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Children's lived citizenship: A study on children's everyday knowledge of injury risks and safety

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Abstract

Children's 'lived citizenship' is about how all children act as members of society, every day. This study aims at exploring such citizenship, drawing on focus group discussions about injury risks and safety, with children in Sweden. The results suggest that the way children relate to safety rules and laws is closely tied to identity. The concept of 'action zone' is suggested for exploring children's lived citizenship. Furthermore, it is argued that children's claims for physical and symbolic space can be understood as actions of lived citizenship.

Keywords

Children's citizenship, injury risks, lived citizenship, safety

Introduction

I really should take responsibility, wearing the safety vest when I am riding, because of the insurance and all, if something happens. If I have to go to the hospital or anything. So it is really stupid not to wear it when I have one, but ... well ...

Natalie is 15 years old. She knows that she should take responsibility for her own safety. She knows she is taking a risk going horseback riding without a vest; she can get hurt and also there are certain rules in society about safety. But the vest is uncomfortable, so she chooses not to wear it. To act on and relate to rules and responsibilities in society is to act as a citizen. In this study, I have chosen to explore the intersection between child safety and children's citizenship. The aim is to explore children's lived citizenship, drawing on their everyday knowledge about injury risks and safety. What insights could everyday

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knowledge about injury risks and safety contribute to children's lived citizenship? In this article, 'injury risk' and 'child safety' or just 'safety' should be understood as opposed concepts where increased safety will decrease injury risks and thereby child injuries (see, for example, Eurosafe.eu).

Contemporary notions of citizenship

Ideas surrounding a broad definition of citizenship have emerged, particularly in the 21st century, perceiving citizenship as something more than merely a formal, legal status. Rather, citizenship is considered to involve aspects such as culture, identity, belonging and everyday life (Isin and Turner, 2007; Isin and Wood, 1999; Stevenson, 2003). Cultural citizenship, Delanty (2003) suggests, may be theorised as learning processes beginning early in life, shifting the focus of citizenship away from membership in a certain state to aspects such as common experiences and cognitive processes. This learning dimension of citizenship is seen as a constructive process taking place in people's lives and involving learning of the self and of the relationship with others.

This altered concept of citizenship creates an opening for new perspectives, focusing on how people actually practise their citizenship in their daily lives. In this sense, citizenship must be understood in its political, cultural, social and historical context (Bellamy et al., 2004; Lister, 2007a). The idea of 'lived citizenship' as suggested by Lister (2007a) refers to how people understand and negotiate rights, responsibilities, a sense of belonging and participation. Focus is put on the actual meaning citizenship has in people's lives and on how social and cultural aspects affect their lives as citizens.

Children are frequently excluded from considerations about citizenship, Howe and Covell (2005) argue, based on the fact that they lack many of the rights of adults such as the right to vote in political elections and the right to enter legal agreements. Many researchers, however, claim that children's citizenship, although different from adults' citizenship, should be regarded as 'equal' or 'full' (Cohen, 2005; Hart, 2009; Jans, 2004; Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Even though children lack some of the rights of adults, children's citizenship should not be regarded as 'less' than that of adults, it is argued. Contemporary research confirms that children participate according to their evolving capabilities and that they contribute to society even though their efforts are not always appreciated or recognised by adults, according to Cockburn (2013). He suggests a re-thinking of children's citizenship, taking children's agency, competence and contributions to society into account.

We need to go further in the discussion about whether children are citizens or not, according to Lister (2007b). The criteria for inclusion as citizens are not uniform, she argues; they cannot be modelled on adult norms. Studies of lived citizenship are especially appropriate when exploring children's citizenship, she claims. Kjörholt (2004) discusses children's active engagement in their local communities in terms of how children 'do citizenship', emphasising actions and activities performed by children rather than their formal status. Citizenship is something that must be learnt, according to Delanty (2003), and learning involves agency on the part of the learning subject. This view suggests a cultural dimension, Delanty puts forth, understanding culture in this context as a making or a doing.

To fully understand the nature of children's citizenship we need, according to James (2011), to explore not only how citizenship is made available to children but also how children experience and respond to citizenship in their everyday lives. What is needed is an understanding of lived citizenship in particular contexts, drawing attention to the significance of children's own agency and how they exercise their rights in their everyday lives.

Previous research

Several studies have made efforts to capture children's notions and understandings of citizenship. The most common understanding of citizenship among young people in the United Kingdom was a 'universal status', achieved by members of a certain state. In their study, Lister et al. (2003) found that the second most dominant perception was citizenship as 'respectable economic independence', followed by 'constructive social participation'. Less frequent were 'social-contractual' ideas and thoughts about 'right to a voice'. In a similar study in Australia, Manning and Ryan (2004) found that the most frequent understanding of citizenship among young people was national identity. All groups in the study mentioned rights and responsibilities as prominent aspects of citizenship. Other ideas were arranged by the researchers in the categories *participation*, *formal status*, *belonging* and *community*.

In another UK study, children aged 14–16 years expressed wishes to be part of their local communities and to have relationships of mutual trust and respect with adults (Hart, 2009). Young people are often regarded as a threat to society, according to Hart, and the political remedy is to control their behaviour. If we are truly concerned with the involvement of young people in society, Hart argues, a cultural citizenship approach is needed, enabling young citizens to participate and respecting their voices as important in society.

Children can be seen engaging in actions of citizenship, according to Larkins (2014), such as making rules of social existence, contributing to social good and exercising their own rights. The results generated from research on marginalised children, aged 5–13 years, in Wales and France, suggested that the distinction between actions and Acts of citizenship can be blurred. According to Larkins children can enact themselves as holders of rights, through Acts of citizenship hidden from adult view. This challenges the dominant notion that children's citizenship is determined by adults. Larkins thus calls for research exploring children's citizenship to broaden understandings of children's agency.

Gill and Howard (2009) studied how children in Australia construct ideas around power and citizenship through their own experiences and identity. In the study, 400 children age 5–12 years took part in group interviews about power, identity and citizenship. The researchers found that although the children did not have formal knowledge of citizenship, democracy and politics, they would still be qualified to discuss issues of rights, power and influence in everyday life.

In an international research project (Taylor and Smith, 2009), researchers sought to understand the meaning of rights, responsibilities, participation and citizenship for children in Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, Norway, Palestine and South Africa. Children in the six countries participated in focus group discussions of citizenship concepts and how

they were enacted in their own everyday experiences within their various social, cultural and political contexts. Three main categories were exemplified in the responses: participation rights such as having a say and being listened to, protection rights such as to be safe from bullying and provision rights such as having access to education and play opportunities.

In the Norwegian study, researchers experienced that children had no difficulty relating the question of responsibility to their everyday lives. The most common responsibilities mentioned fell into three categories: personal responsibility, social responsibility and collective responsibility (Bjerke, 2011). Although the children had no problem understanding rights or responsibilities, the concept of citizenship was a challenge for them to understand and exemplify (Taylor and Smith, 2009).

Few studies have explored the intersection between injury risks, injuries and citizenship. In the late 90s, Green (1997) and Green and Hart (1998) examined children's accounts of injury risks and responsibilities. Focus group interviews were held with 7- to 11-year-olds in the southeast of England. The results showed that children had good knowledge about injury risks and how to prevent and reduce them. They also saw injury prevention as primarily their own responsibility in two senses: first, they saw it as their own duty to keep themselves safe through managing risks, and second, they blamed themselves for any injury they suffered. The children had to negotiate a complex set of sometimes contradictory rules for behaviour in their environments, and injury prevention was not always their first priority.

Van der Burgt (2015) explored how youth relate to risk as members of society, investigating how teenagers negotiated risk and promoted safety in public space. Drawing on material from qualitative interviews, written accounts and a survey in both urban and rural areas in Sweden, the results showed that the teenagers constructed and handled risk and safety in relation to space, time, people and behaviour. There was a spatial hierarchy of risk in the public space, where the 'acceptable' or 'exciting' risks were located in the inner-city district and the 'unacceptable' and most negative risks were located in segregated, so-called no-go suburbs. Teenagers actively negotiate risk and promote safety in public space, van der Burgt concluded, and they are socially and spatially competent agents in their everyday lives.

Dimensions of citizenship

This study may be placed within an overall theoretical framework of social studies of childhood, where children are regarded as citizens in the present, not only in the future (Alanen, 1992; Corsaro, 1997; James and Prout, 1997; Qvortrup, 2005). Accordingly, children are considered competent and able to participate in society. Moreover, children's agency in shaping their childhood experiences is acknowledged, as well as their right to have their voices heard in research.

Citizenship is a fundamental concept in the study. Delanty (1997, 2000, 2007) argues that citizenship is a multileveled concept involving four dimensions: rights, responsibilities, participation and identity. The two former dimensions focus on formal aspects while the two latter relate to citizenship as practice. Delanty suggests that an adequate model of citizenship must involve all four dimensions. Lister (2007b, 2008) outlines a similar

model of children's citizenship in particular, consisting of the basic building blocks: membership, rights, responsibilities and equality of status, respect and recognition. She points out that a single element should not be treated as if it were the whole. The two models are to a large extent similar, sharing the traditional formal elements of rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, each model covers both formal and informal aspects and both models address aspects of belonging to and participating in social groups and society at large.

Thus, to sum up, this work aims at investigating children's lived citizenship in the present. Using Lister's (2007b, 2008) building blocks and Delanty's (1997, 2000, 2007) dimensions, children's citizenship is conceptualised as a whole of rights, responsibilities, participation, identity, membership, equal status, respect and recognition where both formal and informal dimensions are acknowledged. Unlike previous research aiming at exploring how children understand the concept of citizenship and its various dimensions (Bjerke, 2011; Lister et al., 2003; Manning and Ryan, 2004; Taylor and Smith, 2009), this study aims at exploring how children *do* citizenship every day, by drawing on their shared knowledge of injury risks and safety.

Research procedures

In this article, risk is regarded as culturally and socially constructed (Douglas, 1992; Wynne, 1992). Risk awareness and risk consciousness are seen as social processes in which people collectively make meaning of their everyday lives (Olofsson and Öhman, 2006; Wall and Olofsson, 2008). My study explores a field where children's citizenship and child safety overlap. The approach was to invite children to conversations about accidents and the fears and joys of risk-taking and dangers in their close environment. I also wanted to listen to how they, as a group, talked about how they related to safety rules in different settings and about their thoughts on being responsible.

The methodological approach used was social representations theory (SRT). SRT theorises lay knowledge in relation to cultural, historical and social context (Moscovici, 1984). In this sense, lay knowledge refers to knowledge produced by a community of people, in conditions of social interaction and communication, and therefore expressive of identities, interests, history and culture. SRT addresses how lay people make meaning in their daily lives and focuses on how people produce, negotiate and maintain shared knowledge within groups, through social interaction and communication (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Marková, 2003). Focus group interviews to some extent resemble ordinary conversations and therefore I considered it to be a useful method of constructing empiric material for the study.

A total of 113 children in Years 2, 5 and 8 (age 8–9, 11–12 and 14–15 years) at three different schools participated in focus group interviews, whereof 56 were girls and 57 boys. Two of the schools were located in a small rural village and the third school in a mid-sized city. Overall, there were statistic socioeconomic differences between the two areas such as higher average education and income among the population in the mid-size city than in the small village. Lived citizenship is a constructive process taking place in a particular context. It is therefore important to contextualise children's meaning-making of risk and injuries within socioeconomic, cultural and institutional frameworks (Backett-Milburn & Harden, 2004). Consequently, this study does not present results generalisable

to all children, everywhere. Rather my attempt was to capture the ways in which the children developed their thinking in interaction with each other, and then to analyse how these conversations could tell anything about how this group of children lived their citizenship every day.

The children were informed verbally and in writing about the aim of the study and that participation was voluntary, in accordance with ethical guidelines (Swedish Research Council, 2011). They were also informed about confidentiality in the study and that they could choose to withdraw their participation at any time. Information and consent forms were sent out to and gathered from parents. The interviews, carried out in school, lasted for about 40–60 minutes with four to seven children in each group.

In focus groups, moderator involvement is usually kept at a minimum so as to invite the participants to engage in genuine conversation. An interview guide was constructed with a few themes to be covered, but my ambition was to try to follow up topics and issues brought up by the children themselves. In this way, the subjects in the discussions were to a large extent determined by the children.

The conversations were recorded, transcribed and analysed in two stages. In the first stage, a content analysis was performed, resulting in a few main themes; in the second stage, a new analysis of the content was carried out supported by the citizenship dimension. In the following, some results of the analysis are presented.

Risk is fun

Accidents, injuries and risks seemed to be quite inspiring topics to the children. Fear of being injured in accidents was rare even though the children were very well aware of risks and had considerable experiences of being injured. The conversations were lively and cheerful in almost all the groups, and the children frequently joked and laughed and were eager to tell their own stories, as in this group in Year 2:

- Interviewer: And you wanted to tell something? (Addressing Sarah)
 Sarah: Two?
 I: Okay, then it is your turn (addressing Adam)
 John: No, it is my turn!
 S: I was in my room when my brother threw a kind of pin on the floor and it hit my foot! There was blood all over!
 I: I see. Did it hurt?
 S: Nuh ... and there was this other time when I, my friend and my kid sister were jumping on the trampoline .../---/
 J: Now it is my turn!
 I: OK ...
 Adam: Then it is mine ...
 J: My uncle stepped on a nail when he was little and had to go to hospital
 ...

The children were telling stories about sprained ankles, concussions and broken legs. By telling stories, children gained respect from the others in the group. When relating an

accident and describing wounds and injuries in detail, other children would support the storyteller by gasping, laughing, making sound effects and suggesting further details. Risks, but also injuries, were represented as something chiefly positive, associated with fun and challenges, making life worth living. Pupils in Year 8, for instance, seemed to agree that you need to live a little dangerously while you are young:

- Wilmer: You mustn't forget you're alive
I: How do you mean?
Wilmer: You have to get hurt once in a while
Ella: To feel you're alive
(laughter)
I: And if you don't?
E: You might as well fall out of your bed
W: You have had ... a bad life
Adrian: Life has been bloody boring if you've never hurt yourself!!

Jesper, 11 years old, had, among other things, been hit by a car twice. He and his friend constantly got themselves into trouble. Jesper declared with satisfaction: 'Leo and I are crazy! We are born to mess around!' When I asked him why accidents frequently happened to him, he smiled proudly and replied:

- Jesper: I sometimes challenge destiny.
Leo: Jack-ass!
Wilma: It's because he doesn't know how to take it easy.
J: Mom says that I challenge destiny, and I do!
I: Why do you?
J: Because it is fun!

To Jesper, an important feature of his personality seemed to be related to risk-taking. Previous research concludes that risky behaviour is more common among boys and young men whereas girls in general are more cautious (Turner et al., 2004). The empirical data in this study do not allow for a conclusion about gender aspects in general, but an interesting observation was that several girls in the study told stories about their own recklessness and risky behaviour. Katja, 11-year-old, for instance, had her own horse. She told of riding in the woods and jumping over barriers without knowing what was on the other side. She had fallen off several times. She told that she enjoyed the thrill of doing new things, even if they were dangerous, since 'you have got to be a little crazy sometimes'. In the study, being adventurous and daring gave status to girls and boys equally in the groups.

Children in the study frequently and often proudly referred to themselves, in their own words, as dare-devils and described themselves as risk-taking or ill-fated. Social representations are shared views developed and negotiated by a group, closely tied to social identity (Breakwell, 2010; Duveen, 2001). By telling stories, the children also told about themselves, who they were or wanted to be, and the group would respond by supporting, negotiating, enhancing or rejecting the stories, and thereby co-constructing individual and collective identity images.

Safety rules

A fundamental citizenship responsibility is to follow laws, rules and norms in society and the local community. At home, most children claimed they had a mutual understanding with their parent(s) about what was acceptable and what was not. Laura and Jolin in Year 2 gave several examples of things they knew they were not allowed to do when they were home alone such as lighting candles or using the stove. 'I don't do dangerous things' Jolin told, 'So they don't have to tell me. I don't know if there are rules, mom and dad never said anything about any rules'. In a group of girls in Year 5, none of them gave examples of discussing rules with their parents: 'It is obvious', Hanna claimed, 'Yes, what we are allowed to or not, is obvious to us', Clara agreed.

Only a few children gave evidence of conflicts regarding safety rules at home. Basically, four ways of relating to rules at home were identified: first and foremost, agreeing with parents about rules; second, arguing with parents about rules; third, ignoring the rules and fourth not experiencing any rules at all.

Even though the children were very well aware of potential physical or legal consequences of recklessness in traffic, traffic rules were frequently called into question. For example, in Sweden, all children under the age of 15 years are obliged by law to wear a bicycle helmet when riding a bike. The law was discussed in all the groups, and virtually all the children took issue with it, claiming they had not worn – or would not wear – their bike helmets up to the age of 15 years. An appropriate age to stop using a helmet was, according to many groups of children, around 10–11 years of age. Arguments varied: helmets were ugly, clumsy and ruined your hairstyle; besides, accidents rarely happened since most children were quite skilful on their bikes. Also, according to the children, adults did not make any effort to enforce the law, the police would not stop a child without a helmet and parents tended to look the other way when children forgot it.

Previous research has suggested that children to a large extent follow rules in school (Hine, 2004; Thornberg, 2006), which is not supported by my study. On the contrary, the results suggest that the children constantly and collectively challenged and negotiated rules in school. Several children verified that breaking rules was common. Victor and Eric in Year 5 mocked safety rules in school and called them stupid and useless:

- V: We are not allowed to skate or bike and 'bla bla bla' ...
- E: The rules in school are totally useless
- V: We mustn't run indoors' cause it's dangerous (ironically)
- E: And we are not allowed to ...we can only throw snowballs on the football field, and we can't throw cones in the wood.

When I asked them whether they and other children usually followed rules or not, Victor answered that most children did not and that teachers did not care. Many other children were of similar opinions: the school had several rules but neither pupils nor teachers cared about them. In Year 8, a group of children recalled 'golden rules' during their first school years:

- I: But no golden rule anymore?
- Sam: No.

- I: Why? Is it not necessary anymore?
Zackarias: Well, yeah ...
Greta: Nobody cares about it
Z: No one would give a shit
I: But if you would decide on rules together, wouldn't you care?
Z: I don't think so
G: No

In sharp contrast, the children did not challenge rules involving their leisure activities, such as sports clubs. While they would object to and disobey rules at school, the rules at sports clubs were never contested. Children mentioned several safety-related rules at their clubs regarding how to behave, act, take responsibility and be precautionary, but not a single child in any of the groups questioned the rules. In short, rules in school and even laws in traffic were to a large extent represented by children as irrelevant and needless while codes of conduct at their leisure-time activities were upheld strongly and constructed as moral obligations.

A possible explanation as to why rules at leisure-time activities were represented in such a different way than rules in school would be that the children had chosen the activities themselves and that they enjoyed performing them, and therefore accepted safety regulations, yet the empiric material did not support that. For example, children who claimed to be strict about rules in the horse club could act much more carelessly around horses in other settings, like at home with a horse of their own. Another possible motive would be the risk of being punished or even banned from the club, but none of the children spoke of such threats, whereas there were plenty of possible sanctions and consequences when breaking rules in school. When I asked Natalie in Year 8 why she would gladly break the rules in school while she would strictly follow rules at the riding club, she replied that the latter were rules of a certain kind, or to quote her, 'rules that you pretty much follow'. Her classmate Ellen in a different group claimed that those who did not know and follow the rules at her club simply did not belong. Their attitudes were representative of almost all children who belonged to sports clubs, where rules were known to all members and should be followed. In addition, children who belonged to sports clubs were said to be more responsible than other children. To quote Zacharias: 'People are more orderly at my [leisure-time] activities'. When I asked Anna, also in Year 8, how rules were taught in her club, she replied, 'We just know. Everybody knows'. According to Anna, Ellen, Zacharias, Nathalie and several other children, both people and rules were of special qualities in the clubs, different from elsewhere. Being part of a community and being accepted as a member required not only approval but also loyalty towards the prevailing norms and rules, otherwise one did not belong. Shared views and values within groups are closely connected to social identity according to Breakwell (2010), and in the study collective identity seems to have been essential to children's shared views about safety rules.

Freedom to move and act

At one of the three schools, there were 'boundaries' painted on trees in the woods behind the school building and several children told stories about them. Children in Year 2 were

not allowed to cross the white boundary; in Year 5, they could, but no further than to the yellow boundary. Occasionally, children would break the rules and be punished. In Year 8, children had forgotten all about the rules and the boundaries in the woods which no longer concerned them.

Yet most children gave evidence that there were similar limits for their range of movement and action in their everyday lives. The limits might concern how far you could go on your own and how late you were allowed to stay out, as well as what you were allowed to do at home, like cooking, lighting candles or using tools. Most children accepted rules and limits at home, claiming that their parents trusted them as long as they kept within the limits. Only a small number of children, like Patric in Year 8, said that their parents were strict with rules. 'Too strict', he said in an upset voice, 'for no reason'. He was the only one in his class still using his bike helmet, since his parents made him to. A few children in the study said they disobeyed their parents, had ongoing conflicts about where they were allowed to go and how long to stay out, like Tess in Year 8:

I was about twelve. We had fights every week. I wanted to go someplace or take the bus somewhere, but I wasn't allowed to do anything. But I went out anyway, told that I was at a friend's house, and came home late. It was really awful. A horrible time. Since I lied, they didn't trust me at all.

Some children constantly stretched limits as far as possible and others claimed they had no limits at all. Albin, 8 years of age, told the group that he could go wherever he wanted and that he decided for himself about anything: 'I just do things. I never ask, don't have to. I take my bike and ride to the football field or anywhere. I never ask. Haven't since I was five'. Cindy in his class, on the other hand, had to ask for permission to leave the house on her own, and their classmate John was allowed to go on his bike to his granny.

In all the groups, rules were discussed about things you were or were not allowed to do such as crossing roads, taking the bus on your own, or riding a moped, hours you had to be at home and places you could not go to. Children's talk about limits and boundaries brings to mind an image of a 'zone' for children's actions and mobility, where children live their daily lives and exercise their citizenship. Elaborating on such an image, children's lived citizenship may be analysed as taking place within a physical and symbolic dynamic space – an 'action zone'. Boundaries are established by rules, norms and adult authorities, and the zone expands as the child grows. Within the boundaries, however, there is an area of agency and self-management in which children can move and act independently and practise their lived citizenship.

Boundaries are negotiated and decided on the individual level, but are also constructed in a cultural, historical, social and geographical context. Society at large and the local community where children live determine how the boundaries are drawn, partly through legislation and rules and hegemonic representations, shared by all members of society. Additionally, children themselves individually and collectively are co-constructors of their action zones. In this study, children create and negotiate their action zone when discussing rules at home and in school, what they may and may not do, places they are not allowed to go to, hours they have to be at home and so forth. To cross boundaries or stay within them is closely connected with identity. Evidence is given that some children

constantly challenge and cross boundaries, while others are content with the space they are given. Van der Burgt (2015) discusses how children claim public space with different approaches in terms of 'situated agency'. In her study, some children were afraid and felt insecure in their own neighbourhood while others claimed public spaces as their own and never felt anxious in unfamiliar places. The dimensions of social context and position, discursive resources, biography and spatiality were found by van der Burgt (2015) to be important dimensions of situated agency. Drawing on my results, I suggest adding a dimension of identity as significant for children's situated agency. I also suggest that the ways in which children claim space are important aspects of children's lived citizenship.

Concluding discussion

Several studies have focused on investigating views on citizenship, rights and responsibilities, trying to determine how the concepts are understood by children and young people. Citizenship, and also children's citizenship, is thoroughly examined in previous research. Regarding 'lived citizenship', there is still theorisation as well as empirical work to be done. I believe that the main contribution of my study is the effort to analyse how children do citizenship, suggested by Kjörholt (2004), not how they understand certain more or less abstract definitions of the concept. Similar to Gill and Howard (2009), I found that although the children did not have formal knowledge of citizenship, they would still be qualified to discuss it in their own words. In the conversations about children's daily actions in the study, none of the formal concepts such as 'rights' or 'responsibilities' was ever mentioned, yet a rich empirical material for analysing children's citizenship was constructed.

As put forth, children's citizenship is different but not less than that of adults (Cohen, 2005; Hart, 2009; Jans, 2004; Moosa-Mitha, 2005); it cannot be modelled on adult norms (Lister, 2007b) or determined by adults (Larkins, 2014). I agree with Larkins (2014) that children act as citizens in ways that may be hidden from adult view, but also incomprehensible to adults. Risky behaviour among children understood by adults as carelessness or ignorance may on the contrary be expressions of identity and belonging and acts of lived citizenship. My study also confirms the results of Green and Hart (1998), suggesting that children have good knowledge about injury risks and how to prevent and reduce them. No support was given to the idea that children took risks because they did not know better, rather they took calculated risks by choice, based on self-image, identity and group belonging. Also children as young as 8 years old related to safety rules, recommendations and advice in informed ways. Hence, campaigns to inform children about injury risks and safety will most likely have little effect with regard to reduced injuries. Consequently, professionals working to improve child safety would gain from dialogues with children.

The results raise questions about why risk and injuries may be important aspects of children's identity. Moscovici (1984) identified social representations on different levels. Norms and values embedded in society, referred to by Moscovici as hegemonic representations, are shared by all members of society and considered unquestionable. Hegemonic representations on societal level are interrelated to representations on group levels, however hard to distinguish and difficult to oppose or change. Several theorists have argued

that there is a romantic and idyllic connection between childhood and nature. Outdoor life is a sign of a genuine life and a good childhood for Norwegian children, Kjørholt (2004) concludes. Nature is considered good for children according to Halldén (2009) who problematises the origin of this image. Sanderud and Gurholt (2014) elaborate these ideas further and argue that both media and educators imply that outdoor activities should be challenging and even contain physical danger to engage children. Interesting findings of my study was the joy and cheerfulness with which the children told their stories about accidents and injuries. Wounds, sprained ankles and broken legs seemed to bring status to both girls and boys in the study and being a risk-taker conferred prestige to the storyteller. The question I raise is whether there is a contemporary image, implying that risk and injuries, similar to nature, are necessary parts of a good childhood. Injury risks are often associated with challenges, adventure, play and an active life, but also of learning processes, developing cognitive and physical skills. But may there also be a hegemonic representation in the Nordic countries (and elsewhere) that an injury in itself, regardless of learning or improved skills, adds value to childhood?

Children's independent mobility has been studied in previous research (Alparone and Pacilli, 2012; Badland et al., 2011), and the connection between physical space, decision-making and citizenship has been acknowledged (McCann, 2002). Wood, (2011) drew attention to young people's understandings of citizenship in the context of day-to-day social and spatial interactions, and Cook et al. (2015) examined the interplay between active citizenship and children's independent mobility.

I suggest that space is an important aspect of children's lived citizenship and that lived citizenship may be regarded as an action zone. Tentative features of the action zone are as follows: boundaries, boundary guards (rules, norms and authorities) negotiations, transgression, identity, self-determination and situated agency. In my study, children's stories about how and when they could move and act independently, and how they did or did not challenge and contest rules and boundaries of the zone, contributed with knowledge about how young citizenship was constituted in various social settings. Boundaries of children's action zones are determined by (adult) authorities, rules and norms, but are also subjects of negotiations and transgressions. Within the action zone, there is a physical and symbolic space, partly out of adult view and control where children can move and act independently and practise their lived citizenship. I believe that the action zone and its suggested features may serve as analytical tools in studying children's strategies for claiming physical and symbolic space as citizens in different social and cultural settings and for exploring how children live and exercise their citizenship every day.

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