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**THE BODY AS A BATTLEFIELD:
APPROACHING CHILDREN'S POLITICS**

by

Kirsi Pauliina Kallio

ABSTRACT. This article discusses the active role of children in everyday politics. Distinct from empowerment, it is suggested that children can be political on their own terms. The article focuses on revealing the social production of childhood, which takes place in the confrontation between child policy and children's own politics. Children's *bodies* are found to be both the main focus of policy practices and a central avenue of children's own agency. Hence, children are understood to be not only objects of policy, but also embodied political subjects. Using the example of Finnish child evacuees' experiences during World War II, it is shown that, despite their positions in policy fields, children do act as *political selves*. Using the ideas of Michel de Certeau and Carl Schmitt, it is argued that there is an autonomous politics to children which can be recognised as a significant means of coping in their everyday lives. On these grounds, the article sets out to use Pierre Bourdieu's concept of political struggle in considering childhood spatialities in more detail. Overall, children's politics are understood as a wider geographical concept which requires further examination.

Keywords. children's politics, politics of everyday life, agency, childhood, power, space

Introduction

One of the major theoretical drives behind the development of the sub-discipline of children's geographies, as of the social studies of childhood more generally, has been the desire to place children's competence as social actors on to the academic agenda.

Children's agency, in relation both to adults and other children, has thus been a central concern of most of the research in this field. However, suggestions regarding children's politics in everyday life have rarely been made. Generally speaking, 'children' and 'politics' are matched only in policy-oriented contexts in which the concept of politics is understood in a more or less narrow sense. In this view, children do not axiomatically occupy a political role, and their political awareness and agency are evaluated in relation to development, participation and empowerment (Matthews and Limb 1999, p.80).

In this article, I look politically at childhood and set out to outline *a* politics of childhood. Unlike studies in which children are approached from the perspective of empowerment in adult-led policies, I will concentrate on their own, autonomous politics. Following Michel de Certeau's understanding of everyday life, I search for practices in which children's political agency takes place. The concept of the political is understood in a wide sense as 'a distinction between friend and enemy', following Carl Schmitt's thought. Everyday life politics is hence considered, in Pierre Bourdieu's words, as 'a political struggle' that is realised on the scale of the body.

To recognise a politics that tends to hide and conceal itself requires looking for situations in which this politics becomes visible. In this article, I use wartime children's policies as an example of children's political agency. By reflecting on Finnish evacuee children's life stories, I illustrate children's social positions between official disempowerment and self-governed autonomy in general. The empirical material is presented in two forms, as narratives and evacuees' stories, which are both supported by photographic illustrations. The documentary film that is used as a source of material is not understood as a factual transmitter of either war-time policies or children's politics. Instead, the extracts are used to carve out the essence of children's politics, the fact that, regardless of their positions in policy fields, children do act as 'political selves' (Philo and Smith 2003b, p. 110). This understanding of politics is rooted in the Greek concept of *zoon politikon*, or in Latin, *homo politicus*.

I begin by discussing the concept of children's politics in the context of de Certeau's theory of everyday life. I then move on to consider in more detail children's political action in practice, where the child evacuees' tactical agency is thoroughly uncovered. After this, I continue on a more general level by contemplating the scale on which children's politics is practised. Finally, I explore the extent of everyday politics as a viewpoint and its future prospects in childhood studies in geography.

Extra-policy politics

When feminist scholars first raised the question of everyday politics, they made a radical claim by stating that the personal is political (Valentine 1998; Mann and Huffman 2005). Today, an argument over the political nature of everyday life would seem rhetorical. For example, gender issues have been so thoroughly scrutinised that they have become veritable symbols of everyday politics (Elshtein 1981). Within childhood studies, such politicisation remains to be done (Philo and Smith 2003b). While politics is now

commonly understood as an aspect in all social life, childhood is not considered self-evidently political, nor are children recognised as true political actors.

Recent childhood research in geography has introduced several attempts to conceptualise politics more widely. Meanings of politics have been recognised through children and young people's own understandings that are separate from the official policy-making. For instance, being able to express one's views and demands has been recognised as a form of political agency (O'Toole 2003, p. 79). Although such notions do introduce a political aspect into childhood studies, from the point of view of critical geography, these standpoints appear relatively conventional. This is due to the fact that wider understandings of the politics of childhood are also mostly bound up with policy implications (e.g. Skelton and Valentine 2003). A thorough contemplation of children's everyday life politics, where children are confronted as 'political selves', in its initial stages (Philo and Smith 2003b, p. 110; Kallio 2007).

The politics of childhood is not an appealing subject for either childhood studies or political research. This has been noted by those geographers who have taken seriously the challenge of conducting political childhood research (e.g. the special issue of *Space and Polity*, edited by Philo and Smith 2003a). The reasons for this may be obvious, as the two do not seem to have much in common. Politics is linked with rights and responsibilities, from which children should be excluded, as well as burdens, from which they should be spared (Kearns and Collins 2003). Childhood, likewise, is reserved for children only, making politics appear irrelevant in that context.

Generally speaking, childish behaviour is considered the very *opposite* of being political. To put the two together requires a better understanding of everyday politics and the social construction of childhood. Overcoming the naturalised separation between children and politics requires a reconsideration of both concepts (Skelton and Valentine 2003). Childhood should be 'set aside' without losing its specificity, and politics redefined as an ongoing negotiation and struggle taking place in everyday life. A critical analysis of political geographies of childhood is obliged to consider both aspects.

Children are officially disempowered agents in most fields of life. This simple fact reveals the specificity of childhood as a social position. Regardless of the circumstances, children's actions always reflect the prevailing conditions, which for the most part they cannot choose for themselves. Their belonging to such institutions as the family, school and health care go unquestioned, yet the conditions of the institutional settings are constantly negotiated by all members (Kallio 2006). Thus, children's autonomous politics can be defined as 'the politics of resistance and participation' (Pile 1997, p. 1; Kearns and Collins 2003).

In his theory of everyday life, Michel de Certeau (1984) considers politics to be a constant but hidden struggle between strategic and tactical actors in the spirit of Pierre Bourdieu (1985) and Henri Lefebvre (1991). Following de Certeau's ideas, children's politics can be understood as a usage that provides children with agency and power. Due to their disempowered social position, children can participate and resist only through *tactical* agency. Thus in de Certeau's terms, tactical agency beckons children's own politics, whereas the hidden struggle refers to the politics of childhood in its entirety (see also Lefebvre 1991, p. 362). In his understanding, tactics are at the same time a use *of* and a use *on*, representing both acceptance and manipulation of the prevailing order. From this point of view, regardless of the way in which children confront policies, they are

always political, as they are forced either to conform or to oppose. This ‘deviant or obedient behaviour’ is very familiar to us, yet we seldom see it as politics. This article attempts to open up this complexity by examining a particular case in which children’s agency can easily be captured in its embodied forms.

Children’s spatial worlds have been thoroughly mapped by geographers. To mention just a few, the home, park, school, kindergarten, street, city and countryside have all been largely visualised and considered in children’s terms (e.g. James 1990; Winchester and Costello 1995; Matthews *et al.* 2000; Holloway and Valentine 2001; Gagen 2004). Children’s territories and empowered places have been located in order to understand their everyday lives better. Often critical cases are used to unravel naturalised conceptions of childhood. Disability, gender and race are commonly used as viewpoints through which researchers bring out the diversity and contradictions related to childhood (e.g. Aitken 2000; Skelton and Valentine 2003; Holt 2004; Robson 2004; Swanson 2007). Geographers have introduced various places and spatialities in which childhood can be critically examined. However, war as an arena of childhood has not received much attention. Children have been studied as soldiers, but their lives outside warfare have often been neglected (Brocklehurst 2006).

The meanings of war vary from child to child because children do not confront war time policies in exactly the same way. Yet there are some aspects that touch them all. The position of children in war can be compared to that of the disabled, elderly and infirm. They are not participants in warfare, but the weak in need of special protection. As civilians, they are excluded from war as far as possible. In practice this is done through evacuation. During social crises, children have typically been removed to the countryside to stay with relatives or other trusted families (Fig. 1), and public camps and evacuation centres set up to keep children safe from war.

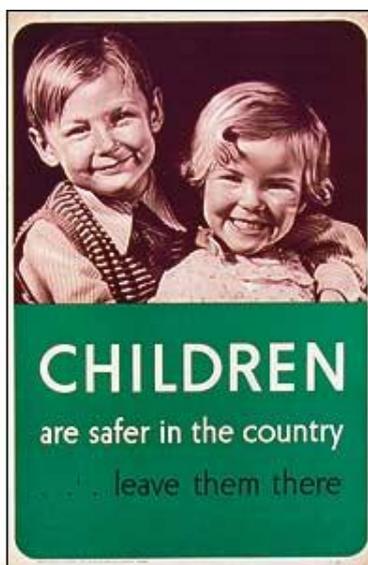


Figure 1: Campaign poster for children’s evacuation during World War II in Britain

As a major crisis, war stimulates the creation of new policies and everyday practices to meet the circumstances. During wartime, child policies and children's politics also assume perceptible forms. The present article explores the journeys made by Finnish children to Sweden in World War II. The discussion of this case does not focus on child soldiers but on civilians who were 'unavoidably involved', and thus made subject to childhood policies (Philo and Smith 2003b, p.107).

Sixty years ago, the difference between the Finnish and Swedish nation states was far greater than it is today. At the time Sweden was developing toward a welfare state, while Finland had only recently gained its independence from Russia. Moreover, at that time Finland had been subjected to war for more than six years, whereas Sweden had been able to declare its official neutrality. During the war, among other things Finland's child policy faced great difficulties. The capacity of private and public childcare was inadequate, and in the major cities especially, poor families were not able to provide their children with sufficient care and protection. In these times of distress, Sweden offered assistance to Finland by providing homes for Finnish children.

As introduced and advertised, the wartime child programme was a great success. Between 1939 and 1945, some 70,000 Finnish children were placed in Swedish families. Young, poor children were able to spend the harsh years of war in peaceful Sweden, where good living conditions, including a supply of food, health care and education, were provided. As a child policy, the programme provided an efficient solution to the problem of caring for children. However, the policy point of view tells us little about how the children themselves *experienced* the evacuation and thus fails to recognise children as political *subjects*. The policy intentions alone did not determine the outcome of this policy. Of necessity, its realisation was negotiated in confrontation with the children on their own terms. Thus these Finnish child evacuees' provide a critical case which helps us unfold the concept of children's political agency and expand understandings of children's everyday lives in general.



Figure 2: Evacuation policy meets children's embodied politics (Dammert 2003)

It is early one afternoon in September 1941. Helsinki railway station is swarming with people. Strangely, there are hardly any soldiers around. The platform is filled with young children accompanied by their mothers, carrying small bundles and baskets. A long train is waiting. One by one the children are being placed in its coaches, and the windows are filling up with small, serious faces. Mothers leave the station uncertainly, some holding back tears, others smiling courageously. At this very moment, the current child policy is revealed to its objects. Mothers have taken the opportunity to send their children away from the war. The children are to travel to an undetermined place for an unspecified period of time. The children's confrontation with this policy at the railway station is pivotal. As the mothers leave the train and the children remain in the coaches, a wartime child politics relative to but distinct from the policy is born. As the children stare out the windows at their mothers, objects (of policy) become subjects (of politics) (Fig. 2).

Childhood policy and politics can be contemplated on multiple scales. Yet in this article I will restrict myself to looking at children themselves as tactical political agents. This viewpoint places all adults in a strategic position, regardless of their position within child policy in general. As the implementers of policies, they all represent the authority that children have to respect, but which they can also challenge on their own political scales. Nevertheless, all actors concerned with questions of child policy could also be viewed as agents in politics (compare Fiske 1998: macro-politics/micro-politics; and Painter 1995: Politics/politics). As Kearns and Collins (2003, p. 208) put it, a highly disciplined act is at the same an expression of human agency.

In the case of the child evacuees, the mothers were not free to choose, as they could not provide their children with good, safe homes at that time. People working on official levels were also somewhat helpless, as there were no resources to handle the required provision within national limits. On account of this, the policy-makers cannot be considered apart from the prevailing circumstances. However, in this article, the focus is mainly on children's political agency.

In his theory of everyday life, Michel de Certeau (1984) examines the tactics people use to survive the demands of the social order. He does not talk about politics as such, but a hidden production, 'poiesis'. Nevertheless, his understanding of the social order has similarities with some notions of the political, such as Carl Schmitt's distinction between friends and enemies as the source of political dynamism. According to de Certeau (1984, p. xiv), we are all caught up in the nets of discipline, where survival is bound up with the creation of anti-discipline. His ideas are based on Bourdieu's (1989) understanding of social space, an inevitable context which cannot be denied, but is not fully reflected either (see also Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). We cannot freely choose the regularities and hierarchies of our social spaces, but being aware of them, we can tactically avoid total subordination. This art of living can also be called the politics of everyday life.

De Certeau's (1984) proposal regarding the dilemma of the dominant order is consumption. He suggests that social orders that are defined and created by powerful institutional producers can be appropriated by both individual and collective consumers. The latter may adopt the product of the former to serve their own ends, thus reproducing the products by using them. Battles over time and space are crucial in the practices of everyday life, which he calls *usage* (cf. Lefebvre 1991, p. 33). Whereas producers can

master place, consumers can 'ruse' the 'proper' order by making use of opportunities and occasions, i.e. little gaps and caverns in the produced order. The producers have a 'triumph of place over time', but production can still be manipulated in time, and discipline challenged by using it 'in the service of rules, customs or convictions foreign to the colonization which could not be escaped' (de Certeau 1984, pp. 32, 36). The table is set, but it is the dining that makes the dinner.

Taking a Foucauldian understanding as his starting point, de Certeau probes into the enemy's weaknesses and the permeability of the strategic order 'proper'. The aim of his study is not to dismiss or dismantle the significance of social power relations, but to understand how they are possible. Mainly, he tries to understand how people succeed in leading satisfactory lives in seemingly oppressed and hopeless positions. The advantages that de Certeau's approach offers have recently been recognised by many geographers, including in respect to children's agency (Flusty 2003; Skelton and Valentine 2003; Gagen 2004; Secor 2004).

The position of children is weak in all social life. Their rights are bound up with various institutions, such as the family, the school and the health care system - child policies in general (Kallio 2006, p. 66). Of all people, children are those who are most firmly caught up in the nets of discipline. Surviving childhood is an example of a 'poiesis' in which consumers are able to 'make something else' out of the product (de Certeau 1984, p. 32). This two-way production, in which children's understanding of politics is formed within institutions, can also be described as 'making a distinction between friend and enemy' or a 'political struggle' (Schmitt 1976, p. 26; Bourdieu 1985, p. 729; see also Buckingham 2000, p. 204: development of political concepts; and Barker 2003, p. 137: institutionalised childhood). In short, it is the basis of children's own politics.

A politics arising from a disempowered position is different from its institutionally based counterparts. De Certeau defines the former as tactical and the latter as strategic. The tactician needs to be as 'sly as a fox and twice as quick', whereas a strategic actor can lean on the prevailing order, 'the proper' (de Certeau 1984, p. 29). This notion forms the core of 'making do', the battle between discipline and anti-discipline. Marginal groups and classes are often viewed as oppressed and manipulated people, but de Certeau reverses this by suggesting that the strength of the disempowered lies in their very position, 'the absence of power, just as a strategy is organised by the postulation of power' (de Certeau 1984, p. 38).

In policy-making and traditional childhood studies, children are frequently seen as vulnerable, fragile beings, 'the archetypal victims' (Christensen 2000, p. 41; Kearns and Collins 2003). Also, critical childhood studies are often concerned with *improving* childhoods (Mayall 2000; Prout, 2003; Rayner 2003; Holt 2004). By contrast, de Certeau's approach to the social order is useful when the research interest is in *understanding* childhood and children's politics on their own terms. From this point of view children do not need to be empowered to become political agents, as they already appear as such. Chris Philo and Fiona Smith (2003b, p. 107) have also called for 'adult-centred' political childhood studies, as 'child-centred' approaches alone 'cannot ... illuminate the tangled politics ... that determine the childhoods "made" by adults for the children within their societies. This is not to deny that young people have some agency here, a capacity for resistance, speaking back and even inducing changes'.

The means of politics

Alongside with Germany, Denmark, UK and Italy, Sweden was among those European states that provided advanced social services early on. Thus the child evacuees arriving from Finland in the early 1940s fell into good hands. Sweden's child policy was certainly intended for the best interests of the children, who were provided with highly developed expertise and given a thorough medical check up before being placed in foster families. Yet, in the children's own experiences, the actions undertaken may have appeared unjust, even representing domination – a fertile ground for children's politics.

The children, who had travelled a long way, arrived in Sweden in foreign and strange circumstances. Some did not know why they had been sent away, others had a poor understanding of where they had landed and what was to happen next. The people guiding them did not speak Finnish, which made the situation even more confusing. The children were gathered into a refugee shelter, where they were to be washed, examined, treated and sent on to foster homes (Fig. 3). In these circumstances, they had to find a way to fulfil the role assigned to them: to become Finnish children of war in Sweden. This involved tactical responses to strategic actions.



Figure 3: Physical examination (Dammert 2003)

Because of its sensitive nature, the wartime child policy programme was generally avoided as a subject for discussion for decades. Apparently sixty years were needed for these events to become distant enough. Recently, however, discussions on the issue have emerged from various quarters (e.g. Luttinen 2003; Almgren 2005; Erving-Odelberg 2005; Härö 2005; Ihrcke-Åberg 2005; Kuorsalo and Saloranta 2005; Pietilä 2005, see also Kavén 1985). The cases presented in this article are based on Erja Dammert's (2003) documentary film, in which the Finnish child evacuees themselves recount their experiences in Sweden.

Dammert's (2003) film offers exceptionally good opportunities for a consideration of children's politics, since it brings out their views reflexively. The

documentary consists of two parts. First, the archives of the National Board of Antiquities and Historical Monuments have been used to portray Finnish and Swedish children's policies during World War II. Secondly, Dammert has interviewed some of the former evacuees for the film. These interviews aim to interpret wartime children's policies from the children's own perspectives, arising from personal experiences. Thus the children, now elderly, are heard and understood in their own terms, but in relation to adult understandings.

Children's political agency is often left unidentified because children themselves are unable to articulate their everyday life politics. Yet powerful and significant experiences can also be accessed later, as Dammert's (2003) documentary film shows. Though not all childhood experiences can be recalled, some of them are well preserved in adults' minds and bodies. The documentary reveals various instances in which children's politics and children's policies can be recognised relative to, but distinct from, each other. It also shows that the tactics children use to survive in the nets of discipline are diverse. The particular case chosen to illustrate these arguments, the medical examination, accentuates the role of the body. It reveals how the children's bodies functioned both as *policy objects* and *political subjects* when the demands of the policy were met and challenged by the children (Barker 2003; Kearns and Collins 2003).

In comparison with the events that took place at the railway station in Helsinki, the Swedish health care policy was more tangible in the bodily sense. Children found themselves on their own in a strange place. They had been taken from their families and sent away, and now their bodies were being examined and controlled by a foreign authority. When they were asked to take off their clothes and undergo various health care procedures, they were made to cooperate with the frightful unknown, the enemy, whom Schmitt (1976, p.27) describes as follows:

The political enemy does not need to be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intensive way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgment of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party.

There is no doubt that Swedish medical personnel appeared to the children as this alien stranger with whom both engagement and conflicts were possible, even inevitable. Nor could relationships between the policy-makers and the children be influenced by Schmitt's 'neutral third party', be it their mothers, charity workers or state agents. Medical staff represented the strategic producer with authority and expertise. It was in their hands to implement the policy that the children were to confront, and thus to define the conditions under which they would become the children of war.

The example of physical examination illustrates well de Certeau's idea of a net of discipline: the children were placed in a situation they could not avoid, nor was it possible to proceed with the practices without the children's bodily presence. The policy-makers were to conduct the examination, whereas the children had to find a way to

‘escape it without leaving it’ (de Certeau 1984, p. xiii). In other words, the doctors and nurses were required to take care of the children’s health, and the children were forced either to resist or to conform with the practices through which this was done.

‘Tactic is an art of the weak’, states de Certeau (1984, p. 37), and he continues with a remark concerning the ‘proper’: ‘Power is bound by its very visibility’. Established policy-makers, such as the medical profession, are usually well aware of their strategic weaknesses and strengths. At the physical examination, some medical personnel chose a strategy of bribery to ease the supposedly uncomfortable situation, bringing rare delicacies with them to be given to those children who behaved well during the examination. Regarding this strategy of ‘docilising bribery’, the children could choose either to submit to the examination procedure or to oppose it (on the ‘docile body’ see Foucault 1991, p. 138). In the first case they would be rewarded with sweets, in the second be left in tears. Whatever the case, in the name of ‘the best interests of the children’, no one was to leave unexamined.



Figure 4: Confronting the enemy (Dammert 2003)

The Finnish war children performed their own politics in many ways as they confronted Swedish child policies. Their agency was based on a politics of either conformity or resistance, both of which led to various tactics. In Figure 4, one of Dammert’s interviewees describes how her reactions changed from hysteria to withdrawal. Like some other children, she made it clear that the good intentions of the policy did not meet the children’s own understandings. These claims, presented mostly in bodily arguments, put the medical staff in an awkward situation. They were either to question their own actions or to override the children’s will, to alter the policy or to deny children’s own politics. It was this situation in particular that some of them had wanted to avoid by offering sweets as rewards for obedience.

The intention of the strategy of bribery was, in de Certeau’s terms, to hide the order of the ‘proper’ and thus close the loopholes which could be used tactically. Such a strategy is commonly used to cover unpleasant and sometimes violent acts of

subordination. Steven Flusty (2003, p. 91) has found the same to be true of security monitoring, where the 'naturalization of interdictory space' is accomplished by disguising observation cameras with candy icing and giving guardhouses charming names. When power can be postulated invisibly, the order is harder to challenge. Yet some of the children in the physical examination could not be placated either by the medical personnel or their siblings. The collision between the policy and their own politics was too great to be overcome within the totalitarian order.

In the evacuation operations, open resistance was one way through which the children confronted the policy directed to their bodies. Children adopted a number of resistant tactics in the course of their transportation, examination and relocation. For instance, a tactic of 'clinging' was used successfully in many cases. One of Dammert's (2003) interviewees describes how she and her two sisters clung tightly to each other when they faced the threat of being located to different foster homes. As a consequence, they were all placed in the same neighbourhood. Another former war child recalls how he refused his placement to an unpleasant family by persistently grabbing hold of the pillars of the car door. In this case too, the tactic worked: another child had to go and settle in that home instead.

However, not all the children questioned the evacuation strategies from a position of resistance. Some of them did not end up in conflict with 'the enemy', but found ways of 'engaging with him in business transactions', in Schmitt's words (see above). The 'docilisation' of the bodies succeeded in part, as some of the children obediently went through the examination, receiving their prize at the end (Valentine 2000). Regardless of the success achieved by the policy implementers' strategy, the tactic of resistance cannot yet be claimed to be more political than that of conformity. As resistance *to* the policy allowed some children more freedom of (embodied) speech, conformity *with* the policy offered the others a shelter.

'Going along' is another means of looking for the gaps and caverns of order. Compared to open resistance, this 'guileful ruse', or at times even 'calculated conformity', is advantageous in terms of invisibility: those who follow the order may avoid the searchlights of the 'proper' (De Certeau 1984; Scott 1985). The hide-outs so discovered often allow for space and mobility outside the disciplined order. This affords one occasions and opportunities, and may ultimately lead to the 'substitution of time for space', the ultimate tactical goal (de Certeau 1984, pp. 37, 83). In practical terms, the evacuee children could not, for instance, decide whether they should stay in Sweden or not, but through their obedient behaviour they could obtain liberties which helped them alter their new living environments to meet their own ends.

To escape without leaving requires a reconsideration and reconstruction of space, which, according to de Certeau, can be achieved by the exploitation of occasions. Going back to the example, the children who performed seemingly docile bodily acts in the examination were not unequivocally more submissive than those who offered visible bodily resistance. Their politics is only harder to recognise, as it is based on occasional ruses. Following de Certeau (1984), to survive within the nets of discipline, one needs to create an anti-discipline, a counter act, which is presented in tactics. As argued above, children's resistance and conformity can both be understood as such (Kearns and Collins 2003; Skelton and Valentine 2003), being the means by which children participate in the reconstruction of childhood.

In general, children's politics do not diverge from any other tactical politics, as can be discerned, for example, in Erving Goffman's (1961) thought. Goffman identifies four major tactics that people use in institutional settings. The first two tactics he presents, 'situational withdrawal' and 'intransigence', are aligned with regression or acute depersonalization and the sustained rejection of sustained control (Goffman 1961, p. 61). These 'tacks', as Goffman puts it, can be understood as the politics presented in Figure 4. When one four-year-old girl arrived in Sweden in difficult circumstances, she first became hysterical. However, her attempts to resist and criticise the policy were ignored and blocked. This conflict, resulting in total subordination, led to a rift between her and Swedish society, which was later realised in the host family setting. As a consequence, she became unable to communicate with 'the alien stranger', the whole of her new environment.

Withdrawal and intransigence are both tactics of resistance in a more or less active sense. Goffman's (1961, p. 62) two last tacks, 'colonization' and 'conversion', are instead examples of a tactics of conformity. A coloniser seeks to view the current circumstances as preferable to any other conditions, whereas a conversionist goes even further by attempting to fill perfectly the role assigned to him or her. Such behaviour is usually considered 'nice' and 'good' in children and is often rewarded, as in the case of the physical examination (see Kearns and Collins 2003). Children's subjective agency is easily put aside because they do not seem to challenge authority. However, the tactics of conformity are no more natural or neutral than those of resistance.

The woman in Figure 4 described her personal experiences as a contrast to the behaviour of her younger sister, who did 'not shed a tear' during the examination. The little sister's agency provides us with an emblematic example of a tactic of conformity. Given that it contained various unpleasant procedures on a very personal level (see Fig. 3), it seems fair to say that the younger sister's experiences were likewise not casual. Instead, the interviewee describes her sister with admiring expressions which show that the act appeared *courageous* to her. The younger of the sisters went for the sweets so decisively that, no matter what it took, they could not deny her the prize. In Goffman's terms, she filled perfectly the role of a wartime child evacuee, and by so doing turned her docile body into a daring one. So, in the case of conformity too, the strategy of bribery can be judged from two angles. The policy objectives were met, but also reconstructed in this meeting, and therefore in de Certeau's terms sometimes *rused*.

Though Goffman's tacks vary notably from each other, one aspect is common to them all: they are all presented for the purpose of surviving institutionalisation. Becoming conspicuous or invisible are opposite ways of dealing with the nets of discipline. They can both be used in a tactical sense, following de Certeau's idea of a 'ruse'; the set order, which is 'proper', is used in a way which was not intended. Here the 'inmates' can be understood as subjects or objects, depending on one's point of view. Therefore, the success of the Swedish child policy and its product, a docile body, can be weighed on two scales.

Technically speaking, the strategy was successful: nice children received a bag of lollies, but the naughty children were also thoroughly examined. On the other hand, as the strategy was adopted by the children, it was criticised, reproduced and 'rused'. Some children resisted the policy by making the medical personnel either reconsider their own practices or violate the children's own political agency. Other children conformed and

took advantage of the rewards. These anti-disciplines, arising from the children's own grounds, gave them some empowerment in a situation in which they were disempowered to begin with. Valentine (1998, p. 326) states that, 'taking some form of control or initiative, even in a very minor way, can actually break cycles of helplessness and fear'. Thus, even if they did not acquire a predominant or stable position, the self-empowerment might have been what helped the children undergo the evacuation.

To the children themselves, the meanings of the tactics and their consequences were of great significance. Some of the war children became so firmly attached to their new surroundings that they never returned to Finland. Others found it difficult to settle down in either of their families and travelled between Finland and Sweden throughout their childhood. Not all the children became familiar with Sweden at any stage. For them, the years in exile were long and filled with longing. Nevertheless, despite the outcomes of the tactics, they all appear equally interesting as politics. The fact that the children met the wartime policies affecting them on their own terms shows that children are political actors in their own right, practising everyday politics intuitively like adults do, by exploring the best solutions and resolutions. Taking this as a starting point, it is also possible to recognise children's politics in more familiar and less radical circumstances.

Childhood politics redefined

In the preceding sections, it has been shown how children's naturalised spaces and places are diminished in an evacuation process, and what kinds of counter action this decontextualisation may evoke. The Finnish evacuee children's everyday surroundings were taken away from them when they were sent to Sweden. Their own established places could no longer provide them with the context of living. Once settled in their new environments, the children would create new scales of action, adjusting to a foreign culture on their own by using the tactics they possessed or could acquire in these circumstances.

However, although the evacuee children had been separated from most of their lived spaces, there was one context of living that they could bring with them from Finland. The children stepped on to the train and off the train in the same *body*. Before they had a chance to create new affiliations, the body was the only scale they could use to communicate. Having lost everything else to the war, the body became the children's last bastion to be defended, as well as the only ground for their agency.

Of all the scales that children employ, the scale of the body appears particularly interesting. Bodily empowerment is allowed and attained little by little, just as it is gradually achieved on other political scales (e.g. home, neighbourhood, nation state). However, compared with these other scales, children's bodily autonomy is more complex to challenge, withdraw or renounce. For instance, home as a socio-spatial context of living can be modified, altered or taken away in its entirety, which unfortunately is the reality for many children, even in current welfare societies. Children may resist or conform to these transitions, but often they are not able to prevent them. The body, on the other hand, cannot be treated this way without exercising violence on the children. Therefore, through their bodily actions (tactics), children are able to resist most attempts to control, manipulate and rule their lives.

To some degree the body always holds an unquestionable, autonomous position. Unlike other scales of action, it cannot be substituted or rebuilt. This very fact protects

children's privacy and makes their bodies firm grounds for politics. The evacuees' cases show distinctly how children's bodies are constantly made into policy objects, as well as how, at the same time, they function as political subjects. A child can be made to submit to a physical examination, but she cannot be made to speak. A home and a nation state can be removed and replaced, but not without the presence of a political body. By its mere existence, the body represents the anti-discipline. These insights explain why nearly all child policy practices are directed at the body. Thus, I argue that in the end all children's politics can be reduced to a politics of the body, a site where strategic producers and tactical users meet.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), challenging bodily autonomy always requires symbolic violence to a greater or lesser extent. The body being children's primary political scale and the main subject of children's policies, it can be further stated that children are in a constant struggle with policies through their bodies. Following de Certeau's ideas (1984), these struggles can be described as the politics of everyday life, in which survival in the nets of discipline and tactical agency constitute the status quo. In this politics of everyday life, 'knowledge of the social world and, more precisely, the categories that make it possible, are the stakes, par excellence, of political struggle, the inextricably theoretical and practical struggle for the power to conserve or transform the social world by conserving or transforming the categories through which it was perceived' (Bourdieu 1985, p. 729).

Thus, in Bourdieu's words, the sense of one's place composed through the body is formed together with the other agents of the social world. In this spirit, Neil Smith (1993) considers the central avenues of the body to be care, control, physical access *to* the body and physical access *by* the body. These four vantage points could well be used as foundations for recognising children's everyday politics. The first three avenues are commonly used by adults (authorities), the last one by children themselves. In the case of the evacuee children, Smith's views appear paraphrased as follows.

The evacuation process was organised in the realms of *care*; the mothers, the members of the charity organisations and the host families wanted to provide the children with safe and good living conditions. Yet, for the children the wartime child policy appeared as a means of *control*; they were sent away from their homes to a foreign place, presumably often involuntarily. In the bodily sense they were also disadvantaged, as the doctors had unrestricted physical access *to* their bodies, whereas the children's physical access *by* their bodies was marginal.

Understanding politics as a part of children's everyday lives presents challenges to both institutional policies and adults' everyday practices. The meanings of such basic principles as provision, protection and participation need to be reconsidered and renegotiated with children. Even if this is a great demand, it is required in order to consider children as political subjects and agents in their own right.

Children's political agency can be taken into account in many ways. Most commonly, their rights to participate in child policies are being stressed, in which case politics are aligned with policies and the political positions are 'given' (Baraldi 2003; Roberts 2003). In this empowering process, participation can be argued and contemplated, actors empowered or disempowered, and rights and responsibilities set in an appropriate order. Understanding politics more widely, namely as an aspect of all social life, challenges this approach. In the politics of everyday life, participation is

considered unavoidable and political agency self-evident. Regardless of their positions, all agents who work in the same social fields are considered political. This idea, true to Bourdieu's (1989) theorisation, brings children out of social and political otherness and acknowledges them as *homo politicus*.

Although children's politics have not been examined widely, everyday life politics in general have attracted plenty of interest among geographers too. After all, children are not the only ones to suffer from societal disempowerment and political otherness. Various minority groups occupy similar positions, as has been noted, for instance, within identity studies, where the concept of politics has been widely contemplated and challenged, but still left somewhat porous and open. Häkli and Paasi (2003) state that, although identity narratives are unquestionably political, the actors or acts producing these narratives cannot be clearly indicated. This notion matches well the understandings of politics presented in this article.

A wider understanding of politics does not primarily clarify the field of studies. Quite the reverse: it reveals so much politics that many goals appear unattainable. Recognising political aspects in *any* subject matter, instead of separating the 'political' from the 'apolitical', produces a risk of inflating the whole concept. This risk has been taken into account by numerous scholars who have searched for a definition of childhood politics (Philo 1994; Buckingham 2000; Philo and Smith 2003b; Mann and Huffman 2005). To avoid the 'apoliticisation' of childhood, the views adopted should be outlined in detail. A better understanding of different kinds of politics can be acquired, for example, by viewing everyday life on a continuum of reflexivity.

Political agency can be understood as more or less reflexive, regardless of the efficiency of the politics itself. In this view, intentional acts performed to reach a definable goal are considered as one end of the continuum; in short, making political choices. Conversely, the other end of the continuum encompasses intuitive acts which cannot be considered reasoned choices. They can be better understood as questions of existence, such as de Certeau's concept of the ruse. In the extreme case, the politics practised in everyday life can thus be regarded as either subject to calculation or unconscious. However, following the idea of a continuum, the acts presented in reality are mostly something in between. This being so, in several approaches it has been found useful to understand the two as separate, though at the same time intertwined (e.g. Clayton 2002; Kallio 2007). This viewpoint makes it easier to conceptualise different kinds of politics. For example, it enables a distinction to be made between explicitly political acts and everyday practices based on political awareness (Nogué & Vicente 2004).

Within childhood studies, various arguments over politics as an everyday life practice can be understood as 'liberators'. Conventional demands concerning the reflexivity of politics can be set aside, as children's tactics do not need to appear self-reflexive (Skelton and Valentine 2003). Instead, their acts can be understood as components of childhood narratives, or as participation in the ordering of everyday life. Advancing children's political agency not by *giving* them power, but by *recognising* the existing politics, poses a fair challenge. In this view, participation and agency cannot be contemplated merely on general policy levels. Instead, as children are considered tactical agents on their own scales, their politics must be confronted in everyday life *with* them.

Taking children seriously in this way, on small scales and in everyday practices, does not mean making a great proclamation. It is rather a strategy of humanity which is rewarded in constant struggle and negotiation. This being so, I argue that considering children's politics in everyday life provides a reasonable basis for the study of political geographies of childhood. Henri Lefebvre (1971, p. 22) also encourages us to do this by suggesting that we should take everyday life seriously: 'Why indeed should not one or other of the specialized sciences ... contribute to the study of everyday life?'

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