Dialoguing Children's Travel: Chronotopes, Narratives and Guides

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While there has been a growing level of quality research in the field of childhood studies both in the social sciences and humanities since the 1990s, there seems to be a remarkable gap in the topic of children and travel/tourism research. The paper aims to address the gap, in a limited way, by analysing the spatial and temporal dimensions of children's travel in literature and specialized travel guides, relying on two chosen concepts: Bakhtin's chronotopes, and the ancient Greek concept of *kairos*, interpreted by contemporary philosophy. The methodology used combines auto-ethnography, narrative and qualitative visual analysis.

Keywords: children's travel, chronotopes, Kairos, narratives, travel guides

Introduction

"Out there things can happen
and frequently do
to people as brainy
and footsy as you.
And when things start to happen,
don't worry. Don't stew.
Just go right along.
You'*ll start happening too."*
- Dr Seuss, Oh , the Places You'll Go!

The very first word of my daughter was "*ap-ap*", a mirror version of *pa-pa*, which in Slovenian baby talk signifies a farewell, a *bye-bye*. She skipped *mum* and *dad* and went straight to *up* and *away* much like the main character in Dr Seuss's rhyming travel adventure *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* Being the daughter of fairly mobile parents, travel was an integral part of her early experience. Aside from the weekend trips and holidays, she has travelled with us to numerous anthropological conferences in Europe, the Near East and the USA. While she could not choose the destinations (more often than not conference venues were in larger towns and cities), she not only influenced the structure of our additional itineraries, including child-friendly public spaces, playgrounds, parks and museums, but also coloured our own perceptions and understanding of tourist destinations and travel encounters.

To give just a short illustration from our trip to Lebanon in 2003 when she was three years old: on the way from Quadisha, we stopped at a small inn at the side of the road and, since we were the only guests, as Lebanon was virtually devoid of tourists at the time, the owner was very happy to chat with us at length. When we mentioned in passing that our daughter was missing the company of children that she had daily enjoyed on the playground in Beirut,

he clapped, exclaimed something in Arabic and in the space of two minutes four of his daughters appeared to play with her (Figure 1). That act of hospitality changed our itinerary and we returned to this same place to eat and play every single day although doing so meant significantly longer routes. Children engaged in a play were in no way constrained by the fact that they spoke two different languages, while the parents engaged in a meaningful dialogue, learning about Lebanon and Slovenia respectively in much more detail than one usually does during a lunch.

In some other places, the daily symbolic construction of temporary homes, be it a tent, an apartment, a hotel room, a friend's house, held the potential of an imaginary world that weaved together as it were, the picture in an art gallery, the stray dog, the people watching, the impromptu city guiding and forgotten suede baby shoes under a park bench in Copenhagen.

The incentive to research the topic of children and travel thus stems in part from these personal experiences, many of which are integrated into travel diaries and family scrapbooks for reference. A great deal of material was collected as a matter of course, often as an anthropological observation and reflection, which is not switched off simply because one is vacationing, and was recorded as jotting, notes, diary and diverse visual material. It was not however collected with research in mind, so it cannot pass the scrutiny of rigorous field research. However, my research interest in tourism, literature and the anthropology of place/space are all long standing, while the field of the fast growing multidisciplinary childhood studies is something I started to tackle fairly recently and am still looking for the proper footing. While preparing a conference contribution on *Responsible Tourism*, employing ethnographic reading and a narrative and visual analysis, the idea was to look at the processes of imagery and narrative construction in children's tourist guide books in order to show in what way children are "taught" to be or become tourists by using suggested itineraries, stories and images. Particular attention was paid to establishing whether the principals of responsible tourism have been integrated into the tourist guides at all and in what form. During that task, I came to realize that comparatively little research had been done on children and tourism as a whole, which was, to some de-

gree, surprising given the research developments in social sciences and humanities in past decades.

In international law a child is defined as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (CORC, 2013, p. 2). Traditionally the domain of psychology, medicine and pedagogy, childhood studies have made a significant research effort since the 1990s both in the social sciences and the humanities, which has demonstrated that childhood is socially constructed, positional and culturally contextualized and cannot be defined, explained or interpreted as biological given.[1] In anthropology, for example, child-centred research has meant a shift from the standard subjects of socialization and parenting to the children's own perception of their lives and their agency within culturally specific settings (Montgomery, 2009). This shift has also entailed a methodological adaptation of ethnographic methods to give voices to children, by employing new research techniques particularly those connected with new technologies.[2]

The scanning and skimming of literature,[3] excluding the predominantly market-oriented research, yielded a picture of several strands of child and travel/tourism research, though the numbers do not appear to be high. For the most part, the research is dedicated to the area of children's rights and the exploitation of children in tourism settings. The protection of children from sexual and labour exploitation has been in focus for more than three decades and has *alter alia* resulted in a specially commissioned report of the UNWTO (2001). Some of the research deals specifically with children as tourist guides in the contested spaces of structural inequality where global tourist encounters take place (Huber-

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1 For the basic overview selection in childhood studies by anthropologists, sociologists, cultural geographers and historians, see Montgomery, 2009; Oswell, 2013; Jenks, 2005; Holloway & Valentine 2000; Gutman & de Coninck-Smith, 2008; Duane, 2013; Clarke, 2010.

2 For sample references on research methods that are exclusively or partly dedicated to children research see, Cappello, 2005; Coover et al., 2012; Emmison & Smith, 2007; Harper, 2012; Kullman, 2012; Theron, et. al. 2011.

3 As the article is not intended to be a comprehensive literature review on children and tourism *in toto*, only those references that emphasise the particular points are cited.

man, 2005, 2012; Crick, 2008). Research on how local children perceive and imagine spatial and temporal dimensions in tourist destinations in less-developed countries appears to be scarce (Gamradt, 1995; Buzinde & Manuel-Navarrete, 2013).

Some of the research on children's mobility and travel has been done by anthropologists (Vannini & Vannini, 2009), focusing on modes of transport, predominantly car travel, as do the currently fashionable mobility studies (Barker, 2009). Children privileged to travel have been subject of museum and heritage research (Smith, 2013) but as far as I am aware there seems to be no particular research done on the spatial and temporal dimensions of contemporary children's travel by examining the narratives and imagery in children's literature and guides. It is thus the aim of this paper to fill that gap to some small extent. The focus in this paper is on children tourists in Bauman's sense of the word; those privileged to travel, at pre-school and primary school ages.

Figure 1:   Four Lebanese sisters and a travel child, in a "map" pattern hammock, Quadisha, Lebanon 2003
Source: Author

Methodology
Using an auto-ethnographic approach by including one's own child in research may come across as a case of extreme indulgence, so perhaps some anthropological contextualization might not be amiss. Anthropological debate in 1980s on the nature of the production of ethnographic texts, on the relationship between scientific and literary text and style resulted in the so-called "new ethnography" (Weber,

2003), including new types of auto-ethnography. While there are differences in opinion as to the balance and value of auto-ethnography (which was never a dominant approach within anthropology), it is by all means a legitimate methodological approach. All research demands an ethical consideration and more so should research involving children. As suggested by Bell (2008, p. 19), "ethical child research can be guided by four commonly identified types of rights embedded in the UNCRC: welfare; protection; provision; and choice and participation." By using auto-ethnography and by obtaining informed consent from my 14-year-old daughter to use some of the family travel diaries, photos, drawings and scrapbook in this article, I believe I have followed those guidelines.

In addition to auto-ethnography, literary texts and travel guides are treated as an ethnographic source and evidence, and basic semiotic analysis is used for the visual data.

The conceptual underpinnings consist of two main frames: Bakhtin's concept of chronotopes, and the ancient Greek concept of *kairos* interpreted via contemporary philosophy.

Narratives in Motion: Children's Literature

"Atticus was a very good sandal maker, but he was an even better storyteller. The children of the village were always popping into the shop to ask for a quick story, and Atticus was always happy to oblige, because he claimed that the stories got into his sandals and made the feet in them walk along faster."
- 100 Greek Myths for Children

Between the ages of five and six, our daughter became a fervent aficionado of Greek mythology, and we would read and discuss an adaptation for children of one hundred myths virtually every day. It was an enjoyable brushing up on of who is who in the Pantheon for the parent, for the child however it was not just a pastime, but a formative reading or listening as the case may be. She would start to interpret natural phenomenon by ascribing it to the god in question, i.e. *Zeus is in a bad mood* or alternatively *Zeus is playing with his lightning bolts* when there was a thunder/lightning or surprise us with more complex identity statements such as *When I grow up I want to be like Artemis*. Why? *Because she is free in the woods*

and never gets married. So when a conference in Athens was scheduled, I was somewhat apprehensive and tried to warn her that perhaps Zeus would not be strolling down the street and that Artemis might not come to greet her in person. Shortly upon our arrival in Athens, we went for a walk. She would smile and stop at every stray dog observing it carefully. When asked what she is looking for she explained: *Well, you know how fond Zeus is of changing into animal shapes. I'm just checking whether that's him.* She was quite satisfied that no definite answer was forthcoming. The possibility of divine incarnation itself was enough. That same evening she declared to the utter amazement and delight of our Greek colleagues that Athens is so much more beautiful than Paris.

The classical myths as retold stories offer children a realm of exciting worlds of adventure removed from everyday life, while transmitting elements of cultural heritage constructed, appropriated and selected in accordance to Eurocentric standards of meta-narratives. Greek myths may be read globally but are by no means universal; rather, they are culturally specific. The value of particular retold stories is measured by the narrative structure interlinking cultural heritage and moral judgments, which Stephens and McCallum (1998, p. 7) refer to as the "Western meta-ethic". Aside from transmittance of values and socially accepted norms, myths in a way provide children with a map, a pattern, an itinerary to follow so that they can position themselves in the surrounding world.

The stories directly frame explanations of geographical place names, i.e. Europe, Aegean sea, the pillars of Heracles; moreover, they describe the strategy of finding one's way out of a labyrinth by using Ariadne's thread, and not the least they provide a tangible location of Hope. In English, the most commonly referred to as a box or more accurately to a Greek original a jar, *pithos*, that Pandora opened, Hope has a definite place at the bottom of the jar. Since the jar is an object that can be moved, Hope may reside in or outside Greece.

The story of Atticus's sandals connects stories directly to movement. If feet are to be nimble, they need sandals with stories in them. Once on the road, the things can happen, but a child can "happen", too, as demonstrated by Dr Seuss. There is a promise of adventure in most children's "road" stories – and the possibility of dialogical imagination opens spaces

where fiction and reality are blurred. Grenby (2008, p. 194) points out that the hybrid nature of children's adventure stories and suggests that such stories "provide a fantasy of empowerment" and "depict a conflict between children's yearning for consequentiality and their residual desire for protection and supervision" with their heroic narratives.

The road is one of the most enduring literary metaphors of adventure, ordeal, growth and transformation that writers for children use when depicting journeys and "very few fictional roads lead straight to their destinations and some are deliberately misleading" (Dewan, 2010, p. 58).

Chronotopes of Encounter and Chronotopes of the Road

In several essays that were eventually translated from Russian and published under the title *The Dialogical Imagination* (2008) Bakhtin introduced his concept of chronotopes, described as follows: "We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 84). Before applying it to the realm of literary novel, Bakhtin invoked the image of what he perceived to be the real-life chronotope, i.e. the *agora*, the public square where the life of a citizen was sumultaneously shaped, accomplished and publicly approved.

Polysemic in nature and applied in literary science in various forms, the concept of chronotope was originally connected to Einstein's relativity theory as a metaphor, and more importantly to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which space and time were defined as indispensable forms of cognition. Distinct from Kant, Bakhtin understood them "not as 'transcendental' but as forms of the most immediate reality" (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 85). His goal was to "show the role these forms play in the process of concrete artistic cognition (artistic visualization)" (ibid.). Bakhtin's chronotope in effect is a time space in which narratives are entangled and disentangled. His case studies were samples of classical literature from antiquity to Dostoyevsky.

While Bakhtin scholars understand and apply the concept in a great variety of ways and point out that Bakhtin himself did not offer any precise and definition, there seems to be an agreement that the

concept is "epistemological in character" and that there is not one chronotope but a plurality of them: "there are different chronotopes for different views of the world and different social situations. (Steinby, 2013, p. 107).

In the case of "the chronotope of encounter" its most salient characteristic seems to be the saturation of experience with excitement and pronounced emotion – all familiar features of travel experience. The derived chronotope of the road expresses the same combination of saturation and acceleration; it is the literary symbol *par excellence* of the "flow of time", and the road is formed by the fusion of time and space (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 244). The road for Bakhtin was often a familiar path one followed and encountered the measure of saturated time, but the road itself could represent exploration and adventure. A case in point is an example of Norwegian children's literature in which Slettan (2013) utilizes the road chronotope to describe and analyse the nation-building narrative of Arctic wilderness exploration while the most important encounter on this road is the one with Nature (Slettan, 2013).

While flow of time would attest to chronological time, the leading principal in dialogical chronotope is not *telos* of the traditional narratives but *kairos*, of modern literature" (Bemong, 2010, p. 7).

Kairos

In contrast to Chronos (χρονος), the ancient Greek god of time, depicted as an old man, winged, bearded and usually clothed, the image of Kairos (καιρος) is one of a youth, with a double set of wings, at the shoulder and at the heels. Kairos is naked, balancing a scale on a razor's blade. His head is shaved save for the single long lock of hair hanging from his forehead that needs to be grasped if one is to seize the right moment. While Chronos is a flow of time, a continuity and something that is measured, a quantified time, Kairos is an opportunity, the proper moment, or the right timing. Conversely with Chronos we are "in time", clothed in tradition and constant measure while with Kairos we are "on time", naked in the timeliness of opportunity, as it were. This opportunity makes an opening for innovation; as Antonio Negri argues in his *Time for Revolution* (2003, p. 153), "Kairos is the power to observe the fullness of temporality at the moment it opens itself onto the void of being, and of seizing this opening as innovation".

The ancient Greeks did not necessarily perceive the right timing as a short moment in time, as an instant opening for an instant decision. It was rather a variable time span within which the right decisions had to be made, and the consequences of those decisions entailed some degree of personal responsibility. Thus, Chronos is often associated with the objective and ontological and Kairos with the subjective, the qualitative, and the "anthropological". Chronos is the time of gods who possess an absolute measure of time. Kairos, in contrast, while a divine entity, is also a time of humans, situational and interpretive. It is situated not in *any* time but in *the* time while "the ontological principle of Kairos indicates the absolute uniqueness of an event" (Muckelbauer, 2008, p. 115).

Various historical articulations of Kairos indicate that there is clear ethical dimension to Kairos and that a simple objective-subjective binary opposition might be misleading. There are, as Frost Benedikt (2002, p. 227) points out, "temporal frames that are independent of human action", meaning that the ontological dimension does not pertain to Chronos alone. When a kairic moment presents itself, one does not decide on a proper action outside of the wider "objective" circumstances and, by extension, without the Kairos of others. Kairos may well represent personal choice, yet the opening of creative opportunity cannot be seen as pure subjectivity if both principles, timeliness and measure, are to be observed. When traveling, for example, we come across someone's wedding, a funeral, a private party, and we may ask whether this is good timing or a bad one, depending not on our choices alone but on the responses of others and the context that we have co-created only in part. What is *good timing* for us, may be *bad timing* for somebody else. If a kairic moment is to occur within the travel encounter, it cannot be reduced to random chance nor can it be reduced to subjective, individual action particularly if we keep in mind the highly contested nature of global tourism spaces.

We may thus ask ourselves, with Frost Benedikt (2002, p. 230), whether timeliness then is "a skill or a virtue" and how children recognize or catch Kairos?

One particular domestic incident comes to mind. When our daughter was four years old, we would argue about daily routines and annoying repeated de-

mands. At one point, exasperated, I asked her to propose what we should do to avoid the tension. She thought for a second and said *Let's go travel*! The English translation does not adequately express the word she actually used in Slovenian *Odpotujva*! The word used in grammatical dual that is particular to Slovenian language included only her and myself, two people engaged in a problem, but it also held a distinct poetic dimension of the songs/poems written by Tomaž Pengov entitled *Odpotovanja,* in which the road is defined as "the shelter of restless people". The proposal of resolving daily frictions with a journey also indicated, at least in my opinion, the child's intuitive understanding of the kairic potential of travel.

Travel Guides

'Zeus, protect me from your guides at Olympia, and you, Athena, from yours at Athens.'
- Augustan prayer

Historical evidence attests to travel guide books that were too heavy to carry, so they served only as "preparatory reading" (Lomine, 2005, p. 82), while the live guides were hired at the travel site, with some apprehension if the above Augustan prayer is any indication. However, it was much later, in the mid-19th century that the art of travel guide writing came into full bloom. Karl Baedeker established his company in 1827 in Leipzig and won over the growing numbers of middle-class British travellers. His guides became so successful that the word *baedekering* entered the vocabulary signifying the description of travel that resulted in written travelogue or another travel guide (Palmowski, 2002). Baedeker promised to make his readers independent of the services of live guides if they followed the instructions in his books to the letter. That meant that the written guide constructed travel expectations, perceptions and also prescribed recording and remembering travel experience in a set manner. The travelogues written at the period were full of direct quotes from Beadeker and the anticipated experience was described in accordance to previously constructed imagery. What transgressions might occur if one did not follow Beadeker properly was demonstrated by E.M. Forster in his novel *A Room with a View*, made into a heritage film in 1980s, in which Lucy Honeychurch went to Santa Croce without her Beadeker guide and was immediately assailed by one of the guides in the church and had to be "saved" (as it were) by Mr. Emerson.

With the gradual democratization of travel, a plethora of new guides appeared with Beadeker adapting to all historical changes remaining in print up to date. In the late 1970s, travel guides started to include information and advice for particular categories (women, children, gay/lesbian, etc.) that reflected wider social and cultural changes. In the next two decades, various specialized travel guides that included children travel began to emerge. First, there were parent/family guides focusing on advising parents about how/where to travel with children; later, with the increased agency of children, travel guides became oriented exclusively towards children, preschool, school and teen-agers; some, such as Lonely Planet, started to edit guides for teens with the subtitle *Not for the Parents*; others are written and edited entirely by teen-agers themselves. The content of travel guides for children spans from predominantly pictorial for pre-school children to hybrid, crossover guides that combine facts, fiction and uses of new technologies for digital generations.

Three Guides for Children: VIENNA-LJUBLJANA-VENICE

The three guides (*Vienna. City Guide for Children,* published in 2002*, A Mini guide for the Big Travellers. A Walk through Venice with Marta, Jacopo and Lula* and*, Let's see the city Ljubljana: Architectural Walk and Tour*, both published in 2008), were selected for comparative analysis based on their geographical and historical proximity, as Slovenia was historically part of both the Habsburg and the Venetian empires. In terms of travel, Vienna and Venice are easily reached by car from Ljubljana, in four and two hours respectively. The Vienna and the Venice guides are clearly addressing the children travellers, while the Ljubljana guide is more ambiguous, one of the reasons being that it is a topical guide focusing on architecture. In personal conversation with the author (2013), I learned that the production of the guide had clearly been motivated by the author's own child, his perceptions of the city and the questions he raised while engaging with it. Although leaning towards the position of being a guide for families with children, it is also oriented towards a larger audience of those who appreciate architecture or tourists more in gen-

eral and is, in that sense, an example of a cross-over guide.

The most immediate visual quality that all three guides have in common are the colours of the cover illustrations. This may be in part due to the cultural proximity of respective traditions in children's book illustrations, mirroring the colour preference that children establish in early infancy (Pitchford et. al, 2011). In terms of content, we shall look at three groupings: 1) maps, trails, itineraries; 2) topical motives of children's literature as dialogued in the guides; 3) travel companions.

Guided Chronotopes: Maps, Trails, Itineraries

All three guides contain maps. In the Vienna and Venice guides, they are depicted in the tradition of children's literature when imagined or fantasy lands are mapped. We can characterize them as chronotopic, since they are directly connected to imagination. The Ljubljana guide includes only standard tourist maps which do not provide space for imaginative dialogue, so they cannot be considered chronotopic.

The map of Vienna (see Figure 2) is pictured as a tree trunk in which the space of the city is directly infused with temporality, and the authors also connect it to the never ending thread of storytelling: "Just like a tree trunk, the city keeps on growing, and that is why we will never be able to finish this chapter…" (Höpler et al., 2007, p. 21). The map of Venice is in the shape of a fish, coupled with a child drawing of another fish displayed on the wall, inviting children to draw the shape of Venice's main islands. Smaller maps are provided for each of Vienna's seven (note the fairy tale number) proposed itineraries. Hand drawn, surrounded with imaginary figures and forms, they show red dot trails resembling the bread crumbs from Hansel and Gretel or a treasure hunt. The proposed trails in the Venice guide are not as prominent although organized around districts, the walks are oriented more around architectural features, i.e. bridges, squares, but they are accompanied by a distinctive character, the grandfather storyteller. The Ljubljana guide is organized much more formally with the dominant visual material being professional photographs. However, eight well-known Slovenian children illustrators contributed their original work, which is, in fact, the main reason that the guide is considered here at all.
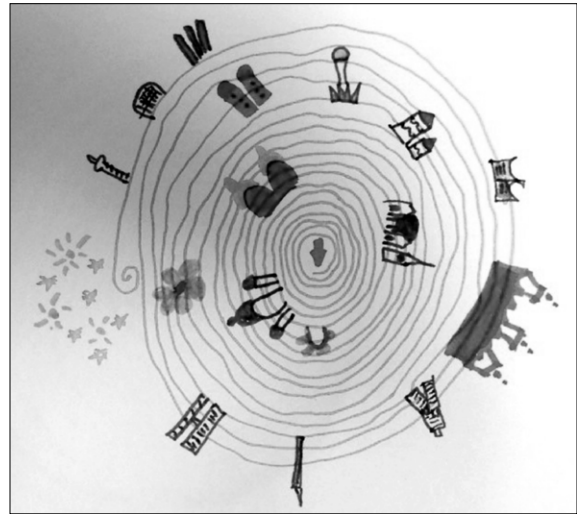

Figure 2:   Child's depiction of a map represented in the *Vienna. City Guide for Children*, p. 21. There are fewer elements in her drawing than in the original illustration in the guide, notably the animals are missing as well as a human figure on a skateboard .while the built structures almost all are present. The shape is in close correspondence to the original but using only one colour for the main lines instead of multiple colours of the original.

Source: Author

Topical Dialogue: The Element of Flying

Laing and Frost (2012) identify four topical motifs in children literature: 1) The Call to Adventure, 2) Running Away, 3) Flight and Pursuit, and 4) Freedom and Escape. The element of flying may be found in each of them: one of the most famous examples from classic children's literature being Peter Pan. In the Ljubljana guide, the element of flying is borrowed from the story *My umbrella can turn into a balloon* by Ela Peroci. A well-loved Slovenian illustrated children story, first published in 1955, it was a step away from the then predominantly rural focus in Slovenian children's literature, depicting an urban landscape of Ljubljana with readily recognizable town features. Its main character was a little girl with strict parents who did not allow her to play with her peers, so she created a small world of her own using a tent behind the house where her precious yellow umbrella was stored. One day, she was playing with her new red ball, throwing it ever higher in the air trying to ignore the stern gazes of her parents, grandparents and an aunt, and

their constant admonishments. With each annoying exclamation of the adults, the ball went higher and higher until it landed in a nearby stream. To avoid the anger of the grown-ups, the little girl hid under her yellow umbrella, closed her eyes, grabbed the handle and whispered: "My umbrella can turn into a balloon". Her wish to be elsewhere, far away from angry faces, powers the umbrella to lift her up and she flies over the familiar houses, river and parks of Ljubljana. In Tivoli Park, she encountered a magical garden with colourful flowers shaped like hats. Each of the hats held a power to transform one into a particular character according to one's preferences. There were children from her street there, all those she was prevented from playing with at home, but there in the magical garden they could play to their hearts' desire. One of the children put on the "see-it-all" hat and found the little girl's red ball. She then plucked up some hats and flew back home. There she handed out the presents, a general hat for her grandfather, a make-me-younger one for the grandmother, a movie star had for the aunt, a professorial one for the father, and a beauty one for the mother; they all were transformed, and their severity completely dissolved. The girl herself did not want a hat as she had an umbrella that could turn into a balloon.

Figure 3: Illustration from the Ljubljana guide (used by the permission of the authors)
The little boy is flying over the city with a yellow umbrella.

Source: Kuhar, Š., & Potokar, R. (2008). *Let's see the city Ljubljana: Architectural Walk and Tours.* Ljubljana: Piranesi Foundation, p. 61 (by permission of the authors).

Her timely decision to empower herself by flying created the *kairic* event which transformed her parents and relatives and ultimately the quality of her life.

In the Ljubljana guide, it is a small boy (Figure 3) not a girl evoking the story, flying over the familiar landscape of Ljubljana star-shaped park (which is not shaped like a star in the illustration, but is recognizable nonetheless on account of the buildings), the same boy that is one of several travel companions in the guide.

Travel Companions

The souvenir shops in theme parks are positioned at the single exit of individual attraction so that it is literally impossible to avoid them. In exiting the polar bear place in the Sea World, Florida, we were about to pass a huge pile of plush bears when our daughter stopped with my immediate protest, "Oh, no we are not buying yet another plush animal!" However, she came up with a solemn statement that one of the bears had spoken to her particularly, she pointed at it, and wanted to come home with her because it was not in a good place.

This argument transported me directly back to the story I liked as a child *Moj prijatelj Piki Jakob* (My friend Piki Jakob) by Kajetan Kovič, in which the father buys a bear in Paris after bear winks at him from the shop window. As it turned out, it was a decision no one regretted. In the space of minutes, our daughter provided a background story of the polar bear who was kidnapped in the far North; her mother couldn't protect it and all small brothers and sisters were crying for it, so it truly needed a better home than a souvenir shop. It spoke with a slight speech impediment (though none of our friends had one), slowly and with measure, using words carefully. It seemed well travelled, well read and spoke some fifteen languages in addition to the bear language.

In effect, it became not only our constant travel companion but also a source of travel stories while we are at home. When we cannot afford to travel, our bear provides adventure stories from whichever trip it "just returned from", usually from places we have not visited yet. Eight years after the bear became part of our family, it has yet to miss any of family travels, though lately it is carried in a parent's and not a child's backpack. Before the polar bear, our daughter had chosen two particular plush animals as her companions: a no-name pink rabbit that I found on the pavement in Chicago and that is seen attached to my backpack in several photographs from travel

in the USA, and a hedgehog named Fergus acquired in Scotland, which travelled with me for years. Both were thus invested with travel stories from the time before my daughter was born but neither acquired their own biography like Aurora, the polar bear, has.

Figure 4:   From the family album: a child and her travel companion polar bear in the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro 2009
Source: Author

In travel guides, the companions come in human form, in pairs in the case of Vienna and Venice, a girl and a boy, and several in the Ljubljana guide. The same boy that flies over Ljubljana appears with his own plush travel companion, a dragon souvenir (Figure 4).

A girl and a boy in Vienna guide are flying over the city together with a bird and a dog, taking pictures, write notes, riding in a carriage, read, eating, having a nap, and appearing as both fellow travellers and guides. In the Venice guide, a girl and a boy are named, Martha, and Jacopo, with a cat, Lula, and a storytelling grandfather, Bepi; this provides a sense of a family invitation to explore the city. The roles of Martha and Jacopo are surprisingly conservative-

ly gendered, while children are invited to play with Jacopo, they are also invited to cook with Martha. Travel companions are cultural brokers and mediators, privileged insiders and interpreters of the imaginary, where the flow of Chronos may render a space for Kairos in dialogical imagination of children travel.
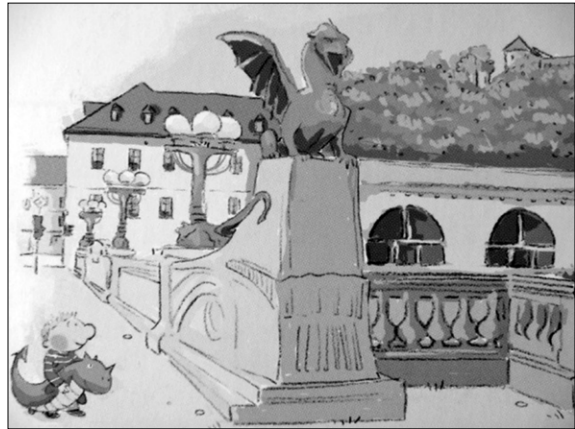

Figure 5:   A little boy on a Dragon's bridge. In Barthesian terms, the main signs denoted in the illustration are a dragon on a bridge, a boy with a toy dragon and a castle. There is no written anchorage while the connotations are oriented towards elements of power in both the castle and the dragon while also evoking the children's stories of dragons in general and the story of St George (the patron saint of Ljubljana) and the dragon.
Source: Kuhar, Š., & Potokar, R. (2008). Let's see the city Ljubljana: Architectural Walk and Tours. Ljubljana: Piranesi Foundation, p. 33 (by permission of the authors).

Conclusions

When Chris Jenks published *The Sociology of Childhood* in 1982, he had to carry the copies of his books two floors up in Dillon's bookshop to move them from the shelves of developmental psychology where the staff put them, to the shelves of sociology (Jenks, 2005). Much seems to have been accomplished for childhood studies since, yet the subject of travel/tourism and children remains decidedly under researched. Whether this is because childhood studies and tourism studies have not yet engaged in a meaningful dialogue or because the reasons are more complex is difficult to assess for someone who is as new to childhood studies as I am. The absence of dialogue

among and across disciplines is noted in other areas, such as the classicists interested in children becoming aware of relevant historical research with rather significant time-delay "owing to the unfortunate dislocation of academic disciplines" (Beaumont, 2012, p. 8), but there is also a limited geographical focus within a single discipline, as Morrison (2012) points out in her criticism of Western-oriented research on the history of childhood. Another notable and rather disturbing lack of dialogue within tourism studies is worth mentioning, namely the research on children who travel and children who are visited appear to be on two different shelves, as it were. Admittedly, this paper has not contributed to moving the shelves any closer due to the limitation of the research material and the focus, but might nevertheless perhaps serve as food for thought in that direction.
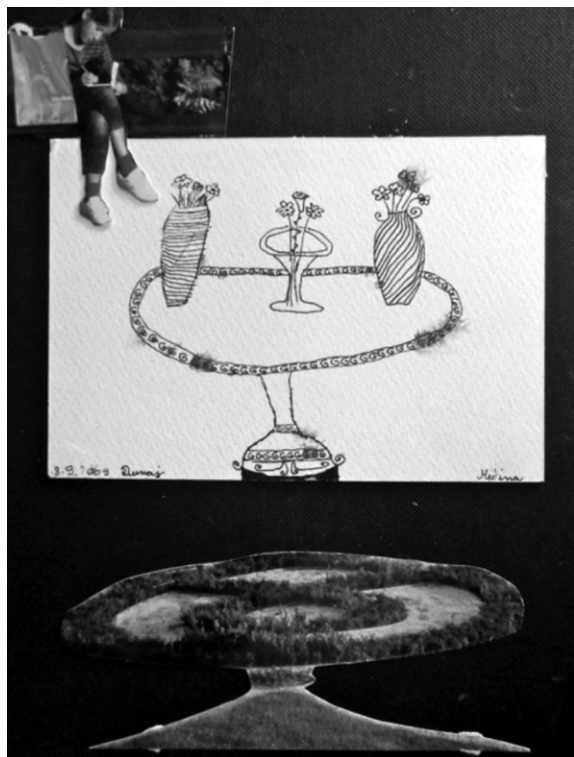

Figure 6:   From a family scrapbook diary. The cover of a "Vienna book". A child drawing in the garden of Belvedere Palace and Museum, 2009.
Source: Author.

While most scholars agree that children's voices need to be heard, there are various challenges on this long and winding road on which children posi-

tion themselves (Figure 6 and 7), listen and narrate stories, create images and engage in meaningful encounters while traveling.

Figure 7:   "Traveling in Vienna". A design of a family from photo cut out leftovers.
When photos were cut out to make a collage for the "Vienna book" the leftover photo paper was not thrown away, but was transformed into an image of our family by the then nine year old. With a little help of a fashion accessory, the child is the same height as the parents.
Source: Author

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