fig. hedges, p.116

<sup>4</sup> fig. road fragments (left)

<sup>2</sup> Drawing Yannis, p.42

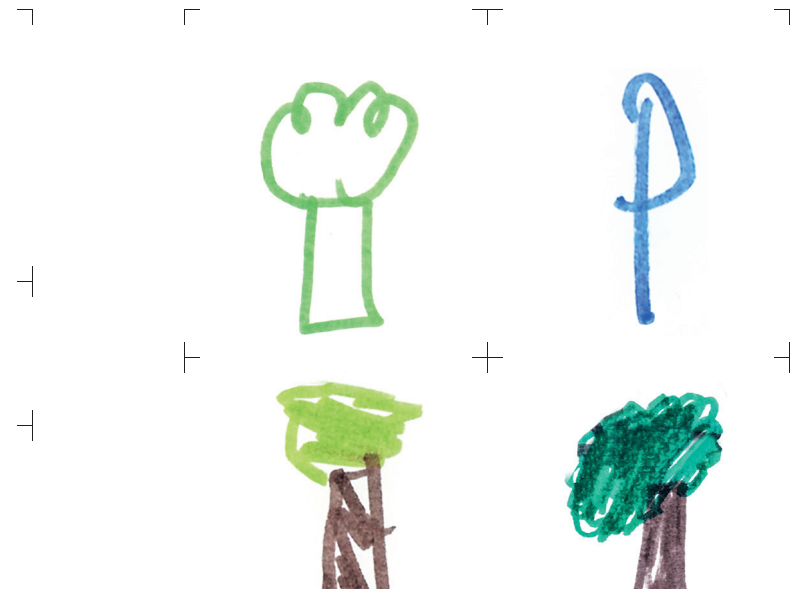
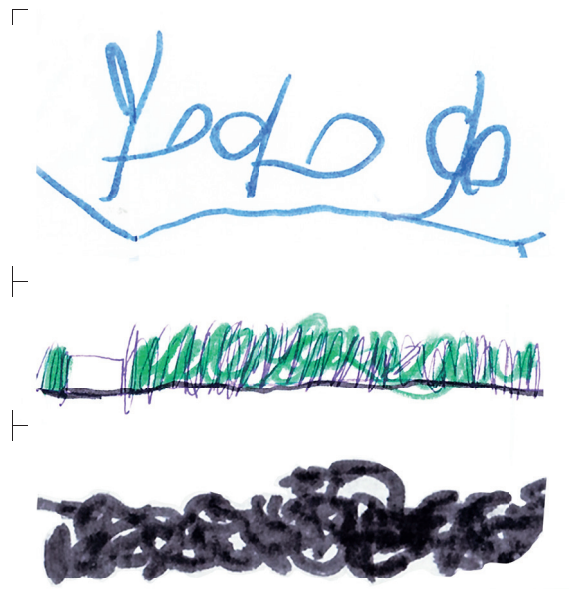
to make a curvy road like Yannis does.<sup>2</sup> More generally speaking, one could say that the surfaces, streets and playgrounds on which they walk on, are shown in top view, whereas most of the buildings are drawn in elevation. An exception however is the school which is often represented as a part of the surrounding space or playground and thus represented in top view, as in Mats or Lydie's drawing.<sup>3</sup> The actual journey of the way home from school was in most cases represented as a street as shown in the collection of road fragments,<sup>4</sup> sometimes with the indication of arrows where the child is walking. In general, it gives the feeling of quite narrow, tube-like spaces. Sometimes there is an extra parallel line for the sidewalk, but this is only the case in a few examples. Contrarily, the crosswalk is very present in nearly all of the drawings and it is represented several times facing the street like a hurdle (as one can see in the three upper drawings of the collection).<sup>5</sup> Another element guiding the path (or street) is the hedge. Indeed, a very typical component of the street scape of this neighbourhood are the little walls, fences or hedges along the streets that apparently also the children seem to interact with.<sup>6</sup> Also some trees seem to be of importance as reference points for some of the kids.<sup>7</sup> In Round Two, with the children by themselves on the field, one starts to see the interactions they have with their environment more directly. These are interactions with objects and places the children are drawn to, as they were asked to take pictures of places that somehow speak to them. It is not primarily a question of whether the photo's subjects affected the children positively or negatively, which to be honest was also quite difficult to say after looking at the results, but the



interest lays on what and where the places are, which actually affect them.

One “theme” that reappear in the photos are the very close detailed shots of, such as plants, graffiti or decoration elements from private gardens. Another popular subject is garbage: in trash bins, in rubbish bags or lying on the street. These close-up pictures that the children took, attest to a very close contact with their surroundings. During the way home from school they have the time to stroll through the neighbourhood and discover these places. Like in the drawings, streetlights and traffic situations are depicted in many cases. The contact with car traffic is part of everyday life for the children. Most of the photos are in proximity of the school, as the children live in general nearby. However, there’s no place where there is a conspicuous number of photos taken. The places they take the pictures of are talking to them in particular. It needs to be mentioned that they had only four pictures available and therefore was quite a decision to know where and when to press the button. The place can therefore not only be considered, as a passive scenery or as a background, but as an actor calling for attention and activated by the camera. The same as in Round One with the drawings, where places were activated in the imagination of the children.

In order to better understand this mutual effect of activation, James J. Gibson’s concept of affordances seems particularly appropriate at this point, as it deals simultaneously with objects and environments and their inhabitants. It is about the place, but also about the viewer (or actor), as we have seen in the previous rounds. In this case, the environment corresponds to the path



from home to school, and of course vice versa, and the actors are the children. The act as such has so far only been the walk to school, but what I'm actually looking for is the act of playing and how play is used by the children to appropriate different spaces, and vice versa how these spaces are "calling" to be played. But let's take the definition which Gibson gives us about his affordances:

"The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill. The verb *to afford* is found in the dictionary, but the noun *affordance* is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment."<sup>8</sup>

As already mentioned, the "animal" is in this case the child and with the first two Rounds we discovered affordances it is offered in the given context. The question is now what are the affordances related to play, or more precisely the affordances of objects and environments *to be playable*.

Taking in consideration the smaller size of the children compared to adults, the environment has to be looked at from literally another perspective, with a relative eye height of approximately one meter twenty, in the case of the seven to eight-years old pupils. In an environment that is manly built (or manipulated) for grown-ups, the child's perspective is given other affordances. As Gibson already mentions: "Knee-high for a child is not the same as knee-high for an adult, so the affordance is relative

to the size of the individual."<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the height of a curb stone for an adult is only a step, but for a child may be a hurdle to overcome or a place to sit on. All the manipulations in the environment are made to change what is afforded, they make more available what one benefits from, and less pressing what makes everyday life more difficult. In the same time, it makes life harder for most of the other animals.<sup>10</sup> But for whom is the urban landscape planned? Have the manipulations in the environment also made more accessible the affordances which children benefit from? Is it easy for the child to move in this environment, or are they more like the "other animals", harmed by the changes? As outlined in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the children have less and less space on the street.<sup>11</sup> Motorized traffic displaces the child to protected areas such as playgrounds and back gardens. Also, in the drawings and photos in the first two rounds, traffic is a big theme, the children stand at the traffic lights of the main street and orient themselves by the pedestrian strips.<sup>12</sup> The central question for this thesis though remains of what's is the position of the affordance of *being playable*? Is the concerned environment considered to be playable for the children, and lastly also for the adult? In the following Rounds, I will try to tackle some of those question. After the previous two realities, revealed to me by the children, I would like to introduce one of my own in Round Three. Willingly influenced by what I have seen so far, I want to set an objective reality next to the two subjective realities we have just seen. I'm using the elements of the drawings and photographs to guide me towards places of potential interest, to verify whether or not there is the affordance of play.

This is without doubt a falsely objective reality on the one hand because I am proposing these places with the affordance of being playable for the children, which by definition shouldn't be possible, taking into consideration, me not being one of those same children and on the other hand because of the affordances being in Gibson's words: "... neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points in both ways, to the environment and the observer."<sup>13</sup> Therefore I call it a subjective objectivity.

# Round Three or the objective reality

Round Three concentrates on the search for places that offer a certain density of elements which have been examined in the previous Time-out. The elements of the first two realities are taken as a set of general interests in the children's contact with their environment. In round three they are now put together again.

This third round is therefore a sort of setting of context to describe five places I encountered when I followed the traces of the children's photos and drawings. Again, as the children had done it in the first two Rounds, I went through the same streets and wrote down what I had noticed. I tried to describe the chosen places as neutral as possible with the axonometric drawing as a tool. As mentioned already before, the interest with the affordances lies in the different interpretation (or activation) of the same place.

When I was walking through the streets around the school, I recognised retrospectively how precise and attentive some of the drawings had been made. I should mention at this point that I have been to the neighbourhood many times before, but I have never spent much time there, and when I'm nearby, I always frequent the same places. It was interesting to get to know the neighbourhood from a different perspective. The children guided me through the streets of "their" neighbourhood and showed me places I would never have found otherwise.

The selection of the five places occurred as followed: I tried to integrate as many elements from the drawings and photos as possible. Also, I tried to include a variety of different places, neither only streetscapes, nor only

squares. The limitation of the interest is still on non-institutionalised, and non-predestined “play areas”, as this thesis is intentionally neither about school, nor about playground as they are commonly defined. The five places are condensed within a radius of about ten minutes walking distance around the school.

The five places are:

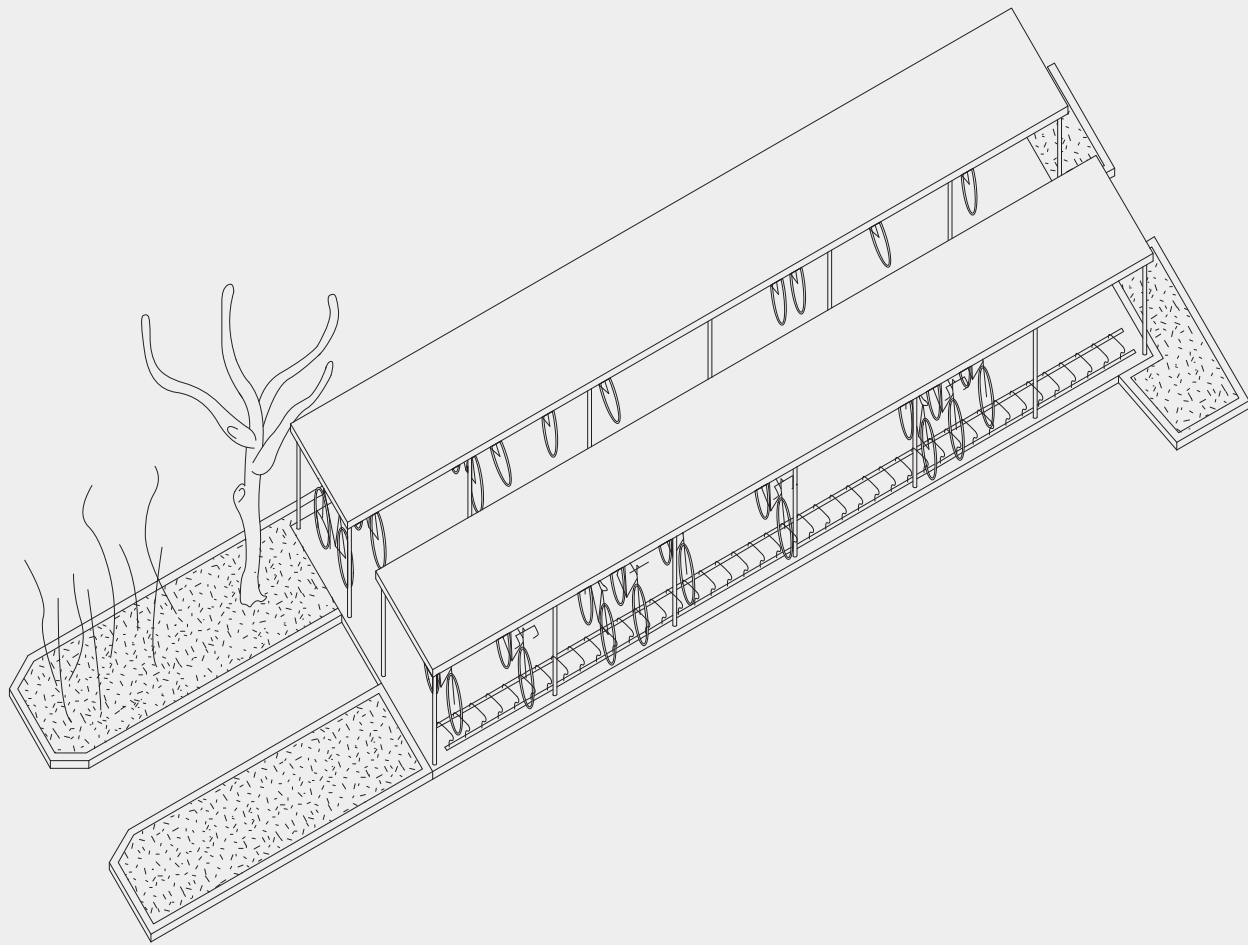
The Bicycle Stand

The Little Square

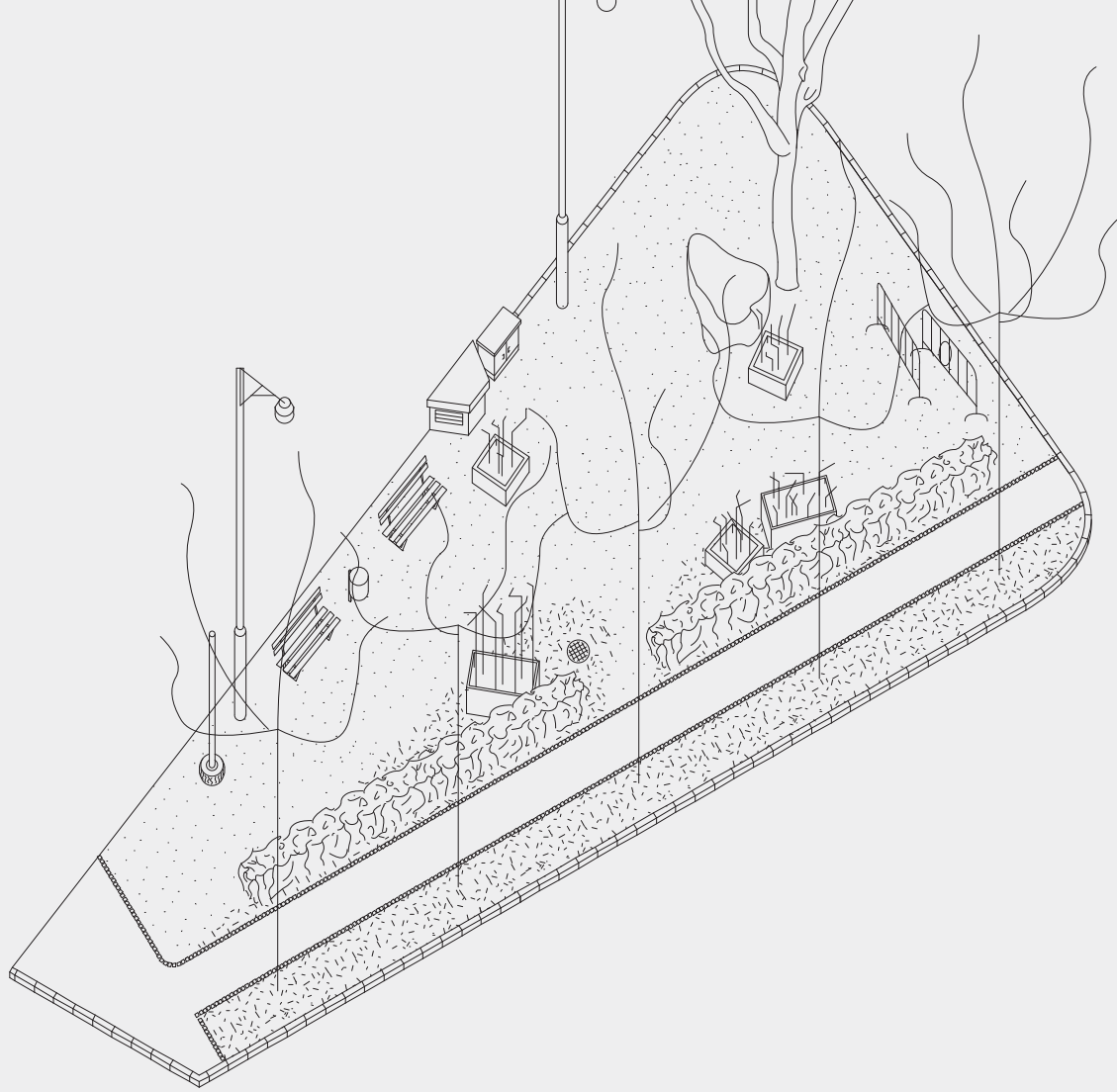
The Bus Stop

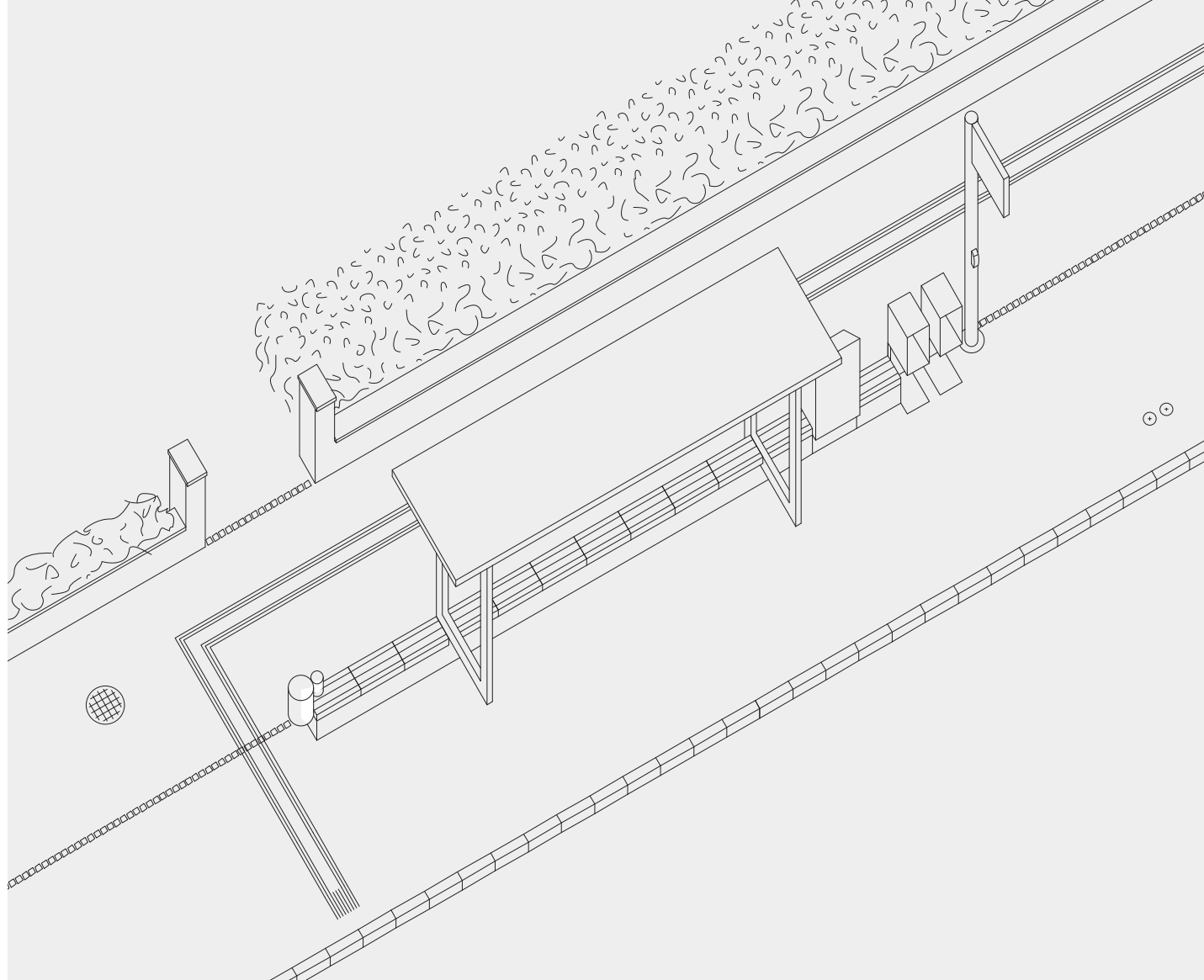
The Neighbourhood Road

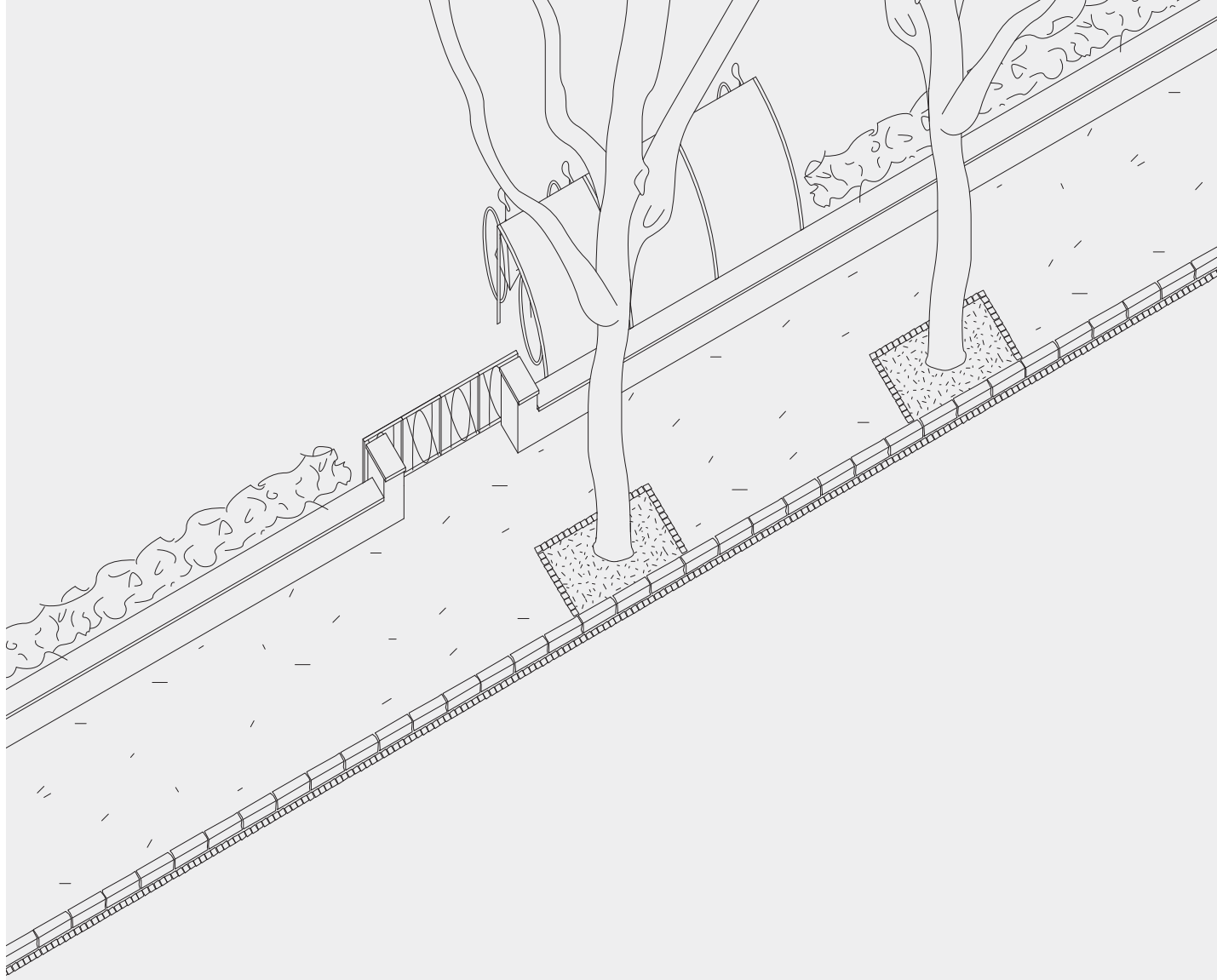
The Big Stairs

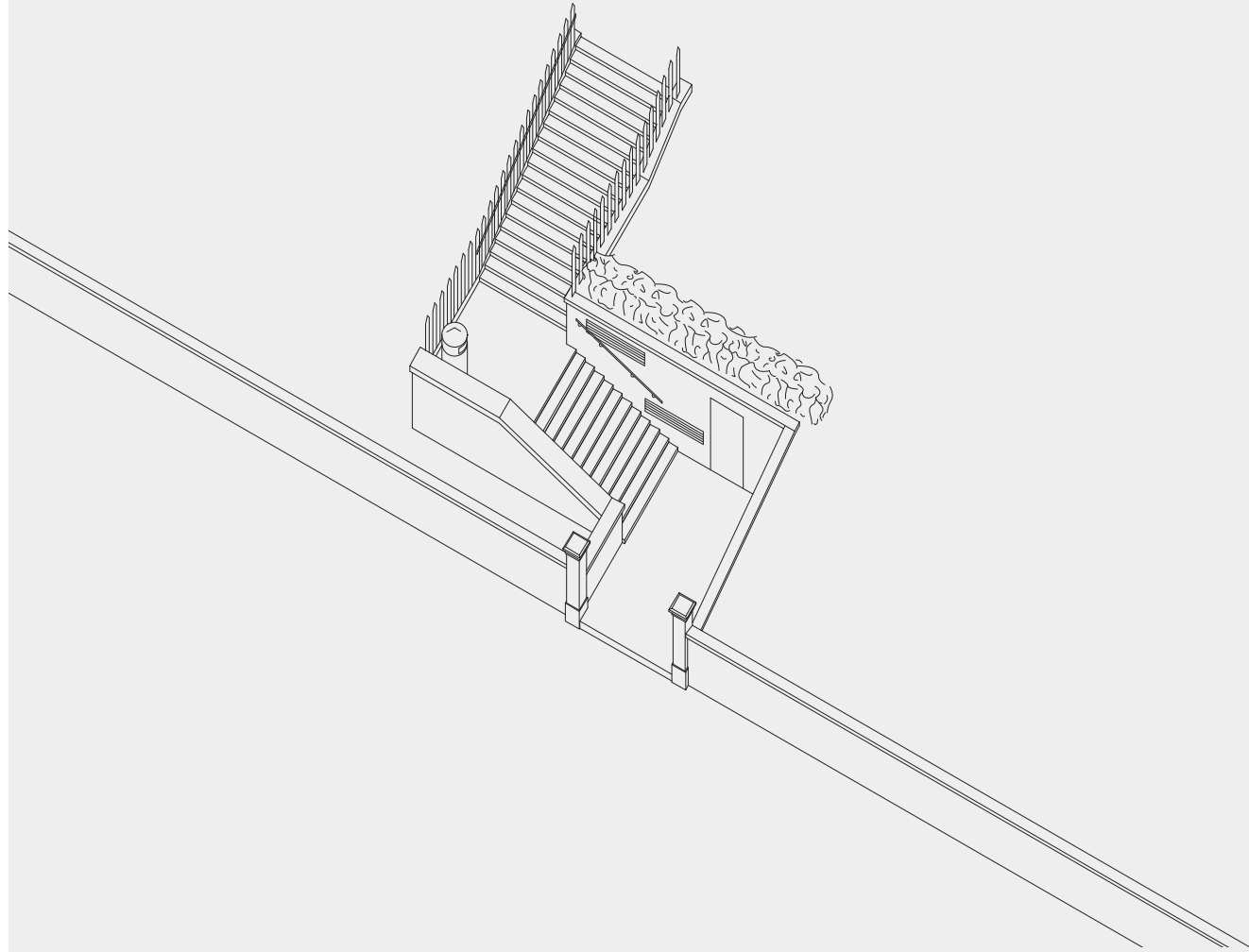












# Time-Out

## TWO

or the spatial  
action of play

After having found five places in Round Three, I would like to take again some distance from the Längasse to introduce an additional theoretical thought, to finally arrive at the playful action in space. For this purpose, I would like to introduce the point of view of the Situationnistes Internationale, the group of thinkers around Guy Debord, who had been active in Paris from the mid-fifties on. In 1958 they have published their own definition of play: “*Contribution à une définition situationniste du jeu*” (Contribution to a situationist definition of play) is the title of one of the texts published in the first issue of the “bulletin de l’Internationale Situationniste”. It is to mention that in the same year Roger Caillois published his book *les jeux et les hommes* 1958 can be considered a truly playful year.

In the situationists manifesting definition of play, Guy Debord calls for a blending of play and real life. He criticises the view of the game as a temporary and spatially limited perfection in the incompleteness of the world.<sup>1</sup> The isolated and exceptional character of the game, as well as competitions as public sports, are no games. Play must enter the entire life by radically breaking with its narrow-minded space and time. Perfection cannot be the goal of a game, Debord claims.<sup>2</sup> Assuming that the world with all its complexity can never take on a complete character, play can only be part of the everyday life when it’s liberated from its completeness. This contradicts to a certain extent Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens* and other known definitions of play, which describe games as spatially and temporally limited actions.<sup>3</sup> For the Situationists play is not (or should not be) an isolated reality and is therefore per se impossible to define.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter play, p.22

<sup>2</sup> Debord, p. 15

<sup>1</sup> Debord, p. 15

Coming back to the five chosen places in the Längasse: As mentioned in Time-Out One, I am on the research of the affordance of an environment to be playable. In the five chosen places I'm hoping to find some of this playfulness. The procedure is carried out in two ways, according to the two opinions outlined above about the positioning of play in everyday life. Both as an exploration of the same field. One examination will therefore be on the importance of the unplanned or even unconscious use of playfulness in the interpretation and the use of a place. The other one is the conscious use of games as a tool for appropriating these same places. Drawn by the field's offers, Round four is an exploration of psychogeographic effects, resulting in a constructive playing behaviour.<sup>4</sup>

# Round Four

or the game as an  
imagined reality

<sup>1</sup>Time-out One, p. 110

Once again, I returned, accompanied by the children this time, to the five places listed before. Most of the children already knew the places, as they're located on the streets just around the school. Once arrived, I first asked them to describe me the place very "objectively",<sup>1</sup> to compare my objectiveness elaborated in Round three with theirs. The discussion was about distances, heights and materiality. Secondly, I asked them to describe me (and to show me) how they make use of the space when they pass by in an everyday situation. And finally, I asked them what they could play there. What different kinds of games, but also, what they could imagine the place to be (or become) in a role game for example.

For this fourth round, I went to visit the children on an already wintery but nice Wednesday morning. With two groups of seven and five pupils, I went two times during an hour to visit the five places, the first two places with the first group and the three other places with the second group.

## Place One, The Bicycle Stand

*Amin, Emma, Julie, Katharina, Mattia, Salome, Thibault, Mrs. Rieder, Jonas*

*After having explained the exercise at the school, the group is about to visit the first place. Together they arrive at the bicycle stand, standing in a circle in between the two roofs amidst many bicycles.*

JONAS. So, arriving at the first place, the bicycle stand, you for sure all know, let's start to describe what we see, and what one can do in this place.

SALOME. One can put bikes here.

EMMA. Leave his bike and take it again later.

THIBAULT. One can simply pass through.

SALOME. Lock and unlock bicycles.

AMIN. Place his motorcycle.

JULIE. One can put his helmet on the bicycle.

JONAS. Describe me also what you see around here?

JULIE. I see bicycles.

EMMA. Poles.

AMIN. A lot of bikes.

KATHARINA. As well, I can see a roof.

SALOME. Here, next to it, there is a tree.

JULIE. I see a bicycle with a very high saddle.

Mrs. RIEDER. Do you know what material the roof is made of?

KATHARINA. Stone.

THIBAULT. I think it's concrete.

KATHARINA. I also see a bicycle stands.

*Emma starts to put herself on one of the bikes and pretends to be driving.*

EMMA. So, and now I'm driving the bike. Like this I can drive away.

KATHARINA. And there are bicycle lights.

JULIE. Here there is a helmet someone forgot on the floor.

EMMA. Wait I'm going to count the bicycles: One, two, three...

*Salome and Emma start to run around and start to count all the bicycles, the others join. After a short moment they lose passion and start to scream random numbers.*

SALOME. There are hundred bikes here.

MATTIA. Here is a kind of graffiti written in red on this pole. It says Luk...

EMMA. Lukas stinks, but "lukas" is misspelled, it's usually spelled c, a, s. Lucas.

AMIN. It is not written very properly. Difficult to read, but it is an insult, I suppose.

*Everyone is standing around one of the poles and start to yell random letters and little phrases they can read written on the pole.*

EMMA. I can also see the pole, where the roof is fixed on, they're round and there are a lot of those.

MATTIA. There is also a motorcycle with the license plate of 104730.

JONAS. And if you imagine being here with friends during the lunchbreak, what could you imagine playing?

EMMA. Stealing bicycles.

JULIE. Hide-and-peek.

MATTIA. Behind the motorcycle is good hiding place.



*Emma puts her two hands around the pilotis and swings around.*

EMMA. You could also turn around the pole like this.

JULIE. And here you can climb on the roof and jump down again.

*Several children try to climb on the structure next to the roof to climb from there onto the roof. Miss Rieder and Jonas are asking them to come down again.*

EMMA. We can also climb up a pole and slide down again, like a firefighter.

JULIE. If we climb all together on the roof, we can go all to one side which makes the roof collapse, afterward we can use it as a huge slide.

*As the group is just about to leave one of the children starts to ring a bell of one of the bikes, where all the others join, ending in a concert of bells.*

JULIE. This is the game of the bells. Like this you can compare all the bells and then decide which one is the coolest.

AMIN. And then one can choose which one to buy for your own.

THIBAUT. We can also make a lightshow with all the lights.

*The group is leaving the bicycle stand and is heading off to the next place.*

## Place Two, The little Square

*Amin, Emma, Julie, Katharina, Mattia, Salome, Mrs. Rieder, Jonas*

*The group is gathered under the tree in the center of the little square. Some of the children are sitting on the big stone right beside it.*

JONAS. As before, first, we try to describe the place as precisely as possible.

EMMA. I see a tree and a flower box.

THIBAUT. There is this stone we're sitting on.

JULIE. I see pebbles on the floor, and little sticks that fell off the tree. And a bush.

KATHARINA. I think in summer these flower pots are filled with plants.

AMIN. There is a green pot and a brown wooden box.

*Katharina is standing in one of the flowerpots while looking at the frozen plants.*

MATTIA. There are also two crowd barriers.

JONAS. Do you know what they are used for?

MATTIA. Yes. In winter, when there is snow on the little slope street, the one we just came down, becomes an official sledging track. This is a lot of fun. They put the barriers to stop the cars, going onto the track.

*The children are walking around, discovering.*

JULIE. I also can see a garbage bin and two benches back here.

AMIN. There is already some ice on the benches.

THIBAUT. It's the first snow.

MATTIA. No, this is ice cream.

SALOME. I can see an electricity box.

KATHARINA. I can see also a streetlamp.

AMIN. Here is a ventilation shaft. It stinks.

MATTIA. It is the ventilation from the canalization system, I guess.

*Everyone goes to the ventilation shaft to smell. Laughter. The children inspect the shaft very closely, some climb on it.*

THIBAUT. And there is a poster glued on the electricity box, and other things written on it.

SALOME. There is the hedge with weird poisonous berries.

JULIE. And there is a manhole, it also comes from the canalization.

THIBAUT. There is a post with a car tire where they fix the sunshade in the summer.

JONAS. Like at the first place, what kind of games can be played here?

JULIE. Hide-and-seek.

SALOME. We can play high-tag or "the floor is lava" and jump on the big stones or the flower boxes.

AMIN. Boccia, I played this once with my parents.

SALOME. One can play jumping rope.

THIBAUT. Football can also be played here with the flower boxes as goals.

*Emma and Salome are standing on the bench and sliding with their feet from one side to the other.*

EMMA. We can slide around on the frozen benches.

SALOME. Yes, simultaneously we're cleaning the benches

for the next person who wants to sit down. Like this she does not get a wet butt.

*Thibault lifts the litter bin cap and smashes it back.*

THIBAUT. We can play some music with the garbage.

MATTIA. The benches could also be used as fortresses for snowball fights in winter.

*The group is heading off, back towards the school.*

## Place Three, The Bus Stop

*Anisha, Jasmin, Lionel, Lydie, Vivienne, Mrs. Rieder, Jonas*

*After having explained the exercise another time at the school, the second group is walking to the third place. Arriving at the bus stop, the group is gathered behind the bus shelter on the sidewalk.*

JONAS. So, arriving at the first place, the bus stop, let's describe what we can see and what one can do here. If you know the place, from your way to school for example, how do you use it?

ANISHA. When I come by here, I don't feel very comfortable, because there are always these weird people sitting and smoking here.

LYDIE. I have my room where I sleep just around the street corner and often I wake up because it is quite noisy.

ANISHA. They often hang out on this spot drinking and smoking cigarettes.

LYDIE. Mostly I avoid the place on my way to school.

JONAS. Let's describe the place. What do you see around here?

LYDIE. There is a bus stop here.

VIVIENNE. There is this wall with some graffiti on it.

LIONEL. A window made out of plastic or glass, I don't know, with a roof.

*The group start to walk around the place.*

VIVIENNE. Wooden benches.

JASMIN. A litter bin.

LIONEL. Also, there is the indication on the floor for blind people.

LYDIE. Here, one can take a newspaper and read it on the bench.

JONAS. And what else can be done here?

LYDIE. Waiting for the bus.

ANISHA. Buying a ticket from the machine.

LYDIE. One can also eat and drink on the benches, drinking beer.

LIONEL. You can also read the bus timetable or read the little map.

JONAS. Could you imagine practicing some sort of game here?

ANISHA. We could play "the floor is lava" with the benches as the safe spot.

*Lydie is pushing the information button on the pole several times rapidly.*

LYDIE. Here one can push the button to hear the information for the blind, but just after the voice starts to talk you push the button again and again. Like this you can make a little concert.

*Vivienne is standing on the bench to reach the ice that has accumulated on the newspaper box.*

VIVIENNE. We can eat the ice here.

ANISHA. There is also a game where you're only allowed to run on the stripes for the blind people. With the right foot on the right one and the left foot on the left one.

*Anisha, Vivienne and Lydie are running along the lines on the floor.*

Place four, The Neighborhood Street

*Anisha, Jasmin, Lionel, Lydie, Vivienne, Mrs. Rieder, Jonas*

*At the next place, a typical street of this district, the group is standing together between the trees and the small wall. The wall borders the sidewalk from the semi-private entrance area of the building on which there is a bicycle shelter.*

JONAS. Same questions at this spot. What do you see, and what can one do here?

LYDIE. I can see a wall, out of stone, behind there is a bicycle stand.

ANISHA. There are a lot of graffiti on it.

LIONEL. Here are some trees along the street as well.

VIVIENNE. There is the entrance of the building.

JASMIN. There is not much more than this here.

VIVIENNE. The gate which leads to the entrance of the building is also here.

JONAS. How do you use this space, or what can one do here?

JASMIN. As said before, not much.

LIONEL. Walk along.

JONAS. And what can be played here?

LYDIE. We can balance along on the little wall.

ANISHA. Sometimes when I'm walking along this street I run in slalom around the trees.

VIVIENNE. If we close the gate we can also balance on the gate. But we might need some help because it is a bit icy.

*All the girls balance twice over the entrance gate with the supporting hand of the teacher.*

LIONEL. The gate can also be used as Prison when we play "robbers and policemen".

*The group is heading to the last place.*

Place five, The big stairs

*Anisha, Jasmin, Lionel, Lydie, Vivienne, Mrs. Rieder, Jonas*

*Arriving on the stairs, with the smell of cafeteria lunch in the air, the group is standing together one last time.*

JONAS. So, one last Time we're describing the place we just arrived at.

ANISHA. There are steps. One, two, three, ...

*Anisha and Lydie are running from the bottom up and count all the steps of the stairs.*

LYDIE. This staircase has thirty steps.

JASMIN. There's a litter bin over here too.

VIVIENNE. And some bushes next to the stair.

LIONEL. There is the big gate at the bottom.

ANISHA. There is also a stair railing, but it is not suitable for sliding down because it is fixed so closely to the wall.

VIVIENNE. And it smells like lunch here.

LIONEL. I'm kind of hungry.

LYDIE. The smell comes from the grate over there, I think.

*Some children go to smell at the grate.*

ANISHA. Maybe it is the cafeteria from the "grosses Länggassschulhaus".

JONAS. And what kind of games could you play here?

LYDIE. "Stair tag". Do you know how it is played?

JONAS. No, I don't.

LYDIE. We can show you. Two or more players are on the stair. One is the catcher like when you play normal

tag, but here, instead of touching each other, the catcher has to be placed simultaneously as the other on the same step and scream her name. Then the other one continues.

ANISHA. If you're not touching the steps, you're safe and can't get caught.

*Lydie, Anisha and Jasmin are playing one round of "stair tag".*

JASMIN. Another game is to balance on the stone wall.

LYDIE. The high school children they shorten sometimes their way here and jump down from the wall directly onto the street.

JONAS. Do you also do this?

LYDIE. No, we're yet too little.

# IV Debriefing

In the Debriefing some specifically noticeable examples from Round four will be highlighted. To sum up the whole fieldplay, these highlights are related to the other Rounds and the Time-outs.

In Round Four, the two ways of playfulness in the everyday life of the children, as discussed in Time-Out Two, are recognised. Even if they are difficult to distinguish, and that has never been the aim of this thesis, both genres of playfulness are present. For the two definitions, I'm referring to Caillois' terminology of *ludus* and *paidia* as explained in the chapter *play*<sup>1</sup>. These two terms provide to talk about the different games more precisely.

First the *ludus*; and the appropriation of places through the practice of games:

Several times the children were mentioning the place being suitable for a certain game. The examples of games I'm going to mention are of a common (child) knowledge. However, it was almost always linked with an alienation or *détournement* of an object present at that location, which makes the affordance more of a subjective character. Taking the example of the benches on the little square that would eventually become a fortress for snowball fights in the very exposed field. It can only be transformed in the event of a snowball fight, in which the viewer has the idea of hiding behind that

bench. It is therefore also, besides its physical self-evidence, meteorological conditions and the creativity (if it can be called like this) of the child, that make part of this particular affordance. Another example of a *détournement* was the building gate at place four, that could be transformed into a jail for the captured robbers. The children are well aware that this gate is not a prison, but for the purpose of that certain game, one needs a symbolic prison. In the moment of the game, the gate loses its intended function as a gate that one can open and walk through, but it becomes a jail and this second reality must be treated with a *sacred seriousness*.<sup>2</sup> Imagining now the situation where in the heat of the action, an inhabitant of the building is walking out through the prison gate, all prisoners could escape. I remember such situations from my own childhood and it always ends in an endless discussion about a misunderstanding of the rules. This is how fragile a game can be and where the real life suddenly reclaims its rights.<sup>3</sup>

Some even simpler games like the "high tag" or the "floor is lava" activated a lot of objects to climb on in all places. As well as the big stairs evoked directly the "stair tag" which basically only needs a wide stair to be played. The places afford a possibility of playing these certain games, the observer then, has to recognise it, and he must want to play the game.

In Round one it became very clear how important the official playgrounds are for the children. In almost all the drawings playgrounds make part of the neighbourhood as very central reference points. However, I would like to stress that the "official games", as just mentioned, in Round four, which are played in places that are not

intended for that purpose, must have their rightful place in a neighbourhood life. They are as important, if not more important for the children than the official playgrounds drawn in Round one. A significant part in child's development is the contact with its direct surrounding, also the contact with adults and especially strangers. This can happen through these games, where the child is learning from the adult's world while blending it with his and her own rules of the game. Through imitation the child appropriates the events seen on the streets and gives them a subjective meaning. The role of the urban environment on the other hand is to offer stories and events to the child's ability to assimilate.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the *paidia*; and the appropriation of places through a playful identification with the place:

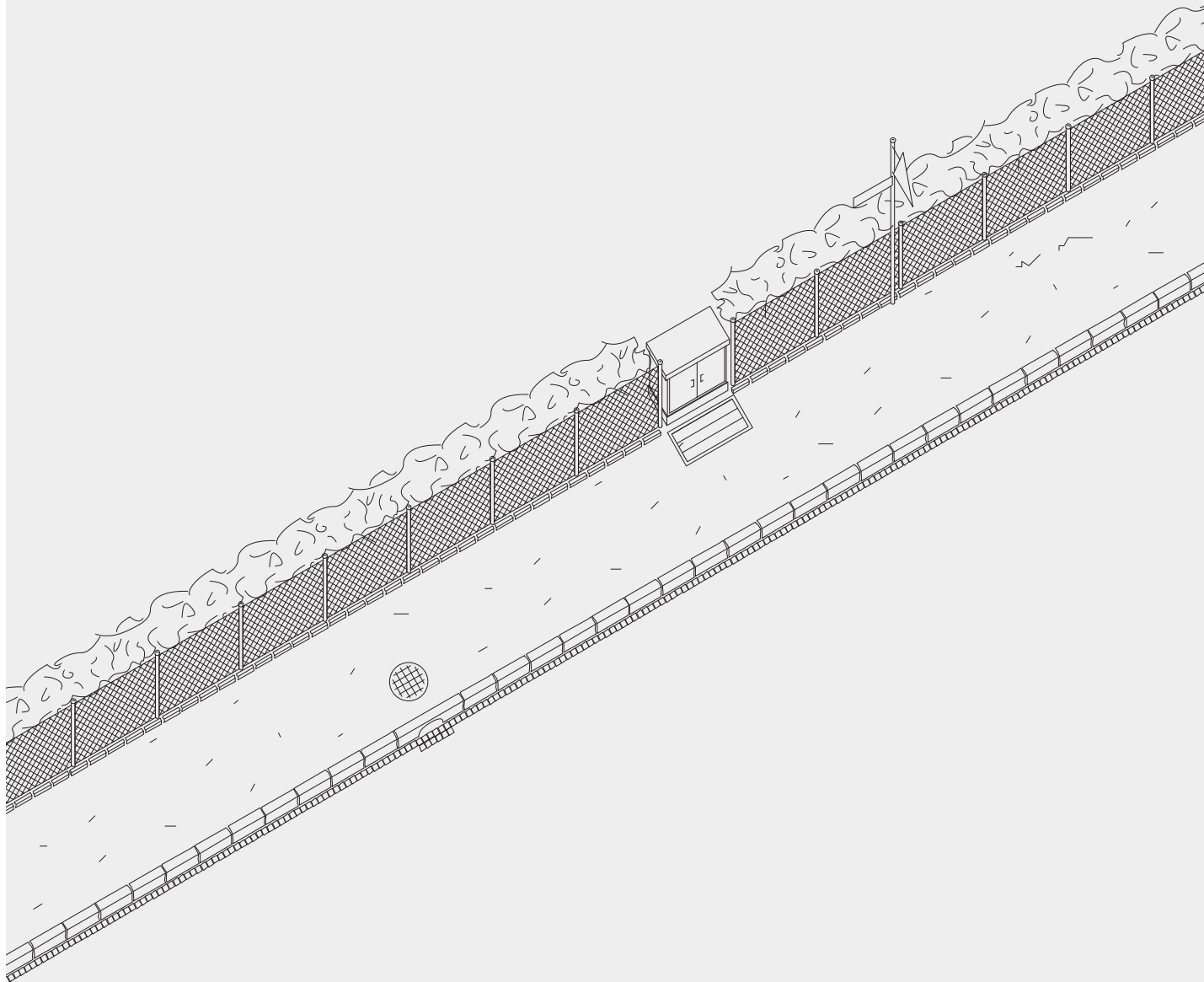
One of the most banal playful activities in Round four was the counting of objects like bicycles or steps of the stairs. The acquisition of this somehow "pointless" knowledge has probably more an aim in itself, than in the real interest of knowing the exact number, which makes it a game.

Another action to mention is climbing. In all the places we visited, the children were climbing onto all kinds of objects: Poles, walls, flowerpots, ventilation shafts, benches and so on. One could say that it is a very "childish" manner of exploration. This might be due to the will of changing perspective, as a sort of imitating the adult, or at least the adult's point of view, but it is likewise a very playful approach. It is about proving oneself (or someone else) the ability of dominating over the climbed-on object. It is the mere fascination of suc-

ceeding, and therefore an end in itself. But it is also, and this becomes especially visible in balancing on top of a wall for example, about the rush one gets while doing it, like described with the *ilynx* games of Caillois' four categories.<sup>5</sup> In general, I tend to say that climbing seems to be something of a very close and intense interaction with the climbed-on object, already physically, where one uses hands and feet. It's something we unlearn during adulthood, since the hands have to be kept clean at all times.

Something small to add are the acoustic activation of places. The moment when all the children were playing the bicycle bells, was one of the most touching for me personally, as well as the "concert" of the information post at the bus station. Here again, the object with a clear purpose is playfully activated through an acoustic *détournement*. The children were drawn to everything abnormal. They tended to describe first everything that was special or unusual, instead of starting with what was normal. The glued stickers, tags and graffiti seemed to pull the attention more than the wall or the poles they were glued and painted on. Also, in Round Two with the photos, they often showed situations in disorder of everyday life. The objects are in these cases are more active, one could say they call for more attention.

Finally, I would like to present a sixth place, which I found after Round four at the school. It is located on the road directly in front of the school. As already drawn by Lydie,<sup>6</sup> the area of the school is bordered by a hedge fence. A gap of about two meters in the fence gives place for the official entrance to the yard. In the opposite corner though, there is an electricity box that





interrupts the fence. As I noticed, many children who leave school towards this side do not really use the entrance but take the shortcut and climb over the box. It is a very playful way to leave and enter the school. This electronic box is thus activated by the children and turned into a playing field.

Already in Round one, the shortcut as well as the detour seemed very important on the bigger scale of the neighbourhood. For the children it was one of the first questions whether they draw their secret paths or not. Somehow, the play is there, where the unofficial way begins. As mentioned above, the interest for the unusual, or simply *own*, is also applicable on a broader context. In the chapter *le parler des pas perdus* (Walking in the city) of Michel de Certeau's "l'invention du quotidien", he wrote that; "...if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities and interdictions, then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist or emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting and improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements. The walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. (...) he increases the number of possibilities for example by creating shortcuts and detours."<sup>7</sup> The walker, or player, thus makes a selection of spaces he uses and through shortcuts and detours he invents new ones and creates other possibilities. The shortcut is therefore a tool, the player uses to discover and assimilate new places, or even the same places but from another point of view. In place six, the climbing, the detournement of the box as a sort of ready-made, and the shortcut are unified in one place.

So, what is the significance of play?

The children are the victims of urbanism. They are the ones, who need the streets and squares the most, yet they do not have anything to say about it. They are the most tactile pedestrians as they are discovering their environment with hands and feet. The game and the playful use of space is the child's loudest voice, and the one they know better than adults. With the language of play, the child is engaging in a dialogue with his and her built environment as well as with the adult. It is a way of criticizing and challenging the status quo. The one who is not playing, doesn't have anything to say.

The cities are in constant change and we have to take care of their ground. The field has to be opened up. The possibilities of pedestrian crossing of neighbourhoods and housing blocks are to maintain and to evolve, to make the most individual use of the same places possible. Let's provide the streets to the children, to us all.

Ready,

Set,



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