

## Cartographies of Children's Memories and Their Migration Experiences: A Visual Analysis

### Cartografías de memoria y experiencias migratorias de niños/as: un análisis visual

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#### ABSTRACT

Studies on childhood, migration, and memory have primarily centered on the perspectives of adults or institutions within the national context. This article unveils research findings aimed at discerning the formation of collective memory among children regarding their migration experiences to Barcelona. Employing a qualitative approach and cartographic representations, the study illustrates how memories evolve through processes of identity, belonging, and affectivity. A joint analysis of collective memory and migration is addressed, which contributes to the articulation of these fields of study through the visual narratives of children as protagonists of their experiences. It is concluded that affectivity plays a pivotal role in shaping memories. Through affective connections, children subvert the temporalities boundaries of childhood, constructing transnational memories shaped by hybrid identities.

*Keywords:* 1. childhood, 2. migration, 3. collective memory, 4. Spain, 5. Barcelona.

#### RESUMEN

Los estudios sobre infancia, migración y memoria se han focalizado principalmente en la perspectiva del mundo adulto o institucional y en la esfera nacional. Este artículo expone los resultados de una investigación que tiene por objetivo identificar la construcción de memoria colectiva de niños/as en torno a sus experiencias migratorias hacia Barcelona. Con un enfoque cualitativo y mediante la elaboración de cartografías se da cuenta de cómo los recuerdos se elaboran desde procesos de identidad, pertenencia y afectividad. Se aborda un análisis conjunto de memoria colectiva y migración, que aporta a la articulación de dichos campos de estudio a través de narrativas visuales de niños y niñas como protagonistas de sus experiencias. Se concluye que, en las memorias, la afectividad juega un rol central. A través de ésta, los/as niños/as subvierten las temporalidades de la infancia y construyen memorias transnacionales configuradas por identidades híbridadas.

*Palabras clave:* 1. infancia, 2. migración, 3. memoria colectiva, 4. España, 5. Barcelona.

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## INTRODUCTION

The mobility and international migration of children and young people is currently a relevant phenomenon in our societies. A “massive loss of habitat,” which is driving an increase in mobility<sup>4</sup> on a global scale, has taken place in recent decades. Violence, war, environmental problems, development policies, desertification and rising water levels, among other reasons, have resulted in the displacement of groups to other territories (Sassen, 2016).

At a global level, and due to the invisibility of children in migration studies in contrast to adult groups, there is no certainty on the exact number of migrant children (Rodríguez Cruz, 2022). However, UNICEF has provided information that allows to estimate the magnitude of the phenomenon: it can be seen that in 2022, more than 35 million children moved from their territories worldwide (UNICEF, 2022). Within Europe, there has been a significant presence of migrants in the last two decades. Specifically in Catalonia, in the metropolitan region of Barcelona, the presence of migrant children and young people has increased. According to data collected by the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT, 2021), foreign children and adolescents between the ages of 0 and 17 years constitute 17.1% of the population, which reaches a total of 1 408 685 people.

Within these processes, in the migratory routes of children, the experience of leaving one place for another impacts on aspects of *belonging* and *identity* in the various spaces-locations of transit and settlement, both in the past and in the present of the experiences of these children. This is how children have had many homes, which makes their biographies be shaped by migration. In this sense, questions arise about what does it mean to leave one place to go live in another? What elements or experiences make children develop a sense of belonging to a locality? At what point does a place of residence become a home for them? And how are these processes experienced emotionally?

In this, collective memory plays a crucial role—understood as an action that, from the present, recreates the social past (Halbwachs, 1968)—since it produces processes and relationships that connect these experiences, and in which the multiple subject positions that configure memories crossed by the transnational are juxtaposed.<sup>5</sup> Taking into account the above, the objective of this article is to understand the memory construction of children pertaining their migrations to the city

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<sup>4</sup> The term *mobility* refers to a broad concept. There is a field of studies that addresses the regimes of mobility and immobility, and the complex relationships between these phenomena, location, and transnational connectivity. For this study, international migration is referred to as a type of mobility.

<sup>5</sup> The transnational perspective was included in many works on international migrations at the end of the 1990s, and refers to networks, social-political organizations, the family, and other agents. Its objective is to go beyond the fragmented vision of migration processes and transcend the *methodological nationalism* that separates the country of origin and that of destination. In the field of collective memory, the term *transnational memory* is addressed by the works on memory and migration carried out in the first section of the theoretical considerations.

of Barcelona, paying attention to their identity processes, and their senses of belonging and affectivity.

In the field of childhood, collective memory and migration studies, research is developed from perspectives that barely take into account the experiences of children, focusing on the point of view of adults, or on the approach to childhood processes from a filial perspective (Hedrer-Manara et al., 2022). These approaches standardize and make invisible the life trajectories of children. In contrast, there are other types of research *with or led by* children (Liebel & Martínez, 2009), whose theoretical-methodological approaches are usually in line with critical and social studies of childhood (James & Prout, 2010) and with feminist perspectives, which have recently been increasing in popularity, promoting research centered around them (Llobet, 2013; Rosen & Twamley, 2018).

In line with these perspectives, the research focuses on the participation and experiences of children who migrate to Barcelona. To do so, a methodological framework is provided that articulates a qualitative approach and a visual analysis based on cartographies created by children regarding their displacements. Understanding these memories is important if it is taken into account the secondary role that children have played in the migration processes and in the practices of remembrance. But it is also relevant because it allows to understand the construction of memory created by and about subjects who have been silenced for *not belonging* to the new society of which they are part as migrants.

Next, the theoretical considerations are presented, which address social memory, child migration, identity, belonging, and affectivity. Then, the methodology, the cartographic method, the techniques, and the analysis procedure developed are presented. The results are then analyzed by means of two axes that account for memories of migration around the identity configurations and senses of belonging and affectivity of children; finally, the conclusions and discussions of the research are shared.

## THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### *Social Memory and Migration*

Studies on social memory have been limited to the national sphere (Lo, 2013) in communities defined as part of a single nation-State and for whom belonging to it is not questioned. This excludes people who would not be part of *what is national* and *of the citizen* due to their position as migrants. The theoretical-methodological dialogues developed between collective memory processes and migration have expanded these understandings while still accounting for their complexities. In this way, the inclusion of migrant subjects in memory practices, as well as of collective memory in

migration processes, has involved reconsidering the notions made use of in these fields of study,<sup>6</sup> thus providing other perspectives for their analysis (Álvarez & Rojas Silva, 2021).

From these perspectives, the works of Creet and Kitzmann (2011), Palmberger and Tošić (2016), and Marshall (2018) become relevant, as they argue that memory and migration are mutually constitutive social practices. In the book *Memory and migration: Multidisciplinary approaches to memory studies*, Julia Creet outlines a critique in relation to the ideas of the location and stability of memory proposed by Nora, Ricoeur, and Halbwachs: "Perhaps stability does continue to play a role in the creation of memory, or, at least, the illusion or pretense of stability, but how do we understand this fixity if movement or migration is a constant?" (Creet & Kitzmann, 2011, p. 6). The need for a place and a materiality of memory have been pointed out as crucial for its maintenance (Halbwachs, 1968), even when a place is lost to a community, which produces an artificial memory (Nora, 2008). These assumptions have focused attention on certain groups. Consequently, there is a view of the continuity between belonging, identity and memory, which can exclude migrants from collective memory processes.

Another relevant conceptualization of these works is the approach to transnational memories, which are defined as those that go beyond national frameworks, configuring themselves as memories crossed by migration and globalization. Thus, transnational memory pays attention to cross-border movements, the different ways in which globalization interacts with memory, and the relocation processes of immigrant groups (Amine & Beschea-Fache, 2012). From these conceptualizations, there is criticism that there are analyses that focus on family and individual memories linked mainly to the place of origin and migratory transit (Glynn & Kleist, 2012). However, for this research, the reality of migration processes in both the country of origin and that of destination, and their practices in the society of residence are taken into account.

Collective memory in relation to mobility, from an understanding that acknowledges it as dynamic, changing, and mobile, thus questions its fixed and stable notion in time (Erll, 2011). From this notion, the research presented here distances itself from the presentist views on migration, understood as homogeneous, fixed, and permanent in time. Instead, it adheres to the perspective of the Autonomy of Migration (Mezzadra, 2012)—which directs the gaze towards the actions, desires, and expectations of migrants—, which, in affinity with this approach, calls into question the impact of children on reality, on the routes of national and transnational configuration, and challenges the notions of absolute dependence on the adult and institutional world.

Therefore, the process of remembering the past varies depending on whether one is a child or not, and on the relationship of that past with mobility. The relationship between past, present, and future from the exercise of memory (Fernández, 2000) allows one to understand that, in the articulation of the temporalities of children in connection with their migrations, they become subscribed through their recognition in the time and space in which they live.

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<sup>6</sup> The traditional notions and perspectives in the field of memory, childhood, and migration are addressed in more detail in the second section of the theoretical considerations.

### *The Collective Memory of the New Generations*

In classic studies on childhood from biological and developmental psychological narratives, children are conceptualized as innocent, immature subjects with little capacity for action (Burman, 2021). Migrant childhood has also been understood from the perspective of vulnerability and lack of agency (Pávez, 2011), or as a social problem that requires intervention (Santamaría, 2002), based on protectionist and romantic perspectives, which develop generic descriptions of both their living conditions and the actions that should be deployed to manage the phenomenon.

Generally, the approach to the memory of youngsters, boys and girls, has been from the perspective of intergenerational transmission (Jelin, 2002) and generational memories (Misztal, 2003). These approaches focus on the transmission of memories, knowledge, and behaviors from an older generation to a younger one through adults and institutions, where the generation is understood as a socio-historical constitution that shares certain ways of thinking and experiences (Mannheim, 1928), and not as a mere biological status. They also emphasize *generational change* by designating the group that receives the memories as the successors or entrepreneurs of memory (Jelin, 2002), thus restraining the meanings of the past based on what the witness generation conveys to the new one.

On the other hand, Marianne Hirsch (2008) proposes the concept of post-memory to refer to the generation that comes after or to the second generation, that is, to people who were not direct witnesses of what is remembered, always being a mediated and vicarious experience. Some of the limitations of these approaches are considering memory as guarded by other generations, only reproduced by the new generation. At the same time, they are likely to marginalize those who did not directly experience the past and thus place the experiences of children in a secondary position.

In this context, it makes sense to approach the memory of the new generations from a co-constructive and dialogical perspective, which understands childhood and migration as relational and intersubjective notions (Habashi, 2013; Reyes et al., 2015). What is remembered or forgotten creates a relational space that depends on the subject positions, from which multiple meanings of the past emerge and are interpreted. Therefore, from these prisms, the construction of memory is developed from agency, where children are protagonists of the practices of memory and builders of their migratory experiences and memories.

At the same time, these elaborations pertain memories that outline the way in which migration processes are configured, and the positions occupied by migrant children. Therefore, the elaboration of memory affects identities, senses of belonging, and the affective processes that are played out in childhood migration. Paying attention to these complex relationships becomes fundamental to understanding the effects and the ways in which these processes intertwine and change.

*Identity and Affectivity in Memory  
and Migration Processes*

Migration processes affect the formation and consequent transformation of identities and memories, both individual and collective (Arfuch, 2013). From the contributions of feminist epistemologies to the field of study of collective memory (Troncoso & Piper, 2015), the notion of experience, identity, and the affective dimension are accounted for in this study, crucial as they are to understanding migration.

Experience, understood from these prisms, problematizes *access to truth*, since it is mediated by historical and political contingencies, embodied and dynamic as it is (Scott, 2001). Identity is understood as a dynamic, changing, and even contradictory process, and not as a pre-established and essentialist category that would account for attributable qualities, like a kind of innate and proper nature (Anzaldúa, 1999). As such, identity is a contingent and situated articulation. In the words of Avtar Brah (2011), identity is constituted by "(...) discourses, matrices of meaning, and historical memories that, once in circulation, can form the bases of a certain identification in a specific economic, cultural, and political context" (p. 153).

From these perspectives, identity is not a pre-existing matter, nor is experience something that is possessed. Therefore, particular experiences are invoked in the elaboration of memory, which configure identities crossed by multiple situations and positions. Identity processes are related to what makes sense to one, so it is crucial to pay attention to the emotional dimension. Therefore, this work adheres to the notion of collective affectivity proposed by Pablo Fernández (2000); for this author, it refers to feelings, emotions, and moods; it is produced, manifested, and felt collectively, so it transcends an individual-personal level. Likewise, in relation to memory, the author argues that collective affectivity cannot be conceived without addressing affectivity itself: all memory is affective and goes back to an affective situation; if not, it would be mere events.

Due to the relational and constructive nature of childhood and affections, memory is recreated from contingent and changing situations that depend on the places one occupy in society. The feelings that are produced in the recollections of children are not the same as those generated at another given time; they may be similar, but they are transformed each time memories linked to specific situations are evoked.

**METHODOLOGICAL NOTES: CARTOGRAPHIES AND THE VISUAL APPROACH**

This research makes use of a qualitative methodology (Íñiguez, 1999), in line with visual approaches to analyze 13 cartographies created by children who migrated to Barcelona. Visual methods highlight the omnipresence of images in contemporary societies, as they emphasize the importance of analyzing visual representations to access understandings of social phenomena that would otherwise remain inaccessible (Banks, 2010). These approaches include techniques that encourage participatory (Pauwels, 2011; Martorell-Faus, 2021) and child-focused (James & James, 2010) productions, that is, that promote the expression of narratives and emotions beyond verbal language, and that take into account the interest of children in all research, respectively.

Cartography is understood as a research method that brings together practice and theory (Passos et al., 2009), in such a way that it serves as a mediation for identification with spatial referents and mental maps, by recording information about spaces, territories, uses, and displacements (Bonfá-Neto & Suzuki, 2023). In the cartographies made by children, migratory memories were captured through territorial and symbolic maps, including coordinates of locations, affections, people, and significant elements (Almeida & Bedin da Costa, 2021; Punch, 2002).

From a socio-constructionist perspective of memory (Piper, 2005), the elaboration of the past is distanced from an exact representation of it, and is configured through imagination. In accordance with this idea, the elaboration of images in visual methods is linked to originality and inspiration, thus being a creative process (Mannay, 2016). Thus, the use of these strategies is presented as a theoretical-methodological and political commitment to explore tools that systematize experiences and give voice to subjects, by acknowledging their desires, feelings, and the process of co-construction of knowledge (Ibáñez & Michelazzo, 2013).

### *Workshops, Mappings, and Participatory Productions*

The fieldwork was carried out between March and May 2021, through theoretical sampling (Valles, 1999). In the first instance, the main researcher linked up with a public school that has a significant presence of migrant children, in order to invite them to participate in the research. The school is classified as a center of high socioeconomic complexity, located in the Vallés Occidental region in Catalonia, in the province of Barcelona. This area is characterized by a high percentage of migrant population, so the school has traditionally welcomed children of different nationalities.

In the 2017-18 academic year, the center was linked to a program called Hack the School, by the Bofill Foundation, whose objective was to include families in the community and thus design a playground for the school. The project coordinator said that discovering these types of programs, in which the community transformed the school, led them to enter into an alliance with the Magnet Program,<sup>7</sup> which aimed at combating school segregation and promoting educational innovation. This has served to promote the heterogeneity of said center, by including Catalan children, since historically the school had a reputation of being *welcoming to immigration*.

Secondly, a call was issued to children who met specific inclusion criteria, such as (a) being between 6 and 13 years old; (b) having been born in another country and then emigrated to Barcelona, and (c) having resided in the country for at least eight uninterrupted months. This age range prior to adolescence was targeted because at this stage they experience other processes, which implies other particularities for the research (Sedletzki & Perrault, 2016). Regarding the age criterion, a child was considered as such in accordance with the National Council for Children, that is, being under 18 years of age, this being consistent with the current Spanish legislation. Finally, the migratory status was chosen as an inclusion criterion, as well as the length of stay in

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on this program, see Magnet, n.d., in the references.

the country of arrival, since these factors can contribute to the exploration of previous experience, and how it is remembered and constructed in the process of settling in the host country.

The reasons that prompted the migration of those who participated in this research were diverse, such as improving their economic situation, seeking academic opportunities, or forced migration due to crises in their countries of origin. All of them migrated with their families or with someone related to them by blood. The identity of the participants was protected by means of pseudonyms, as detailed in Table 1, which provides brief information about them, such as age, nationality, and sessions in which they participated.

Table 1. Participant Children

Participants	Age	Country of origin	Time living in Spain	Number workshops in which they participated
Julia	6 years	Chile	2 years	1
Josefina	6 years	Chile	2 years	1
Ignacio	11 years	Chile	2 years	1
Iana	9 years	Ukraine	4 years	2
Emilia	9 years	Paraguay	3 years	2
Antonia	9 years	Chile	2 years	2
Valerio	10 years	Honduras	1 year and a half	2
Lautaro	10 years	Colombia	2 years	2
Lian	10 years	China	6 years	1
Juan	10 years	Morocco	2 years	1
María	11 years	Colombia	5 years	2
Tania	12 years	Honduras	5 years	2
Bruno	13 years	Chile	2 years	1

Source: Own elaboration.

Five workshops were held with boys and girls in accordance with the research objective, focused on creating cartographies. From the perspective of popular education, each workshop was conceived as a group work device with a set duration, where knowledge and experiences were brought together to promote collective learning (Cano, 2012). In this way, starting from an open question directed to the children, “how do you remember the experience of migrating to Barcelona and what were the emotions that accompanied this process?”, each one elaborated a personal cartography. During the workshops, a language adapted to their ages was used, with clear instructions and practical examples when necessary. Attention was paid to the working time of each participant; close and personalized back up was provided when requested. The duration of the sessions was approximately two hours.

Various materials were provided for the elaboration of the cartographies, such as maps, icons, magazines, and various supplies, as well as other materials brought by the children, such as colored pencils and photographs of their pets. With these elements they drew spaces, relationships and/or



relevant people, objects and transits. The use of symbols was proposed to represent the affective dimension, for example: (a) a large dot to indicate the places where they carry out their activities; (b) an x-mark to indicate what they dislike; (c) a heart to indicate what they like or what makes them feel good, and, finally, (d) a square to indicate a situation, person, object, or place that evokes feelings such as fear, aversion, and/or rejection. Other symbols were also used according to the children's preferences, such as stars or flowers.

During the workshop, the way in which each participant created the cartographies was observed, by recording their narratives and actions. It is understood that the visual images created were part of a broader narrative, so their meaning is linked to the story of the children (Mannay, 2016). These narratives were crucial in establishing a dialogue with the image, by understanding the experiences related *through* the data produced by them (Radley, 2012; as cited in Mannay, 2016), and privileging the children's versions and interpretations of the past, as well as their experiences as related to the cartographies.

In this work, the feminist and Foucauldian perspective of Gillian Rose (2012) was chosen to analyze images in research, due to the importance of how they tell stories and reveal or make invisible social differences in a broader cultural context. Thus, the visual data produced in the research is considered as providing complementary information to verbal language about the migration, social memories, and identities of children, and can be analyzed contextually (Banks, 2010). In line with this perspective, a content analysis was carried out by Cáceres (2003) through an inductive coding of the data from the cartographies, which followed specific stages (Rose, 2012):

*Stage 1 (pre-analysis):* Everything observed during the workshop was recorded in a field diary, including dialogues, the creation of cartographies, narratives, dynamics, and interactions, and reflections between participants and the researcher.

*Stage 2:* A content analysis of each cartography was carried out (Cáceres, 2003), which allowed the identification of people, places, routes, colors, words, and assigned emotions through open coding. The relationship between these elements and their overall nature was then inductively categorized.

*Stage 3:* The individual analysis of each cartography was resumed by adopting a transversal-global perspective of the data (Rose, 2012). Thus, the visual analysis of the cartographies was linked to the field notes, through the elaboration of categories discussed between the researchers based on the objectives, in order to triangulate the information, which ensured the rigor, quality, and transparency of the qualitative research (Sisto, 2008).

### *Ethical Considerations*

Research with children requires ethical procedures and regulations, as well as a reflective approach committed to the rights and well-being of children, which allows for the promotion of dynamic and respectful relationships between all the people who participate in the study. Taking into account that every research process implies power relations between researcher/expert and participants

(Gandarias, 2014), efforts were made in each session to level inequality and avoid falling into instrumental or adult-centric research practices, which would nullify the voices and creativity of children. This involved adopting an attitude of attentive listening that prioritized the needs and proposals of children, where the main researcher played a guiding role. This research is based on the idea that children should not be understood as *objects* to be intervened, but rather co-constructors of knowledge and agents capable of influencing their family and community environment (García-Quiroga & Vallejo-Correa, 2021).

The inclusion of children in the research is based on the right to participate and be informed, as set forth in article 12 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Pávez, 2011). To this end, Informed Consent agreements were drawn up that respected the will to participate and the freedom to withdraw, with prior authorization from parents or legal guardians. Consent was obtained to use photographs of the cartographies in the analysis, and pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of each child. In addition, the research received approval from the Ethics Committee of the institution corresponding to the affiliation of the first author, reference number CEEAH 5518.

This study is based on benefitting children by seeking to minimize risks (Consejo de Organizaciones Internacionales de las Ciencias Médicas [CIOMS] y Organización Panamericana de la Salud [OPS], 2017). However, due to the fact that it addresses sensitive aspects of migration, particular efforts were made to protect children from possible re-victimization when recalling these experiences. As such, the Informed Consent agreements made explicit the possible risks, providing mechanisms for addressing them in case they occurred, and the balance of the risks in relation to the benefit of the study.

In their reading, the children were enthusiastic about participating in the activity, both at the beginning and during the workshops; they asked questions about what cartographies were, and on the meanings of migration. Some even wanted to do more than one workshop session to go deeper into their cartographies, which showed their special interest.

A benefit of the research related to scientific and social value was reported by means of adapted language: that approaching children's experiences contributes to the production of information for future interventions and public policies on the subject, by promoting inclusion and the exercise of their rights. Another benefit was the creation of a space in which children could talk about their experiences; share opinions, ideas, and feelings; be heard, and express themselves freely.

Taking into account the dimensions addressed in the study, some children expressed feelings of sadness and/or anguish based on memories of situations of abuse, subordination, and vulnerability, for which support and protection mechanisms were offered. During the workshops at school, children expressed discomfort due to experiences of violence in the past, so immediate and sensitive supportive responses were given to them, through emotional support and respect for their needs at all times. In order to reinforce the feeling of being protected (Graham et al., 2013), the importance of having a close person aware of this situation was communicated, having been previously agreed with the child.

Due to the fact that the study takes into account the agency practices deployed by children, questions and instructions were included in the workshops that gave way to emotions linked to self-confidence, the construction of secure bonds, and involvement in situations that afflict them. This allowed to decenter the affective dimension linked to pain, and go beyond a position of victimization, which was also included in the analysis of the research results.

## RESULTS

Below, two axes of results are presented from the analysis of memory cartographies on migration. Each of them addresses specific themes and experiences through memory. At the same time, through a collective reading of these cartographies, common aspects and interpretations were identified that enabled an understanding of the identities, senses of belonging, and feelings of children in the construction of memory.

### *Senses of Belonging and Identities of Memory*

In this axis, the practices of remembrance are based on the ways in which children identify with places of their past and appropriate new spaces provided by mobility. Thus, the meanings linked to territories and communities configure particular senses of belonging and identities from which children recognize themselves (Hedrerera & Álvarez, 2018).

The memories of migrations are made up of routes, locations, and aspects of daily life presented through drawings and icons. For the children, remembering migration involved locating a starting point on the cartography, that is, the place of origin from which the journey begins. In the first meetings, they imagined in which space of the cartography to place the geographical map, asking themselves: “Where is my country on the map? Where can I locate it?” (L. Hedrerera-Manara, field diary, May 12, 2021), this being an initial form of appropriation in relation to the cartography and the migration journey.

At the same time, the construction of memories included, in some migrations, the record of cities in which they had settled, or towns through which they had passed prior to their destination, which were part of the migratory routes. In this way, the migratory past is related to these movements, as does their arrival and stay in the city of Barcelona, and so they are recorded as places of belonging.

As an example, for Ignacio (11),<sup>8</sup> Chile and Catalonia are part of his life story (figure 1). At 9 years old he emigrated with his parents from Temuco, a town located in the south of Chile, to Barcelona. In his cartography, unique characteristics of the country of origin are visualized, such as the Andes Mountains, a natural mountainous boundary in South America that divides Argentina and Chile. It also features araucarias, native and ancient trees of Patagonia, his home, and a typical fruit that Ignacio calls “the best avocado”; recalling his journey through Paris, he draws the Eiffel Tower as an iconic symbol of the city, and, finally, his arrival point, Barcelona. He portrays the

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<sup>8</sup> This is the age of the children.

Agbar Tower, a modern building representative of the city; a cycling activity through the forum that he usually does on weekends with his family; the Plaza Tetuán field where he plays soccer with his friends from the neighborhood, his family, and the Catalan language.

Through the memory and the narratives that accompany what he describes, Ignacio expresses the development of emotional bonds and attachment through the meanings that he sees in the spaces that he inhabited in his past and present.

Figure 1. Ignacio's Cartography



Source: Made by participant child.

In the following cartography (Figure 2), Iana, aged 9, constructs her migration from Ukraine to Barcelona. She traveled with her parents for economic reasons and settled in Barcelona place in 2018. The cartography shows her home in her country of origin, the countryside, a farm on the outskirts of the city, and a square at winter, “because in Ukraine it snowed and was very cold” (L. Hedrer-Manara, field diary, May 13, 2021). She also related a song in Ukrainian, which she sang, shared, and taught to her classmates at the end of the session, which moved the children. In Barcelona, she portrayed the beach, a place she likes very much and enjoys, and a church she goes to with her family. Through the colorful symbolization of places, composed of animals, flowers, and own characteristics, together with the title in Ukrainian and Catalan, “Mій Moxit,” “My journey,” respectively, her migratory journey is a process that calls belonging into question.

Figure 2. Iana's Cartography



Source: Made by participant child.

The connection between the two territories can be seen in both Ignacio's and Iana's cartography. He wrote the title "The journey from Chile to Catalonia" with the colors of the flags of Chile and Spain. On the other hand, Iana drew the flags of Spain and Ukraine, connecting them with a dotted line that includes the shape of a heart. Thus, it can be seen how migration and its memory are constructed beyond national boundaries (Mezzadra, 2012) and configure transnational memories combined by experiences in different territories, from where attachment and affective relationships are erected (Vidal & Pol, 2005).

Similarly, in this process, children also build memories specifically related to their homes, an important element regarding their link with Barcelona. One of the participant girls, Antonia (9), who migrated from Santiago de Chile to Barcelona with her mother and grandmother in 2019, remembers that:

Do you remember the afternoons in San Joaquín, there I had my own room, and I had a giant window that just had the sun shining in my face and there, one of the cats that I adopted, they gave him food anyway, but my grandmother, Lala, didn't like him, I mean, she didn't want him to be there, but she gave him food anyway, but I wanted to keep him and he would sunbathe (F. García & A. Mora, personal communication, May 5, 2021).

In this sense, home becomes an experience of a place related to smells, weather, colors, which are all mediated by an everyday life that is historical and specific to social ties, which makes this everyday life a relevant part of memory (Brah, 2011).

Although these memories arise as personal experiences, which expose different migratory trajectories, at the same time they are articulated around common and shared elements among boys and girls. In the instances in which they showed the finished cartographies to their classmates, and

collectively they discussed their experiences, they would contrast the environment where they lived before and where they live now. Thus, some children remembered their places of origin as spaces that they appreciated more, since the homes were located in rural areas or surrounded by nature and unpaved roads, and they expressed that there they “felt freer and wilder”, compared to the spaces they inhabit in Barcelona (L. Hedrerera-Manara, field diary, May 12, 2021). The contrast with the apartment building-type home and the current urban area meant a change in their ways of being by inhabiting a space with another geographical location, territoriality, and sociocultural aspects.

Thus it can be observed that the memories about home and the environment, both their own and those of others, form a common and collective space where spaces, temporalities, thoughts, and sensations come together, from which the children recognize and identify themselves. This confirms that both the territory of origin and that of destination are configured as places of belonging, since they are aspects that make up their identity in the present. In this way, memories create sense of belonging, both in the past and in the present, having effects on the continuities and discontinuities of identity (May, 2017).

At the same time, childhood identities in these contexts are shaped in such a way that what is local is articulated with what is global through different ties, this creating *imaginary communities* (Brah, 2011). That is, children develop the first sense of community, for example, in the space-neighborhood in which they live, but then they learn to visualize themselves as part of several other *imaginary communities* with which, although having no physical encounter or contact, they still identify with, according to their groups, places, experiences, and struggles, as in the examples shown.

### *The Affectivity of Children in Remembrance Practices*

The emotional dimension takes center stage when remembering migration, and is a main marker of which aspects are memorable (Vázquez, 2001). In this sense, cartographies as a tool for producing information allow for sensorial expression, a materiality and connection that is not limited to verbalized language. Thus, the elaboration of cartographies challenged the children, which allowed for greater involvement in the construction of memory from affectivity. As such, the processes of affectivity, migration, and memory occurred, on the one hand, through the materialization of locations, actions, people, and objects that can be visualized in the cartographies and, on the other, through memory narratives, that is, from what children tell when sharing their stories collectively.

The participants expressed feelings of nostalgia when remembering the past. This was because they missed their place of origin, their customs, daily life, and family ties, among other factors. Although these memories are crossed by a certain feeling of grief, when elaborated from these feelings, children mobilized the desire to return, expressing the desire to return permanently to the country of origin, or to just go for a visit. In this regard, most of the children

pointed out the impossibility of such due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of borders, and/or for economic-work reasons, although there were some who had not had the opportunity to return ever since their emigration. The impossibility of returning intensified the feeling of longing, and so memory served as an important tool, not only because it allowed the emergence and recognition of these feelings, but because, in the elaboration of the memory children connected with their ties of origin, which made it possible to keep their transnational identities (Rosinska, 2011).

These findings are related to the so-called *migrant subjectivity*, understood from *nostalgia*, whose Greek etymology means *nostos* -to return home- and *algia* -a feel of pain-. However, it is relevant to point out that the construction of these feelings is not constituted in a linear way, and is not reduced solely to returning to the past, since, taking into account that the desire to return can be sad and at the same time constitute their identities in the present, these are also projected towards the future (Rojas Silva, 2019). According to Vanessa May (2017), nostalgia is a complex way of relating to and engaging with the past, a potential tool for producing a sense of belonging in the present by means memory.

On the other hand, children expressed feelings of sadness, discomfort, and/or fear due to experiences of violence in their country of origin, on the journey, and at the destination, that is, at different times in their migration journey (Hedrer-Manara & Íñiguez, 2023). Fear, marked in some cartographies by a circle and verbalized by the children in their elaboration, was associated with memories of social protests and acts of repression by the police and/or other State agents, in a historical-social context of economic crises and political conflicts specific to each territory of origin (see Figures 3 and 4).

This can be seen in Figure 3 regarding the *No to tax reform* conflict in Colombia, and in Figure 4 in relation to the social and political crisis in Chile. In the destination country, in this case Catalonia, some children expressed sadness due to situations of racism and discrimination at school. Finally, in general they expressed a feeling of exclusion due to the lack of participation in the migration project within their care groups, in terms of the decision to migrate.

Figure 3. María's Cartography



Source: Made by participant child.

Figure 4. Bruno's Cartography



Source: Made by participant child.



This can be seen in Antonia's (9) cartography (see Figure 5), which marks with an x the demonstrations she witnessed upon her recent arrival in Barcelona. As an example, the protests she represents with a green bandana correspond to the feminist demonstrations of 8M. She also symbolizes with a flame of fire the riots that occurred in October 2021 in Catalonia due to the referendum. The memories of violence in the place of origin, although leaving an emotional mark and placing children in a position of vulnerability, are not only fixed in these dimensions. This is because migration implies a change in their trajectories, which configures new spaces of protection constituted by bonds, networks, and a different socio-political context, which enable resignification in the present based on past affections (Fernández, 2000). In addition, the recollections of the past from these places make visible the power relations and violence exercised by different agents -adults and institutions- among adults and children.

Figure 5. Antonia's Cartography



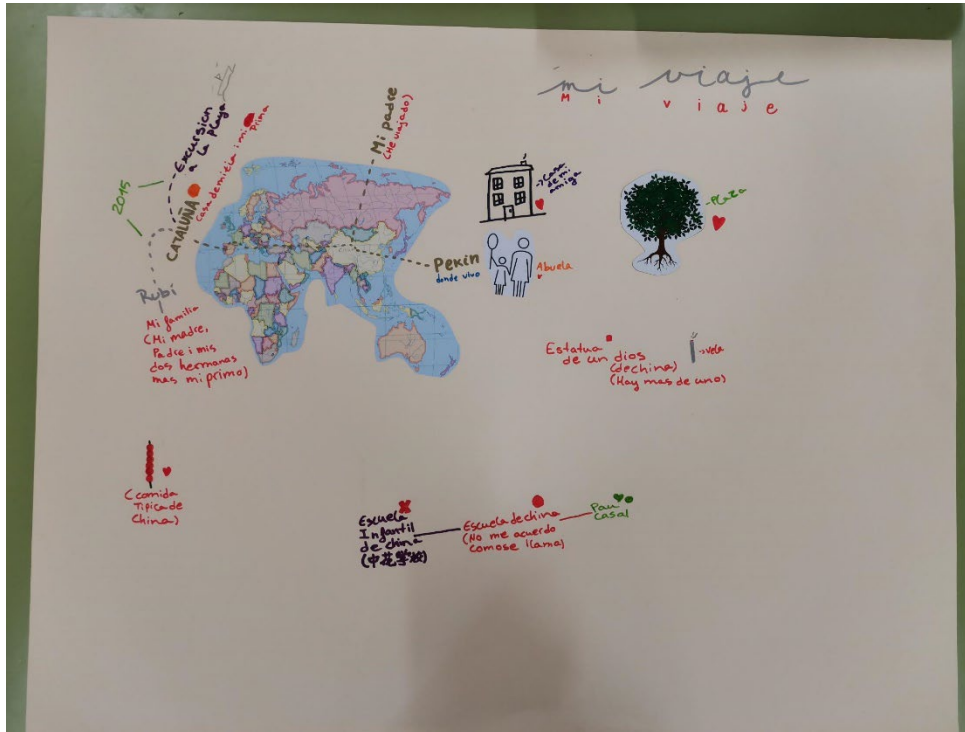
Source: Made by participant child.

On the other hand, in the cartography of Lian, 10 years old, from China, she describes the journey with her father to join her family in Barcelona, and having experienced a process of family reunification (Figure 6). Her creation invites one to travel to Beijing, where she draws her house, a typical meal, a square that she likes, and a statue that made her feel uncomfortable and a kind of fear of religion. During the session, Lian told that she remembered a religious statue with a candle that she saw in different places and that her grandmother, who was the person she lived with, always worshiped.

In the lower part she traced a route of the schools she attended; she pointed out that she did not like the school in China, and showed with a heart that she does like the one in Barcelona, because

it was one of the first places where she felt welcomed. In this way, the symbolism regarding emotions represented in the cartography allows for a transformation of migration, in which school is a new space of welcoming for her. In this sense, memories of migration through affectivity allow her to redefine her story of origin and transform her narrative based on her current experiences.

Figure 6. Lian's Cartography



Source: Made by participant child.

The children also remember their migration journey as an *adventure*, symbolized by hearts and happy/excited faces, placed on the images of airplanes or ships, or above the lines drawn between maps (see all figures). The experience of traveling by plane, transit through airports, and the desire to know a new place evoked excitement, nervousness, and curiosity. This is interesting, since the memories constructed from these affects put into tension the idea of *uprooting* and separation trauma, characteristics often used to describe the vulnerabilities of migrant children.

In this way, the findings evidence how children's migration memories are constructed, updated, and configured based on new experiences and processes of change. This way, mobility between territories involves transformations in which experiences are traced that give way to new beginnings, where individual and collective memories are reconfigured (Brah, 2011).

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This article sought to contribute, from a critical perspective, to the analysis of the migration and memory processes of children. It is concluded that transnational memories are constructed, which produce situated and hybrid identities, in which biographical, family, and community aspects of

different places are articulated. This is done through meanings, the creation of new spaces of belonging, and feelings of connectedness with the territories inhabited by children. These memories can reproduce, strain, and/or transform subject relationships and positions. In this sense, children's remembrance practices create and recreate senses of belonging and identity based on mobility, affecting each other. Therefore, the experience of migrating constructs reality in a symbolic and narrative way for children, and thus constitutes the place of subject production (Brah, 2011; Scott, 2001).

Although some memories involve the idea of belonging to a nation or homeland, rooted in a culture, ideologies, and nationalist and hegemonic movements (Yuval-Davis, 2004), others are developed beyond the confines of a delimited geographical territory and denaturalize the essentialist character of identity (Mercado & Figueiredo, 2022). These memories question purity, tradition, homogenizing and exclusionary practices, and the idea of belonging to a specific locality, in which borders, de/localization, and the meeting-point of political, cultural, and psychosocial processes intersect (Brah, 2011). The above is interesting because it breaks with the ahistorical and hermetic notion that nations have about themselves, by questioning their limits to the extent that children, regardless of their non-citizen status, make their own processes visible from agency and from the transformative and mobilizing affects of migration, thereby distancing themselves from the *uprooting* and vulnerability of migrant children, places where they are commonly placed.

Likewise, the findings show how the memories produced by children call into question traditional categories of childhood by producing desires, expectations, and imaginaries that reinterpret the past from the present. In this sense, the participants' memories subvert that notion that de-temporalizes childhood, as if it were not linked to a historical and social time; a notion based on the ideas of the purity and innocence of this vital stage. They also dispute the idea of childhood as defined in terms of age and maturity, according to specific sociocultural contexts and the milestones of the development of the life cycle (Gaitán, 2006). In this, affectivity plays a crucial role, as it allows the superficial and verifiable character of memory to be stressed, by enabling a sensitive dimension of it, outlined from creativity and fantasy (Fernández, 2000). Thus, through these practices, children question the authorized subjects of memory, thus becoming co-constructors of memory and protagonists of their migration processes.

On the other hand, in methodological terms, throughout this article it was evidenced that cartographies can be a key tool for the construction of memory, since their elaboration and interpretation provide materiality to memory, promoting sensitive and sensorial connection, and enabling a closer and more tangible relationship with the past. Considering that the construction of memory, actions, and discourses of children are still rarely taken into account (García-Quiroga & Vallejo-Correa, 2021), the elaboration of migration trajectories through cartographies made it possible to capture and configure a space with the migratory experiences of the past and their link with the present. At the same time, it made it possible to highlight the children's own meanings, by contextualizing their responses in the daily interaction and research scenarios in which they occurred.

Similarly, the narrative-visual dynamics of the workshop promoted a safe and supportive space, adjusted to the rhythms and needs of the participants, by adapting to the requirements of each child and taking into account the emotional burden that the work around their mobility entailed. Therefore, the visual tools made possible the display of affections and memories, also facilitating other forms of expression complementary to words, which allowed approaching the sensitive dimensions of the experiences of boys and girls (Ibáñez & Michelazzo, 2013). Likewise, the visual techniques used with children promoted their creativity by evoking sensations and experiences from their own records, and pursuing not only the production of data, but also ensuring research processes that make visible the voices of groups that have been silenced and support a science committed to transformation (Mannay, 2016).

Finally, although children actively participated in this study, for future research it would be relevant to include them in the very design of the research itself, as well as in that of the workshops, in order to take them into account in each and every stage of the research process.

Finally, for studies on memory, childhood, and migration, the challenge still stands of continuing to ask about the processes that can be remembered, when talking about collective memory and who actually partakes of the memory. Including children in this area implies advocating for research that accounts for the memories not only of the places and societies children *left behind*, but also of the spaces in which they currently live, which would position them as political and social actors able to change the ways in which society perceives itself.

Translation: Fernando Llanas.

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