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Laura Trafí-Prats

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The Existential Territories of Global Childhoods: Resingularizing Subjectivity Through Ecologies of Care and the Art of Ahlam Shibli

by Laura Trafí-Prats

The Resonant Image of the Natural Child

Some images of children resonate more than others, creating cultural frames for seeing and understanding childhood (Holland, 2006). One of these resonant images of childhood is the natural child. It is an image that has traveled through time and space, emerging and evolving in interconnection with different cultural texts. It was first discussed in Locke's (1689/1996) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and it was later recaptured in Rousseau's (1762/1979) *Emile*. Both scholars identified an ideal state of innocence, curiosity, and playfulness in childhood that had to be cherished. That idea was consistently represented in the art of Locke's and Rousseau's contemporaries; it is visible in portraits of children comfortably engaged in playful, unrestrained situations in communion with natural environments and animals. The use of painterly strategies such as naturalistic color tones and classically balanced compositions reinforced a sense of harmony between children and the natural world (Higonnet, 1998).

As Holland (2006) argues, sometimes resonant images of childhood are used to negotiate different subjective relations in response to specific sociocultural contexts. For instance, through the introduction of nonnormative, curious, and adventurous characters in hypersensorial and stimulating worlds that included fantastic places, eccentric creatures, and unexpected encounters, such as those in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (published in 1865), the resonant image of the natural child was used to resist the Victorian myth of the good, disciplined child. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* slammed the door on the swiftly changing realities of urbanization and social regulation brought about by the first Industrial Revolution and left them behind. In this respect, resonant images of childhood tend to exist in the gap between the ideas and expectations that adults project and the historical conditions defining children's lives (Duncum, 2002; Jenks, 1996; Pufall & Unsworth, 2004).

Such a gap also is evident today in the context of integrated world capitalism (IWC), the term Guattari (1996, 1989/2008) uses to describe late postindustrial capitalism in the age of globalization. Characterizing world capitalism as integrated expresses two of IWC's most distinctive aspects: its deterritorialized nature and its infiltration into all aspects of life:

Capitalist power has become delocalized and deterritorialized, both in extension, by extending its influence over the whole social, economic,

and cultural life of the planet, and in 'intension', by infiltrating the most unconscious subjective strata (Guattari, 1989/2008, p. 33)

By combining Guattari's ecological critique of IWC with a postcolonial critique of childhood (Cannella & Viruru, 2004), we can see how the resonant image of the natural child functions as an existential refrain that intends to limit the ways we think and the ways we actively create existential possibilities for childhood, numbing our awareness of more diverse and localized contemporary childhood subjectivities.

In considering the postcolonial context, it is important to remember that in many parts of the world, there have been mass migrations of children to urban centers for the last 30 years. More than one billion of the world population of children between 0 and 19 years-old live in urban centers looking for increasing resources related to shelter, health, education, and family income (Aslam & Szczuka, 2012). The number of children living in poverty increases year after year, including in highly developed societies, such as the United States. According to Jiang, Ekono, and Skinner (2014) of the National Center for Children Poverty, in 2012 "children under 18 years represent[ed] 23 percent of the population, but they comprise[d] 34 percent of all people in poverty" (para. 1).

As critical pedagogy and the movement for school reform have effectively documented, there are connections between poverty, race, and ecologically damaged urban areas (Kozol, 1991, 1996, 2005, 2007; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001). In places that are highly affected by industrial exploitation, real estate speculation, social and national conflicts, and different forms of pollution, there are large numbers of homes and schools with limited access to social and natural resources.

When reading about the state of contemporary childhood from a Deleuzoguattarian perspective, it seems clear that the current ecological crisis is not limited to the destruction of natural resources. It is affecting and diminishing subjectivization as well as all social and intimate aspects of existence (Guattari, 1989/2008). Within this theoretical framework, we can assume that under IWC conditions, designers and manufacturers of toys and material culture are the ones who produce the resonant image of the natural child as a creative learner who inherently develops through sensorially rich interactions in carefully constructed environments. It is an image that embodies adults' ideals and longings for a less restrictive life—while also reinforcing a white middle class myth of heteronormative family life—as well as an inward move from a collective experience of engagement with the environment to a private realm of care and play in the controlled and protected space of the single family home (Ogata, 2013).

Second, from the perspective of a postcolonial critique of childhood (Cannella & Viruru, 2004), we can initially recognize in this resonant image the global progress of discourses associated with apparently benign westernized child-centered ideas of growth, freedom, and playfulness. However, by digging deeper, we can also interpret how such rhetoric renders the economic and imperialistic powers of the image invisible. It does so by disconnecting the discourses on the development of the concept of childhood from the history of colonial practices that historically served the advancement of capitalism within which such discourses emerged. Capitalism and imperialism have invoked ideas of innocence, primitive knowledge, and paternalistic supervision to justify the conquest, occupation, and control of other peoples and places. As Cannella and Viruru claim, we need larger interdisciplinary frameworks to decolonize childhood:

We believe that we must stop looking at childhood as an isolated phenomenon intelligible only through the lenses of “experts”...we must start thinking about those who are younger as people who are part of a much larger and complex whole, as linked to and influencing the larger and more complex world. Otherwise, we are not doing justice to the lives of children and to their existence as human beings. (2004, p. 3)

In Guattari’s (1989/2008) ecological critique of IWC, the “complex whole” that Cannella and Viruru describe is conceptualized in relation to three ecologies: the environment; social relations; and the intimate forms of existence—almost imperceptible aspects of existence, including sensitivity, affects, and body rhythms. Parr (2010) calls the latter “molecular forms” (p. 176) and writes that they are “micro-entities that transpire in areas where they are rarely perceived: in the perception of affectivity, where beings share ineffable sensations” (p. 176). He also notes that “molecular forms can be associated not only with deterritorialisation but also the very substance and effect of events that begin and end with swarms and masses of micro-perceptions” (Parr, 2010, p. 176). The ultimate goal of an ecological critical practice, like the one outlined by Guattari (1989/2008), is to ensure that singularity is not crushed out of every aspect of existence, including childhood.

The Existential Territories of Childhood

The term existential territories (Guattari, 1989/2008) refers both to the ways through which dominant economic and mass-mediated conditions repress and limit existence and to the potential for the development of new ecological practices that distance themselves from normalized subjective positions. Guattari (1989/2008) points out in particular that the worlds of childhood are among the most highly managed by the expert discourses and institutions of IWC and that there is an urgent

need for processes of singularization to occur within “the domain of mental ecology in everyday life: individual, domestic, material, neighborly, creative or one’s personal ethics” (p. 33). “It seems to me,” he states further, “that the new ecological practices will have to articulate themselves on these many tangled and heterogeneous fronts, their objective being to processually activate isolated and repressed singularities that are just turning in circles” (Guattari, 1989/2008, p. 34).

Existential territories are not preexisting places, but malleable sites formed and reformed through subjective passages of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. They are movements that either standardize or produce change, loosening fixed relations that exist with a body or a collective, while exposing them to new organizations (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005). As mentioned earlier, such movements have the potential to make the singular existences of children (as individualities or collectives) within the highly homogenized and controlled environments of IWC sustainable (Guattari, 1989/2008).

Based on these ideas, and with the aim of expanding upon them, I am going to elaborate on a possible understanding of the existential territories of childhood by connecting a number of concepts: the aesthetics of assemblage; a pedagogy centered on the micropolitics of daily life; an ecology of care; and photodocumentation as deterritorialization of childhood.

The Aesthetics of Assemblage

In *The Three Ecologies*, Guattari (1989/2008) provides extended examples and arguments to show that existential resingularization is only attainable through ongoing aesthetic-existential processes similar to an artist’s processes of creation and research. This implies that attempts to deterritorialize childhood from any physical, cognitive, or moral control exerted by modern disciplines such as psychology, pedagogy, and pediatrics (Cannella & Kincheloe, 2002) will not come from causative and descriptive forms of knowledge connected to those disciplines. Instead, it will entail an expressive aesthetic process that allows the incorporation of accidental elements that come from outside and alter our current knowledge [of childhood]:

The new ecosophical logic—and I want to emphasize this point—resembles the manner in which an artist may be led to alter his work after the intrusion of some accidental detail, an event-incident that suddenly makes his initial project bifurcate, making it drift far from its previous path, however certain it had once appeared to be. There is a proverb, ‘the exception proves the rule’, but the exception can just easily deflect the rule, or even create it. (Guattari, 1989/2008, p. 35)

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari (2005) also discuss such practices as assemblages or heterogeneous groupings of specific coexisting, localized, related aesthetic qualities—such as color, smell, sound, touch, movement, repetition, and density—that coalesce locally to create new knowledge. Assemblages have a territorial aspect; they constitute forces that unmake and make territories. They refunctionalize the territory and how we exist in it by making it become something new (Parr, 2010). In connection with this, I try to argue below how a pedagogy centered on the micropolitics of daily life uses such aesthetic assemblages to deterritorialize childhood from dominant existential refrains like the resonant image of the natural child.

A Pedagogy Centered on the Micropolitics of Daily Life

In Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) framework, the molecular aspects of life are the basis for micropolitics. The molecular allows for flexible connections that are local and singular and that often occur at the level of everyday existence. A molecular logic of production functions as the inverse of molar politics (and American education), which emphasize processes of standardization. These molar politics subscribe to an underlying logic of commodity, a wasteful repetition-of-the-same, and a predefined childhood subjectivity. By enacting productive forces—such as desires, affects, and anxieties—that molar politics intend to control, a molecular logic enables the becoming of difference and the emergence of the minoritarian within dominant conditions (Guattari, 1989/2008; Parr, 2010).

The movement in Italy and other European countries in the 1970s to reform public early childhood education in order to liberate childhood experiences from a model of standardized services of care, which is best represented by Reggio Emilia's city-run early childhood program, is an example of a pedagogy that attends to the micropolitical (Malaguzzi, 1998; Vecchi, 2010). Over more than 40 years, Reggio Emilia has developed a system of schools based on dynamic, localized, interrelational networks of interdependence between children, teachers, families, and the city.

The way that Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia program, describes the social ecologies and subjective possibilities that developed in these schools has many things in common with molecular processes as well as the aesthetics of assemblage. The social ecologies of learning in Reggio Emilia schools are localized and generative and relate with others and with the environment. New connections are not created by the teacher or a textbook, but indirectly encountered by the children in their school and city environments. Like the aesthetics of assemblage, learning in Reggio Emilia schools allows for the unfolding of multiple engagements, derivations, and reconstructions of the idea that children often negotiate through sensorimotor and graphic languages. In addition, such learning

often occurs in small groups, respecting the affective and intimate level of many discoveries and therefore connecting to the molecular aspects of experience.

The complexity and heterogeneous character of learning interactions in Reggio Emilia is exemplified in many places in Malaguzzi's (1998) writing. I have selected a passage in which he describes how teachers work without preexisting lesson plans, relinquishing their control and content expertise to rely on children's potentialities and viewing the classroom as a dynamic organism with a variety of fluid moments and directions that can be guided at different paces:

We do know that to be with children is to work one third with certainty and two thirds with uncertainty and the new. The one third that is certain makes us understand and try to understand. We want to study whether learning has its own flux, time and place; how learning can be organized and encouraged; how situations favorable to learning can be prepared; which skills and cognitive schemes are worth bolstering; how to advance words, graphics, logical thought, body language, symbolic languages, fantasy, narrative, and argumentation; how to play; how to pretend; how friendships form and dissipate; how individual and group identities develop; and how differences and similarities emerge.

All this wisdom does not compensate for what we do not know. But not knowing is the condition that makes us continue to search; in this regard we are in the same situation as the children. (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 89)

As Vecchi (2010) notes, a view of care as an ethical position of social responsiveness and interdependence with the outside world emerges from this invested immersion in the environment.

An Ecology of Care

In Reggio Emilia's pedagogy, care is about promoting aesthetic engagements that resist indifference and conformity to the rapidly changing environments of global societies. Vecchi (2010) writes that care evolves in

constant daily ways, made up of many actions, of attention and choice, [which] can be a positive element for participation and conscious solidarity with all that surrounds us and with other human beings of all cultures and backgrounds; an indispensable attitude for the future of democracy and the human species. (p. 94)

Such an ecology of care is consistent with Guattari's (1989/2008) three ecologies and their three levels: It exemplifies a responsible interdependence with the environment (the first ecology); it requires a permanent assessment of how any given environment is transformed and mediated by sociohistorical conditions (the second ecology); and it fosters the formation of new relations and connections through such experiences as sensation, movement, coexistence, and manipulation (the third ecology).

Photodocumentation as Deterritorialization of Childhood

To localize, amplify, and develop emerging learning moments, Reggio Emilia educators use documentation, which involves listening to and taking notes on conversations, observing and taking notes on actions and relations, gathering documents produced by teachers, collecting work produced by students, and taking photos. It also involves the process of interpreting these various documents and discussing their possible impact on the direction of a project (Rinaldi, 1998).

A key aspect of documentation is the creation of image sequences, also called ministories, centered on capturing the flow of singular moments of individual or small-group learning. Their aim is to communicate to teachers, families, and the community that young children are dependable subjects who not only have needs but who also create intentional and sophisticated actions that are valued by and of interest to adults and other children (Malaguzzi, 1998). Often these ministories present singular moments when learning intensifies. The time frozen in each image combines with time that expands in the cluster of images that compose the ministory. The images tell a story, carrying the complexity of the connections, digressions, choices, and affects comprising a singular learning experience:

[They] make us pause on children's expressions and actions with one another and in the work they are doing, seeking to convey as much as we can of the learning and atmosphere, the sense of life flowing within the group. It is not a simple thing at all, and one learns by doing it. (Vecchi, 2010, p. 134)

One of the more compelling aspects of Reggio Emilia's practice of documentation is its criticality. Photodocumentation carries the potential to be successful in capturing the complexity of a learning moment, but it can also fail to do so. It operates in a liminal space, in between the children's and the teachers' memories about the lived experience and what the images intend to narrate. It is an indispensable site for critical dialog and reassessment of the viewpoints that we adults use to publicly represent children, the things that capture our attention, and the things that we miss and that might be key for conveying the singularity and complexity of a learning situation. Documentation is, therefore, a site for the resignification of past experiences.

The complex social ecology fostered through documentation connects not only with progressive ideas of childhood, but also with art-centered ideas about how documentary photography has the power (or not) to steer awareness in a particular direction and with the concept of the *citizenry of photography*. Azoulay (2008) elaborates on this concept, which was influenced by the ecological crisis exacerbated by the revitalized practices of imperialism and war following the events of 9/11; the new outbreaks of historical conflicts defining the geopolitics of the Middle East; and the socially engaged practices of photography that international artists have developed in response to those phenomena. As Azoulay (2008) describes, the citizenry of photography is a concept radically different from what she calls the “image fatigue” that occurred when people “simply stopped looking” (p. 11), which dominated postmodern theories of photography addressing the documentary effect:

The world filled up with images of horrors, and they loudly proclaimed that viewers’ eyes had grown unseeing, proceeding to unburden themselves of the responsibility to hold onto the elementary gesture of looking at what is presented to one’s gaze. (Azoulay, 2008, p. 11)

Writing as a critic of the state and the visual-culture politics practiced by the Israeli government, Azoulay (2008) claims that photography depends on a civil contract where virtually everybody becomes a citizen. Photography becomes enacted through an encounter of a plurality of gazes, which can result in many forms of exchange, depending on who is looking—the photographer, the photographed, a close viewer, or a distant viewer. Many of the photographs that Azoulay (2008) discusses in *The Civil Contract of Photography* capture difficult and disjunctive moments in which such dialog between the photographer and photographed occurs. Some of these examples may include images in which we see the person who is photographed guiding the photographer to what urgently needs to be captured; others may include images in which the person who is photographed partially covers her- or himself, protests, or escapes from the picture to resist being part of it. While those performances show different attitudes toward the photographic act, they both represent the civil contract of photography because they reaffirm the agency of the photographic actors. The political agency that the photographic act enables is precisely what is denied in the actual world when one is a refugee or an alien in her or his own land. As Azoulay (2008) explains:

Photographed persons are participant citizens, just the same as I am. Within this space [of the photograph], the point of departure for our mutual relations cannot be empathy or mercy. It must be a covenant for the rehabilitation of their citizenship...When the photographed persons address me, claiming their citizenship in photography, they cease to appear as

stateless or as enemies, the manners in which the sovereign regime strives to construct them. They call on me to recognize and restore their citizenship through my viewing. (p. 17)

While it is not my intention to include an examination of the deep historical and cultural complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as part of my argument, I do want to argue that the statements of plurality and recognition contained in the concept of the citizenry of photography coincide with Reggio Emilia's use of documentation as a site to engage in critical dialog in the community, nurturing aesthetic engagements as a way of resisting indifference and fostering responsibility.

But unlike Reggio Emilia's documentation, the concept of the citizenry of photography emerges far from the contexts of Western progressive pedagogies and therefore extends our perspectives to worlds that were previously unknown to us. It invites us to commit to them and to encounter and recognize the singular existences of other childhoods. It invites us to look at images as a civil practice through which children are seen affected by, but also intervening in, the precarious or catastrophic environments in which they are living.

In the final section of this article, I intend to elaborate on this civil practice of looking via the concept of *prosthetic visibility* (Garoian, 2010) and in connection to Palestinian photographer Ahlam Shibli's artwork.

Ahlam Shibli's Photographs and Prosthetic Visibility

From Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) perspective, we can describe Shibli's photographs as the manifestation of a minoritarian artistic language dissenting from majoritarian communication practices (Parr, 2010). The documentary as a major language of IWC offers a rendering of world events as a spectacle that relies on a constant repetition-of-the-same. It eventually leads toward the invisibility of the singular, the exceptional, the marginal, or the difficult. Shibli's photography functions as a deterritorialization of this mainstream discourse through a photographic art that Demos (2013) has described as a "rearrangement of the visual" (p. 11), in which molecular manifestations, existing in the margins of state and media-regulated practices, become visible.

In most of her photographic series, Shibli's subjects are subalterns: Muslim and Arab LGBTQ people living in the margins, refugees, orphans, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, and others. Shibli's photographs operate in the interval between the visible and the invisible (Garoian, 2010). As Demos (2013) states, they intend to capture

those living on the boundaries of exclusion, threatened with disappearance, as well as documenting the commemoration of those who have succumbed to absence . . . Shibli's photographic practice pledged to recognize the unrecognized, challenging the visual regimes that would otherwise consign those subjects to erasure. (p. 11)

It is in this respect that Shibli's photographs can be thought as instances of what Garoian (2010) denominates as prosthetic visibility, in which

art evokes the visible in the invisible...[and has the] ability to give presence to what can only be imagined ... exposing and challenging the cultural assumptions that occlude our seeing and understanding in order that we may see and understand in other than the ways we have been taught. (p. 182)

This is clearly present in the project *Dom Dziecka: The House Starves When You Are Away* (2008), in which Shibli documents the everyday lives of children living in several orphanages in Poland. The photos reveal how these children construct a new communal home and a collective society and build intimate and family-like relations without having their own family homes. The visibility of the photos prevents the construction of a space for voyeurism that engenders victimization or other sorts of paternalism. Many of the photos are not directly accessible. They offer peripheral views and contain blurry areas (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). In general, the project creates an in-between space in which the fundamentally human attributes of affect, care, and interdependence appear as social transgressions since they do not occur within the social milieu of the family where we would normally identify them (Demos, 2013). The artistic photographic act of pausing and choosing and capturing these situations shows a point of view that seeks a type of visibility capable of destabilizing assumptions (Garoian,



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

2010). It creates a new organization and consequently deterritorializes childhood existences into something new and unseen, which has a prosthetic effect.

Shibli's series *Death* (2011–12) centers on the political images of Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli security forces as a result of what is known as the Second Intifada. This series reflects on the constant presence of absences through depicting banners, posters, graffiti, and photographs that are placed in a variety of public and domestic sites and often bear similar images: the bust of the so-called martyr, holding an automatic rifle or a similar weapon, surrounded by poetical and political messages reaffirming the resistance and independence of Palestine. Some of the images include the colors of the Palestinian flag and some include green, representing Islam.

Despite the homogeneity of these images, Shibli's photographic project seeks to create an amplified territory of uses and gazes. The images can thus be seen not only as ideological instruments, but also as mementos, shrines, and rituals that become part of the entirety of everyday life.

In these photographs, children appear repeatedly as dynamic forces, engaged in unfolding actions, movements, relations, and games, bringing a degree of resuscitating life to the scenes (Demos, 2010). In contrast with the fixity of the images, children's scripts are open ended, implying possibility. Often the images of the martyrs appear monumental in relation to the bodies of the children. Sometimes such images take over the center or majority of the frame, which seems to suggest the marginality of children under these conditions.

In one of the photographs, we see a group of three boys playing soccer at night in front of what seems to be an apartment building. The photographic effect blurs parts of their moving bodies and faces; we feel the instantaneity of the ball bouncing, a moment of affective touch, and a wide, open smile, all situated in the darker right corner. In the center of the image, we see illuminated banners with portraits of the martyrs, all mounted in light boxes and surrounded by pots of flourishing plants. If we pay close attention, we also see a fourth child there, dressed in dark sports clothing with the name of the Spanish-Argentinean soccer star Messi on the back (see Figure 3). In another photograph, we see several boys engaged in an indeterminate interaction at the entrance of a cemetery, where a group of male adults is already inside. The adults look toward the photographer and point at her. The graveyard is in a ruinous state; old, faded images of martyrs hang at the threshold. We see the shadow of the photographer on the center wall and numerous tombstones beyond it (see Figure 4). Another image presents a very young boy standing in a street, where a variety of graffiti and banners as well as a sharp-edged shadow of roofs with many silhouettes of satellite dishes are visible on the façades of the buildings. The landscape of the street appears monumental in relation to the tiny boy. Nothing in this



Figure 3.

haunting view seems to affect him. He stands still in front of a door, perhaps waiting for someone to open it. The photograph stages a contrast between established forms of global and local communication (through the satellite dishes, graffiti and banners), and the possibility of entering another space of potentiality (see Figure 5).

As Demos (2013) suggests, Shibli's art "investigates non-recognition as a space for existential exposure . . . her

photography acknowledges precarity as a source of human community, even while contesting its forms of social exclusion and political-economic inequality, which become the targets of common struggle" (p. 26).

Shibli's photographic projects, like prosthetic visibility, deterritorialize resonant images that limit the existential territories of childhood. They open a space for a plurality of gazes through an aesthetic that encompasses diverging and contradictory forces and excessive and difficult elements that challenge any universal ontology trying to define children and their environments and how the two interact. They focus on the micropolitics of everyday life and the minoritarian and intensive-expressive aspects of existence.

Shibli is a Palestinian citizen of the Israeli state who is a refugee in her own land; her photographic projects thus should be understood as contributing to what Guattari (1989/2008) describes as the aesthetic-ethic processes of resingularization of existence—both her own and that of others living in similar subaltern conditions.

Shibli's projects enable a civil practice of looking, through which teachers, artists, parents, and others living in the West assume the responsibility of not being at home in one's home (Said, 1998).



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

This is not being in the home of images, theories, institutions, and environments that stabilize, romanticize, and intend to perpetuate naturalist ideas of childhood and that deny the differential existences of children and the interdependence of children and broader worlds.

Finally, Shibli's photographs show how art can be a way of thinking anew.

They show that the singularization of childhood can be imagined in the

virtuality of a photographic art that pauses on liberating and flickering moments of play, affect, and intensity even when these occur in the precarious and anomalous spaces of global childhoods.

Conclusions

The current ecological crisis not only involves the destruction of biodiversity and natural resources, but also homogenizes subjectivity, affecting all of everyday life and the intimate realms of existence (Guattari, 1989/2008). Such standardization limits children's experiences and ties them to unrealistic and oppressive images that may pass as innocent or naïve. This presents a need, as well as an opportunity, for pedagogies centered in the various elements of the experiences of daily life and in the aesthetic intensities located at the level of the intimate, embodied, and sensorial aspects of the learning experience—pedagogies that continually deterritorialize images, discourses, or praxes that aim to crush and oppress children's existences.

In this article, I have tried to elaborate a three-point connection between global childhoods, ecologies of care directed at resingularizing the existential territories of childhood, and the use of photodocumentation as a critical site to radically reimagine childhood. This three-point connection allows us to become participants in a virtual space, the citizenry of photography, which prompts us to understand the act of looking as an ethical-aesthetic-existential opportunity for living in in-between worlds and for civil engagement in broader, more just concepts of childhood.

The citizenry of photography demands a committed looking that pursues the recognition of the singular, molecular, differential aspects of childhood subjectivities and ecologies, while preventing indifference to the realities of childhood poverty, displacement, instability, and subalternity. It

constitutes an ethics of spectatorship and a prosthetic visuality and asks: What are the relationships between the visible and the invisible when children participate in a photographic act? What is actively shown and concealed? What are the visually expressed tensions between virtuality and actuality and between limitations and potentialities? How may visuality function (or not function) as a prosthetic space in which to deterritorialize dominant existential refrains limiting childhood existences? These types of question emerge when artists, educators, and caregivers are willing to examine their own convictions and the implications of those convictions in the broader world, share their perspectives, and discuss possibilities beyond the existing policies that dominate American education and American cultural views of childhood.

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Figures

Fig. 1 Ahlam Shibli, Untitled (Dom Dziecka no. 23), Poland, 2008, gelatin silver print, 38 x 57.7 cm. Dom Dziecka Lubien Kujawski, May 17, 2008, Saturday afternoon. Emil K., Jula R., Dagmara S., and Bartek K. spending time together in the TV/computer room. Courtesy of the artist, © Ahlam Shibli

Fig. 2 Ahlam Shibli, Untitled (Dom Dziecka no. 27), Poland, 2008, gelatin silver print, 38 x 57.7 cm. Dom Dziecka Lubien Kujawski, May 17, 2008, Saturday evening. For supper, the children are divided into small groups and each group is responsible for its own meal. Przemek K. is serving Adrian Z., Damian Z., ukasz Z., Dawid C., and Marcin W. Courtesy of the artist, © Ahlam Shibli

Fig. 3 Ahlam Shibli, Untitled (Death no. 58), Palestine, 2011-12, chromogenic print, 38 x 57 cm. Balata Refugee Camp, February 16, 2012. Attached to the house of the family, a memorial for the martyr Khalil Marshoud, a militant from the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. On the wall, light boxes with the martyr's portraits and writing describing his beliefs. Most of the children of Marshoud's various brothers are named after him. Courtesy of the artist, © Ahlam Shibli

Fig. 4 Ahlam Shibli, Untitled (Death no. 12), Palestine, 2011-12, chromogenic print, 66.7 x 100 cm. The graveyard, the only green area in the camp, is used by the locals as a meeting place and a shortcut to the main road. The posters above the entrance represent martyred key figures from the Balata Refugee Camp branch of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Courtesy of the artist, © Ahlam Shibli.

Fig. 5 Ahlam Shibli, Untitled (Death no. 56), Palestine, 2011-12, chromogenic print, 38 x 57 cm. Balata Refugee Camp, November 22, 2011. On the wall of the house, a poster reading, "Neither prison nor guard terrorize me / The prisoner Haitham Ka'abi / The son of the Balata Refugee Camp's resistance / Arrested on August 2, 2006." Next to it, the lower part of the wall is full of graffiti supporting the prisoners. Courtesy of the artist, © Ahlam Shibli