

FOR A CHILD-CENTRIC METHOD FOR SENSITIVE LISTENING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF A CHILD LISTENING RESEARCH PROJECT CONDUCTED BY ANA CLÁUDIA LEITE AND GANDHY PIORSKI IN THE CITIES OF SÃO PAULO (SP), PORTO ALEGRE (RS), BRASÍLIA (DF), RECIFE (PE) AND BOA VISTA (RO) FROM 2018 TO 2020.



+ Heading

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – FOR A SENSITIVE
LISTENING METHOD FOR CHILDREN**

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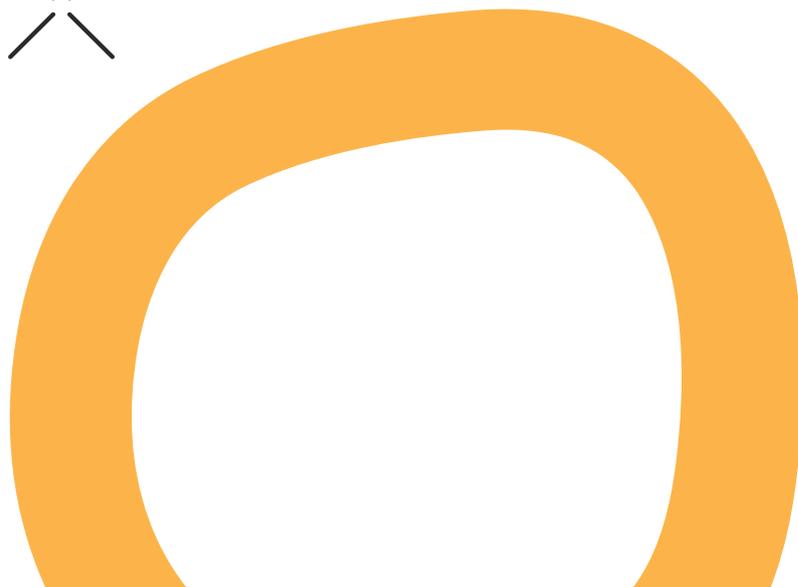
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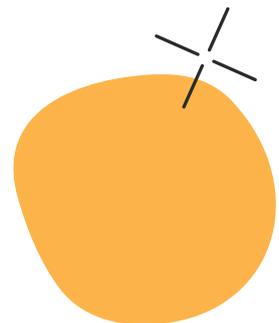
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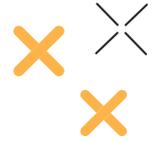
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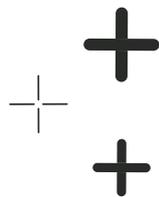
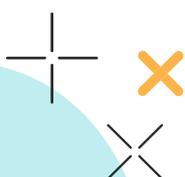
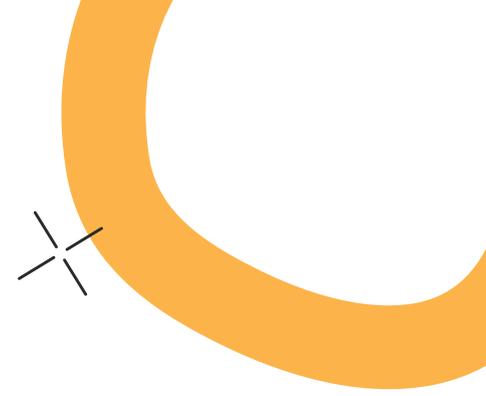


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1. Why listen to children?

The role of children as subjects of rights and producers of culture has gained increasing recognition over the last decades. In Brazil, Article 227 of the Federal Constitution states that the rights and best interests of children and adolescents have absolute priority, and as such must be respected and put into effect before all others. The Child and Adolescent Statute, one of the core instruments created to ensure this absolute priority is respected in practice, recognizes the peculiar stage of development characteristic of childhood and *adolescence* and, placing children and adolescents in a position of vulnerability that justifies the special and integral protection they must receive.

In this same context, initiatives to promote child listening and child participation have been gaining momentum and notoriety¹. They are now increasingly called upon to participate, be protagonists and be listened to – even in early childhood – so their perspectives can be included in public policies, laws and intervention projects related to cities, schools and other institutions and issues that affect them.

However, it is still a challenge in the childhood field – for advocacy, education, and public policy making stakeholders alike – to carry out listening processes that guarantee the right to participation without losing sight of their peculiar stage of development, which requires

that listening to children be done prioritizing their own perspectives, languages, and cultures. Recognizing play, plastic expressions, gestures and (above all) symbolic and syncretic thinking must therefore be at the core of the listening process. Achieving this requires deconstructing the current model of knowledge production and social practices, a model that is based on a rationalist and pragmatic view that centers on logic, reason and linear thinking and only considers children's oral production, disregarding their body and its languages as well as the symbolic and affective world.

This conception of childhood, and consequently the way it is approached in social and legal processes, often end up emulating children, inducing them into discursive, linear, performative narratives that do not really touch their perspectives. These practices usually capture only a superficial layer of the culture, strongly influenced by the care-giving institutions – school, family, church, socio-educational and cultural organizations – as well as by values and discourses coming from the media and advertising. The deeper layer, the multiple languages and the symbolic and imaginative knowledge, is seldom reached by many initiatives. By prioritizing strategies that approach issues and situations from a direct, conceptual and objective perspective whose goal is to arrive at pragmatic and coherent answers to propositions, we miss a unique opportunity to access the child's perspective in order to broaden our references and knowledge around a certain subject or issue.

In the name of including the voices of childhood in public policies, laws, schools, cities and educational, social, and cultural experiences, children will often be exposed to situations designed under a model that does not honor childhood, situations that lead to emulation, embarrassment, or even reproduction of suffering experiences (as in the case of hearings with children victims of violence conducted

without the proper protocols and care). Many experiences therefore reproduce modes of expression, production and interaction that are proper to the adult world, but antagonistic to childhood.

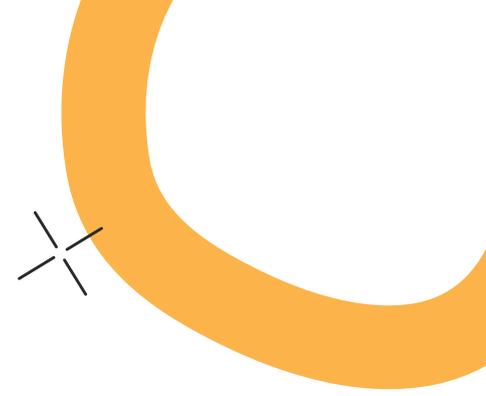
Even the simple and usual act of applying a questionnaire or conducting a listening process needs to be problematized when it is based on literal, objective, and measurable questions and answers. In general, strategies like these limit the likelihood of getting to know what children's perspectives are beyond what is already known or intended to be reached through the listening and participation process. This practice is particularly common in listening processes concerning the right to the city or that contemplate some stage of urban intervention — in the neighborhood, at school, in the public square.

Even from a legal standpoint, it is important to highlight that ensuring children's right to participation requires keen consideration of their particularities, which, in turn, implies recognizing them and listening to them, starting with their languages. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the one which addresses the right to participation) emphasizes the need to respect the particularities of childhood and differences in relation to age and cognitive and emotional conditions. It reads:

- 1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
- 2. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law."*

Another point to be noted in the text of the Convention is the use of the term “due weight” [*Translator Note: the expression ‘given due weight’ was translated in the official Portuguese text of the Convention as ‘takes into consideration,’ and this section focuses on the use of the term ‘consideration’.*] It evokes the notion that children must be assured the right to have their perceptions and needs taken into account in matters that concern them, but does not foresee the physical participation of the child in the processes themselves as a precondition or mandatory requirement. This aspect is of the utmost importance, as it has contributed to safeguarding infants, children, and adolescents from possible inductions to situations of emulation, exposure and symbolic violence. It also highlights the necessary care and ethical commitment that researchers and professionals in law, education and social welfare (among others) must exercise when carrying out listening and participation processes involving children.

This research project was based on this understanding and on the premise that considering what children say about complex issues, or issues that touch on their lives, requires, first of all, continuous exercise of sensitive listening, thus allowing us to respect and more successfully reach their place of speech, their peculiarities of expression and their existence.



2. Contextualizing the child listening research project

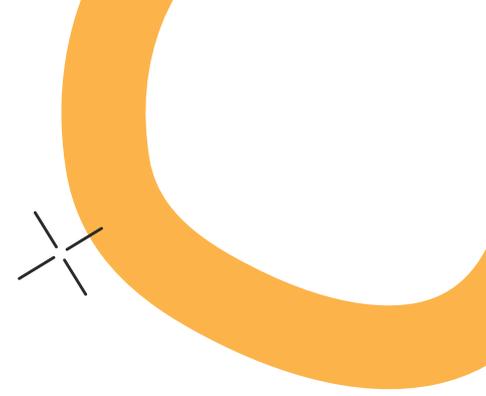
From 2018 to 2020, researchers Ana Cláudia de Arruda Leite and Gandhi Piorski developed a sensitive listening project focused on children from Brazil's five geographical regions, relying on the support of Instituto Alana² and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation³.

The starting point for this work was the Instituto Alana's interest in understanding and considering the perspectives of children on the impact of climate change on their lives and those of future generations. At a later moment, the Bernard van Leer Foundation learned of the project and saw it as an opportunity to listen to children about their city, especially their relationship with outdoor play and mobility, in the municipalities where the Urban 95 Program is active⁴. As a consequence, this research project has the support of both organizations. It was carried out in the cities of Porto Alegre (South Region), São Paulo (Southeast Region), Brasília (Midwest Region), Recife (Northeast Region), and Boa Vista (North Region). The choice of cities took into account the territories where the Urban 95 Program operates, the partners' history of institutional articulations, and the requirement that all cities had to be state capitals.

Local partners were sought in each municipality to find available and appropriate venues to hold the listening workshops and to

put together heterogeneous groups of children aged 4 to 12. The criteria for composition of the groups sought to ensure they were diverse in terms of age, gender and socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial background, as well as that they included children with physical or intellectual disabilities. A total of 110 children participated in the listening project, 11% of which children with Down syndrome, autism, low vision, deafness, hydrocephalus or cerebral palsy.

Each group was heterogeneous not only in terms of the profile of the children themselves, but also the institutions they came from – referrals came from public and private schools, third sector organizations, cultural spaces and institutions focused on inclusive education. By doing so, we sought to both enhance diversity and avoid ideological or cultural biases – each type of institution has its own perspectives, ways of interacting and institutional positions, which, in a way, reflect on the body and the subjectivities of their stakeholders.



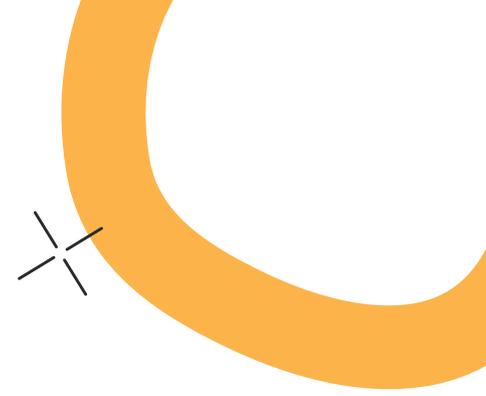
3. The work methodology

The methodology was based on a conception of listening that privileges the multiple languages of children and their most genuine sayings, which spring from the deepest and most subliminal layers of culture and highlight the symbolic dimension of their expressions. The project's core interest was to navigate the imaginary, the traces, the gestures, the words, the looks, the silences, the expressions and the narratives of childhoods. Hence, its methodology is based on exposing children to situations that encourage their expression through different languages – body gestures, graphic expressions, the construction of three-dimensional objects, play, narratives – since it is through these languages that they more easily communicate and reveal their affections, needs and individual and collective representations.

The listening process was carried out through workshops developed in two formats: immersive, on four consecutive days with three-hour sessions (totaling 12 hours); and in-depth, with two cycles of four three-hour meetings each spaced by a week (totaling 24 hours). An institutional partnership was set up in each municipality to provide the venue required, supply the infrastructure for the workshops and welcome accompanying adults.

When designing the methodology, we sought to tackle two recurring challenges of listening processes: 1) creating the conditions for children to express themselves freely; and 2) seeking meanings in children's productions beyond their direct, explicit – and therefore more superficial – utterances and expressions.

Finally, the research project also had the goal to systematize and share the method created in order to inspire other initiatives committed to children's perspectives.



4. About the method — working conditions

The listening method developed for this research project was based on six core tenets for the organization and development of the work:

1. Mapping the group of children;
2. Friendly space;
3. Pedagogical ambience;
4. Quality activities and materials;
5. Recording and organizing children's productions;
6. Reading and interpretation of the listening process.



1. Mapping the group of children

Mapping of the profile of the participant group via a questionnaire and compilation of the primary data collected aiming to obtain information on the social, economic, educational and cultural background of the families and children involved, as well as aspects of direct interest to the purpose of the research (such as play and leisure habits).

The researchers applied a questionnaire during a face-to-face meeting with family members or guardians of the children enrolled in the listening workshop in order to obtain a first layer of perception of the group's economic, social, and cultural aspects. The questionnaire consists of 21 questions, including multiple choice and open-answer items. It allowed the researchers to build initial knowledge of the group and establish possible quantitative and qualitative correlations between the data points collected. The data was also tabulated and compiled in order to allow for more general understanding of the research sample and the profile of the children involved⁵.

The questionnaire brought up interesting data points, such as on leisure habits. When answering the question "*What activities do you usually do for fun and how often?*", the most frequent activities children mentioned when interviewed with their caregivers were "listening to music" (69%) and "watching TV" (61%). "Visiting friends and relatives" was mentioned by 48% of respondents, followed by "going to parks and nature spaces" and "going to squares", both at 41%. Another question that brought a wealth of information was about play. The question was phrased as "*What games do you usually play?*", and the respondents mentioned 259 different activities. These were later grouped by similarity and organized into major categories in chart 6 of Annex 1.

and establish dialogue with children and their productions makes all the difference in the quality of the listening conducted, allowing us to look at each child as a singularity, as a unique being who must be respected in their limits and conditions of expression and subjectivity. It is also fundamental to guarantee, before and during the listening process, that we have the consent of the children themselves to participate in the research project. Each workshop in every city began with a conversation with the group, in simple and accessible language, that explained the project, its objectives and possible uses, as well as the importance of listening to them for the construction of a more democratic, fair and friendly society. At this point, the children are given the opportunity to express their doubts and considerations. The researchers then asked them clearly and objectively if they all agreed to participate in the research and to donate their productions to this work, noting that nothing would be used for commercial purposes or other purposes that did not honor the children's rights. It was also emphasized that, even though the parents or guardians had already handed in the authorization form, their decision would be final. This transparent dialogue and deep respect for the children (in addition to being an ethical commitment) also creates, from the outset, a favorable environment for the work, a safe, welcoming and empathic space that helps bring researchers and children closer together.

Another important element of the work ethic relates to the way children's expression and productions are handled. We based our work on the premise that one should not interfere in creative processes, allowing each child's expression and ideas to be fully respected, including the conditions and barriers they face. This is a point of attention and one of the basis of the methodology developed for this research project: we have sought in all stages, from conception to execution, to always put the child first.

4. Activities and materials

The choice of materials to be used is a very important aspect of the work. Materiality exerts influence on imagination, enabling more or less dynamism and expression depending on its quality. Materials must be selected with sensitivity and prior analysis of the diversity of objects and the possibilities they exert on the senses and inventive work of children. Priority was given to natural, industrial, and art materials whose qualities and traits evoke beauty, memory, revelation, diversity and fixability.

Similarly, the activities and experiences must be curated to prioritize those that foster the expression of children's uniqueness as well as their collective feelings and cultural, ethical, and social perceptions.

We chose to work with six forms of expression: play, storytelling, drawing, object making, modeling and narrative creation. It was also a premise that the choice of activities is wide, given there are many languages and possibilities that can be leveraged to achieve the same proposed objectives. The choices made for this particular research project were based on the value of each language and the opportunity they offer to apply the methodology in different contexts, including in terms of material and human resources available.

5. Recording and organization of the content produced

Cataloging and organizing children's productions and the image, audio, video and text records produced during the project is an indispensable step for future systematization and analysis. Depending on the number of activities, the number of children and the duration of the listening process, one may end up with an extensive collection that requires organization before, during, and after the activities. Identifying all productions and digitizing the collection facilitates the

reading of the material, as well as its use in documents and other media. Transcribing children's oral narratives also expands the possibilities for accessing more in-depth characteristics of the words spoken and the tones of expression, which can bring important clues to the later stages of interpretation and analysis.

6. Reading and interpretation of the listening process

This step involves curating and selecting children's productions, which can be done by various criteria: regional, thematic, aesthetic, inclusive (representing the diversity of the group), symbolic and others. For this research project, we compiled analysis categories based on elements that emerged from the children's own productions and that converse with the general scope of this listening process: nature and climate change, city and outdoor play. To support our interpretive analysis, we worked with clearly identifiable elements in children's productions that did not require great technical knowledge, as well as with the children's oral narratives about their own work.

+ 4.1 About the method — main activities and materials

We believe that the most appropriate strategies to foster children's expressions are those that make it possible to access and enhance their imaginary, fantastic, and playful life, where all things – including the more abrupt and violent world – can be looked at from other perspectives.

Thus, a set of activities based on six expressive possibilities (play, storytelling, drawing, object making, modeling and narrative creation) was developed and tried out in different ways in the five regions

of Brazil. We highlight below some of these activities, selected to provide a few references on how to develop listening processes that value children's own discourse⁶.

Play

The workshops started with a moment of integration and welcoming based on play. It was a playful, pleasurable moment of insight into the group of children and construction of a bond of trust and empathy. It was also used as an opportunity to share a repertoire of traditional songs and games from Brazilian childhood culture – and to learn other games from the children as well, as they also contributed to this moment of playful integration by bringing their own suggestions for round games, *cirandas* [Translator Note: activities similar to “Ring Around the Rosie”] and hand-based games. Some games were also played with the purpose of learning the names of the children and a little more about them, such as *Abra a Roda*, *Tin Do Le Lê*, *Cipó de miroró*, *Balanço do Mar*, *Bambu tira bú* and others.⁷

Storytelling

After the playful welcome with games, usually done in outdoor spaces, the children were then told a story. At this time, the focus was on enabling the group to have a concentration and internalization experience, inviting the children to connect with themselves based on the stories. To this end, we relied on traditional tales for their unique narrative and symbolic richness and ability to tap into the imaginative power of children.

The stories contribute to creating an environment conducive to the children's engagement in the workshops, and were chosen according to the purpose of the activities on each day.

If the activity was individual or related to a deeper theme, such as “origins”, “the nature of life” or “time”, the Grimm brothers’ tale “The Frog King or Iron Henry” was used, as it allows to a deeper dive into the symbolic world. If the activity was collective, a creative indigenous tale would be told, such as the Arara people’s “The Bark of the Sky”, or even ancestral stories linked to ancient African orality. If the theme was related to social/urban issues related to the children’s relationship with daily life (e.g., with their city), the story “The Bremen Town Musicians”, also by the Grimm brothers, would be brought in. Marina Colasanti’s *Moça Tecelã* (“The Weaver Lady”) was used when the goal was to help children soar towards their dreams and utopias and to imagine other worlds and horizons.

The stories were chosen based on the imaginary elements they can awaken. They are used as contemplative tools that allow children to approach symbolic forces more finely tuned to the proposed activities. However, there is no obligation to directly link the story to the activity; the most important thing is to ensure a curation of quality stories that have symbolic power, feature elements of origins and images of delighting vitality, and are rich in mysteries and in creative intelligence. The goal is for the stories to amplify the possibilities of expression of the children, and to bring up the deeper and subliminal layers of their feelings and propositions.

Drawing

Drawing is perhaps the first and most universal mode of expression for children, something they take up from the moment they are first able to use trace-making tools (pencils, crayons, markers, paintbrushes, charcoal, ink etc.).

Drawings are so important to accessing children’s imagination that it is possible to develop deep and sensitive listening processes using

only drawings as a strategy. They are both challenging but also surprisingly pedagogical when later revisited with careful observation, devoid of judgments and prejudices, for a subsequent interpretation of their symbolic elements. In practice, however, quite often very little is extracted from these productions; many listening initiatives use drawing as a strategy but do not subsequently deepen their analysis and understanding of that child's narrative. The drawing becomes a mere adornment in the process, like an illustration or the opposite of the literal expression of what should be proposed (for example, about an urban intervention in a square).

Examples of activities performed:

- Individual drawing: *draw nature containing the four elements and you. You can't have anything man-made in the drawing. Just you and nature with the four elements.*

In this first moment, the intent was to lead the child to the elaboration of a primordial image of life. To guide them to draw themselves in this context, to express their self-image in contact with this composition



of very basic, very simple and structuring symbols of existence.

- Individual or collective drawing: *draw a city with everything you think should be in it. This drawing should include your homes, paths connecting things, a deep dark abyss, a monster, swords, you and your friends.*

A large blank piece of paper panel was produced and hung along a wall in the room. With charcoal and pastel chalk in hand, the chil-



dren were given this challenge. Some of the symbolic elements used here are taken from the Archetypal Test of Nine Elements, known as AT9, created by psychologist Yves Durand based on the General Theory of the Imaginary. The purpose of these symbols is to potentiate tensions, solutions and fears, to locate nodes of discourse, to raise preponderant feelings, and to converge paralyzing or dynamic aspects of the cultural imaginary.

This exercise was also done without the use of symbolic images; children were asked to draw a city with the things they like to do in it. Only quite rarely did we see emerge points of tension, stronger relational elements, or collective and individual behaviors in the face of social situations. The common trend was to see emerge a city split into places of entertainment, playgrounds, or family intimacy. That itself is already an element to take into account – albeit a poorer one, as it does not translate a vision of the city and the complex relationship that children have with it. Symbols such as a deep, dark abyss, a monster and swords make the narrative much more fictional and idyllic, but from it arise elements that link in ways that are both contradictory and more connected to the whole of the social fabric (and not just watertight pictures of desires). It makes the impressions of urban life from the children’s perceptions become clearer. Issues such as garbage and pollution, the social pressures of violence and fear, prejudice, the lack of interaction with community life and many others emerge as eruptions, unfiltered by the constraints of elaborate discourse.

Object making

Another activity carried out was the making of objects from unstructured elements sourced from industrial scraps. Three-dimensional object-making facilitates the exercise of creative imagination in its relation to space and time, and, therefore, with corporeal life.

Another important reason for choosing this activity is the syncretic nature of these materials. They come from innumerable sources, from natural (such as noble wood scraps) to scientific ones (such as machine parts and industrial tools designed by engineers). The possibility of fixing seemingly incompatible and disconnected things with lines is an activating and dynamic element for children’s creative skills. Narratives by young children could gain more movement and

animism with the help of the unstructured materials, bringing more of the strength of enchantment and narrative to their expressions.

Example of activity performed:

- Individual object-making: *something is happening on planet Earth, so you'll need to build (with these objects) something that figures out what's going on and gives a solution to it.*



An important activator in this activity is the hidden element. Something is happening, but no one knows what it is. This is the dynamo *par excellence* of childhood: mystery. Here, the possibilities extend to infinite scopes. With great inventive interest, children dive into this wide realm of possibilities, while still connected to the theme of the continuity of life on Earth. We do not shy away from the theme; on the contrary, we add paths for hypotheses and solutions within an inseparable whole that is the discussion about the sustainability of our relationship with nature.

Modeling

Modeling, more closely related to drawing, lets itself go where the child points to, and is therefore a freer substrate for child exploration and expression. However, one has to question the use of modeling clay. It presented some limitations regarding the purpose of this research project, noticed during the process and in comparison with the other languages and materials used in the workshops. Clay, as a malleable material, is very inviting, but peters out quickly if some modeling techniques are not made available. Based on the children's experience with the material, we realized that modeling has potential, especially when using clay, but requires an audience aged 7 and up as well as some preparation and technical guidance. With those constraints in place, children are able to dig deeper into the experience and use modeling as a means to narrate and support their ideas and feelings. Without a modicum of technique, they spend most of their time struggling with ways to get their compositions upright, and those easily break down. Most of the time, they give up and do it in the form of a drawing, with two-dimensional lines, as we were able to observe *in loco* during the listening workshops carried out in the participating cities.

Example of activity:

- Individual modeling: *Make the place where you like to play or be the most. It can be real or imaginary. Also make the path (with the things on it) that takes you from your home to this place.*



The activity was important because it tested the emergence of more concrete narratives that took into account the child's vision of the city's physical spaces, the perception of the places with which they coexist, the representation of their bodies in these environments, and their affective memory of the places.

During the research project, we noticed children in all the cities were struggling to model elements from the paths they used. Although it was part of the proposition of the activity, few children modeled elements along the paths they created. In light of that, we created another activity to further investigate the mobility and concreteness of urban life in children's bodies.

- Individual modeling exercise 2: *make the paths that you walk in everyday life. What's in them? Where do you go through? Many things happen at school, at swimming class, in your home; we don't care about that right now. We want to know what happens just on the way from home to school, on the way from your home to the park, etc.*



We decided to deepen our listening on the theme of mobility, on those spaces between things, between the places of more significant events in the everyday life of urban children. To this end, we also used the same question as above for the individual drawings, as a way to offer freer possibilities of representation. The hypotheses that emerged with the play doughs became more concrete with the drawings. These revealed a greater wealth of images, with clear signs of the city experience that Brazilian children live today. This highlights the importance of having a good repertoire of activities and knowledge of the materials being used so that one can

understand the sensitivity of each language as a tool to facilitate children's expressions.

Playing with words

Of all the languages explored in the workshops, the activities focused on the exploration of oral and written narratives were the least present, as the great purpose of the listening process was to access other languages and the more subliminal and symbolic layers of children's expressions. We also tried to avoid direct narratives about the proposed themes and challenges that name and describe the problems using orality or writing.

As such, priority was given to word-based activities that break with linear, rational, and pragmatic logic where one has more control and dominion over the narrative. One of the proposals was to build collective stories, where one of the researchers would start the narrative and the children, in the order in which they were placed in the circle, would continue freely. This type of composition features the element of surprise. The use of the sudden word, suddenness and improvisation always elicits the possibility of accessing deeper elements in the children's feelings and unconscious perception. It mobilizes expression into often unexpected paths. This activity allowed for very incisive displays of traces of the children's collective feeling, what they intuitively sense of social elements, ideologies, and the implicit discourses of civilization.

Another activity performed was the random word game, where each child had to say a word based on the one they heard from another child. This allowed us to work with randomness, spontaneity and free association, making it possible to learn more about the children's repertoire and universe.

+ 4.2 About the method — recording, organization and interpretation of the collected data

Recording what was produced is a crucial, indispensable step for the second and most demanding moment of the project, i.e., the reading of the collection of works produced by the children. The research project requires thorough cataloging of productions, without which it runs the risk of ending up with an amorphous and chaotic mass of drawings, objects, photographs and hours of footage without any possibility of having traceability or guidance on what one is looking at. Highlighted below are some of the measures taken (still while in the field) to allow for proper organization of the collection of productions:

1. Record on the back of each drawing the child's name, age and city.
2. It is important to write what was narrated about the drawing on the back of the drawing itself. If possible, use the child's own words, the emphases given – it would be best to transcribe the text.
3. When cataloguing the objects produced, it is important to label them with the title of the work (if any) and the child's name, age and city. Film or photograph productions from various angles and then pack each object in bags, as many are fragile and can break down. If they are stored disassembled, however, they can be reassembled later using photos or videos of it as a reference.
4. Record the child's narrative of their production in audio or video, if they wish to. This material will be used only as an

input for the interpretation stage. It can help by making the record more complete, as the child demonstrates how the object moves or the sound it makes.

5. As for the clay models, only picture or video records are available, as it is not possible to transport the pieces without destroying what has been made. One strategy is to film all the productions and ask the children to talk about their work in order to have a more complete record. It is important that children know they're not obligated to talk about what they have done.

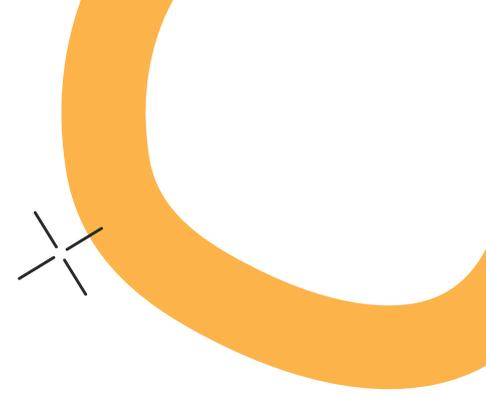
Once the collection has been catalogued and organized, the next step is to read and interpret the material in order to understand more deeply the things children said as expressed in their drawings, sculptures, constructions and narratives. To this end, we worked with clearly identifiable elements in children's productions that did not require a repertoire of studies of the unconscious or even symbolic culture. It is important to emphasize that we continuously sought to distinguish between the psychological layer of the drawing (which is of no interest to the purpose of this research project) and the collective perception (of the social and group feelings of childhoods) in order to avoid de-contextualized analyses that can lead to judgments and preconceived conclusions.

The interpretative notes are intended to awaken educators, researchers and professionals in the field of childhood to a different way of interpreting productions created by children based on an effort to synthesize narratives, an interpretation that seeks to make central themes emerge that can even be found precisely in the absences, in the invisibilities, in the aspects that could have been manifested but were not. To this end, two parameters sustain our proposal for interpretation, one collaborating with the other. They are:

1. Visual reading of the graphics and shapes presented by the children. The exercise of finding the entry points into the works presented. The details that hold the greatest power of expression.
2. The child's narrative about the work done, because it contributes to the interpretation of the productions, and, chiefly, because it allows for greater fidelity and approximation of the child's intention and perception of their own process and work.

Together with the records compiled of their productions, the possibility of having the children's narratives about their own productions contributes to the reading and interpretation of the material, as they serve as a support that allows the professional to conduct the analysis without the need for vast knowledge and a previous repertoire of symbolic reading of children's productions. With the additional input, one can get to the heart of the expressions faster.

A collection used for a listening process allows for a wide range of inputs and perspectives. The researchers chose to discuss the main issues emerging from the activities and demonstrate them with examples (such as those identified in the children's productions). The listening workshops held in Porto Alegre, São Paulo, Brasília, Recife and Boa Vista generated a vast collection of children's productions, including various material objects, audio recordings, photos, videos and field logs. In all, there are about 150 drawings, 95 objects, 80 clay modeling productions, and 70 hours of audio and video material. The wealth and breadth of the collection will make it possible to revisit it in the future, possibly with different thematic propositions and purposes that go beyond the issues addressed in this particular research project.



5. Final considerations

A child-centric listening process aimed at creating, systematizing and sharing a method for it requires prior study, organization, and the patience to let oneself be permeated by the material. It requires one's time and willingness to dive into different layers of understanding of what it means to genuinely listen to childhoods, since accessing the place where the child speaks requires a different notion of time, space, communication, and outcome.

From the perspective of this research project, giving children's perceptions 'their due weight' (as determined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child) does not imply activism and engaging children in causes or actions. That may even be an offshoot of listening, but these are not necessarily overlapping processes, let alone synonymous ones. The outcome – this one, indeed, actively sought – is protecting children's right to participation by offering listening processes offered as a possibility to bring children's perspectives to light. As such, the crucial point to be safeguarded is the right of children to be considered in processes that relate to them, to be honored in their peculiar state of development and their languages, traits and ways of seeing, feeling and acting in the world.

Finally, this research project considers that listening to children is – in addition to a right enshrined in the national legal system and

international standards – something vital to society. The expressions coming from childhood are pedagogical, imbued with a temporality that must be rethought in our sense of civilization. They call upon us to see dreaming and imagination as a purpose for coexistence, and as a way of living well.



Notes

1. CECIP, 2016. **Mapeamento de projetos com participação infantil no Brasil**. Available at: <http://primeirainfancia.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/mapeamento2.pdf>; UNICEF Brasil e SNJ, 2014. **Participação Cidadã de Adolescentes e Jovens – Marco de Referência**. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/relatorios/participacao-cidada-de-adolescentes-e-jovens-marco-de-referencia>; [\[return to page\]](#)

CUNHA, Andréa Carla Pereira and FERNADES, Natália. **Participação infantil: a sua visibilidade a partir da análise de teses e dissertações em Sociologia da Infância**. In: DORNELLES, Leni Vieira and FERNANDES, Natália Fernandes (ed.). **Perspetivas sociológicas e educacionais em estudos da criança: as marcas das dialogicidades luso-brasileiras**. Portugal Universidade do Minho. 2014. p. 36 – 48. Available at: <http://www.ciec-uminho.org/documentos/ebooks/2307>. [\[return to page\]](#)

2. Instituto Alana is a civil society, non-profit organization whose mission is to “honor children”. It has a number of programs and partners seeking to guarantee conditions for the full experience of childhood and is supported by the proceeds from an endowment fund since 2013. To learn more, visit <https://alana.org.br/>. [\[return to page\]](#)

3. Established more than 50 years ago, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation is a private foundation seeking to develop and share knowledge of experiences that work in early childhood development. It provides financial support and expertise to governments, civil society and private partners to help test and scale up services that effectively improve the lives of young children and their families. To learn more, visit <https://bernardvanleer.org/pt-br/>. [\[return to page\]](#)

4. The Urban 95 initiative was created to promote the interests of babies, young children and caregivers who rarely have a voice in urban planning, mobility strategies and programs and services for them. It seeks to answer one core question: If you could experience a city at about 95 cm height (about 3”, or the average height of a 3-year-old) –, what would you change? To learn more, visit <https://bernardvanleer.org/pt-br/solutions/urban95-pt/>. [\[return to page\]](#)

5. Annex 1 of this Executive Summary contains some of the data collected through the questionnaires applied in the five municipalities, provided to offer a better overview of the profile of the children and families participating in the project (as well as the research methodology itself). [\[return to page\]](#)

6. The annexes include a few examples of productions by the children participating in the research project. [\[return to page\]](#)

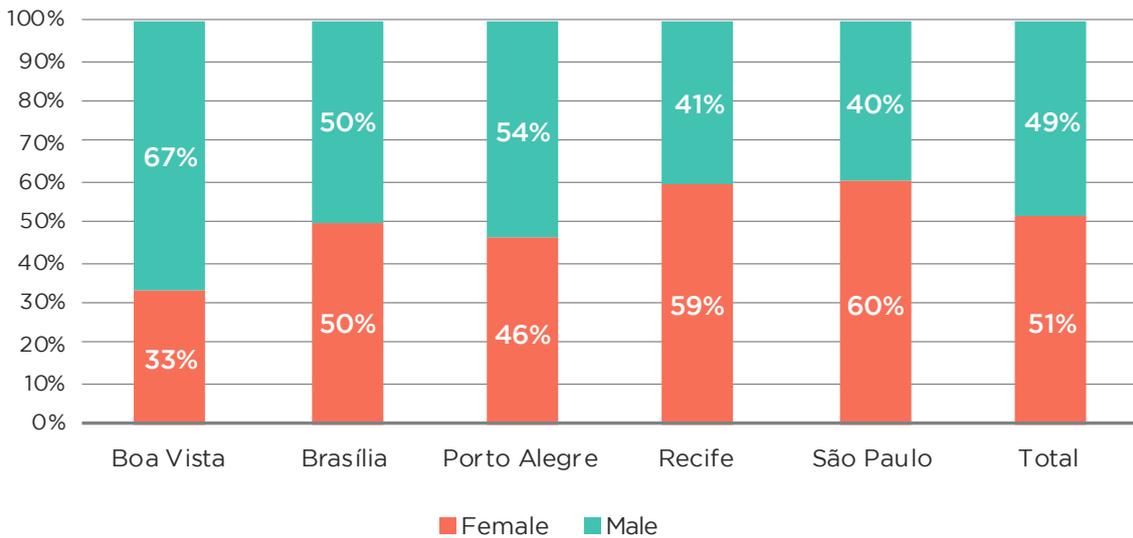
7. These games and others are available in the album “Abra a Roda, Tin Do Le Lê”, published by researcher and ethnomusicologist Lydia Hortélio. [\[return to page\]](#)

Annex 1

Project participating children and families profile

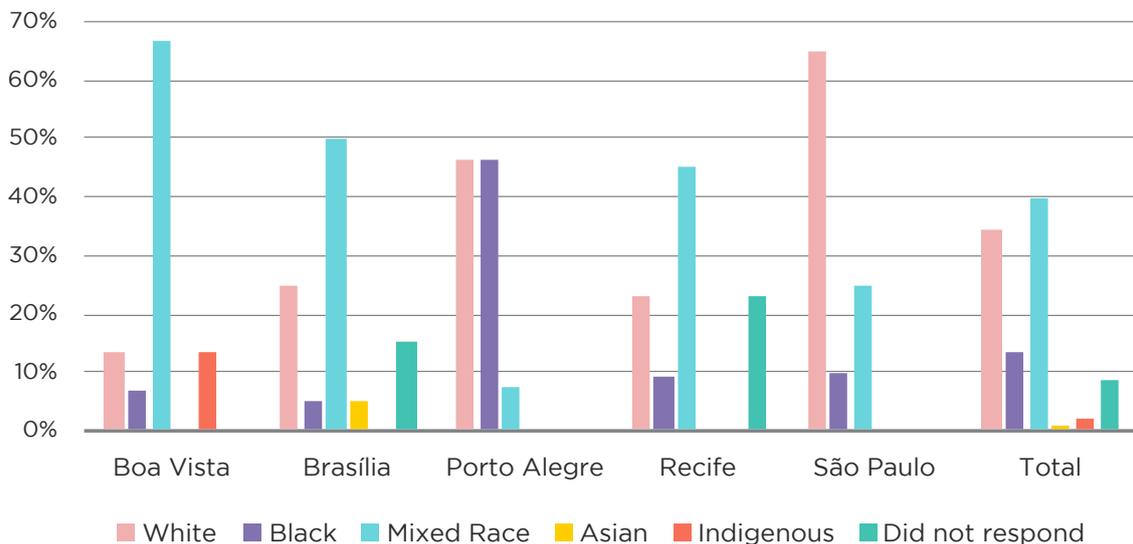
Data from the questionnaires applied with the families or guardians of the participating children were tabulated and compiled into the final report of the research project conducted from 2018 to 2020. We present below some data points collected during the research project that allows one to better understand the profile of the participants and the methodology.

Chart 1: Gender distribution per municipality



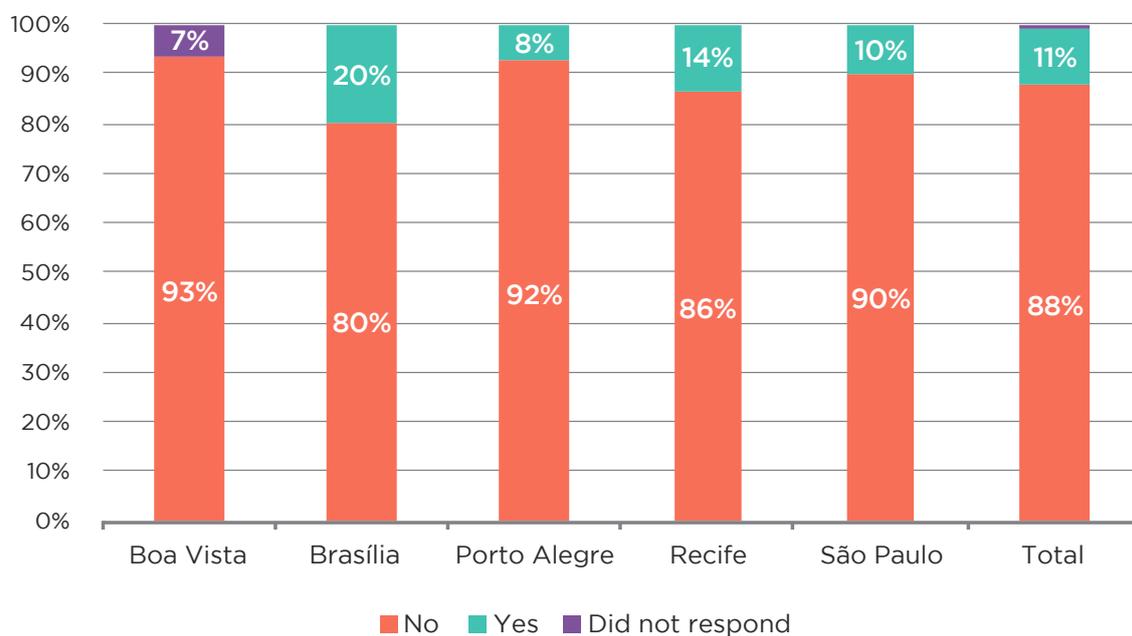
Source: Child Listening Project, 2019.

Chart 2: Racial distribution per municipality



Source: Child Listening Project, 2019.

Chart 3: Distribution of children with physical or intellectual disabilities per municipality



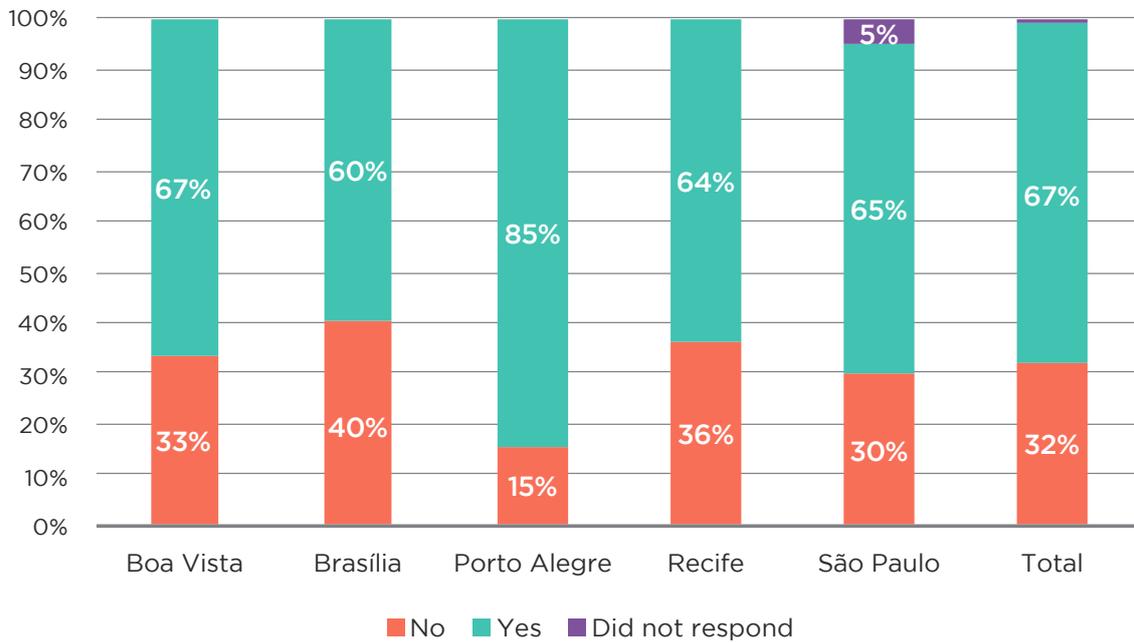
Source: Child Listening Project, 2019.

Chart 4: Local institutional partners relied on to form the groups of participating children



City	Public school	Private school	Third sector	School for children with disabilities	Religious institution	Public institution	State care institution
Boa Vista	x				x	x	
Recife	x	x	x	x			
Brasília	x		x	x			x
São Paulo	x	x	x	x			
Porto Alegre	x		x	x			

Chart 5: Awareness of the Statute of Children and Adolescents per municipality



Source: Child Listening Project, 2019.

Chart 6: Games mapped by quantity and category



Annex 2

Examples of children's production per activity performed

1. Individual drawing: *draw nature containing the four elements and you. You can't have anything man-made in the drawing. Just you and nature with the four elements.*



2. Individual or collective drawing: *draw a city with everything you think should be in it. This drawing should include your homes, paths connecting things, a deep dark abyss, a monster, swords, you and your friends.*



3. Individual composition: *something is happening on planet Earth, so you'll need to build (with these objects) something that figures out what's going on and gives a solution to it.*

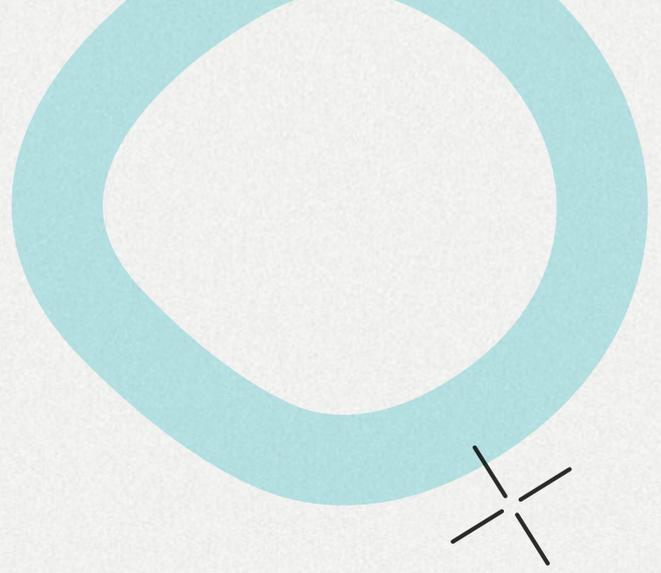


4. Individual modeling: Make the place where you like to play or be the most. It can be real or imaginary. Also make the path (with the things on it) that takes you from your home to this place.



5. Individual drawing exercise 2: make the paths that you walk in everyday life. What's in them? Where do you go through? Many things happen at school, at swimming class, in your home; we don't care about that right now. We want to know what happens just on the way from home to school, on the way from your home to the park, etc.





FOR A CHILD-CENTRIC METHOD FOR SENSITIVE LISTENING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF A CHILD LISTENING RESEARCH PROJECT CONDUCTED BY ANA CLÁUDIA LEITE AND GANDHY PIORSKI IN THE CITIES OF SÃO PAULO (SP), PORTO ALEGRE (RS), BRASÍLIA (DF), RECIFE (PE) AND BOA VISTA (RO) FROM 2018 TO 2020.



<https://alana.org.br/>



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