

Growing up is crossing boundaries

The example of the French Picturebook *Devine qui fait quoi* by Gerda Müller

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Abstract

The fundamental notion of “spatial turn” which was coined by the geographers Edward Soja (1996) and Jacques Lévy (1999) is part of the relevant questions on living space: How is man in the space which surrounds him? What interactions exist between the individual and his living space? Responses to these questions can be found in a French picturebook published in 1999 by l'Ecole des Loisirs, *Devine qui fait quoi. Une promenade invisible* [Guess who does what? An invisible walk] by Gerda Müller. This paper has two aims. The first aim is to demonstrate that *Devine qui fait quoi* is a “geographer-picturebook”, expressing and participating in the construction of a child's lived-in space. The second aim is to show that a “geographer-book” like *Devine qui fait quoi* can be read in a kindergarten to explore, to structure and to organize space with 5 year-old children.

Keywords: Lived-in space; geographer-book; iconotext; spatiality; picturebook

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1. Introduction

The selection produced for the international research “The construction of the sense of espace vécu in European children’s literature in the second half of the 20th century (1945-2010). An international historical and comparative survey on picturebooks”, in the French case, is composed of forty-two picturebooks (see Table 1). The request which consisted of finding six works for each decade between 1945 and 2010 proved to be complicated. The French production, especially before the 1980’s, didn’t seem to give an important place to domestic living space in the picturebooks. It was therefore necessary to take up a chronological variation as to the interest given to the subject. In the picturebooks, the house can take on several uses and different meanings. It is the ideal refugee or the ideal-model of the “living machine” as Le Corbusier defined it (1925, p.219). This ideal-type constructs an “interior living space” which allows every child to invest in a new space. Working from our corpus of 42 picturebooks, we have been able to attempt a first chronological slice in the treatment of domestic living space. We have thus distinguished a first period which would go up to the “turn” of the 1970’s. This period is characterized by a first representation of living space as “the natural place of the function of living” (Le Corbusier, 1925, p.155). A second period would go up to the end of the 1980’s. With the cultural turn, that these years encountered, the picturebooks are divided between the “traditional” representation of the burrow-habitat which is rather the fact of the big publishing houses (Hachette, Casterman, Flammarion...) of the time and a more social and ecological representation of the house which is rather the way of the small publishing firms of the time (Ecole des Loisirs, La Farandole...). Finally, a last period would lead up to today. The number and the difficulty in choosing only six titles per decade indicate very clearly that the subject of domestic living space is an extremely contemporary subject.

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Table 1. The analyzed corpus

Picturebook creators		Title	Year	Decades
Author	Illustrator			
Paul Émile Victor		<i>Apoutsiak le petit esquimau</i> [Apoutsiak the little Eskimo]	1948	1951-1960
Jean-Michel Guilcher	Cana	<i>Mangazou</i> [Mangazou]	1952	
Jean-Michel Guilcher	Gerda Müller	<i>Jan de Hollande</i> [Jan of Holland]	1954	
Rose Celli	Gerda Müller	<i>Boule d'or et les trois ours</i> [Goldilocks and the three bears]	1956	
Pierre Probst		<i>La Maison de Caroline</i> [Caroline's House]	1956	
Dominique Darbois		<i>Kaiming, le petit pêcheur chinois</i> [Kaiming, the little Chinese fisherboy]	1957	
Annie Butel	Lucile Butel	<i>Féfé des Antilles</i> [Fefe of West Indies]	1962	1961-1970
Gilbert Delahaye	Marcel Marlier	<i>Martine à la maison</i> [Martine at Home]	1963	
Bénédicte De La Roncière		<i>Assoua petit Sénégalais de Casamance</i> [Assoua the little Senegalese from Casamance]	1969	
Andrée Clair	Bernadette Després	<i>Nicole au quinzième étage</i> [Nicole at the 14 th floor]	1969	
Annette Tison	Talus Taylor	<i>La Maison de Barbapapa</i> [Barbapapa's House]	1972	1971-1980
Gaby Gozian	May Angeli	<i>Sarah la petite tsigane</i> [Sarah the little Gypsy]	1972	
Jean Garonnaire		<i>La Tour part en voyage</i> [The Tower is traveling]	1974	
Philippe Dumas		<i>La Maison de l'avenue Jean Jaurès</i> [The House of Jean-Jaures Avenue]	1979	
Evelyne Passegrand		<i>L'Immeuble qui pêchait</i> [The building that was fishing]	1979	

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Picturebook creators		Title	Year	Decades
Author	Illustrator			
Monique Davot	François Davot	<i>Claire et Pascal, enfants de mariniers</i> [Claire and pascal, Bargees' children]	1981	1981-1990
Cécile Gagnon	François Davot	<i>Johanne du Québec</i> [Johanne of Quebec]	1983	
Pierre Probst		<i>Caroline déménage</i> [Caroline moves away]	1987	
Pierre Couronne		<i>Les Lapinos à la maison</i> [The Lapinos at home]	1990	
Gilbert Delahaye	Marcel Marlier	<i>Martine va déménager</i> [Martine is going to move]	1992	1991-2000
Alice Dumas	Martine Laffon	<i>Le Monsieur de la rue d'à côté</i> [The Man of the next street]	1993	
Claude Ponti		<i>Le Tournemire</i> [The Tournemire]	1996	
Béatrice Poncelet		<i>Chez elle ou chez elle</i> [At her place or at her place]	1997	
Claude Ponti		<i>Ma Vallée</i> [My Valley]	1998	
Gerda Müller		<i>Devine qui fait quoi? Une promenade invisible</i> [Guess who does what? An invisible walk]	1999	
Guillaume Dégé		<i>Ma Maison</i> [My House]	2001	2001-2010
Mario Ramos		<i>Maman!</i> [Mummy!]	2001	
Claude Carré	Natali Fortier	<i>Tu rentres à la maison</i> [You are going back home]	2002	
Max Ducos		<i>Jeu de piste à Volubilis</i> [Treasure hunt in Volubilis House]	2006	
Marie-Félicité Ébokéa	Clémentine Sourdaïs	<i>Mariétou Kissaitou</i> [Mariétou Kissaitout]	2008	
Gaëtan Dorémus		<i>Frigo vide</i> [Empty Fridge]	2009	

It is part of recent questions on living space, a notion definitely found in Heidegger in 1951, but which constitutes, since the 1990's, the fundamental notion of what

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geographers Edward Soja (1996) and Jacques Lévy (1999), after him, called “spatial turn”. How is man in the space which surrounds him? What interactions exist between the individual and his living space which is a social space? Certain responses to these questions can be found reunited in a picturebook which appeared in 1999 by l’Ecole des Loisirs, *Devine qui fait quoi. Une promenade invisible* [*Guess who does what? An invisible walk*] by Gerda Müller. This book is maybe quite relevant to this recent period, therefore I decided to analyze it more precisely in this paper.

In his PhD dissertation, defended in 1992, Marc Brosseau, a Canadian geographer, asserted that some “geographer-novels” existed (Brosseau, 1996, p.8), that is to say some fictive narratives producing their own geography, expressing relationships among the different characters and the places described, practiced and appropriated. These “geographer-novels” could intervene on the construction and transmission of knowledge about human space. The picturebook, *Devine qui fait quoi. Une promenade invisible*, could be considered what I myself call, a “geographer-picturebook”. This children’s picturebook, whose story tells about a little boy who wants to build a boat in his bedroom, would transmit spatiality and take part in the construction of the Young reader’s intimate space. Realizing that he is missing a mast, the Young hero leaves, braving snow which has covered the surrounding countryside. He must cross several spaces, several areas before finding a branch that he is going to pick from a tree standing on the other side of a stream. The story offers the reader a series of sequential, panoramic views of the places crossed by the child. The reader is invited to follow the character from his intimate space to unknown confines that he must brave in constructing a makeshift bridge.

A children’s geographer-picturebook, like Gerda Müller’s *Devine qui fait quoi*, can be considered as a socio-spatial representation of living spaces and interpersonal relationships of characters. To study these representations, we must question the socio-spatial ideologies conveyed to young readers.

This paper has two aims. One of them is to show that *Devine qui fait quoi* is a “geographer-picturebook”, expressing and participating in the construction of a child’s lived-in space. The second one is to show, with a first experience in a class, that a “geographer-book” like *Devine qui fait quoi* can be read in class to explore, to structure and to organize space with 5 year-old children.

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Firstly, I will demonstrate by comparing *Devine qui fait quoi* with the book which inspired it that a picturebook contains its own spatial ideology (Beauvais, 2015; Meunier, 2016). The hero's course through his living space is a successive crossing of limits that helps him to grow up. The little boy's journey can be read as the expression of what Abraham Moles called "the elasticity of limits" (Moles & Rohmer-Moles, 1972, p.5) in a field of freedoms that human beings maintain with topological space. Secondly, I will propose to develop the spatial ideology transmitted by Gerda Müller's picturebook. The reading will be a spatial interpretation of this picturebook whose ambition is perhaps to show the child the importance of public space to realize himself. Thirdly, I will study the reception of this picturebook by young readers of kindergarten and show that Gerda Müller's, as a geographer-picturebook, can help children to structure space.

2. Picturebook transmits "spatial ideology", the example of *Devine qui fait quoi*

In *How picturebooks work*, in 2001, Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott asserted that the settings of picturebooks "communicate a sense of time and place for the actions depicted" (p. 61). Clementine Beauvais, in her PhD dissertation, defended the idea that there exists in Children's Literature some ideological values that cross time to influence the spatial and social behaviour (Beauvais, 2015, p.24). In this first part I would like to show that Gerda Müller's picturebook, *Devine qui fait quoi*, contains an ideology that I decided to qualify as "spatial" (Meunier, 2016, p.144). My demonstration will apply to the comparison between *Devine qui fait quoi* and the picturebook that inspired it, *Ida e Volta*: two books very similar but with a different 'spatial ideology'.

Gerda Müller was born in 1926 in Naarden, Netherlands. She graduated from the Amsterdam School of Decorative Arts and decided to emigrate to France:

Batavian teachers had warned us that we could not earn money with illustrations in the Netherlands. I went to Paris in 1948 because I wanted to attend the very comprehensive courses of Paul Colin's, a famous poster designer, and above all because I admired Rojankovsky whom I had discovered at the School of Art in Amsterdam, the

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entire collection of «Le Roman des Bêtes» with original lithographs. It was a shock! (Ezraty & Lévêque, 1999, p.97).

Two years after she arrived in Paris, she was taken on by Paul Faucher, director of the Père Castor's Atelier. She stayed there thirteen years and produced about forty picturebooks. In 1969, she decided to break her exclusive contract with the Atelier. She worked with many french publishers (Belin, Gautier-Languereau, Nathan). She returned to school and attended some layout classes at École Estienne in Paris. In 1985, she was asked to join the German Publishing House Ravensburger, with whom she would find great freedom in subject and realization (Ezraty & Lévêque, 1999, p.100). She produced about ten picturebooks, which were translated into French and at least twelve other languages.

After sixteen years of collaboration with the German Publisher, Gerda Müller wanted to do something else and work somewhere else. She arrived at L'École des Loisirs, a French Publishing House, with the picturebook, *Pivoine, mon âne*, in 1998. But, this picturebook is still in the line of what she did for almost forty years, working for Père Castor or Ravensburger. Very quickly, she wanted to do something else. Her Editor, Marcus Osterwalder, confided that a librarian introduced to Gerda Müller a picturebook by Juarez Machado, a Brazilian artist, *Ida e Volta*, published by Primor in 1965 and by Flammarion/Père Castor in 1976 (Osterwalder, 2016, p.5). This book, which is very difficult to find now in France, is the book which inspired *Devine qui fait quoi*.

The original title of Juarez Machado's picturebook evokes a round trip journey, a loop itinerary, *Ida e Volta* (round trip in Portuguese). The book is composed of eighteen spread-boards, including the cover. There is no text and the book opens on green footprints that we can already observe on the cover. These footprints lead to a shower. On the following page, the shower is open and blue footprints guide us to the following page. The invisible character walked to a wardrobe in which he took out some clothes to get dressed. As we can see on figure 2, a first part of the picturebook takes place at the hero's home, from his intimate space (the shower to the entrance threshold of the house and the public space). Inside this first space, it seems to have no partitions except the shower curtain. All the character's personal space is represented « open » and porous.

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Although, there is no scenery except several accessories that permit us to identify different suggested places (a bedroom wardrobe, a kitchen table, a living-room gramophone, the coat hanger in the entrance corridor).

In the second part of the picturebook, we are in the public space. The main character's steps cross other character's steps. He seems to exchange some friendly gestures with them. In this space, the illustrator represented several elements of scenery, mostly walls, doors and windows. This public space, which constitutes the main character's lived-in space, is a succession of bubbles, agglutinated to each other or sometimes separated. This is a representation of public space that reminds us of foam, a representation and a concept imagined by the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2004). The hero ends up borrowing a bicycle and hurtles down a slope, directly towards a pile of pots of paint. Most likely stained with paint, he takes off his shoes and goes on away barefoot. The return to the shower is suggested by the back-cover and the cover. Finally, what is shown to the reader is then a linear course, from the shower to the fall in the pots of paint. The loop course is suggested and gives the impression of a non-sense and limitless cycle.

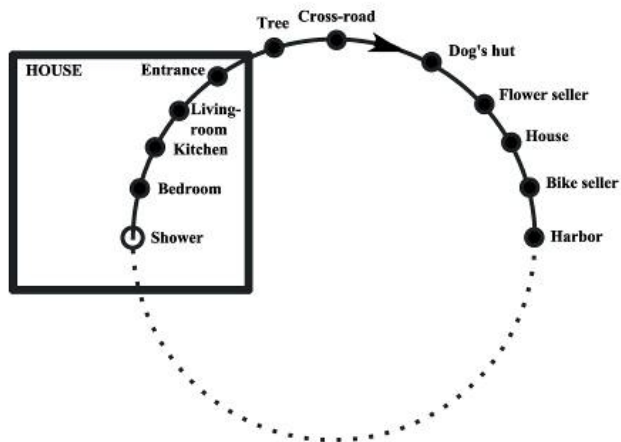


Figure 1. Spatio-genetic map of *Une aventure invisible* (1976)

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The picturebook, *Devine qui fait quoi, Une promenade invisible* (*Guess who does what. An invisible Track*) was published in 1999. It was translated into Italian (*Indovina che cosa succede. Una passeggiata invisibile* at Babalibri's) and in Spanish (*Adivina quién hace qué* at Corimbo's) in 2001; in German in 2008 (*Was war hier bloss los* at Beltz's). In this wordless picturebook, the hero, a little boy that we can glimpse asleep beneath his covers on the illustration of the first page, is waking up. After he gets washed, he plays in his bedroom with a wooden box that he decides to turn in a boat. When he realizes that he is missing a mast, he goes out, facing the snow that covers all the nearby countryside. It is across the stream, a few strides away from the house, near the pony's enclosure, that he finds a branch, ripped from a wonderful tree. With this branch he can complete his boat as soon as he comes back to his bedroom.

The adventure told by this picturebook could be divided into three phases. The first one corresponds to the preparation of the adventure and takes place in the meso-space of the house (pages 2 to 7). The second phase is the proper adventure which takes place in macro-space and throws the hero into "public space" (pages 8 to 29). The third and last phase is devoted to the conclusion of the adventure and to the realization of what initiated it. We are back then in the meso-space of the house (pages 30 to 33).

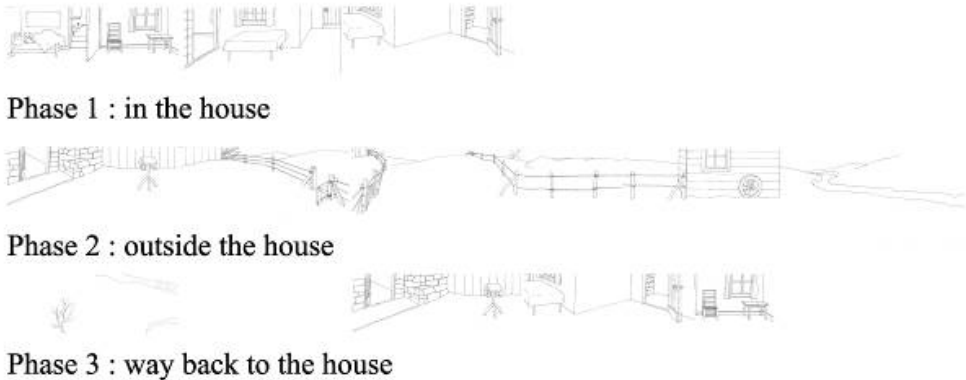


Figure 2. Structure of the picturebook *Devine qui fait quoi* (personal collection)

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The narrative is not to read page after page but double-page after double-page. The landscape format of the picturebook proposes to readers a series of panoramic and sequential views of the different spaces, crossed by the little boy. Readers are invited, from the first page, to follow the main character by observing his tracks: “Let’s follow his tracks” (p. 1). They are embedded in a long journey that accompanies the child, staying at his height and without any rupture in the sequence (Fig. 5).

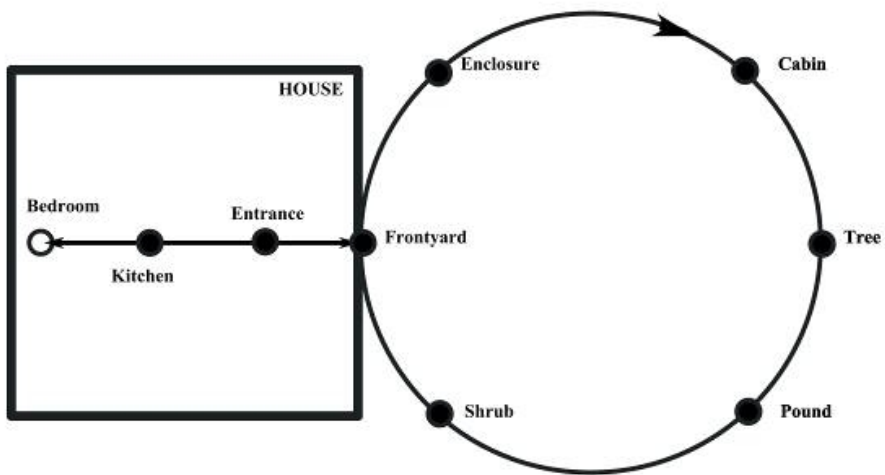


Figure 3. Spatio-genetic map of *Devine qui fait quoi* (1999)

The space in which all the walk takes place belongs to what French geographers call “close space”, a blurred notion that is always very difficult to define because it includes a random and subjective distance around the person. Anglo-Saxon geographers refer mostly to the frequency of attendance and name these spaces “everyday spaces” (Holloway & Valentin, 2000, p.11). Geographers have mapped the increasing institutionalization of the everyday spaces of childhood. Institutionalized spaces, which are designed and controlled by adults, are based not only upon the protection of

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children but also on the power relationships of control, regulation and exclusion (Philo, 1997; Sibley, 1995).

So, *Devine qui fait quoi* gives a representation of the little boy's close lived-in space. The concept of lived-in space, "espace vécu", as it was defined by French geographer Armand Frémont in 1975, includes the space of the daily attendance (life space) and the space of social interrelationships (social space), perceived as objects of mental perception and representation that a person or a group can build itself. When Gerda Müller worked for Paul and François Faucher in the Père Castor Atelier, she could observe children's life space as often she wanted. She could represent it and made a lot of sketches. Indeed, between 1946 and 1961, Paul Faucher created, boulevard Saint-Michel in Paris, a special school inspired by the Celestin Freinet's movement, "l'École nouvelle". The Père Castor's School, as it was named, was settled on the first floor of the Père Castor Atelier building. In an interview for the *Revue des Livres pour Enfants*, Gerda Müller witnesses:

On the second floor, there was the Atelier, on the first floor classes of the «Petite École» and its active methods. Montessori's ideas were already applied in Holland and what happened in this school didn't surprise me. From the Atelier, through a roof window, we can observe children's games in the gymnastic room. I did a lot of sketches there (Ezraty & Lévêque, 1999, pp.8-99).

Devine qui fait quoi, written thirty years after the adventure of the Père Castor Atelier, seems to constitute a reminiscence of the observations realized by the author. It stages, if we could say, a little boy in the different places of his "life space" and his "social space". These two spaces composing "l'espace vécu", according to Frémont, are organized like onion peels. Each crossed space is a peel protecting the child's more intimate space: his bed, where everything begins, where dreams slumber.

As an example, we can compare the treatment of the passage by the corridor. On Machado's book (Figure 3a), there is no scenery. Only a few accessories suggest that the character is in the corridor and take his hat. On Müller's book (Figure 3b), all the scenery is detailed and cut at the hero's height. The angle of view has changed since the preceding pages. Maybe we can find several crossing points in common between the two picturebooks (the bedroom, the kitchen, the corridor), but Gerda Müller's book shows

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all the stages of a loop itinerary, realized by a child in his lived-in space. Juarez Machado stages a goofy adult hero who, like Tantalus, endlessly revives the same walk, the same fall and meets the same people. Whereas, Gerda Müller's Young hero lives a real adventure by going far and away from the family nest to go and pick, on the other side of the stream, a branch that he needs to build his boat, like he imagined it maybe in his sleep.

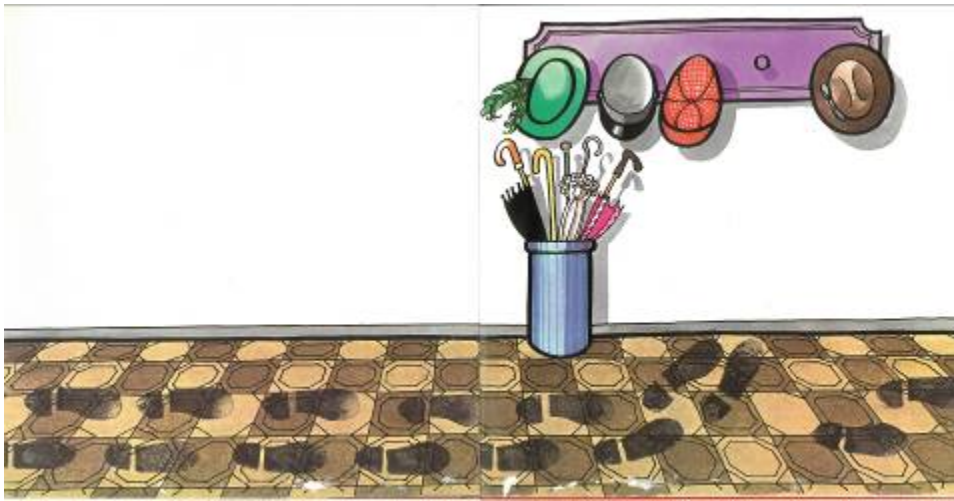


Figure 4a. *Une aventure invisible* (1976), pp.10-11

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Figure 4b. *Devine qui fait quoi* (1999), pp. 6-7

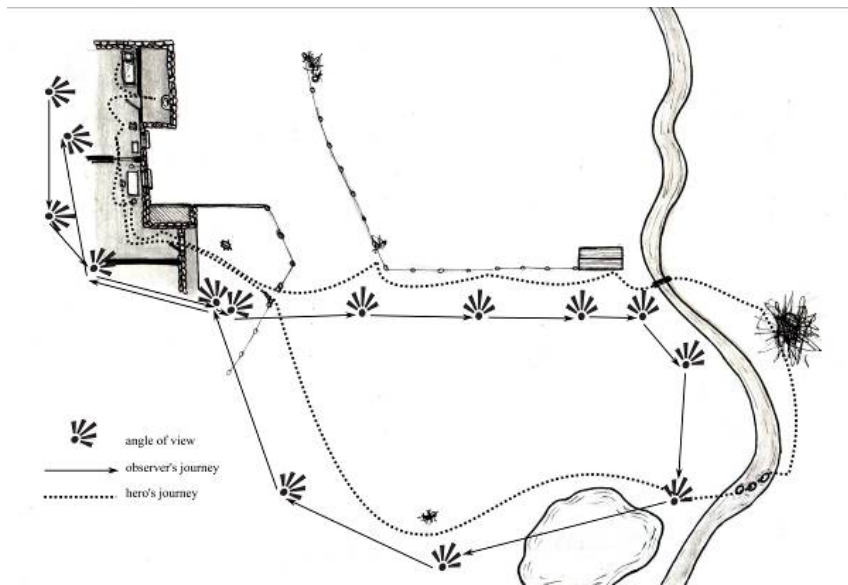


Figure 5. Reconstitution of the hero's lived-in space (personal collection)

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3. When picturebook explains how to live in space: Growing up is crossing boundaries

Cultural and Social Geography could be defined with this simple formula, borrowed from the French Geographer Jacques Lévy: the “science of the spatial dimension of Societies” (Lévy, 1994, p.23). Geography questions spatial strategies of human beings on Earth, “space struggle” (Lussault, 2009). Directly imported from Bruno Latour’s Sociology of Sciences, the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) allows us to consider every active entity, without necessary intentionality, in these strategies of production of space. Children’s picturebooks, cultural and manufacturing artifacts, can be seen as nonhuman actors or participants. Some of them are even spatial nonhuman participants and can modify the children’s perception of space. It is exactly this sort of picturebook that we could name “geographer-picturebook” insofar as they participate in the construction of space and spatiality. Recently, some works showed, for example, the importance of the maps in iconotextual narration (Goga & Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2017) but also in the transmission of spatial message (Meunier, 2016b). This second part will question precisely the spatial message carried by Gerda Müller’s picturebook.

The spatiality lived by Gerda Müller’s Young hero could be qualified as psychological, as Edward T. Hall conceives it in his work about proxemics at the beginning of the 60’s: “Proxemics is the term I have coined for the interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture” (Hall, 1963, p.1). In referring to the works of biologist Heini Hediger, Hall shows that like each animal, Man “is surrounded by a series of bubbles or irregularly shaped balloons that serve to maintain proper spacing between individuals” (Hall, 1963, p.10).

The metaphor that consists to compare a person’s different life spaces to bubbles or balloons is to bring us closer to the metaphor of shells used by Abraham Moles in the 70’s (Moles & Rohmer-Moles, 1972) to illustrate the theory of psychological space. According to Hall, the perception of space for human beings, as for the animal indeed, is dynamic because it is related to action, “what can be done in a given space – rather than what is seen by passive viewing” (Hall, 1966, p.116). Gerda Müller’s hero realizes himself in the movement and this in the course through his lived-in space that the little boy builds himself. We could even add that it is through the “elasticity of limits”

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(Moles, 1972, p.35) that he grows up, crossing, one by one, the boundaries that get him further and further away from his bed and his nest.

Gerda Müller shows us, at first, the child in his bed (page 1), beneath his covers, with his teddy bear (object of emotional transfer). This first shell corresponds to what Edward T. Hall (1966, p.117) calls the boy's "intimate sphere". This intimate sphere is defined by an "intimate distance". Hall locates it between 15 and 40 cm around the person. This is the distance within which we are comforted and protected. This intimate space is then located beneath the cover. Once the cover has been pushed off, we come into the child's "personal sphere": a personalized space where every intrusion could be lived like a violation. Hall defines this sphere as: "a small protective sphere or bubble that an organism maintains between itself and others" (Hall, 1966, p.128). Hall locates the "personal distance" between 45 and 125 cm, the length of an arm. In the picturebook, it corresponds to the corner of the bedroom in which the child has his bed and which he has "territorialized", personalized by hanging a poster he made on the wall. Bachelard recognizes in the lived-in corner a fundamental function: Every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house (Bachelard, 1964, p.136).

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Figure 6. *Devine qui fait quoi* (1999), pp.2-7

According to Bachelard (1964), it is inside the corner-shelter, which “rejects and restrains, even hides, life” (p.136) that the child, motionless, goes to imagine, to invent, to dream before embarking in the realization by action. “And all who live in corners will come to confer life upon this image, multiplying the shades of being that characterize

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the corner dweller”, goes on Bachelard (1964, p.140), making the corner the starting point of inhabiting. “All corners are haunted, if not inhabited”, says Bachelard and “the function of inhabiting” consists then in making the junction between the full and the empty, between the corner and the “following shell”, the first social space.

On page 3, we discover the complete child’s bedroom. We come then into what we could call the child’s “first social sphere”. Hall distinguishes for every sphere a close phase and a far phase. This “first social sphere” could correspond to the close phase and, more precisely in the picturebook, to the territory of the bedroom. Indeed, this bedroom, like the bathroom which constitutes an appendice of it, is shared with another person, our hero’s little brother (we can notice two wash cloths hanging near the sink). This is an appropriated space by the two children who inhabit it. It is separated from the rest of the house by a sliding door made of Japanese paper, a sort of membrane which is used as a crossing with the following room, shared with all the members of the family.

Pages 5, 6 and 7 lead us into the kitchen/living-room, space shared with all the inhabitants of the house. Several objects witness the presence of different occupants: parents, the boy and his little brother, a dog. This forth shell is protected from the outside by a thick wall made of stones which lets us glimpse the snowy countryside. This is the “second social sphere”, and precisely its “far phase”. The occupancy is relative, short-lived, defined by more or less explicit rules. So, in this way, the house with thick walls, small windows leaving us to guess the outside cold, refers to what Bachelard names the “nest”. Inside, the little boy’s house seems warm and soft.

A nest-house is never young. Indeed, speaking as a pedant, we might say that it is the natural habitat of the function of inhabiting. For not only do we come back to it, but we dream of coming back to it, the way a bird comes back to its nest, or a lamb to the fold. This sign of return marks an infinite number of daydreams, for the reason that human life, rhythm that reaches back across the years and, through the dream, combats all absence (Bachelard, 1964, p.99).

Beyond, down the corridor, a fifth shell is extending, the “first public sphere” or its close phase. It is constituted by the closed territory from the front yard of the house, well known space to the child, and, far away, clearly limited by the stream. This “public sphere” is an interstitial space of contacts with the other persons’ social sphere.

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According to Moles, it is in this interstitial space that the person realizes his projects, his dreams. The idea of the boat was born in the child's "intimate sphere" but it is somewhere else that it will be realized, at the margin, beyond the well-known limits.

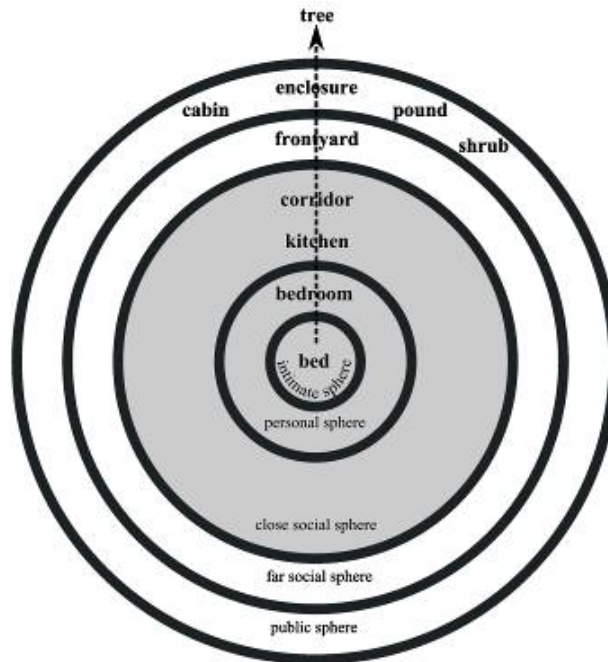


Figure 7. Reconstitution of the child's psychological space (personal collection)

The itinerary realized by the child, is a crossing of successive boundaries, at first authorized and regulated, then new and unexpected. According to Moles (1966, p.230), 'only marginal freedom is interesting for the individual'. Could we consider that Child's construction would be, finally, only a succession of topographic limits that the Child is invited to cross? Would not the book have the ambition to show the Child the importance of projects, ideas or feelings, born into the intimate space, and their realization by facing the other spaces?

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4. Structuring space by reading picturebook

American psychologist Lynn S. Liben proposes to distinguish three sorts of representations that allow children to structure space (Liben, 1981). Firstly, all the productions that bring into spatial relationships (maps, drawings, models, verbal description) are named “spatial products”. Secondly, Liben gathers under the expression of “spatial thoughts” all mental activities. Thirdly, she names “spatial memories” every implicit knowledge that needs spatial knowledge without any reflection. Psychologists Sheldon H. White and Alexander W. Siegel could show, on their side, that a child who wants to find his bearings in space needs to define some landmarks, to link them with an itinerary and to inscribe them in a wider area. Their works are based upon description of itineraries, spatial productions, spatial thoughts and memories.

The micro-space of the picturebook invites the young reader to follow a character’s itinerary through more or less big spaces thanks to spatial landmarks and tracks left by the main character. The landscape format which proposes panoramic and frontal views can facilitate the comprehension of the story and the organization of the different spaces by a young reader. The spatial configuration seems to be more visible and readable. Plus, the only line of text contained in this picturebook, at the beginning, can be considered as an instruction which alerts the young reader to what he is supposed to do: keep aware during the reading, collect clues to find their bearings in the story... and in the space.

L’École des Loisirs recommends this picturebook for 3 to 5 year old readers. So, it is appropriate for very young pupils of ‘grande section de Maternelle’ in a French class where the experiment that I want to report here has been led by a student teacher. She wanted to help children to structure themselves in the space through several activities related to the reading of this picturebook. I must point out that the spatial and didactic dimension of the book has been awarded, in 2000, by the Fondation Michelle-André, Espace-Enfants-Suisse Foundation’s partner. This association aims to show how space and rhythm influence Child’s individual and psychological behavior.

In this last part, we would like to report an experiment led in 2014 by a student-teacher, as part of her masters, with a preschool class of 25 pupils, aged 4 to 5. This experiment aimed to show that Gerda Müller’s picturebook, *Devine qui fait quoi ?* could help children to structure space thanks to different spatial activities proposed around the book and its reading.

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In a first phase, pupils, all together, have discovered the picturebook. The teacher has shown, one by one, the double-spread to the children. Each double-spread has been enlarged to A3 format. Pupils have been invited to observe, describe and interpret pictures. The teacher wrote the sentences constructed by the pupils. This exercise forced pupils to verbalize their thought and to build narrative. The teacher was careful to make them notice some visual landmarks (bed, poster, sink, chair, table, window, etc.). She asked them to use topologic vocabulary (on, under, over, below, on the right, on the left, near, in front of, behind). This “rewriting” of the story allows the pupils to be familiar with main character’s displacement: “He took the board near the cabin and put it over the stream. He walked across the stream on the board. And the dog jumped over the stream”.

In a second phase, pupils manipulated a model, realized by the teacher, during several lessons. The model represents the three rooms of the child’s house. In order to facilitate the passage from the picturebook to the model, the teacher has cut and replaced different landmarks, noticed by the pupils during the first phase: the child’s bed, the poster hung above the bed, the bathroom sink, the chair, the windows and their particular curtains, the table in the kitchen, the coat-hanger. The teacher asked the pupils to describe what they had in front of their eyes. They immediately noticed the landmarks and recognized the child’s house. So the teacher asked them what would be the use of this kind of representation:

Mathis (5 years): «to see how the little boy’s house is made».

Maxence (5 years): «to play in the house with characters».

Mina (6 years): «to see the house, but smaller, because if not it’s too big for our eyes».

The teacher introduced then the word “model”. Paulin (5 years), who wanted to show that he had understood well, said to the teacher: “Like the big one but smaller”. At first, following the oral instruction given by the adult, a pupil move a character through the rooms of the house. Then, this exercise was done another time but with two pupils: one (the transmitter) gave the instructions; one (the receiver) moved the character inside the model. A third exercise proposed to the pupil who moved the character to verbalize his

moving inside the house. All the exercises have been globally successful without any difficulty by all the pupils.

At the third lesson, another exercise is proposed to the pupils. The instruction given by the teacher is: “Draw the little boy’s house and trace his itinerary inside the house. You are not allowed to go back and see the model”. The pupils’ productions are very different and I have decided to comment on three of them that I found very significant.

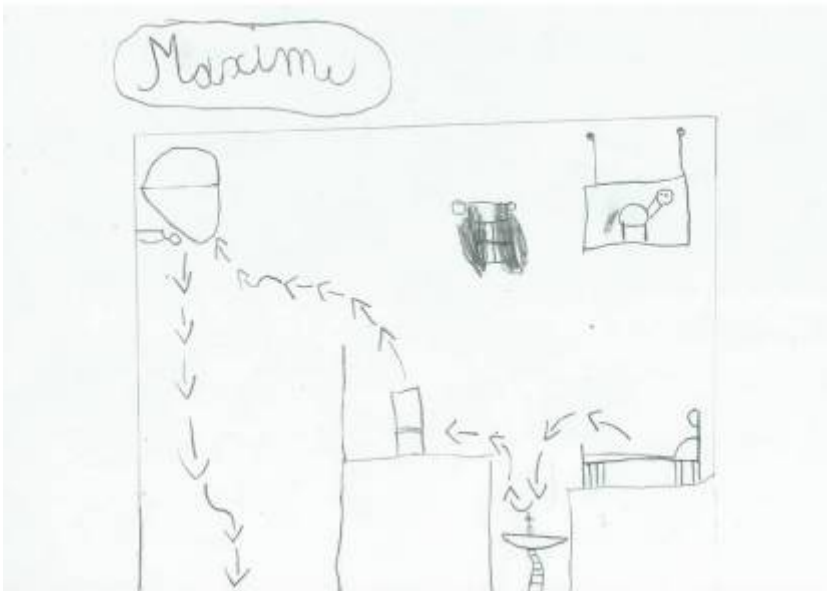


Figure 8. Maxime’s drawing (personal collection)

In Maxime’s drawing, the young author proposed a view from above, very close to a map. The different places crossed by the little boy are partitioned and identified by one or two object-landmarks: the bed and the poster/the sink/ the chair, the kitchen table. The path inside the house is marked by arrows. The reading is suggested from the right to the left.

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Figure 9. Mathis' drawing (personal collection)

For Mathis, there is no zenithal view but a frontal one. The roof the child has drawn refers to a symbolic representation of the house whose roof brings together different partitioned rooms. The itinerary suggested by Mathis is a sequential and chronological course, from the left to the right, that doesn't correspond to the spatial organization of the rooms. For instance, the bedroom is divided in two rooms because it is crossed by the child twice. The bathroom intercalates between these two parts of the bedroom. The entrance becomes, according to Mathis, a room totally partitioned and separated from the kitchen. The course is figured by footprints. Mathis didn't find it appropriate to draw arrows because the reading that he suggests is implicitly from the left to the right like every sequential sequence he used to do since the "Petite Section de Maternelle".

In this experiment, the teacher resorted to cognitive maps (Tolman, 1948). As Marie-Germaine Pêcheux could underline (Pêcheux, 1991, p.593), "the term of map is

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metaphoric” here. The drawing realized by children, like a map, tries to organize space and to operate on it. In the drawings reproduced below (Figures 8 and 9), we can find the three essential elements of a spatial structuration process: some **landmarks** in domestic space, a representation of an **itinerary** and a general **configuration** of the house (Siegel & White, 1975). The itinerary is then defined as “an ordered sequence of landmarks” (Pêcheux, 1991, p.594). The configuration of the domestic space is still stylized at this point of the process.

After several lessons, the teacher decided to show the pupils some blueprints of houses that she submitted for the pupils’ comments. They noticed that the blueprints represented a house seen from above. The teacher gave then the same instruction as previously. Pupils were able to draw inspiration from the posted blueprints and to come back and see the model as often as they wanted. For all the pupils, the horizontal representation has disappeared. They took care to draw a view from above the rooms of the house.

The teacher reported that pupils have always shown motivation for the many offered exercises. She advanced an explanation: “This picturebook, in particular, without any text, allows the pupils to participate in the project actively, to feel themselves linked to the picturebook by creating the story with their own words and by the cognitive maps they realized”. An implicit pact seems to exist between the reader and the narrative: the teacher found it. This pact is hermeneutic: the reader interprets the different signs left by the author to build the story. It is through this pact that the transmission of territoriality operates. Paulin’s drawing is a good example.

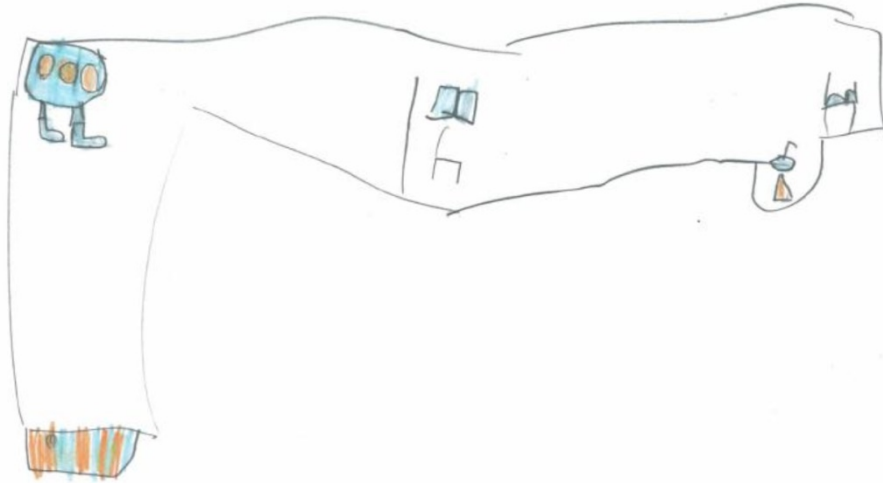


Figure 10. Paulin's drawing (personal collection)

According to Paulin (5 years), the representation seen from above is very close to the model: the “L” form of the house, the placement of the bathroom. The bedroom and the kitchen are well partitioned. The entrance makes an elbow with the kitchen. The object landmarks are quite well located. The house, the first social space, takes the form of a long corridor leading to the outside. This corridor in “L” takes its origin in a “corner” of the house where the little boy’s bed is located. Like an appendice of the personal space of the bedroom, we find the bathroom. The bedroom directly overlooks the kitchen. Only a thin partition, without any door, separates the two rooms. Paulin’s representation is very close to what Gerda Müller wanted to describe: the permeability of this border *intra-domo*, materialized by a sliding door. The communication between the child’s personal space and social space is facilitated. The kitchen table is in a corner, too, in Paulin’s drawing. In the bedroom, another corner is occupied by a chair. Corner by corner, the pupil drew an itinerary towards the exit of the house. This last “airlock” is as large as the house-corridor, as if the whole house was a long uterus from which the child prepares himself to go out and to encounter the World and the Universe.

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Paulin knew how to translate his representation of the house thanks to the reading of the picturebook. This representation is not similar to the representation he did after the first reading of the book where stereotypical representations of house-hut surfaced. The exercises of comprehension and appropriation of the picturebook operated a new approach of the relationship with space. What we can observe in this example for Paulin is the fruit of what Fabian Muniesa et Roger Callon call “performation” (Muniesa & Callon, 2008, p.5), that is to say the ability of certain texts to modify initial representations.

During the following lessons, pupils had to represent the child’s itinerary outside the house. The teacher asked them to tell her the trail they had taken by referring to the picturebook. For the trail outside the pupils used the same process that they used for the trail inside and they found the same clues: loop itinerary, sequential organization, visual landmarks (the bird feeder, the poney enclosure, the cabin, the board to cross the stream, the tree, the islet of land, the shrub).



Figure 11. Itinerary of the outside course drawn by Theo (personal collection)

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The hero's itinerary in the macro-space has been correctly understood by Théo (5 years). Landmarks are linked together, in the micro-space of his cognitive map, by a line. The little child can bring bearings in the macro-space, even if it is less familiar. This is the skill he has to develop. The process he used in the micro-space (the map), the meso-space (the house) and the macro-space (the outside of the house) are always the same: survey of general configuration of the space, survey of topologic landmarks and sequential organization of these landmarks in an itinerary. For each exercise, pupils were made aware of the task they had to perform, of its difficulty, which inevitably led them to be vigilant and to build some strategies of spatial structuration. The experiment that Fedor Shemyakyn led in 1962 showed that maps composed by using route-maps were generally maps the most used by populations inhabiting a new place because they were easy to draw. They seem easy to use for very young pupil as well.

5. Conclusion

With the example of the Gerda Müller's picturebook, *Devine qui fait quoi*, we can conclude that the spatial narrative of picturebooks allows the teacher to work with pupils on the structuration of space. It is possible to understand the different scales that surround the child's intimate sphere. "L'espace vécu" appears, according to Irvin Altman (1975), like onion peels. Marie-Germaine Pêcheux defended that the structuration of spatial knowledge is a real and fundamental issue for children and society (Pêcheux, 1991, p.584). Working with very young pre-school children on the distinction between close space and far space is the occasion to give them the opportunity of building "tools" of autonomy.

It appears very clearly that promoting the youngest children to move in different spaces, to bring bearings in far spaces, in bigger spaces than the classroom, invites them to "escape" the dimensions on which adults can still have control over them. The conquest of new spaces of freedom, gradually earned, is a quest of autonomy. And if the structuration of space is not a priority in Kindergarden, it is because lawyers and teachers want children not to grow up too quickly.

Gerda Müller's picturebook proposes an easy "narrative-itinerary", leaning on the definition of easy landmarks. The iconic narrative, consisting in finding the different

tracks left by the hero all along his course, forces children to compose and produce the textual narrative. It needs to use topologic vocabulary that makes sense giving sense to the narrative. All the exercises led by the teacher around the reading of this picturebook show that the reading is performative. It draws children to modify their perception of *espace vécu* transmitted by the picturebook.

The cognitive map gradually becomes for children the ‘tool’ for structuring space but also for “dominating” it. The child learns to move in it thanks to an object, a character; to select some landmarks-places; to set some temporary limits; to affect a “substance” to each space he understands. In the next classes, he will be able to measure space, to distinguish different scales. Because the picturebook *Devine qui fait quoi* speaks about space, about spatial practices, about moves and landmarks, because it permits children to understand the structuration in its close space, it is a “geographer-picturebook”.

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