Pelotas as seen through the eyes of its street-children

An empirical investigation of the child-friendliness of a midsize Brazilian city

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Abstract

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Language: English

The aim of this study was to understand the lives of the street children in Pelotas in Southern Brazil. Utilizing multi-method approach I have outlined normal days of these children. Observation, semi-structure interviews individually and in focus groups and walking tours with twelve street children provided vast knowledge about the geographies of their activities and locational choices. This study illustrates the picture the street children have of their city. The conceptual framework of this study is based on the concepts of child-friendly cities and attachment to place. The results analyzed by using these concepts reveal the extremely challenging situation of street children in the margin of society. Settings for a good and balanced life may be there, but actualization of those settings is trivial. Abuse, violence, drugs, discrimination and misunderstanding frame their everyday life. Possibilities to live a normal life are minimal. In this light child-friendliness of Pelotas is evaluated. Based on the results, I claim that these concepts cannot be directly applied to street children. To be able to improve the livelihoods of these children a key tool is cooperation with them. The projects need to be designed and planned *with* them, not *for* them. Collaboration between the children and the mainstream society is needed to get sustainable results.

Keywords: Child-friendly city, attachment to place, street children, city planning.
A little boy with torn clothes lies on the pavement. He has found some cardboard to lie on but apparently he is cold. He searches for heat curling up alongside with a mangy dog. He is all dirty and someone has taken his flip-flops. His elbow is bleeding a little. No one stops to ask whether he is all right. He puts a piece of cloth on top of his face to get privacy and continues to sleep.
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Glossary

**Menor (plur. Menores)**  
A child under seventeen living on the streets

**Maior (plur. Maiores)**  
An older person living on the streets

**Os normais**  
“The Normals” meaning the mainstream people

**Nós**  
“We”, meaning the people living on the streets

**Senhora**  
“Madam”, a polite way to speak to a woman

**Tia**  
“Auntie” a polite, but more casual way to speak to a woman

**Bairro**  
A neighbourhood

**Centro**  
Name of the district in the city centre

**Casas**  
Shelters or sanctuaries for people living on the streets

**Drugs**  
In this research the definition of drugs is the one used by street children in Pelotas. Drugs include crack, marijuana, thinner, cobbler glue

**Pedra**  
“Stone”, crack

**Brigada Militar**  
The federal police of Brazil. They call the shots in buss- and railway stations. Under the authority of the *brigada militar* there are also the firemen. Patrolmen in different locations are also men of *brigada militar*.

**CUFA**  
Centro Único de Favelas – The Only Centre of Slums

**FEBEM**  
Fundação Estadual do Bem Estar do Menor – a Brazilian public institution for juvenile correction. Street children understand it to be juvenile prison.

**Real (plur. reais)**  
Brazilian currency (corresponds 39 SEK)

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1 Background

Much of the research about children’s relationships with places carried out around the world today has its roots in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the rights of Children, the CRC\(^3\). Child-friendly cities (CFC) projects are commitments to turn this convention into reality. A secretariat called United Nations Child-Friendly City International Secretariat was established in Florence by UNICEF\(^4\). The CFC is a concept defined by United Nations Child Friendly City International Secretariat. Agreeing upon the CRC, the Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda, undersigned countries have agreed upon trying to construct friendlier cities to the children\(^5\). By this definition a child-friendly city is a place where children’s rights to a healthy, caring, protective, educative, stimulating, non-discriminating, inclusive, and culturally rich environment are addressed\(^6\). According to Riggio, cities should be organs for transforming the living environments for the children at the family, neighbourhood and city levels with institutional, legal, budgetary and planning power\(^7\). In Italy, Sweden and Finland surveys about children’s views on child-friendly environments have been conducted\(^8\). In studies concerning child-environment relationships, few studies address the relationships which street-children form with their environments. If any, these children, who do not have a home to shelter them, need a child-friendly environment and a city which is friendly to them as they lack a family and parents to take care of them. These children, if any, could tell if the city where they live is child-friendly. They, if any, know the meaning of the term ‘child-friendliness’ and they know the importance of such child-friendliness for their survival. The phenomenon of street-children has mainly been seen as a social problem. Focus has been on the work made by help- and aid-organizations and charities. It is however a problem to be solved by the whole city – at all administrative and human levels – in order to make the city a friendly place. This is the new perspective of the CFC movement and this is the perspective applied in this study on street-children living in the city of Pelotas, Brazil.

The street-children phenomenon is a growing problem in modern-day cities, not only in third world cities but around the whole world. Fast urbanization is one reason behind this phenomenon as it leads to social problems\(^9\). It is estimated that only in Brazil for instance there are from 200 000 to 8 million children living on the streets\(^10\), which is an increase compared to earlier\(^11\).

The way street children are treated in general is shocking and a serious issue of human rights. It needs to – and can be - tackled before getting too immense, causing pain in individual lives and troubles to cities as social, economic and political organisms. The problem affects the whole city including the image of the city. For all these different reasons the problem should be of interest to city planners and politicians.

\(^3\) Nordström, Maria (will be published 2010)
\(^4\) Riggio, Eliana (2002) p.45
\(^5\) Chatterjee, Sudeshna (2005) p.2
\(^6\) Riggio, Eliana (2002) p.45
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Nordström, Maria (will be published 2010)
\(^9\) Le Roux, Johann, Smith, Cheryl Sylvia (1998)
\(^11\) Le Roux, Johann, Smith, Cheryl Sylvia (1998)
Most often attention to the street-children issue concerns street-children living in megacities like Rio de Janeiro. However, there are street-children living also in smaller urbanizing spots and they live under partly different conditions. One of those smaller urbanizing spots with the problem of street-children is Pelotas in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil. This is a city which has become more dangerous. Some of the suburbs in Pelotas are too dangerous for outsiders to enter nowadays. Among these, one good example is the suburb of Dunas. Even postmen refused to enter this area. Despite the fact that more children wander around the streets of this city\textsuperscript{12} than before, the city is located in one of the most prosperous states of Brazil.

1.1 Objectives of this research

The objective of my research is to describe how the street children in Pelotas live, survive and experience their city through studying the geography of their activities. My intention is to show Pelotas as seen through the eyes of its street-children and from their perspective. By mapping the daily activities of the street-children, I will see where they do certain things and find out why these places are important to the street-children of Pelotas. The results of my investigation will make it possible to suggest to the politicians, administrators and planners of the city, improvements that can be made to the lives of the street-children and thereby making Pelotas a more child-friendly city.

Study questions
What are the daily activities of street children in Pelotas?
Where in the city do these activities take place?
How – and why – have the children chosen these places?
What does street children’s Pelotas look like?

\textsuperscript{12} Authors own observation from the years 1999, 2000, 2002, 2007, 2009
2 Conceptual Framework – Attachment to Place

I base the conceptual framework of this study on the notions of child-friendliness of a place and place attachment. I tend to combine these two concepts in relation to the situation of street children in Pelotas. The concept of place is essential also in this context. Notion of time-geography is interconnected in these afore mentioned concepts as it in a way brings them together and forms them in this study. Time-geography is important for this research as everything happens in time and space\textsuperscript{13}. An interesting question is though; who are the people of a place and how the concept of place is understood. According to Allan Pred, language and signs of people in a certain place for instance mean physical limits of that place\textsuperscript{14}. On the other hand Ehn and Löfgren claim that every social group form shared values and beliefs, which include classifications like what is normal and abnormal, natural or unnatural. One of the most crucial classifications is between order and disorder; it encircles the individuals own way of life and marks off the outside disorder\textsuperscript{15}. These different statements are interesting in terms of this research. Street children are part of society, whether people wanted it or not. They live within the same official city borders with the more advantaged people, but they do not share same signs or values with other people. Even the street slang differs from the language of the majority. Street children’s understanding of the meaning of order and disorder may also be very different from other people’s.

2.1 Child-friendly cities

A child can form friendship towards places, which is also the idea behind the cities’ friendliness. According to Chatterjee, friendship ideologies of children change by their age\textsuperscript{16}. She also claims that children form the same kind of friendship with places than they form with each other. The nature of child-place friendship should be reciprocal\textsuperscript{17}. For a place to be child-friendly it has to be attractive for a child. An attractive place has functional significance for an individual\textsuperscript{18}. Home, for instance, is normally related to a place with a roof and walls and it is often even considered to be safe and cozy. But as mentioned by Chatterjee, children will assess this opportunity to be at home in relation to the situation there and their desire to live at home\textsuperscript{19}.

2.1.1 Conditions for a child-friendly city

Principally a child-friendly place is based on six essential conditions. According to Chatterjee a child needs a place to demonstrate caring and responsibility to him or her as the child also does the same. She concludes that a child will care for a place that provides them a safe environment keeping them away from harm like traffic, pollution, abuse and crime but that also satisfies the physical needs of the child\textsuperscript{20}. The second condition for the friendship on the list is shared activities and interests. This means that the place has activities and interests to share with a child through possibilities.

\textsuperscript{13} Pred, Allan (1984) p.280
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p.285
\textsuperscript{15} Ehn, B. & Löfgren O. (2001)
\textsuperscript{16} Chatterjee, Sudeshna (2005) p.5
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. p.8
\textsuperscript{18} Heft, H. (2001) p.124
\textsuperscript{19} Chatterjee, Sudeshna (2005) p.11
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. p.15
To be able to maintain the friendship with a child a place has to support environmental resources too; it has to allow the possibilities to be actualized and provide new possibilities as well.

Loyalty should be reciprocal also. The Intention of the place should protect the child’s interests as the child should protect the place.

A place should enable and allow the child to create special places that provide security and fulfils the privacy needs.

The last condition that Chatterjee mentions is horizontality. A place should promote the fields of free action in the place by allowing the actualization of possibilities and minimizing the constraints to action. The place ought to have an equal power relationship with the child so that the child would not feel inhibited exploring and actualizing all possibilities found in the place\textsuperscript{21}.

Children have their needs and to prefer some places rather than others these places have to satisfy the needs of the children. By analyzing these conditions in relation to the stories of street children it will be relatively easy to see whether Pelotas is a child friendly city or not.

One can only ask whether a city can be child-friendly if there are children living on the streets.

2.1.2 Towards child-friendliness

I am interested in how a city could become child-friendly because I believe that it would thereby promote basic human rights. When studying homeless people in Toronto Canada, Rae Bridgman got interested in engaging young people in city planning and its advantages\textsuperscript{22}. Brian Simpson writes that there are instances accepting the fact that children themselves actually should be involved in planning urban environment\textsuperscript{23}. Rae Bridgman has concluded fifteen practices how a city could become more child-friendly. There are some very interesting points in relation to the current situation in Pelotas that I think should be taken into consideration in urban planning in Pelotas. These points are for instance participation of young people in development of initiatives for children and youth, participation of front-line workers and educators that engage with the children in daily basis, empowerment of young people themselves to determine the nature of the programme or project , safety and security, innovative use of existing resources, operational sustainability, identified long- and short term impacts and last but not least challenging conventional beliefs of the nature of the existing issues and solutions and recognition of diverse groups of young people\textsuperscript{24}

To be able to learn what places have to offer to the children to become their friend we need to learn and understand how children and settings, discussed earlier, transact\textsuperscript{25}. For this purpose I consider the cooperation with the children of the city and understanding their lives to be extremely important.

2.2 Place

Places are shaped by people who live in them, but I believe that the process is reciprocal. Places also shape the people who live in the place\textsuperscript{26}. L. Courteney and W. Hardwick recognize that each place, region or city, like any social group, has a unique history and

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. p.16
\textsuperscript{22} Bridgman, Rae (2004) p.339
\textsuperscript{23} Simpson, Brian (1997) p.907
\textsuperscript{24} Bridgman, Rae (2004) p.343
\textsuperscript{25} Chatterjee, Sudeshna (2005) p.12
\textsuperscript{26} Pred, Allan (1984) p.280
reconstructing it enables understanding\textsuperscript{27}. At least since 1970s geography as a discipline has been developing from being just about location and maps towards a discipline embracing socio-spatial dialectics\textsuperscript{28}. Places may vary in scale and scope as Chatterjee concludes\textsuperscript{29}. It seems that academicians share the same opinion of place being not only a geographical site but more like fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory\textsuperscript{30}. Anthony Giddens affirm that places or locales can be understood in two different ways. He explains place on one hand offering physical settings for social interaction. On the other hand he reminds that it is an error to assume that locales can be described in those terms only. Places or locales need to be seen as constituting context of interaction. He states though that the settings are important factors specifying the contextuality of a place\textsuperscript{31}. These definitions are important for social scientist even though I find them relatively concise. If places were just physical settings for human interaction the \textit{places} human did not occupy yet or do not use, would not be recognized as places. Anyway in social sciences the importance lies probably on the side of place being an arena for social interaction. In terms of street children research Stotowsky et. al mention a crucial point. They demand attention to the power relations in meaning of place. They claim that when thinking about a place we should take notice of access. It is important to see who are in a certain place and who stay absent. When taking into consideration street children for instance in Pelotas the question of equity in this sense arises. We have to observe what people can do in different places and what they cannot, but also how these activities affect other groups of people in a society\textsuperscript{32}. As Stokowsky et. al note, these conceptions of social reality raise different kinds of concerns about the politics of place\textsuperscript{33}.

2.3 Sense of place

Sense of place has been understood as a human relationship to a place too. However there have been some disagreements about where the sense of place comes from. Richard C. Stedman concludes different writers’ opinions about sense of place and its origin by writing that sense of place is not intrinsic to the physical setting itself, but resides in human interpretations of the setting, which are constructed through experience with it\textsuperscript{34}. He also mentions the importance of the environmental physical settings when forming sense of place\textsuperscript{35}. These questions are interesting. Do the landscape and physical settings matter really? In his study about landscapes and sense of place Richard C. Stedman integrated different variables that he believes are crucial when forming a sense of place. He believes that sense of place integrates characteristics of the environment, human uses of environment, constructed meanings and place attachment and satisfaction\textsuperscript{36}. He concludes that the sense of place is constructed together with of course physical environment but also human behaviours and social and psychological processes\textsuperscript{37}.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{27} Courteney, L. and Hardwick, W. (1995) p.219
\bibitem{28} Batty, Michael and Cole, Sam (1997) p.277
\bibitem{29} Chatterjee, Sudeshna (2005) p.18
\bibitem{30} Stokowski, Patricia et. al (2002) p.369
\bibitem{31} Giddens, A. (1984) p.118
\bibitem{32} Stokowski, Patricia et. al (2002) p.371
\bibitem{33} Ibid.
\bibitem{34} Stedman, Richard (2003) p.672
\bibitem{35} Ibid. p.673
\bibitem{36} Ibid. p.671
\bibitem{37} Ibid. p.671
\end{thebibliography}
2.3.1 Phases of sense of place

Shmuel Shamai describes the concept of sense of place through phases\(^{38}\). Even these phases can be divided into scale of seven stages. These stages are described by feelings a person has or activities he or she does in the community for instance.

The first phase, belonging to a place includes three stages. The stages are (0) Not having any sense of place, (1) Knowledge of being located in a place. At this stage a person understands being in a place but does not have any bond to this particular place even though the person recognizes symbols of the place. (2) Belonging to a place – There is not just knowledge of being in a place and the symbols of the place. A person feels togetherness and common destiny\(^{39}\).

According to Shamai the second phase has two stages. (3) At this stage a person has emotional attachment to a place. Place has a personal meaning as centre of personal and collective experience. (4) At this stage people identify with the goals of the place recognizing them as their own. Places’ interests get blended with the persons own goals and the person feels loyalty towards the place. These two stages make the level of attachment to a place of the ladder of sense of place\(^{40}\). There are some requirements in order for a person to be able to get attached to a place and reach this second phase. These requirements include a complex discussion about needs and satisfaction of the needs. Attachment is like a positive bond between a person and the environment as mentioned. In this sense we have to remember what makes people attached to a place. Stedman considers it to be satisfaction. The place needs to fulfill the needs of a person in order for him or her to become attached to the place. What people need is of course relative. Maslow wrote about five stages of needs\(^{41}\) which nowadays can be seen as quite simplified.

A strong attachment to a place brings one to the third phase of sense of place; the level of commitment to a place. This phase has two stages also. (5) This stage describes the persons’ involvement with a place. In this stage people actually get involved in actions of the community. This includes that a person invests time, money and talent for the good of the place. (6) This is the highest level of commitment to a place. At this stage a person is ready to sacrifice things like freedom, prosperity and even life for the good of a place. This implies the readiness of a person to get involved with deepest commitment to the actions of the community\(^{42}\).

2.4 Attachment to place

Historically, attachment to place was of interest primarily to earlier phenomenological scholars. Now the multidimensional nature of the concept is understood and scholars from different backgrounds have contributed to the formation of this concept and in discussion thereof\(^{43}\). Place attachment is a complex phenomenon that incorporates various aspects of the relationship between people and place. The part “attachment” points out the effect whereas “place” emphasizes the environmental settings to which people are emotionally attached to\(^{44}\). The term place attachment implies that persons’ relationship to environmental settings

\(^{38}\) Shamai, Shmuel (1991) p.349

\(^{39}\) Ibid. p.350

\(^{40}\) Ibid. p.350

\(^{41}\) http://www.union.umd.edu/GH/basic_needs/index.html  7.4.2009 9:38am

\(^{42}\) Shamai, Shmuel (1991) p.350

\(^{43}\) Low, S.M. and Altman, I. (1992) p.1

\(^{44}\) Ibid. p.4 and 5
themselves is primordial in the formation of place attachment, yet the origins of place attachment are varied and complex. Riley claims however that, environmental settings per se may not be the only factors but also the meaning of and experiences in a place, which often involve relationships with other people. Therefore, places are repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place qua place to which people are attached.

2.4.1 Children’s attachment to place

According to Chawla, a preschool child will be happily attached to a place where it finds secure nurturance and where it can explore and at least temporarily appropriate attractive things. So, place needs to have certain settings that appeal to children and which fulfil their needs. Even this can be unclear and a subject for discussion. In Stedman’s article the problem whether the characteristics of the settings of a place, or the experience people have of these settings is more important, is highlighted. I would claim that we experience these unique characters differently from each other. In a way, we should see even people in a place as “settings” of that particular place and not just natural qualities or architectural factors. Place should have personal meaning as centre of personal and collective experience. I agree with Stedman’s notion that “in essence”, people confer meaning of the environment in ways that reflect their social and cultural experiences. In this way, it is possible for a single space to encompass multiple ‘places’, reflecting the uniqueness of human culture and variations in experiences people have had with the landscape. Anyway, when the settings of a place are appealing to a person, he or she gets attached to the place. This is relevant for my study on street children too. According to Chawla “children are attached to a place when they show happiness at being in it and regret or distress at leaving it, and when they value it not only for the satisfaction of physical needs but for its intrinsic qualities.”

2.5 Street children

The way in which street children are understood varies greatly. As described in a study by UNICEF the most common definition of a street child or youth is “any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults. This definition was formulated by Inter-NGOs in Switzerland in 1983. In the study made by UNICEF the term “street children” is used to refer to children who work and/or sleep on the streets. Such children may or may not necessarily be adequately supervised or directed by responsible adults and include the two co-existing categories referred to by UNICEF as those “on the street” and those “of the street”. Other researchers identified these two categories amongst different street children. “Children of the street” are homeless children who live and sleep on the streets in urban areas. They are totally on their own, living with other street children or homeless adult street people. On the other hand, “children on the street” earn their living or beg for money on the street and return home at night. They maintain contact with

45 Ibid. p.6
46 Riley, R.B. (1979)
48 Chawla, L. (1992) p.66
50 Ibid. p.673
51 Chawla, L. (1992) p.64
their families. This distinction is important since “children on the street” have families and homes to go to at night, whereas “children of the street” live on the streets and probably lack parental, emotional and psychological support normally found in parenting situations.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{52} The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and Viva Network (1997)
3  Setting the scene

3.1  Reasons for choosing Pelotas
I have myself studied social and environmental situation in Pelotas during almost all my university carrier. My candidate thesis was about street children policy in the Pelotas planning program for the years 2005-2008. I have applied my new knowledge from different courses at the university to be better able to understand this many-faceted issue from Pelotas’s point of view. The last more extensive research was during the course Environment and social change at the Stockholm University. I made a so called Urban Environmental Profile on Pelotas and discovered broad spectrum of factors creating social issues, the street children issue being one of the most severe.

3.2  Brazilian Street children
The story of Brazilian street children is not a beautiful one to read about or even less so to see. Actually all the children mentioned in the monograph about street children in Recife, Northeast Brazil by Tobias Hecht said that they really do not want to enter the child and adolescence centres because of the adult behaviour towards them. Street children of Pelotas have their own stories but with similar results; they do not often want to stay in these centres or the centres are not even available for them for one reason or other.

It is extremely difficult to measure the amount of street children and statistics vary greatly according to Jubilee Action, a registered charity. As mentioned earlier, it is estimated that there are from 200 000 to 8 million of street children in Brazil living in very poor conditions. According to Jubilee Action most of the street children in Brazil are expected to be killed before they become eighteen. It is not a secret in Brazil that the action of so called death squads is getting more violent all the time in their mission to “clean up the streets” and “guarantee the safety” of people. This is problematic if Brazil wants to help the street children. Children and adolescents are the most vulnerable people in an unstable living conditions because during that age they form the very idea of the world and are dependent on adults.

3.2.1  Different types of street children
Often if somebody is talking about street children one refers to the homeless kids and the minors who consider streets to be their homes and do not have any place to return to at night. Many times they are thrown out from home after a loss of mother, violence, drugs or a like. Some of them have been told that they can reach a better life just by looking for it on the streets. Those children are just one part of the street children that I am going to include in my study as I mentioned in the part of concepts.

There is another type of street youth. A large amount of minors do have parents or a parent and a home where they return regularly. They are considered as street kids because they spend most of their time on the streets doing different things. Many of them have ended up on the streets because of huge family size. Often coming from single parent households the street children are helping mothers (sometimes also fathers) to support their family by working on

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53 Hecht, Tobias (1998) p.175
55 Nordström, Maria (2002) p.50
the streets of cities or begging. A great deal of the youngsters looking like street children actually has a home where they return to when the night comes. Every child has their own story to tell and normally that story, including tragedies from their family life and other problems, is a good way of telling what category of street children that child belongs into.

But there is something in common in all of the street children. They are often maltreated, misunderstood, feared, and in some countries, like in Brazil, even killed. They are seen as a problem for the society, frequently seen as thieves and the general opinion about them is very negative. In my opinion their possibilities to live what we call a good and normal life is practically impossible. They are often beaten by police and thrown out from super markets even though they had money to buy some food. They often also look younger than they actually are due to the lack of nutritious food yet that is just one factor causing hindered physical growth. Inhalations of glue, thinner sniffing and use of other drugs are to blame as well. They have same kind of fears of being arrested, being hurt or of getting sick. They survive by begging and carrying bags or “taking care of cars” in parking lots or in front of fancy clubs. They in some cases struggle to manage to get their every day food but are satisfied with very small things. Studies reveal that emotionally they construct “families” with their friends on the streets. They call somebody mother even though that somebody is the same age or care for someone like a brother even though the two would not have any family bond. They fill the empty space of belonging into a family by making their own families and showing a great loyalty to each other. One very important thing is also the same to all of them; the longer period of time they spend on the streets, the more difficult it is for them then to go back home and school and also to adapt into the norms and the rules of the society. After having spent a longer time on the streets they are also more likely to get involved with crimes.

3.2.2 Some reasons for being on the streets

Some general causes can be recognized behind the phenomenon yet as I mentioned every single child has their own reasons why they have ended up on the streets. Probably one of the biggest reasons is the fast urbanization and industrialization and extreme social stress as causation. This is evident also in Pelotas. Poverty and family disruption have been also seen as a reason for these events. One prevalent reason for a child to run away from home is humiliation at home and the feeling of being just a failure in terms of success at school. Many minors also want to find a freedom and change to the boring life. Maybe not that much anymore, but some time ago political reasons were playing a big part in this phenomenon. Young adults and even young children joined political parties or rebellious groups and left home for something ideologically more important.

3.3 Pelotas

Pelotas is a midsized city in Brazilian scale situated near the border of Uruguay (approximately 135km) and Argentina (about 600km) in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in the southern Brazil.

56 Le Roux, Johann and Smith, Cheryl Sylvia (1998)
57 UN-HABITAT (2007) p.76
58 Le Roux, Johann and Smith, Cheryl Sylvia (1998)
59 Ibid.
60 http://www.pelotas.com.br/cidade_dados/pelotas_dados.htm_27.5.2009 11:28
Setting the scene

Situated: Ashore the biggest sweet lagoon of the world, Lagoa dos Patos in Southern Brazil, near Uruguay and Argentina\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area:</th>
<th>1647.9 km(^3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population:</td>
<td>339 934(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population:</td>
<td>93% (^5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density:</td>
<td>196, 18 (hab/Km(^2)). (^6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch of industry:</td>
<td>cattle breeding, agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Pelotas in nutshell

Whereas other cities in Brazil have developed some kind of industry this has not been so much the case in Pelotas. From 1997 the economic development of the city has been going backwards. This has had some serious consequences in both the environmental and social fronts. \(^7\)

Typical to most of the cities in Brazil Pelotas also have experienced a massive urbanization. In Pelotas, urbanization has happened in a very short period of time. Also because of the fast urbanization Pelotas is facing various problems in different scales. In Pelotas there are both, social and environmental problems. The average amount of children per woman according to José Olavo Bueno dos Passos is six or seven \(^8\) which of course with lacking social security causes problems. There are over 5000 households in Pelotas without basic services like sanitation water \(^9\). These multi scale problems are triggering one another which might make them even more difficult to tackle.

\(^{62}\) [http://www.pelotas.com.br/cidade_dados/pelotas_dados.htm 3.3.2008 14:40]
\(^{63}\) Ibid.
\(^{65}\) Plano do Governo (2005) p.36
\(^{66}\) [http://www.pelotas.com.br/cidade_dados/pelotas_dados.htm 3.3.2008 14:40]
\(^{67}\) [http://www.pelotas.rs.gov.br/cidade_historia/pelotas_historia.htm 4.3.2008 14:11]
\(^{68}\) Interview with José Olavo Bueno dos Passos 11.3.2009
\(^{69}\) Plano do Governo (2005) p.21
3.4 Existing projects for street children in Pelotas

There should have been many initiatives to improve the livelihoods of the street children of the city. They are mentioned in the development plan for 2005-2008 but not many projects seem to be bearing fruits. I interviewed an authority responsible for children’s wellbeing Dr. José Olavo Bueno dos Passos about different projects and programmes as he should be the most conscious about different initiatives made for the street children of Pelotas. I interviewed him finally on 11.3.2009 after trying to agree on a date for this interview for a long time.

But as mentioned there are campaigns made for street children. One thing in common to all of the initiatives is that a child needs to be totally drug free and be studying to be able to take part of any activity or project made for street children. According to Dr. Olavo there used to be more activities but drug addicts caused problems in the places for activities. To the children who are able to “satisfy the examiners” there is for instance a band were children and youth can play instruments. In connection with a rehabilitation centre there are handicrafts for children and also possibilities to play games.

More short term collaborations are casas as the children call them. The casas are lodgings for homeless but the amount of people they can accept is very limited. There are 2 shelters called Casa de Passagem, number one for adults which can attend six men and three women and number two for children which can attend eight boys and four girls. (Dr. Olavo Bueno dos Passos mentioned both of the Casas de Passagens but did not mention the amount of people the Casa number one could accept). Then there is also a place called Albergue which Dr. Olavo, as he is commonly known, did not even mention. According to Schneider Albergue can attend 46 people at a time. One has to enter to this shelter by seven o’clock pm and has to leave the place at 7.30 am. One has to be totally drug free and cannot be under the influence of alcohol. In past times people were collected in daily basis to stay over night in these places but this has been changed. Nowadays people on the streets are collected sometimes by convoy of Brigada Militar. The system was changed into this because the children are always the same ones and often do not want to follow the collectors to the shelters. Even if these convoys passed by the Avenida Bento Goncalvez every now and then, the children of my group do not know about them. Also the general coordinator of CUFA, Vagner Borges says that these kinds of collections are not really happening. According to Dr. Olavo the children were collected in December 2008 and taken to their homes. This cost money and did not help anything as the children returned to the streets after ten days. The only way to get rid of the streets children problem, according to Dr. Olavo, is to get rid of the drug dealers and with family care.

To get rid of drugs in Pelotas may not be a easy task if in any place. The one and only place offering detoxication, Hospital Espírita, has limited amount of places and grapevine tells its own story about the place. In this hospital drug addicts are simply detoxicated. According to Vagner Borges people are almost anaesthetized the whole time they spend in the treatment. The children who already got treatment in Hospital Espírita say the same thing, in their own way though. They say that the nurses just put them to sleep the whole time they spend in the

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70 Interview of Dr. Olavo Bueno do Passos 11.3.2009
71 Schneider, Taline (2009) p.4
72 Interview of Dr. Olavo Bueno do Passos 11.3.2009
73 Schneider, Taline (2009) p.5
74 Jorge, Monica (2009) p.4
75 Interview of Vagner Lemos Borges 14.3.2009
76 Interview of Dr. Olavo Bueno do Passos 11.3.2009
Setting the scene

place. When they get out of this place they are on their own. According to Dr. Olavo there is no place in the whole state of Rio Grande do Sul which would combine detoxication and mental or psychological treatment to drug users or alcoholics.

One program initiated by Dr. Olavo is called Esmola não! No alms! The program was started in June 2008 with an objective to cut off the alms the children get begging on the streets or taking care of cars. According to Dr. Olavo the reason and need for this kind of operation is that many of the children are begging on the streets because they contribute to the family income. They are sometimes even sent to the streets by their parents. Often the money is also used to buy drugs according to Dr. Olavo and for this reason the money the children get needs to be reduced. If the children are identified and the parents found, the parents can loose their custody for the child. Dr. Olavo told that this has decreased the number of mums working with their children on the streets. Begging and taking care of cars can be seen as child labour and cannot be accepted concludes Dr. Olavo.

Pelotas has also its own Centro Único das Favelas (CUFA), the Only Centre for Slums. This organization practices more so called bottom up method activating people on the grass root level. They activate children on the streets and also children living in bairros in sports like street basketball, music, theatre and arts like graffiti. They are present on the field getting involved with the lives of the children to be able to know them and their interests. In this way they search for the best activities and methods to deduct social exclusion.

3.5 Street children of Pelotas

“Surprise, pithiness and rebel are the principal feelings of people trying to pass by a group sleeping on a public place almost at noon. Even though the view is getting more and more common, it still irritates pedestrians who have to jump over people trying to rest… and drivers beep trying to wake them up.” Normally people hold tight their purses and bags when passing by street children, often also changing the side of the road to pass by. People using drugs do not want to go to home or to shelters because they do not want to take baths or stay away from crack. They do not even want to know about working because they just want to beg and if they get food from people they just sell it to buy more crack. This is the way how street children (and also adults) are seen in Pelotas in general today. Or at least this is the exact way how people react when seeing these children.

But this is just the way they are seen by the majority of inhabitants of Pelotas. When one gets to know them one would know how they really are. Not all of them use drugs which is already something different to the general belief. They do not have to steal as people give them some money when they help with car parking or when they do various activities in front of stopped cars on traffic lights. They are loyal, they like to play, they are trustworthy (surprisingly so), they cry as all children but they really know how to be happy about small things and they do not require a lot, only a little bit of consideration.

As in general, also in Pelotas it is extremely difficult to find out the exact amount of street children. Some of the children spending their time on the streets, principally in Avenida Bento

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77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Interview of Vagner Lemos Borges 10.3.2009
80 Schneider, Taline (2009) p.4
81 Lautenschläger, Jussara (2009) p.5
82 Schneider, Taline (2009) p.4
Goncalves or in the city centre, just come to earn some money to help the family economy and others really live on the streets. It seems as though this problem would be growing all the time in Pelotas. Newspapers continuously publish articles about street children and especially the drug problems of these children even though my research proves that these two issues not always go hand in hand. According to José Olavo Bueno Passos there are approximately 170-180 people living on the streets of Pelotas. The research to count these people was made four or five years ago as Mister Olavo told me. This amount includes of course adults as well so the exact amount of children is very difficult to define not even mentioning that the accuracy is highly questionable as this research was conducted such a long time ago. As I wrote earlier the local newspaper Diário Popular published an article announcing the doubling of people living on the streets in Pelotas during one year. This article surged a huge peak of discussion about the problem. The general coordinator of CUFA (Centro Único das Favela – The Only Centre of Slums) of Pelotas though estimated about five per cent of child population living in the situation of streets.
4 Methodology

4.1 Research approach

My study is a mixture of illuminative evaluation and ethnomethodology. This is because I make key behaviours and attitudes visible in a given context. I also try to enlighten policymakers to dynamics of behaviour of street children in different situations for them to be able to understand them and better attend these behaviours in a more appropriate way which is characteristic for illuminative evaluation\(^{83}\). On the other hand I focus on the detail of the commonsense character of everyday life of street children by explaining what these children do and why they do it. That makes my study partly ethnomethodology also\(^{84}\). Ethnography can be complicated and surely more debatable than quantitative studies but when made well and successfully ethnography gives a lot of information about how the world is seen, lived and works. In a good ethnography ways of life come apparent\(^{85}\). As my primary goal is to understand the lives of the street children in Pelotas and make their lives apparent, the scope of my research includes mainly street children. To be able to comprehend also the things the children may not see themselves I needed to broaden my scope to include also authorities and different instances for more information. I chose not to use information from people of age eighteen or more as the word “street children” implies only to minors as a part of this study. To collect this qualitative data I focused on people and their narratives so units of this study were individuals forming a group of street children.

4.2 Time-geography

Time-geography is the theory and method which brings together all these questions and issues. Torsten Hägerstrand developed the concept of time-geography which inspired my study. Hägerstrand points out that the context, which has to be taken into consideration, actually includes three worlds: physical, mental and socio-cultural. He discusses that these worlds are interdependent and give condition to one another\(^{86}\). The physical world includes material physical things. Considering the worlds of street children, the physical world, including distances and other tactile things for instance can aggravate or enable activities of everyday life. By mental world Hägerstrand means knowledge, thinking, perception, memories and emotions. It contains the notions of who am I, and what my value is. It also refers to feelings. Socio-cultural world is seen to include cultural products, stories, myths, norms, legislations and work of art. The socio-cultural world of street children is interesting. This third world normally contains the legislations and norms as mentioned\(^{87}\) but street children seem to have two socio-cultural worlds; one of their own and the one where they actually live in including the rules and norms of other people in the city also.

As revealed earlier, the world can be seen as including three altering parts; physical, mental and socio-cultural. These study questions illustrate and illuminate these different parts of the world of street children. One part of the world, like the socio-cultural one, gives form to another part of the world, like the mental one and vice versa. The questions one and two about the activities and their locations are quite physical in nature, if we consider these different worlds. The question number three, why these locations have been chosen, is already more socio-cultural probably. On the other hand mental world can be affecting in the decisions

\(^{83}\) Hart, Chris (1998) p.46
\(^{84}\) Ibid.
\(^{85}\) Hart, Chris (1998) p.164,169
\(^{86}\) Hägerstrand, Torsten (1985)
\(^{87}\) Kranz, Helena (2006) p.229
considerably. Also the possibilities and constraints can be seen as stemming from the socio-cultural world but also self-esteem and trust in one self are part of the mental world affected by the other two worlds. The interconnectedness of the worlds is interesting. The three worlds of street children are different from the worlds that the majority of society lives in. In some sense it is obvious but when some essential parts are missing, the construction and formation of other worlds become challenging. We made time geographical diagrams of so called normal days with children which they found very funny. These diagrams together with maps of Pelotas show interestingly the geography of the activities of these children.

4.3 Methods used

Methods used in street-children studies are similar in nature: observation, participation observation, playing and interviews. Following the same lines I carried out participation observation during ten weeks in Pelotas in 2009. During that time I also conducted semi-structured interviews in groups and individually. I also used in-depth interviews to collect data on more sensitive issues. Some of the most interesting findings came actually on the situations of pure observation and playing with the children. To describe the lives of street children in the best way I have shifted and sorted the data according to the places children have chosen for their activities and the common themes of the narratives. This way of collecting data also functions as one part of triangulation. It means that a researcher uses various methods to capture a phenomenon. The result from these different methods can be compared with each other and analyzed to form an overall picture of the phenomenon. In this manner it is possible to achieve reliability in a study.

4.3.1 Observation and interviews - Question number one

My first study question is what the daily activities of street children in Pelotas are. To be able to answer this question I used observation and interviews, both with children themselves but also with adults who have helped the children or still are working with this issue. I also interviewed the authority responsible for the wellbeing of children José Olavo Bueno dos Passos.

Observing, being present in a given place, is one of the most longstanding traditions in human geography. Observation emphasizes not spoken method of data collection where observers’ position can vary considerably; from outsider observer to participating observer. Attention has to be paid on what kind of observer is good for the research, for how long will it be possible to observe. I was able to stay on the field for two and a half months studying children spending the most of their time on the streets of Pelotas. I also observed how people treated them and acted when the children came near. Observation is probably the most commonly used method in street children research. It enables involving uniquely what is said by children and what they have been seen to do. My scope in this study is the kids from twelve to seventeen. I have chosen this age group because at that age children are very vulnerable. This is also the age group which is covered by the Statue of the Child and the Adolescence. I took

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89 Cloke, Paul et. al (2004) p.8
90 Esaiasson, Peter et. al. (2004) p. 334
children into my study group and went deeper with them. These individual children were the units of my study. Of course I talked with older people living on the streets too as people got to know me during the period of this field study. Yet I have used their statements only to clear up the definitions of words like the names of different drugs or other words of street slang. I have not tried to handle the street children as a one big group but as individuals with their own life histories to tell. This study tells the story of these particular children. To help me with this task I had former street children, now already adults, adults still living on the streets of Pelotas as contact persons as well as two people, one who have helped street children in Pelotas for years already and another who has knowledge of the street situation because of his contacts. This is not an uncommon tradition among researchers conducting participative research. 

I conducted interviews also to be able to answer the first question. As those children not necessarily knew how to write it was necessary to interview them. Semi-structured interviews are an often used method as well in street children studies. As a different way to get data, this is also one way to make the study reliable. I gave just a topic and children told about each thing openly. As the interviewer I had to be reflective and follow the signs of the interviewee. I also had to be able to interpret the performance of the subject and had to keep listening all the time as sometimes the most interesting statements came out outside the purposeful conversation, at least when I interviewed children one by one. I also subdivided my big research question into smaller questions to be able to keep the structure of the study as the example of preparing qualitative interviews suggest. I also had to take into consideration that street children may be suspicious about me and I had to make clear what I was doing and why. I also wanted them to know that they could stop the interview at any time they wish and that they did not have to answer anything they would not feel comfortable with.

4.3.2 Walking tours - Question number two

My second study question was about the geography of those activities – where in the city do these activities take place. To answer to this particular question I used Walking tours. It can be difficult, if not impossible for children to describe their feelings and perceptions of places verbally. There are possibilities to get information of children’s perceptions in other ways also. One method, which I used, was “walking tours”. They are walking tours in a predefined area containing chosen places that a group of people visit. One person or a group of people choose for example some important or problematic places which are going to be visited during the walking tour. Nordström underpins two very interesting points in walking tours especially for my particular study. She points out that sometimes the accessibility and temptation of a place are crucial for one to desire to be in that place. Also sometimes being in a place stimulated memories and feelings. These are reasons that make this method an interesting one especially for my study. Of course I had to take into consideration the relationships and trust between the people who are present on the same walking tour. As Nordström states, it is obvious that social relations between individuals play an important role in what kinds of information the researcher gets. Walking tours give rich information especially when combined with observations and interviews. It is interesting to be able to

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94 Lehtikunnas, Katri (2008) p.3-4
96 Ibid. p.153
97 Ibid. p.164
98 Ibid. p.25
observe the reactions and behaviour of the people leading the walk to see whether the behaviour and words say the same thing. I asked children to show me the places they spend their time in doing different activities. I also asked them to describe how long they stay in different locations. This enables me to compare this information with my own observations and interviews with the children and adults. According to Maria Nordström it is very useful to ask a child to draw a picture of important places too. These pictures have to be analyzed afterwards of course. I put the places children show me on a map of Pelotas to grasp the movements of these children more easily and also to be able to show the distances between those places to people who do not now the city.

4.3.3 Focus group interviews - Question number three

My third question was how and why children have chosen these particular places for their activities. I conducted focus group interviews, meaning that I discussed and interviewed a group of children in a park where we normally were when I interviewed but also meanwhile we were visiting the places they had chosen to show me. We had then a common theme to talk about while we were walking. Focus groups are a popular tool in qualitative inquiry in human geography. The groups have to be well planned as well as the location for the discussion. These groups can transmit valuable information as they are good situations where children can share their feelings. I wanted to follow the children for a while before the walking tours so that I could notice the trust relationships between them and take that into consideration when planning the groups. If the children did not trust their mates (or me, or some of my colleagues) some knowledge may have remained unknown. It was not difficult to form the groups. The children indicated clearly with whom they could talk and also being just with me they told me directly if they did not want to talk together with someone.

4.3.4 In-depth interviews - Question number four

This question can be one of the most sensitive ones. What does the Pelotas of street children look like? The best way to be able to answer this question was to use in-depth interviews individually with the children but also observing the children during the walking tours in the city. I planned and decided the locations for the interviews after one month in Pelotas. I did not want them to feel uncomfortable but I was also aware that I could not let them freely choose the location for the interview. Some places in Pelotas might have been too dangerous for that yet after a while I noticed that these children knew the places and would not have put me in danger. I consider the locations always with my colleagues on the field. In an in-depth interview when a researcher goes deep into the life of someone else the integrity of the interviewed must be guaranteed. It was very hot in Pelotas during my study and we often stayed in the park Parque Dom Antônio Zattera where bushes and trees gave a bit of a shadow to us.

99 Cloke, Paul et. al (2004) p.28
100 Nordström, Maria (2002) p.24
101 Ibid. p.161
4.4 My research group

My research group, which consists of twelve children, was the main unit of my study. The children were from the age of twelve to the age of seventeen. The information about the children is collected in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Bairro</th>
<th>Sleeps at</th>
<th>Uses drugs</th>
<th>Studies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rafael</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Would like to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>André</td>
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<td>Would like to</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>De</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Closer information about the children

The sampling strategy was purposeful as I have defined an age cohort I want to study. I also had defined that I want to concentrate on the children that live on the streets near the city centre and not in the suburbs away from the city centre. In the beginning of my study I simply went to the streets with one local assistant. I had some snacks with me and I went straight to the children I thought seemed underage. I asked if they would let me talk with them and when they said yes, as they always did, I sat on the pavement with them and explained who I was and what I was doing. I explained my purpose in a way I had beforehand discussed with my assistant and asked whether they would like to be part of my study.

I did not consciously use any snowballing. I did not have to. On my first day I talked only with two fourteen-year-old boys but already on the second day they were much more. Up until the last day new people kept appearing. It was pleasant even though I had chosen my research group already. I still never said that someone would not have been welcome.

The background of the children in my research group varied greatly. It was difficult for them to say how long they had been on the streets. They returned home sometimes and after a while when the situation became intolerable they came to the streets again. That was often the point when they thought that their time on the streets somehow begun again as if they never had been there before. This tendency had begun at an early age for most of the children of this group. Some of them were only from four to six years old when they ended up on the streets for the first time. This leaving and returning home had been going on for some years for these particular children. Some of the children had been begging on the streets already as babies but
nowadays that is not allowed. Mothers can even lose custody for her children if caught in this kind of activity.

Mixture of violence, neglect and drugs was the main reason for these children to live on the streets. Some parents or step parents did not want to see the child at home anymore for one reason or another. Sometimes they just did not like the child or the child had gotten involved with drugs and that was something the parents did not tolerate and threw the child out from home. Often the violence was towards another member of family and the child just did not like to see that. Homes were also extremely small. In one room, could easily live five children and a granny. Five of the children earned money to contribute to the family income. Most of the time, the street life had begun like that by trying to contribute to the family income. A child came to the streets to earn some pocket-money and got involved with people using drugs and probably experimented. Nights at home turned into some night on the streets and finally a child would not go back anymore, sometimes probably because of shame, sometimes he or she was not allowed to return anymore. One of the children was an orphan and did not have a home. His parents had been killed in a car accident. The boy, now fourteen, stayed with his drug addict brother who ended up selling their home and furniture leaving the boy on the streets.

At first most of the children were quiet and observed me giggling and mumbling. When the “old ones” who had been with me from the beginning had heard many times me saying that no one has to answer to anything they do not want to and everyone can give a funny name to themselves they begun to explain to the newcomers who I was and what I was doing. One boy did not understand what a research or study was and another boy explained the word to him with an example from the nature. With time they noticed that I was not trying to harm them and I always did what I had promised (like coming on the following day at a certain time). After a while they also could borrow my camera and take pictures. I also could give a slant to someone for him or her to go and buy some water for us. Not once a cent was missing. If water was cheaper one day, I got few coins back when a child came screaming that he or she had found cheaper water. They noticed I trusted them, which was new for them and I believe that was one reason they started to trust me.

4.5 Ethics in this study

When arriving to a place as a researcher one must think if the study is going to be good for the people or the environment under investigation. As human geographers have started to study minorities like Gypsies or even street children it is not obvious that the arrival of the researcher will do any good for them, or even the other way around. When studying street children I had to realize that they are a powerless group and I had to protect their rights to privacy. I cannot publish pictures of their faces or express publicly their real names. In this thesis I have hidden their faces on the pictures and used substitute names for the children so that it is as easy as possible for the reader to follow the text.

I also had to take notice of traumatic questions or topics. I needed to be sensitive interpreting the feelings of the children. I had to make it very clear that they were allowed to stop answering the questions at any time they felt like it but I also needed to notice if someone felt uncomfortable. Some questions could have been painful or confidential for a person. I

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104 Ibid. p.164
105 Ibid. p.164
106 Ibid. p.164
also had to remember that street children may interpret some words or questions differently than I even though I speak Portuguese. I had to go through the questions and discussion topics with Daví, my colleague on the streets with great knowledge of the situation in Pelotas. He helped me to form the questions so that there was less possibility for misunderstanding. In this research I followed the ethical guidelines recognized by Hammersley and Aitkinson. I informed the children about the study in a way that they understood what they were involved in. I did not make anything public that I promised to keep to myself. I am trying to avoid any negative consequences that could occur to the street children because of my study. I avoided using the children without giving anything in return and as I already mentioned I needed to be especially sensitive towards the feelings and beliefs of the street children. I was also afraid that my questioning will wake them up to think their actual situation and feel sad or abortive. I informed the children often beforehand when I knew that on the following day we were about to discuss a sensitive topic. Never occurred that someone would have been absent because of that though. I really believe that this study can make improvements in the livelihoods of the street children so I did not just come and do my work and disappear again yet it was highly important not to give any empty promises. I did not say that anything was going to happen to not disappoint them in that way. When studying children, some special points have to be remembered. In our tradition, if one wants to study children one has to have permission of the child’s parents. This was not possible in this case for two reasons. First of all, some of street children do not have parents who I could ask for permission. They may have passed away or disappeared or just not interested in the child anymore. Another important point is that not always the parents of the street children want their best. In 2000 I met a boy who used to come near my home asking for food. He wanted to stay in shadows eating so that his mother could not see him. I asked why and he responded that he is supposed to get money and bring that to his mother so that she can buy alcohol. If he got food instead it would not help her and that would cause a terrible fight at home. Letting parents know about the study could cause harm to the children. Many of them do not want to be in touch with their parents anymore so they remained wherever they were. If the permission from parents was required even in these kinds of very special cases that would make this sort of studies impossible and push street children even more to the margin.

I wanted to give something to these children as I felt that they were partly giving me my degree. I took food and drink every time with me to the streets. I felt that I took their time from their work and other activities, so the least I could do was to compensate the loss they might suffer. I have to admit that in the end they saw me as a friend and asked a lot of things such as if I thought that they could manage in school or in rehabilitation and so on. I tried to be stimulating and helped them with some official matters as identity papers and school material. We also had a sports day when we played football and ate and also a biology day when my local tutor came with microscopes and other materials into a park. The children were really happy looking at their hair and hands with a microscope and finding new flowers to learn about. This activity stayed alive even after my home coming. My tutor takes the children once a week to the university campus to make similar tasks and exercises than as during this successful day.

4.6 A normal research day in Pelotas

I tried to cover all different times on the streets except the night, which I considered too dangerous. Still the course of a day was always very similar regardless of the time of my

arrival to the streets. If I came in the morning, I came between 9 and 10. There was no use coming earlier as the children were normally sleeping. In case they were I sat down to observe them and people passing by. Most of the times, I came after lunch if I had not agreed on a walking tour or individual interview. I lived very near Avenida Bento Gonçalvez and already when I started to approach the intersections where the children normally were working they started to run to me screaming “Tia, tia!” or “Finlandesa, finlandesa!” (meaning Finnish). I had always with me something to eat and the children chose a place for us to sit down and eat. Normally we discussed some topic while we were eating. First they told me what they had done since we had last met and then they wanted to know what I had done. Then we talked about the things I wanted to know. We were normally about fifteen sometimes more sometimes less. After this kind of sessions I normally interviewed one or two children one by one. Depending on how long it took I searched the other children or at least some of them in the places they were working or playing and stayed with them. After an official research day I invited my assistant or two into my home to discuss the day with them. I wanted to know whether they had interpreted certain situations in the same way I had. I also asked about some occasions when I was not completely sure whether someone was hopped up or not. Once I also was not sure where an argument had started and asked my assistant whether he had noticed something. These discussions were necessary and very helpful as a way of triangulation to make this study reliable.

After a couple of weeks I could not walk in Pelotas without having street children around me so my observation continued even if I was going to buy food to home or going into a restaurant. The children convoyed me almost where ever I was going and they started to recognize the car I was driving already from far and came to jump around it when I stopped in traffic lights. These were good opportunities too to observe the children even though they did not behave in the same way towards me as they would towards other people. Once after a day on the field the children accompanied me when I went to buy bread to take home. The children advised me that I should buy sausage instead of cold cuts because it was cheaper. A man hired to make sure that street children do not stop in front of the bakery came to chase the children away when they proudly started to explain that no, no, this lady is from Finland and they were just helping her and telling her what she should do. The man did not want to hear any of it but they were content helping me. They did not know this but yes, they were doing a good job in showing me what their life is like.

4.7 Probable problems

Someone might claim that the lack of girls in my study is problematic. According to Conticini girls tend to be less mobile compared to boys and they often stay nearer their homes in the neighbourhood108 which was also obvious in the case of Pelotas. It can be questioned if this has an affect on my study. I am sure in a way that it does as the girls are exposed to different dangers than boys but does the lack of girls affect my results? I do not believe so. As the two girls of my study told they can even have more problems than the boys. They have more sexual harassment towards them compared to the boys. Girls may be less visible on the streets than boys but it does not mean that their reality would necessarily be less risky. They get housekeeping jobs more often compared to boys and are also unfortunately more often involved in prostitution109. I still believe that the other dangers encountered by boys are a reality for the girls too. This would mean that at least the child-friendliness according to mainstream concepts would not increase. I also wanted to study particularly the children

108 Conticini, Alessandro (2005) p.77
109 Hecht, Tobias (1998) p.58
living in the city centre. I think that if I had tried to search for girls especially that could have changed the results of this study as the girls are not the ones living in the city centre.

The reality of street children staying in bairros may be somewhat altering. Children there have less job opportunities but on the other hand they may sleep at home at least more regularly compared to the children staying in Centro. As I mentioned, I also had chosen to study particularly the children staying near the city centre. Being so, I believe that absence of girls is not a problem in this particular study. One of the findings is that there are more boys than girls in the city centre which is not exceptional behaviour for street children. The nature of the study would have been different if the bairros were included in the study. This kind of comprehensive and abundant study is sorely needed to be able to respond to the needs of the more excluded part of the society.

I also had to be aware of the lack of trust the children normally have with adults. I had to be conscious that many times these children tell what they expect the listener wants to hear. It is also understandable that togetherness during a long period of time leads to friendship. I had to keep that in my mind for not let it affect my understanding of the things I heard. This is why I use triangulating methods to collect the data. I also had always two other persons with me on the streets and after every day we got together to discuss what I had observed and if we interpreted the things in a similar way. In this way I guaranteed the reliability of the data.

Ages of the children are important results of course also. I have got this information only by asking them. I decided to trust them in that. I also noted that in a way the actual age is less important than the size of the child in terms of the treatment the one gets from the other street children.

One aspect worth mentioning is the development and change in the children of my research group during this research. As I mentioned I had to ask some hard questions that might have awaken emotions in these children. They probably had to think about their own lives more when I was asking about it compared to how much they would otherwise have thought about their lives. Almost at the end of my time in Pelotas two boys of my research group returned back home. They appeared on the streets afterwards also as they enjoyed the company but they were clean and tidy and encouraged other children to make the same choice and return home. This can have had an affect to some of the answers these children gave me, at least the one who actually decided to return home. I evaluated the things they said to me after the home going and my conclusion was that the tone of their attitudes towards the street life and its aspects had not changed.
5 The Results

5.1 Places used and activities in these places

I will categorize the results of this study according to the different places and functions of these places which came up during my time in Pelotas and which appeared to be the most important to the children. The individual life stories are also important determinants but as this study is more about the places and the particularities of these places as locations for activities, the closer information of these particular children is only in appendix where the stories can be found in the case of interest.

When spending two months researching street children it is obvious that aspects of their everyday life; like activities and places come up. I found it the most concrete to show my results by illustrating the places in Pelotas where the street children do their things but what each method I used brought as results into this research. Street children in Pelotas do not try to hide anywhere. This is why it is possible to find information about their places and activities even by only observing them. Even though they are often walking in smaller groups they come to the same places to sleep when night comes. So when walking in Pelotas in the morning the street children can be seen sleeping on the intersection of the Avenida Bento Goncalves and Rua Felix da Cunha, playing in parks like Parque Dom Antônio Zattera, begging in Centro or on Avenida during the day, buying drugs in Navegantes or Castilhio and returning to work to the Avenida later on again. I have pointed the most common bairros and more specific places of street children in the following map.
Figure 3: *Bairros* where the street children are normally

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Results

Figure 4: Specific places of used by street children. 1. Intersection of Avenida Bento Goncalvez and Rua Felix da Cunha, 2. Intersection of Avenida and Rua Andrade Neves, 3. Intersection of Avenida and Rua Alm. Barroso, 4. Supermarket National, 5. The best part of the street Rua Sete de Setembro, 6. Pedestrian part of the street Rua Andrade Neves, 7. Parque Dom Antônio Zattera

The children know their city well but they do not know the names of the streets. Not all of them can read so for this reason these children do not use the names of the streets often. They describe different locations by telling which places are near to a certain location. This kind of places can be restaurants, a child welfare office or a fountain for instance. The street children of my study conceive Pelotas as large. One reason for that is that one cannot walk to all the places in the city. Compared to Porto Alegre or Rio Grande, Pelotas is seen as a safe city by the street children. Some of them have been to those places and the rest believe what these “globetrotters” tell them. I will now give an introduction to the places the street children spend the most of their time in.

The children told about their activities and places during interviews very freely. There was nothing they would have said more during the individual in-depth interviews. Just once the other children were telling about one fourteen-year-old when he was absent.

“When he wakes up he tries to find breakfast, begs for) some money and goes to the centre to have lunch and get more money. Then he goes to Navegantes (a suburb where

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111 The base for the map from: http://www.pelotas.com.br/politica_urbana_ambiental/planejamento_urbano/mapas_municipio/mapa_urbano_impressao.pdf 3.3.2008 15:00
the children go to buy drugs) to buy crack. Then he goes to the house of a gay man to...earn more money.”

My observations support these activities and locations. During the different times of the day the street children can be seen in different places. I even saw that “gay man” the children were telling about and the boy of fourteen (that was told to go to the house of that man) kept quiet and low profile. During a certain period of afternoon he was not seen on the streets but of course I cannot be sure whether he was just wondering around or whether the story of the other children was true.

5.2 Places – An overview

5.2.1 Avenida Bento Goncalvez

Avenida Bento Goncalvez or more familiarly Avenida, as street children call it, is one of the main avenues of Pelotas. It is situated on the north side of the Centro, the commercial centre of the city, dividing the central part of the town. Avenida is from seven to eight kilometres long and is one of the busiest streets in Pelotas so it offers various spots for begging and working which are the main activities of a normal day of a street child in Pelotas.

Avenida Bento Goncalvez is one of the most common places for street children in Pelotas. It is used as a working place, kitchen, and bedroom and the parks nearby function as playrooms if I can use these terms of public places. As mentioned, Avenida is one of the busiest streets in Pelotas and for this reason it offers so many opportunities for employment in traffic lights or as a car caretaker but also because of its pedestrian part in the middle. The nearer the east end of the Avenida the more there are opportunities to get food. There are some restaurants that offer food for street children every now and then. Parts of the Avenida are used for different purposes and the possibilities for altering activities in those locations are commonly agreed on. The children are almost unanimous that the Centro is better when trying to get food and Av. Bento Goncalves is better for working. The pedestrian part of the Avenida between the streets Felix da Cunha and Alm. Barroso is most often used for working as a car caretaker. The sellers in the trailer restaurants in the pedestrian part of the Avenida are friendly towards the street children so this creates a more appealing working environment. When a child wants to earn money by juggling there are some intersections better than others on the Avenida. Avenida has traffic into two directions and a pedestrian part in the middle as mentioned. The best locations for juggling are the intersections of the streets Alm. Barroso, Anchieta on the side for traffic from east to west and Andrade Neves and Alm. Barroso on the side for traffic from west to east. Normally the children go to beg in front of a supermarket National near the Avenida. This supermarket is on the next block from the Avenida on Alm. Barroso so it is near and easy to reach only by some footsteps. The area of this supermarket is enclosed and the street children are not allowed to enter but they stay around the banisters waiting for someone to come out. Then they ask something to eat. When people leave they often give something for street children outside the barriers.
Rain also offers great opportunities for playing. Avenida floods almost every time when it rains and serves as a swimming pool for children as the cars have to stop passing. Rain forms also excellent mud for moulding in parks near Avenida as in Parque Dom Antônio Zattera.
Parque Dom Antônio Zattera is located near Avenida. According to the children it is one of the most beautiful places in the whole Pelotas. During the hot summer days its trees offer shadow from the burning sun and unfinished maintenance work gives opportunities for playing. There are some sandheaps where street children practice acrobatics for instance. There is also a small football ground which is one of the favourite places when someone happens to find something that serves as a ball.

Avenida is mainly understood as safe and street children (also other people living on the streets) often gather to sleep on the Avenida (except those who return home for nights). That is a good place to sleep because of the shed which protects us when it is raining explains a boy of the age of fourteen showing a building equipped with a shed in the intersection of Avenida and Rua Felix da Cunha.
One boy of fourteen prefers sleeping where all the others are:

“\textit{I like sleeping here. It’s better here with the others. It’s safer here than in the parks}”

Another boy of fourteen showed also another place where they used to sleep during one of our walking tours, also on the Avenida.

“\textit{We used to sleep here. It was good. But we left probably so much garbage that they (authority) put guards here and they do not let us sleep here}”,

Explains the boy with a meaningful grin on his face. According to the boys there are always reasons why they cannot stay in public places. “This was a good place to sleep because here never rains” he continues showing the area under the shed on the Avenida Bento Goncalves. The area is also full of shops and a popular icecream bar. On the corner of the entrance to the football stadium of Pelotas there are cardboards used by street children to stay warm when the nights get colder (see the picture 6). Sometimes the cardboards are used also to cover the face for more privacy or to protect from the sun during the summer time.
The children described the football stadium as one of the good things about Avenida. One boy of fourteen told about his experiences with rich football players:

“When they (the players) go in to play or to training, they sometimes give small change or something to eat to us. They are really cool with us”

Because of its business Avenida is seen as safe. There is always some people there and therefore the police also act less aggressively towards street children on the Avenida.

There is only one place on the streets where the children normally wash themselves and also drink. It is a pipe in Parque Dom Antônio Zattera where the children also often gather to play. This park is quite large and normally among the majority of the society, understood as dangerous, at least during the night time.
The children revealed that the Avenida is safer in the east compared to west. Almost right away when Avenida ends in the east begins Navegantes and on the west side begins Castilios both suburbs where the children by drugs. Castilios is at the moment rougher in terms of drug traffic and because of that more dangerous. As the boy of sixteen put it:

“It’s much safer near Big (another supermarket). The more you go there (showing to the direction to Castilios), the more dangerous it becomes. If I go there they come and do this (shows a gesture of cutting his throat)”

5.2.2 Centro

Centro is one of the districts in Pelotas. It contains the majority of commerce in the city and is also the location for many shops and restaurants. Avenida is busy with cars, but in Centro people are walking, shopping and having lunch. Centro also has much more restaurants compared to other places in Pelotas, which makes it easier to find food there compared to other places like Avenida or bairros. One boy of fourteen told that he gets lunch from certain restaurants in the city centre everyday particularly from one which is located in the intersection of the streets Andrade Neves and Tiradentes. Other children said that it is at least easier there compared to other locations in the town but they do not get something always when they go and ask. The walking tours revealed that especially the street Rua Sete de Setembro in the heart of Pelotas is one of the best streets in terms of getting something to eat. The boy of seventeen said that:
“Sometimes outside the restaurants people give us leftovers. Sometimes they give money and do not give food. Sometimes they give food and do not give money. Senhora it goes like that.”

The most generous restaurants are situated on that street according to the children on my study. The part of the street Sete de Setembro, where the restaurants are located, is only for pedestrians so during the afternoon that is the place to be as people are walking to restaurants for lunch for instance. There are some lottery halls also on the same street. The children tell laughing that those places are excellent for begging. People go there and actually do something quite stupid. When one begs in front of such a place, people easily want to do something to make their conscious better, the children said during one of the focus group interviews. As the girls in my study revealed the pedestrian part of the street Andrade Neves is also a profitable place to be during the afternoon hours.

As mentioned, street children normally get together around the intersection of Rua Felix da Cunha and Avenida when night comes but on the other hand the marquises of the shops in the Centro offer shelter from rain and for this reason some children choose Centro sometimes to be their bedroom.

5.2.3 Areal

Normally the activities of street children are located quite near to Avenida but sometimes they wander to the suburb of Areal which is situated between Centro and Dunas on the northern side of the Avenida. Areal is a large and partly advantageous suburb but there are zones that are very poor. The children go to the poorer zones of the region, ring the door bells and beg food or clothes directly from homes. Housing in Centro is more expensive and for this reason poorer people live outside of the Centro and experiences of street children prove that poorer
people are more generous and giving than thrifty. One time I asked why they go to Areal, if they are staying near to the city centre. The boy of sixteen answered:

“It is strange senhora, but rich people give us less than less advantaged people”.

The children walk to Areal. The district is next to the one of Centro so it is possible to walk there without problems.

5.2.4 Dunas

Dunas is a suburb actually inside Areal on the north side of the Centro. Most of the children in my study are originally from there. Dunas is quite poor and during the years I have known Pelotas and visited the city it has just become more and more dangerous. According to the children and Vagner Borges there have even been times when the police or post men refused to enter the area. There are not much things to do in Dunas so many youngsters come to the city centre to find those things. There are not many activity opportunities in Dunas and the children say that this is the reason they roam to the Centro almost every day. As the boy of seventeen said:

“There’s nothing to do in Dunas. I come here (Avenida) because I can’t do anything in Dunas. It’s not good for me to stay here with people using drugs, because I end up using as well but...Now I stay a bit more in Dunas because the girls are more interested in me”

Social exclusion and different risks are everyday reality in bairros like Dunas. There have been initiatives to improve the livelihoods in this part of Pelotas but a lot still needs to be done. Sand roads of the suburb are named by numbers. There are official roads until number 27 but after that settlements are illegally built shanties. According to the children the bigger the number the more dangerous the area becomes. As a boy of fourteen put it:

“Tia, it’s not for Senhora to go further from the Road 28. It gets really heavy”

The home of the sixteen-year-old and seventeen-year-old boys is located on the Road 32. This is the way the sixteen-year-old described his decision to hit the road:

“I came here like a dog eating everything I could find. There’s nothing to eat back home”

The girls also revealed that some bigger boys try to kiss them in Dunas.

“Sometimes there (in Dunas) are bigger boys who try to kiss me even if I don’t want to. Luckily Marcos and the others came to help me”

This is the way a thirteen-year-old girl described once the events in Dunas.

5.2.5 Navegantes and Castilhio

Navegantes is situated about 1,8 kilometres from the Avenida Bento Goncalves to east. Castilhio is about 2 kilometres from the intersection of Avenida and Felix da Cunha to west,
towards the bus station (see the map of Pelotas. Navegantes and Castilhio are situated relatively near and for this reason among other bairros they are more attractive options to procure drugs. There are shops to buy thinner and glue also in Centro but the owners are sometimes worried about getting into trouble if they sell thinner for street children.

These two suburbs were mentioned only in situations when talking about drugs. The same kinds of social problems, illustrated in the case of Dunas, are reality in bairros like Navegantes and Castilhio also. Castilhio is very dangerous as a whole and according to my street adviser Daví even police have to have a good reason before entering the area, at least during the dark time. As the boy of sixteen told me:

"I’m afraid of that place. It’s dangerous. There’s a lot of deaths"

Navegantes is not as dangerous as Castilhio according to the children of this research. The suburb is divided into three zones where the zone number three is the most dangerous. It is dangerous mainly because of the drug trafficking. The next picture is taken from one of the spots where the street children go to buy crack and other drugs. The children comprehend that Castilhio is near to the bus station and Navegantes near the supermarket called BIG.

5.2.6 The best places
These so called best places are places the street children often dreamed of even though they were rarely able to go to these places. These places are for instance Laranjal and Barro Duro. They are both suburbs near the Lagoon Lagoa dos Patos. Laranjal and Barro duro are famous for their beautiful beaches good parties, especially during the Carnival season. According to some children Laranjal is very safe and people there are extremely generous. One boy of fourteen described the time he spent in Laranjal as follows:

Picture 9. The most dangerous street in Navegantes 3. The main spot for trafficking. Here the children buy crack
“When I was hanging out there nobody was disturbing me. I even slept in some homes there. Senhora, it was really good”

According to a boy of twelve these afore mentioned places are the best places he knows. He told me with beaming eyes about various things one can do on the beach.

“Senhora, the best thing in my life is to run in the water. It’s so cool! And playing football is so great there too. If one falls down one won’t even hurt oneself”

There were some children who said that Avenida and more especially Parque Dom Antônio Zattera is the best place in Pelotas but these two were places in the minds of the street children. They had been to those places long time ago.

5.3 Daily routines of the street-children

5.3.1 Morning activities

The days of street children in Pelotas are quite similar in nature. They do pretty much the same things everyday and hang out in the same places. Their normal activities are begging, working, searching for food, playing and sleeping. Some of the children use drugs and use time finding it also. In appendix there are time-geographical figures of the movements of the street children of this research.

Most of the times, the day begins on the Avenida or on the intersection of Avenida and Rua Felix da Cunha where the street children wake up. We were making time geographical figures of their normal days and they told that they wake up a bit before noon. Just one of the children, a boy of fourteen, is enrolled in education. He is also very proud of being studying and he like to show things that he can do. Probably because of his cabeca boa “good head” he sometimes can even do small jobs in a florist near the intersection where he normally works in. Brothers of fifteen and thirteen said that they understand that they have to study but they were fighting at school (in every school they have been to) and now none of the schools would like to have them. Even their grandmother says the same thing. One boy of twelve years said:

“I asked my mother to matriculate me in school but she would not.”

I asked why but he did not know. All of the children except one were saying that they would like to study…At least one day. But at the moment the time is used for other things.

This is probably the reason why the children told that they wake up relatively late. The first thing they do is to ascertain that they are alive. As a boy of fourteen put it:

“When I wake up I discover, hey I am alive. Then I check out if I still have my chinelos (Brazilian toe shoes). If everything is alright I will go and find some breakfast”.

The street children do not go to the Centro in the morning but more often to the supermarket National to try to find some breakfast. National is near Avenida as mentioned and just a few blocks from the intersection of Felix da Cunha, the bedroom. After that the day begins filled with hard work and playing.
5.3.2 Struggling for money and food

The majority of the time of street children goes to the struggle to earn money. As mentioned, the children are mainly seen on one of the principle avenues of the city Avenida Bento Goncalves or city centre and more precisely the pedestrian part of the street Andrade Neves or Rua Sete de Setembro. These two locations are the best ones to get money and food, so activities like begging, juggling and car care taking happen in these places. The most of the time is spent trying to get money. But there are certain times when it is better to be in Centro and others when better on the Avenida. Lunch time is the best in Centro as people get out from offices and other work places. Otherwise the Avenida and quite endless lines of cars offer an opportunity to work in the intersections of Avenida.

The street children normally earn money by juggling with little balls made of plastic bags and sand. The children wait in the intersections (principally in the intersection of Avenida Bento Goncalves with Rua Andrade Neves and Alm. Barroso) looking at the traffic lights. When the light turns to red they start juggling or showing capoeira (Brazilian martial art) or other acrobatics. Just before the lights turn green they circulate between the cars asking for small change.

It is amazing how every single child knows how to juggle. When asking them who taught them they just smile and say: no one. By observing how people react when children approach the car in traffic lights it appears to be very varying. At times people even say a couple of words but more often they just close the window of the car.

“Normally they are afraid and just roll up the window when they see us coming”,

Tells a boy of fourteen who dances very skilfully and shows often acrobatic movements in front of the cars. Once I asked why the people are so afraid then. Another guy of fourteen said that:

“They are afraid that we are coming to abduct them, but we do not do that. We do not even have to. We always get enough to buy our things”.
Other continues:

"They are taught that we are going to buy drugs with the money they give us and they do not want to give anymore".

According to the children, when they do not feel like juggling they can beg in the intersections of the streets crossing the Avenida Bento Goncalves or take care of cars on the same avenue. The children show respect towards the work they do. One time when I was passing by one fourteen-year-old with lunch I had brought to them he said to me:

"Senhora! I cannot come yet. I am taking care of this white car and I promised to that Mister that I will take care of his car. When he comes I will find you."

I know that this boy loves pizza which I had with me and I had not seen him eating yet during that day but still he decided to stay taking care of that car. Later on I asked whether he knew the owner of the car but he did not. So he could not even be sure whether he was going to get any money but a promise was a promise.

Most of the children wander to the Centro between twelve and three o’clock. Nine out of twelve wander there for lunch. It is not far away. Only one kilometre depending a bit on what side of the Centro the children are going. As mentioned the best location for finding food is the pedestrian part of the street Rua Sete de Setembro in the Centro. It is a relatively long street, but the pedestrian part with generous restaurants is completely reachable by foot. Normally the afternoon is better for getting money and food compared to the morning. They
are almost the same restaurants every day that give food to these children. The children know already that if a restaurant gave them food yesterday, it is probably better to visit another restaurant on the following day to have a better chance of getting something. The children have smashed buckets or tins where they get their food. Fingers serve as cutlery but sometimes children get spoons from icecream bars or use even sticks found in parks. Also people give food to street children in front of the restaurants.

The children explained that the most lucrative days are Friday and Saturday, both in terms of getting food and money. Also Sunday is relatively decent but the traffic calms down much earlier on Sundays compared to Friday and Saturday. The girl of twelve said that she would never miss Saturday and Sunday. She does not do tricks as the boys do but she has a beautifully made box where she puts the coins she earns. As mentioned it is substantially easier for minor sized children to earn money. A small twelve-year-old told that he gets easily 24 (50SEK) reais per day. It is not far from the statements of the other, older children. A boy of fourteen explained about emoluments in the following way:

“One has to know the places to be in terms of earning money: during the afternoon in front of Otto (a restaurant) and at night in front of Panvel (a pharmacy on the Avenida). On a bad day one earns from 15 to 20 reais and on a good day from 30 to 40 reais. But you have to be clever though. Rain is more profitable for us; people feel pity then and give us more. The same thing on Christmas. Last Christmas we got 70 reais both, me and Rafael”
Even if the children are quite content with their earnings a boy of fourteen reminds that it is not that easy always:

“Sometimes you get only 5 reais during a whole day”

5.3.3 Playing

The rest of the day is spent working and playing for most of these children. All of them disclosed the best thing in their lives to be playing. They play football with an old football with no air in it; they run a race or practice capoeira or acrobatics. Parque Dom Antônio Zattera, near Avenida is one excellent place for sports and playing. Sometimes though, the children are chased away from the sand heaps at the park, at least if they were annoying or bothering the workers in the park. The children were talking all the time so just observing them when they were working gave a lot of information about their mutual relationships. These relationships were interesting and important also when trying to understand their everyday life and survival. Interviews conducted individually and in groups of course gave more profound understanding how they perceive things and what they think about loyalty and friendship. Street children of Pelotas normally were hanging out in smaller groups so understanding the relationships between them was relevant. The groups made often playing easier compared to if they were alone. The importance of play came across actually when talking about working. One of the boys at age of fourteen said that his mum has money for food but at times he wants to play with toys or computers.

“We have food at home but I want some futilities in my life too, but of course my mum doesn’t have to be able to buy me that. That’s the reason why I work”

He says the futility with a grin on his face. I did not say anything but thought that I do not know any child who would not like to have any toys at all. It was important to be able to play. After all that was the best thing in life. Sometimes two of the children in one traffic light were juggling while some others were playing. Then they changed the positions and the others started working and gave the two some time for leisure. These groups I was also using as the groups for group interviews. The groups were approximately of four children but often they got together and did things as a bigger group, but as I mentioned this is often an occasion which gets the attention of the police too. Os menores, the minors were more together than os maiores, the adults who were not even part of this particular study. The importance is not that much the age of a person but more the size. One boy of sixteen is the size of an eight-year-old. He never grew more because of drugs. His was often mobbed and when he was talking he often was cut in even by much younger children. They were often playing around with each other. Often in a manner that to me seemed quite harsh but they were saying that it is just for fun. In the plays of the street children violence is reflected. They wrestle often and strangle each other sometimes so much that I asked my assistant whether we should intervene. But no, they have common rules they explained and they would not hurt each other, at least not severely as they explained. It was interesting to note however that all the best things like playing and football were social happenings. It was obvious that being with the others was better than being alone.
5.3.4 Evening

After having found drugs or after having played enough, street children get together to talk and just hang around. I was often present in those sessions and after noticing how well they functioned, used the situations as focus group sessions. Street children have a lot of dreams just as any other children of having their own family and kids or profession. Some of them have more far reaching dreams meanwhile others wish that God would give them still another day to live. During one of our focus group sessions we talked about dreams and opportunities. The children of my study did not think that they had too many opportunities. The way they look like hinders their access to facilities that the city of Pelotas offers to its inhabitants.

“Senhora, once I tried to go in to a restaurant but they did not let me. I showed my money and said that I could pay but the waiter slapped me on my face. This is the reason why we can only buy sandwich. Real food can just be found in restaurants.”

Said a boy of thirteen. Another boy age of seventeen was listening to us and he said:

“We cannot go in to shops or restaurants like this... sloppy”.

Many of the children already know what they want to be as adults. They apprehend that they have to study to be able to become dentist, police or dancer for instance. Every half year the one responsible for a child has to matriculate the child in a school. This seemed to be a problem in four of the cases. Two boys (brothers aged of 15 and 13) had been fighting so much in those schools they had been to that it was difficult to find school that would accept them said their grandmother I met just a couple days before I was leaving Pelotas.
Actually when talking about drugs the boys started telling about the projects there used to be in Pelotas. Nowadays these projects are not open to these children. Mostly the problems begin when they say that they are not studying. Children of the projects and different activities should be studying to be allowed to enter. The other problem in terms of schooling and activities is the drugs. If using drugs a child cannot enter in any project. Some of the boys of my group have even lost their opportunity to detoxication and rehabilitation after that. Actually there are not any place nearby Pelotas which would combine detoxication and rehabilitation in one and the same place. Some of the children talk about these institutions with dislike and even fear. Children can get their bodies antagonized from drugs but there is no place after that which was closed and would help them mentally, to get the strength to be without drugs. One boy of seventeen has quit the detoxication and open rehabilitation twice and cannot enter anymore. “He has already fallen down from the safety net”, if citing Dr. Olavo. According to him there must be a drug dealer searching for him, willing to kill him. That must be the reason why he wants to be detoxicated this time and the reason why we cannot let him enter according to him.

I noticed that the more children had spent time on the streets the more difficult it became to name any dreams. The most difficult this was to a boy at age of fourteen who does not have parents or a home. They were killed in a car accident when he was smaller (was not sure of his age at that time). It seems that the more they spend time in the street life the more they have perhaps doubts in terms of future. They seem to be unbelieving and do not say aloud their dreams, not even to themselves. The boy of sixteen would like to help other people living on the streets.

“Senhora, I’m sure that I would be good at that job. I know how the street life is, I could know better how to approach people as I’m one of them” explained the boy.

One boy of thirteen said that he understands that there need to be resources before they can get anything which to me sounded very clever. He continued by saying that if he could choose anything in this world he would like to have an all day project in Pelotas where they could go:

“I would probably be a place for us. A motive to be without drugs. A thing, which would make us think about the future”.

When he had said that the boy of fourteen, who had not said a single dream earlier said:

“I just would like someone to help us. I would like to have a home of my own”.

When I was interviewing them individually I asked whether they believe in a brighter future, in a future out of the streets. Only the boy of fourteen and thirteen did not answer directly yes, they do believe. The boy of thirteen said:

“Senhora, the life on the streets is as if we were all the time balancing between hope and despair. Sometimes one is winning, at times the other.”

Faith came up in our discussions often. We did not go through who believes in what but belief seemed to be something quite natural to the children. They have an interesting belief in that everything goes the way it was meant to go and that the destiny is exactly how it should be. The children were sure that if not already the next day, the future will be better. They have a relatively positive picture and hope for the future in spite of the circumstances they live in.
Some of them criticized the God sometimes. One thirteen-year-old boy, who makes lyrics and sings, sang:

“Is it so that the God sees this misery on the streets, is it so that He will show us how to survive, and is it so that he will help us...”

They also ask for more time to live and opportunities from God. I never saw them praying but the way they talked about God was full of trust and belief. On day when I was saying good bye for the day and asked a fourteen-year-old boy whether he will be around the following day, he said that:

“Of course I will if the God gives me one more day”

In a way this might have been a joke, because on my last day on the field everyone was sure that after some years we will meet again.

5.3.5 Night

When the night comes working still continues. Some of the children return to the intersections of Avenida and Alm. Barroso, Achieta or Andrade Neves and continue begging and juggling. Some just hang around on Avenida with friends using drugs or just talking and joking around, some continue working until very late. The boy of thirteen said:

“I know the best days of different bars. I come every night and take care of cars in front of the bars and clubs.”

As I showed in the table of the situations of the children five of the twelve children always sleep on the streets. These children stay awake much longer than the ones sleeping at home, but when Friday and Saturday come, ten out of twelve stay up until two or five o’clock in the morning, sometimes even until later. Most of the children are from Dunas and can walk home. Depending on the side of Dunas it takes approximately a half an hour or 45 minutes to walk there or just 10 minutes by bike. A fourteen-year-old told that he just has to help with the family income:

“When having earned ten reals (Brazilian money) I go home.”

He continued:

“I go home always. It takes only ten minutes if my bike doesn’t break down”

Only some prefer going home. The boy of twelve said:

“I do not want me and Marcos (the name changed) to stay with the other boys. I do not want him (Marcos) to start sniffing again so I prefer going home”.

Even Marcos said:

“One has to be strong and intelligent to be able to stay away from the drugs if staying on the streets.”
Results

The street children roam around the street Rua Felix da Cunha when bedtime approaches. Most of them gather to this particular intersection to sleep. They do not feel secure at night but the proximity of other children makes them feel a bit better. It also warms them up during the winter time. As the tiny boy of sixteen depicted it:

“I’m afraid of sleeping. The bigger boys keep bothering me. I’m afraid that someone comes to stab me or pinches my stuff”

When the cars passing by wake the street children up by beeping or people by informing that the children could adjourn or get out of the way, as detailed in Diário Popular, a similar day recommences; day after day, week after week and year after year

5.4  “The life on the streets is not like the life at home you know…” – Crucial aspects affecting the daily routines

5.4.1  The girls on the streets

Even the girls were equally in the little disputes, at least these girls. On the other hand there were just a few girls on the streets. I asked if they knew why and they said:

“The girls really have to have it rough at home to choose the streets. Here on the streets we (the boys) are always “on top of them” and they do not like that.”

I can believe that. As I was observing them, there was always someone teasing the girls and willing to be near them. There was one day when some older guys had tried to kiss the girl of thirteen without any permission and the boy of twelve (the brother to the girl) and his best friend, a boy of thirteen went to help her. They said that they would even kill if someone tried to hurt their siblings. The children told that the girls are also more often taken into compulsory admission and involuntary treatment compare to the boys. As mentioned they stay more easily at home supporting the family in the varying situations. The children also perceived the girls more reliable and for that reason better able to get employment. When I accompanied the discussion in Brazil and observed the nature and amount of announcements of missing girls compared to the boys I found the risks of the girls greater than those of the boys. As they get employment as a home help more easily they also encounter risk for sexual abuse more easily.

5.4.2  Importance of friendship

They all say the same thing about helping each other.

“We help everyone even though they were not our friends.”

No one ever said to me that there would be any problems among them. The older people on the streets caused problems at times. Most of the children said that os maiores bother them.

“Sometimes they come and steel our money or clothes when we are sleeping” - boy of thirteen

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Results

Os menores did not appear to be afraid of being robbed by the other small children, at least not during the day time. Every boy has his own little bag hanging on his waist. When playing, they often gave the bag to someone who was meant to take care of it while they were doing somersaults or running a race.

The importance of the friendship and the social life came across also by talking about playing. The best plays were the ones involving a lot of children. Also when practicing acrobatics, dancing or capoeira the other children judged the success of the movements and gave ideas how to improve.

On the other hand there are much more in it than just loyalty and desire to help. One boy of thirteen had completed his detoxication just before Christmas and tried to manage without any drugs. One day he relapsed to inhale thinner again. His best friend told us later that the inhaling had been the idea of one boy of seventeen, who also is one of my research group. An alarming way to think about the friendship and the actual friends came from this thirteen-year-old boy:

“When you take five to be your friends and thirty to be your enemies, you will see that the five stab your back and the thirty will come and help you”.

The children told that on Saturday’s people from different bairros come to the Avenida Bento Goncalez and this often causes fights. It is enough to be a friend to someone who another has a disagreement with. As revealed in the figure of the children, some of these children are from different bairros but I did not see this kind of loyalty fights during the time I spend in Pelotas. The carnival time is even worse in this sense I discovered. But as the children mentioned, Saturday is one of the best days in terms of begging so that day attracts more children to the streets.

Despite of these negative aspects related to the mutual relationships of the street children, the importance of the friendships and friends could be seen. The looks and touching of these children transmitted the best how important it was to have someone near who understands them and wants to know how they are doing. Normally it is just another age mate. One of the greatest fears of the street children was also to loose someone dear. When I asked for an example they said: Like a friend. Once when a thirteen-year-old boy started inhaling again the one taking care of him was the twelve-year-old boy. He told me:

“Normally I want to go home for the night (he lives in the house of a friend). Now I take care of my friend (the 13-year-old). I don’t leave him here on the streets alone with the other people using drugs. I stay with him and look after him so that nothing bad will happen to him”

Mostly the street children are not jealous or disaffected. If one of them succeeded it seemed to be a victory for all of the children. During my time in Pelotas one of the boys at age of thirteen got into a dancing group. All the others helped him to wake up in time to practice and smelled his jogging shoes to be sure that they “smelt new”. Everyone wanted him to be tidy. Condition for being in this dancing group was a life without any drugs. This ended up being too difficult but when the boy for the first time took a piece of clothing and wet it in the thinner the boy of sixteen tried to back him:
“Marcos, don’t do that! You are better than this and we believe that you can do this. Don’t throw away your opportunity to get out of this situation”

The boy of sixteen was inhaling thinner at the same time but hugging Marcos strongly and when talking to him he held Marcos’ shoulders and looked straight to his eyes. Unfortunately this support was not enough. The sixteen-year-old did not have the tools an adult professional would have had.

5.4.3 Relationship with “os normais”

The relationships with os normais, the normals, as the children call the people who are not living on the streets, were easy to observe. I was examining the undertakings of the children and os normais during the time I was simply observing but also during our walking tours and the conversation sessions we often had in the Praca do Macacos (Parque Dom Antônio Zattera). As these children live or at least spend most of their time in the public places with the mainstream society, the relationship with this more advantageous part of the society is crucial in determining the livelihoods of the street children and also in how they see and experience Pelotas. The articles I referred to earlier talk a clear language of preconceptions about these children.

I already described the normal situation in the traffic lights when children approach the cars and the situation does not change much in other places. A grin of dislike is often seen on the faces of the people passing by or a simple inexpressiveness as if the person would not have seen anything. People were staring at me and my colleagues when we were doing our daily research. In the end of my time in Pelotas the newspaper of the Pelotas region, Diário Popular, wanted to interview me about my work and “my children”, as they called my research group. I talked with the kids and explained the request of the interviewer and what it could cause to them. Almost all of them wanted to participate. During this interview I heard one boy of fifteen to say:

“I have spent a lot of time on the streets and this is the first time we have someone who listens to us.”

Another occasion showing the lack of connection between the children and os normais was when I happened to ask the time while we were on our walking tour with the boy of thirteen. “Just a moment”, he said to me and ran a couple of meters ahead to ask a man what time it was, using even the word Sir when talking to the man. The man just looked at the boy from top to toe and remained silent until I reached them and asked again. He answered politely. The boy just said to me:

“It is very difficult to help you Miss.”

At least lack of the etiquette could not have been the problem. Some of the sellers in the trailer restaurants or bars in the middle of the Avenida Bento Goncalves seem to be friends of these children. Every now and then they get food from these bars and they can go and drink water in the trailers. During the winter time the sellers even keep the belongings of the street children, like blankets and clothes while the children are working and playing so they do not have to be worried of someone stealing their things. But after all, they have given the children an opportunity and got to know them. They do not have any preconceptions anymore.

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The street children in Pelotas discuss their fears, dream and problems with the other children. Sometimes they may get an advice from an adult living on the streets too concerning the dangers on the streets or a probable good price for the crack or the thinner somewhere. Mostly the only advice or help they get from an adult comes from a normal who says that: “you should get a job”, or “go home and stop hanging out here”. Good advices, yet impossible to be implemented. One time a boy was walking on Avenida bento Goncalvez. He did not talk to anybody but was passing by two men of the mainstream society. One of these men got up and kicked the boy on his back so that he fell down on his face. The man who kicked just said that the boy could come and fight if he wanted to. The boy did not want to. When I told about what I had seen to a man I knew in Pelotas, he said that I could not judge the kicker as I did not know the context. The man said that the boy could have had raped the kickers daughter or sister maybe. I heard that those boys would not get kicked without a reason. This illustrates well the comprehension the people in Pelotas have of the street children. A dialogue between the street children and the adults is minimal.

5.4.4 Drugs

When the street children have collected enough money for the day, some of them return home, some of them go to the bairros searching for drugs. Castilhio and Navegantes are close, so the children can even walk there. These bairros are chosen because they are near. Also the price for the drugs is agreeable in these places. The boy of fourteen said that he is not afraid of entering any bairro. He can reach every location in Pelotas by buss but normally he does not go anywhere else but to those places mentioned above. In general the street children in Pelotas are always associated with the drugs and the alcohol. In a way this is not wrong as, drugs are one part of the everyday life on the streets even though not all the street children use drugs. Every child of my study knew where to get drugs and also they all had friends using drugs. As I wrote in the glossary, when these children talk about the drugs, it includes also thinner and glue, not just marijuana and crack or pedra, stone, as they call crack. Even though the general belief is that all street children consume crack that is not true. Only four of the children of my research group used crack. They were only boys (aged of 17, 16, 14 and 14). Two more boys at age of fifteen and thirteen had been using but with help of detoxication managed to stop consuming crack at least until now. The children were really open about drugs. One time, after one group discussion inadvertently began a new one. One of the children stood up and clarified that we should get the record straight here. They explained to me very clearly what each drug does and how they work. There was not any problem of talking about drugs. They talked about drugs like I talked about candies with my friends. Just when the police came around the children hided their marijuana or the crack pipes made of bottle caps, radio antenna from cars and tape. They agreed on that everyone is affected in different ways by drugs. Someone gets tired and someone gets afraid or mad. One of the boys who uses crack at times, starts tearing his hair on the left side of his head when he is under affection of crack (he does not have any hair on that side around his ear anymore). They also concurred that crack is useful if one needs to stay awake or without food. They told that crack and inhaling thinner take their hunger away. In this context they remembered to remind me that the marijuana leaves them with a terrible hunger. Because of that, it is not useful to be taken when there is a shortage of food. One the other hand marijuana functions well when it otherwise would be difficult to sleep. They agreed on that marijuana makes them feel tired and thereafter it is easier to sleep in whatever conditions. They added however that one has to be prepared to wake up with a horrifying hunger in the morning after.
The children talked about drugs in a way the other children talk about candies as I wrote, without any glimpse of conception that they actually were talking about something illegal and extremely dangerous. They actually thought that drugs were only a problem while one uses them. They believed that the problem would be solved when one got detoxicated. They were certain about the affection of the drugs being eliminated totally in detoxication without leaving any marks. They also believed that one would get an addiction to drugs after trying drugs once.

After one focus group session they started discussing the prices of thinner and crack and marijuana just as if buying was the most normal thing in the world. I asked where they had access to drugs.

"Everyone sells us"

This was the answer which came like in chorus. But they also added that getting drugs was easier in bairros compared to the city centre as the risk for the seller to get caught was slighter. I was told that one pedra of three to four millimetres of diameter costs about five reais (the children were trying to find a small stone on the ground to be able to show me the size of pedra they were talking about). One marijuana costs only one real, meaning that it is the cheapest drug to buy. I do not know what they meant by one marijuana but it seemed to be the most normal thing to talk about one marijuana even though I never figured out how much it actually was. I was shown approximately how much it was but I have no idea how much it would be in grams.
Results

Thinner is much easier to get. The children told that most of the stores selling paints sell them thinner too. When buying thinner, Navegantes or Castilhio are the places to be as mentioned. The risk for the sellers is much smaller there compared to Centro, the same thing that with the stronger drugs. In the past the inhaling of glue was much more popular but nowadays, they told, the glue has been changed into the thinner. Seven out of twelve inhaled thinner. They were only boys (aged 13, 14, 14, 15, 15, 16 and 17). I think three of them were actually shamed about it because always when the girl of thirteen came around they threw the pieces of clothing wet in thinner away and tried to clean their hands. Sometimes they also wet their own clothes to sniff the thinner from their sleeve. I was told that one can of thinner is sufficient for one day. They did not know how many millilitres a can was and they looked me like silly when I said that I did not know how big a can was. They chortled and shook their heads. Everyone obviously knew how big a can was. One boy of thirteen, who had been twice in detoxication, told me about his experience of inhaling:

"When my condition was really bad I inhaled and inhaled and did not stop. I even slept in a petrol station sniffing the ground"

The boy of seventeen told that inhaling makes him calm. He said that he has a lot of anxiety inside him and inhaling makes him feel okay. One time the boys started to discuss how much each of them had put money to buy a bottle of thinner which costs approximately five reais. According to the amount of money one has given to the group to buy thinner, one gets the opportunity to wet his reg.

Likewise to those who used drugs the various substances were undisputed part of life for those who did not use too. One of the boys of fourteen had been selling a while mixture of stearine and wheat flour to a dealer as cocaine. He splits his sides when telling the story:

"The dealer guy was mad. He actually believed me and came after more another day"

Even if the drugs were a normal part of their everyday life they finally get serous when talking about it.

"It’s not a game Senhora. If one owes to a dealer and cannot pay, they won’t even ask. They will find you and kill you. They already killed a ten-year-old girl. They cut her throat”.

I asked that if they knew the reality and knew that they get troubles if they experiment drugs and if the drugs were the worst things in their life, why do they got involved with them. One boy of fourteen said to me:

"When I use drugs, for a moment I feel myself better than the rich people”

Another boy, aged seventeen had been in the detoxication and had returned home. I got to know him just after some weeks in Pelotas because he was not staying on the streets. One day he came to search for his brother on the streets and got into the bad ways again.

"Tia, before there used to be activities for us, handicrafts and so. Not anymore, now we don’t have anything. I begun when I came here to Avenida and didn’t have anything to do. Tia, I wouldn’t like to use but I’m not succeeding.”
5.4.5 Police

Even if the relationship with normais was relatively decent, the relationship with police or guards seemed to be much more inflamed. If there were many street children at the same time playing for instance, the guards or police often came to follow what they actually were doing. Even when we were with them at least three times a week mounted police kept following us. Violence towards street children is something very difficult to understand and it plays remarkable role in the everyday life of these children, during the nights of the weekend it even tries to take the role of a protagonist. I did not see any abusing, but this issue was one of the topics of the focus group interview and also the individual in-depth interview. Once when the boy of fourteen was sleeping on Avenida Bento Goncalves in the place I told was not permitted anymore, police came and pulled the boy to the street from his hair. I did not see this happen but the boy told me on the following day and the other children told the same story afterwards during the same day without knowing that I already knew what had happened. Another time was when the sixteen-year-old was put on fire. He had been inhaling thinner when the police saw him. Sometimes after having earned enough money for the day some children consume drugs, often on Avenida as mentioned. Once the police had taken the thinner and thrown it on top of this boy putting him on fire at the same time. The boy ran to a nearby pond to extinguish himself. This happened when I was in town. Eight out of twelve had been battered by a police or a guards.

“Normally they come asking what we are doing. Even though I say I have not done anything they put me against the wall e hit me”

Told a fifteen-year-old boy. The stories of the boys are all similar.

“They hit my head on a wall twice even though I did not do anything. I was with Michael begging in front of Panvel (a pharmacy) when they saw us. They said they would get us. Some days after at night they found me in Castilios and hit me.”

The children have understood that the police like beating them. The sixteen-year-old told that they like him because he is so small in size. Once when he was beaten by a police he had begged him to stop. He had said that he would faint but they just said that it was what they liked. They say that the rod of police is the worse. The skin somehow sticks to it when they beat and it hurts they explain meanwhile discussing whether they prefer to be beaten with a fist or a rod. Just one boy of twelve and the girls did not reveal same kind of stories with the police. In spite of these stories the children say that they are not afraid of the police and consider people in general to be nice. One boy of fifteen just said:

“They just do not know us”

During the focus group discussions and individual interviews we talked about the fears of the children. I thought that they would be afraid of the police or the drug dealers for instance but no one said to be afraid either of these two. I would conclude them as the dangers of the street children even if they were not afraid of them. Most of the children said to be afraid of drugs and mentioned them as the worse things in their life.

“You know, when the affect of the drug ends one gets really sick. Everyone is affected differently, some get illusions and some gets tired. We can imagine that someone is
coming after us and will stab us. I, when still using crack could have done the same but no one got on my way” - boy, age seventeen.

5.4.6  Security

Five of the children (all boys, aged 12, 13, 15, 16, 17) said to be afraid of stabbing at night.

“They can come while we are sleeping and stab us”

Tells the boy of sixteen. He prefers sleeping with the other children because of that. He says that he feels more secure in a group. One boy of thirteen sat next to him and nodded in token of agreement. The children are also afraid of loosing their family or friends. The boy of thirteen said that it would be the worst thing to happen to him. He also said that he is actually afraid of living too as the world is so bad place. Sometimes the children are also afraid of waking up and not seeing their peers around them. As I heard the children telling their stories I consider the prostitution or rapes huge dangers also in Pelotas. In this sense especially the girls staying on the streets are at risk. One boy of fifteen was relatively quiet when we talked about the fears and the dangers on the streets. Finally he said that he is afraid of having to introduce his children to me if still living on the streets. Everyone of the focus group (at that day there were five children, four boys aged 12, 13, 14, 14 and a girl at age of 13) were nodding when the boy of twelve said that he was afraid of someone who does not like them to come and harm them. In another focus group of three boys, two boys of fourteen said that they are not afraid of anything especially.

“At least we are not dangerous to the normal. We are dangerous perhaps just for us” –boy, age fourteen

I asked these two boys whether they feel themselves secure on the streets, but they said no.

“I’m neither afraid of the majors nor the police but I don’t feel myself secure. The life on the streets is not like the life at home you know....”
6  Analysis

In the analysis I will answer the three first study questions. The section on spaces describes the daily activities of the street-children and the places they have chosen. It also discusses why certain locations have been chosen for these activities. The section ‘Pelotas my friend’ discusses the friendliness of Pelotas based on the concepts of the child-friendly city. The section about attachment to Pelotas opens the discussion of the street children’s attachment to Pelotas, highlighting the feelings of the street-children towards their city. The fourth study question, what does Pelotas look like in the eyes of the street-children, will be addressed in the concluding discussion.

6.1  Spaces – their places

When analyzing the results of this research the concept of place becomes essential. Place can be understood in various ways. On one hand I think Pelotas as a place. The city has its physical settings and its geographical location as any other city. These qualities transform a city from a spot on a map into a place. Another characteristic for a place, as mentioned earlier, is that it is an arena for social interaction and activities. This fact makes Pelotas a place too. There are observable activities in Pelotas as the rich going to and coming from work or festivities and the street children, for instance, playing and working.

To me, a place should be a complete unit even though it contained variations in physical settings and appearances. To be complete in my sense means that people share the same values and beliefs. Ehn and Löfgren described a place to be something wherein people, as one social group, share the same values and beliefs. In this way Pelotas would not fulfil the criteria of a place. I underpin the understanding of the notion of place because it holds in it either the inclusiveness or the exclusiveness. Interaction as a word per se already holds inside togetherness and inclusiveness, which unfortunately breaks the illusion of Pelotas being a place, as exclusion is part of everyday life of the street children in Pelotas. For this reason on the other hand I see Pelotas as a space which contains various places. I do this for some particular reasons. One reason why I see Pelotas a space of places is that the majority of the people living in Pelotas see and feel the city differently from the way the street children see it, even if being “equal” resident of the city. The residents of Pelotas, including the mainstream society and the street children, do not share the same values and beliefs. Another reason to conceive Pelotas as a space of places is the fact that Pelotas for the street children is a large space which retains the places for their daily activities. As mentioned, a place has an appearance and observable activities and is an arena for activities. The street children can be seen almost everywhere in Pelotas but some places are more occupied by them than others. These places are located in a space called Pelotas.

Finding food is one of the everyday activities aside of working or begging. It is relatively easier for the menores compared to maiores as mentioned. Not all the children get food from restaurants. The children in “normal” situations have time for playing in their kindergartens and schools. They do not have to spend the most of their time trying to find possibilities of existing. Instead of having a particular time for playing and enjoying of their lives, the street children play in the middle of working. When the traffic light is green and the cars are passing by the children use the time for playing. Also when they have managed to get enough money already, they practice acrobatics in the parks, run races or play football. Sometimes they even
go to internet cafeterias or “Lanhouses” to play with computers, but only if they are let in. Playing is seen as an important thing as the children try to earn money to be able to play with toys or computers instead of playing football or running a race.

The children using drugs have this activity too. The newspapers publish articles weekly how the street children using drugs are becoming more visible even during the day time. My research group use the day to earn money and to play. When the evening comes it is more likely to meet the children in bairros like Navegantes on the southern part of the city or Castilhio near the west end of Avenida, buying drugs (in the case of the children using drugs). They also reveal that the people use drugs more during the night time because the police beat them if they see someone inhaling or smoking crack. If the children want to use some drugs during the day time, they inhale thinner as its smell is not that strong compared to marijuana or crack for instance. In this way they are less likely to get caught using drugs.

When the night comes and small the trailer fast-food restaurants in the middle of the Avenida open, children’s activities concentrate again on the Avenida and its immediate vicinity, except Lucas, a boy of thirteen, who seeks his way to the best clubs of the particular night. The children continue begging and taking care of vehicles until the small hours. Sometimes even until five o’clock in the morning. The children of my research normally sleep near the Avenida too (the ones who do not return home for the night). Even though they do not feel themselves safe, Avenida is safer than any other place because of slight traffic which continues all round the clock. On the other hand the marquises of the shops in the Centro offer shelter from the rain and for this reason some children choose Centro sometimes to be their bedroom.

The places the street children use, are chosen for the possibilities those places offer for the street children to fulfil their needs. These children would without a doubt have more needs, like those discussed earlier in this thesis, but the possibilities of these particular places guarantee the very existence of these children. They have not chosen these places for fact to be perfect, safe, cosy or enjoyable but rather for the struggle for the existence.

6.2 ‘Pelotas my friend’
Before discussing the attachment of the street children to Pelotas and considering how they see the city, Pelotas per se is needed to be examined. Here I will analyze the places in Pelotas and whether they are theoretically child-friendly or not. In this way I am able to see the child-friendliness of Pelotas as a city according to my conceptual framework.

To be child-friendly, a place needs some basic conditions as I defined earlier (see page number 3). I will examine the places the street children use and the friendliness of the places. The children of this study mentioned just a few places and their activities take place in the same places almost every day. These places, for repetition, are Avenida Bento Goncalvez, Centro, Navegantes, Dunas, Castilhio and Areal (also Laranjal even though they do not go there often). Places should be safe and be able to keep a child away from harm like abuse and crime and satisfy their physical needs. I do not see any discussion here, whether these places are safe or not. The streets of Pelotas in these different locations are extremely dangerous, especially during the night time. Even if the children were not directly afraid, the risk of diseases and deaths are constantly present and these places are not trying to offer much to change the reality as the stories of the children reveal. As I have described, the killings and the abuse are parts of a normal day of the street children. They cannot be sure if they are
going to get killed while sleeping or abused by the police when just playing but they cannot stop existing. On the other hand Avenida and Centro principally satisfy the need for alimentation. Also the children who return home are definitely more protected there than on the streets from danger coming from outside. But on the other hand these homes cannot offer enough as the children still spend the most of their time on the streets. Sometimes even the violence at home can make it dangerous to stay at home.

These places have possibilities for activities. They are not many but there are. The problem is that most of the children are not able to use these possibilities which, leaves them unused and the issues and the difficulties of the children remaining. In this context I talk about the hobby opportunities and the education. Technically there have to be a place in school to every child. The problems appear when a child has spent a long time on the streets as in the cases of my study. It is not easy to start going to school if parents do not have money for the material as pens and notebooks, not even mentioning if a child does not have a home. These were problems that the children found in terms of going to school. According to Dr. Olavo every street child has a home. I asked him what a home means. The response was that it is a place with a relative or in another place. I find, as do the children, a problem here. These homes are not appealing or possible choices for these children for one reason or another. Children are worth more than being objects of abuse and mistreatment according to rights of a child. So, even if all the children had a home it does not necessarily mean that they could stay there. If the boys, as was the case of one of my research group, stepfather shoots the boys mother in her belly trying to kill an unborn baby in front of the eyes of the boy, it is undisputed to presume that the child cannot stay in a home like that, but yes, he has a home.

I highlighted also the projects initiated in Pelotas for the street children. I find it controversial that at the same time ethers bulge out articles describing the growing drug use among the street children, the city does not have an adequate drug rehabilitation possibilities or plans projects and activities only for the street children who do not use any drugs. The actualization of the affordances and thereafter the creation of new ones, which are the conditions for child-friendly places, are very difficult if not impossible in the places mentioned by the street children.

According to the theory a child-friendly place protects the interests of a child as mentioned and for this reason a child feels loyalty for the place too and protects the interests of the place. The street children have their own coping methods to manage with the everyday life. These activities are displeasing for the mainstream society in these places where the street children practice their activities. People try to avoid and get rid of the activities of these children without giving anything in return. According to the children, the programme of Esmola não! moves the problems just into the periphery. The idea is to keep the children near their homes as Dr. Olavo described. The fact of the matter is that the project does not offer more opportunities for the varying range of the street children in the city centre and Avenida. In the periphery they do not have any opportunities to manage if the circumstances at home are awkward. These places cannot be seen to be providing security or privacy, which are included in the list of the characteristics of a child-friendly place. There are a lot of places where children cannot work or sleep. A child-friendly place tries to minimize the constraints of action whereas these places the children of my research group mention actually try to maximize the constraints until there would be no street children. If there are, at least the children of this study do not know about the new opportunities these places would be offering.

112 Interview with Dr. Olavo 11.3.2009
for them to explore. The days of the children are almost the same always. The weekends of course bring some variation as during the Saturdays and the Sundays there are always much more children on the streets.

These facts above will not paint too child-friendly picture of Pelotas as a city. As mentioned a child-friendly city should have child-friendly places. According to the facts mentioned above the situation is not beautiful, at least on theoretical level. A child-friendly city takes care of its children. I believe that in Pelotas there are officials and citizen who care and even initiatives that are meant for the best of the street children but the way the current projects often are carried out does not reach the less advantageous children. Of course the prevention is important too but does not help the children already on the streets. I claim that CUFA is very important organ in Pelotas. It seems like a stone in the plinth at the moment in Pelotas’ way towards the child-friendliness, which is something the city without a doubt wants. I wrote earlier that a child-friendly city has discussion with the children when planning new projects. Cooperation and discussion is often lacking when planning action for the street children. This became evident when reviewed literature concerning current practices in street children work. CUFA is showing the way in the tradition of cooperation with the grass root level I would claim, which is essential for a sustainable success.

A child-friendly city should be healthy for the children. As mentioned in the section of child-friendly cities, the place should protect the child even from pollution. The work of the street children is on the streets. Avenida, which is revealed as the best place for working, is one of the busiest streets of the city as I mentioned above. This causes other risks above the polluted air. The fourteen-year-old boy has been overrun four times in his life. “Only two were serious” as he disparages. There have been occasions of hit and run. The boy has managed by himself. He did not suffer any major injuries. “I just lost my teeth and the other boys tease me that I cannot smile to the girls” he explains smiling with his toothless mouth. The hygiene is also absent. One day a boy of sixteen cut his finger. He could only wash the cut in the tab in the Parque Dom Antônio Zattera which was too far away at that particular moment. The washing had to wait until the end of his “day at work”.

The street children do not have equal access to the health care. This is a severe problem, as just during my relatively short visit there were 38 possible cases and four victims of hepatitis A not even mentioning cuts and stomach aches and so forth. The terrible rains and flooding, which left hundreds of people without home and even killed some during my time in Pelotas, did not help the situation of the lacking heath care. The boys said that they always have to have maioir with them if they need to go to the hospital. To me that seemed strange and I asked about it from my legal adviser Lorna Barroso and she said that it is true. In Pelotas, if a child dies in the hospital the parents of that child take care of the body. Being so, the case of the street children, going to a hospital becomes complicated as they may not have any parents to accompany them in the hospital.

A child-friendly city is caring and protective. In these children I see a lack of caring. They were afraid to stay close to me in the beginning but after a while they wanted to hug and always gave three kisses for greeting and three for goodbye. The smallest wanted to sit in my lap and said that this is the very first time someone really cares for them. The city of Pelotas does not offer shelter or security for these children. Even those who have home live in a situation of risk as the houses are not constructed in the best and the most secure way. During

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113 Reis, Osiris (2009) p.11
114 Ibid. p.11
the rainy season the flooding causes major problems in Pelotas also for those who have home, not even mentioning the ones living on the flooding streets.

Educative is one of the adjectives of a child-friendly city. The street children know a lot of things; much more than I imagined and much more the people in Pelotas generally imagine. They have abilities that normally children at the same age do not have. They have developed some complex coping methods and regardless of their young age they possess abilities to search for employment and know their own limits better than their age-mates I would affirm. In this sense one could say that Pelotas is educative for children and even for the street children. In a way however I suspect that the educative does not mean only this school of life. Most of the children of my research group are not enrolled in education. This does not mean that they would not have any place in school in case they were matriculated. Actually I am almost sure they would but that is not the issue. As I have mentioned already the difficulties begin to appear when a child spends a long period of time on the streets. The longer the time spent on the streets the more difficult it will be to get enrolled in education again. The boys told me that based on their own experience as they know so many maiores in Pelotas and they have seen the paths of live of the people who stay on the streets. In a way it is good that the children need to stay away from the drugs to be allowed to take part in the activities directed to the street children. This can be the way for them to really want to get rid of the drugs to be able to do other things. In case they need help to stay out of drugs, I think that a child-friendly city should offer help for them. This is a tread wheel. On one hand if a person hopped up is allowed to take part of the activities aimed for the street children this person can end up ruining the opportunities of all other children too with his or her behaviour. This has actually been the case in Pelotas according to Dr. Olavo. On the other hand if a person does not have any other thing to do and has a past with drug problems it is easy to stumble again.

It may be difficult to find a child-friendly city in modern day global south if these are the requirements. A child-friendly city should be inclusive and non-discriminating. The issue of exclusion is essential here. The street children are a visible part of the society. They also support the football teams of the city. When the football team of Pelotas suffered a traffic accident the children were sad as some of the best players died. They share some things with the society and have fond feelings towards the common cultural things but on the other hand they are not let to take part of the mainstream, more advantageous society. They stay always in the marginal. The children are not allowed to enter in the shops or the restaurants. Not even if they showed that they have money to buy something. The boy of thirteen got beaten once when he tried to enter in a restaurant even though he waited the waitress to come and told that he would like to eat and showed his money. Even with me they got shouted at in a bakery. Three children were with me cuing politely when the owner of the bakery came and wanted them out of his place. Everyone can see who is a street child. As the children told, normally people just shut their car windows when they see the children coming. I would claim that even the very street children see themselves differently. The way they talk about os normais the normal’s indicates that they are not normal. Some of the people I met in Pelotas said that they do not even see the street children anymore. By closing the window or choosing the other side of a street to walk on the people exclude these children. When noticing the people averting their eyes when seeing a ragged child I comprehended how visibly invisible they actually are.

6.3 Attachment to Pelotas

I believe that the feeling of attachment is essential for a child to feel the friendliness of a place. For the sense of place and the attachment to place to be formed I outlined some
requirements that should be fulfilled according the theorists. However, in relation to the friendliness of Pelotas, many of those requirements seem to be absent. The settings of a place often enable or hinder the formation of the attachment. The settings have to be appealing for a person, in this case for street children, for them to be capable to feel attached to the place. Those settings need to be appealing and actualisable for the children also, otherwise as mentioned earlier there is no use for the opportunities or settings (see pages no. 4 and 7). According to Stedman the sense of place is not intrinsic to the physical settings itself, but resides in the human interpretation as I wrote in the section of sense of place. In this way it does not actually matter whether there are projects for the street children if the children themselves do not experience that there are projects aimed to help them.

The sense of place becomes as a result of social and psychological processes. Human uses of the environment and the constructed meanings are essential for sense of place reveals Stedman in his article. It was mentioned that the experience of these factor is highly important for the sense of place. The street children live in their own world inside the normal society. They have their own slang and their own rules and norms according to which they live side by side with os normais. Dangers are different for the street children than for the majority. Actually the very street children are seen as dangers. Pelotas can be seen as dangerous at night by the majority or calm by the people who can compare Pelotas with Rio de Janeiro for instance. The children who sleep at home feel Pelotas more dangerous than the ones sleeping on the streets even though they are the ones in the situation of a greater risk to get killed during the night. As the children told, the more time one spends on the streets the more one looses the fear of dying or being abused. These things become something that just happens. Those children that can read every now and then see reports from different parts of Brazil and can conclude that Pelotas is safe just because they know what happens elsewhere. I still do not understand why the concept of sense of place is always related to something positive. Could it not be something negative too? Even Richard C. Stedman characterized sense of place as a human relationship to a place. I do not think that it necessarily needs to mean that the relationship is sound and abundant. To illustrate this point of view I will remind of the degrees or the phases of sense of place mentioned by Shmuel Shamai (see page number 6) yet I do not find these phases completely correct or adjustable, as Shamai present them, for the reality of the street children. As I wrote, for the street children their places represent opportunities to stay alive. For this reason they also may feel even keen to these places.

6.4 Children on the ladder of sense of place
According to Shamai, sense of place has three different phases divided into seven stages. Interplay of different factors determines on which phase a child can reach forming a sense of place. The first stage is belonging to a place. I would say that these children yes, belong to Pelotas. They know their city and enthusiastically tell about it to me when they noticed I knew less than they did. They are the children of that city. They would probably situate on the stage (1) in Shamais scale as they recognize being located in a place and can identify the symbols of Pelotas like football teams and Fenadoce which is very well known around the whole Brazil. I would not lift them to the stage number (2) though as they do not have the feeling of togetherness or common destiny with the place or the other people in Pelotas. On the other hand in their Pelotas people, the other street children share a common destiny and they feel togetherness as almost all of them know each other at least by appearance. I still sometimes wonder whether they seem to belong to Pelotas, and actually probably even feel like

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belonging there because they do not have any other choice. They were born in Pelotas and leaving the city is not an option for a child alone. In case belonging to a place per se is already seen as a stage one or the first phase of sense of place, I would claim that sense of place does not need to be something clearly positive in every case. It can be also a condition. Some of the children have been to other places like Porto Alegre and Caxias (another city in Rio Grande do Sul). It can be a bit chic to tell about the better opportunities elsewhere but on the other hand they can hope for being able to leave Pelotas. If that was the case, would that reduce their sense of place? At least they would not be attached to Pelotas if they wanted to leave the city. I asked once if they would like to go and live somewhere else. I got a feeling (every time actually when talking about the future) that as the idea of living in another city was so absurd, they could not imagine it, or did not want to.

As I find the phases of Shamai slightly deficient I want to discuss the other phases too even though in a way I already situated the street children in the ladder of sense of place. The next step on this ladder is attachment, which already becomes more challenging to achieve but is essential for a child-friendly city. Based on the theory of sense of place and place attachment, for a child to get attached to a place the place needs to fulfil the needs of that child. Fulfilment of needs is something I have discussed earlier. Pelotas fulfils the needs for alimentation but does not facilitate the fulfilment of other needs of a child or a human. Apparently it is the responsibility of the street children themselves to create coping methods and strategies to be able to fulfil the other human needs, as the need for security meanwhile the city is trying to construct constraint hindering their possibilities to earn money for instance.

I claim that the unique characters of Pelotas described by the street children are very different from the unique character mentioned by majority of inhabitants. The world of the street children is different, and Pelotas of the street children is deviating from the Pelotas of the majority of the people in the city. The face of Pelotas has to appear different in front of the street children and the majority, os normais as the children call them. The face Pelotas shows to visitors and the mainstream society is beautiful, green and full of historical sites, malls offering possibilities for shopping, clubs filled with people surrendered themselves to samba. Street children’s Pelotas has many excellent intersections, beaches to dream about, stores reminding them of their exclusiveness even if they at times could forget it and clubs where the rich go and sometimes have so entertaining night that they give a slant to them when they are waiting outside the clubs.

6.5 Especial attachment to place of street children

Most of the street children have a faith and they believe that everything that was meant to happen will happen, even though they sometimes question; why me? In this sense people in Pelotas are also just settings enabling or hindering the formation of attachment and behind every action and event there is something greater determining what is going to happen. The street children actually see the people of Pelotas as friendly even for a researcher like me that is almost impossible to understand. People being one of the settings is in fact appealing to the street children even though to me the treatment they got and get from os normais was far from friendly. According to Stedman place need to fulfil the needs of a child for him or her become attached to the place. Social needs and sense of belonging are mentioned as needs by Maslow. Juxtaposition, made by children, of nós and os normais tells it own language of the feeling of belonging to the mainstream society. These factors indicate that the street children cannot have so strong sense of place that it would reach the level of attachment. As I wrote, even this phase is divided into two stages by Shamai. If we look at the factors Shamai requires for a person to be attached to a place I could state that the street children are attached to Pelotas at
least on the stage (3). Even if they were not seen as equal citizen they do share some collective experiences with the other people of the city. The example of football tragedy shows collective experience among all people in Pelotas. Or the massive flooding in Pelotas I mentioned earlier shook up the rich and advantageous of the city but also the street children trying to find a dry place to rest and sleep. Even the stage (4) is dormant. One would say that no, street children do not recognize the goals of Pelotas as a city and are seen as a reason of the troubles instead of active agents helping the society. We have to remember that they are children. They should not contribute the same way in achieving the common goals than the adults, but they are capable to help if they were let into the society. I would not necessarily say that they could not be able to reach this level of sense of place even though Pelotas as a city does not offer security and feeling of belonging to them.

There are two societies in one society. There is the mainstream society of the majority and the society of the streets children. I could not claim that the street children would reach the stages (5) or (6) of the sense of place if I saw them only as a part of the major society of Pelotas. They are not involved in the actions of the community and as they are not, they do not sacrifice anything either someone would say. On the other hand in the society of street children they take active roles in the community. They agree on things like who is working and where and try to organize everything so that there is enough employment and alimentation possibilities to everyone, even they are only children.

In this light the question whether the pure physical setting matter or not, becomes interesting. In Pelotas the physical settings only could probably make attachment felt by the street children only stronger. There is nothing directly wrong in the physical settings in Pelotas. If they had only their own society of street children, they would probably not feel discriminated and the need of belonging would be easier to fulfil. The mainstream society reminds them of the exclusion.

Based on the theory we should think that the Pelotas of the street children is repugnant and malevolent. Almost every aspect advocates the brusqueness of Pelotas. These theories generalized to concern all children are incapable to explain why these street children still feel fondly towards Pelotas and as shown could even have the strongest degree of sense of place in this hostile city.
My objective was to be able to understand the lives of the street children in Pelotas, see the city through their eyes. I wanted to find out how they live, survive and experience their city to be able to come up with probable ways to improve the livelihoods of these children. I believe I do understand now at least the lives of the children hanging out in the region of the centre of the city, but to be able to transmit what I understand, I need the worlds described by Torsten Hägerstrand. With help of those worlds, the complex life between the two societies and the choices made by the street children are more manageable. The worlds Hägerstrand describes are clinchers determining whether the street children are able to get attached to Pelotas or not. These worlds also form the picture the children have of their home town; child-friendly or not.

Firstly, physical world of the street children in Pelotas seems to be very limited. The physical-, mental- and socio-cultural worlds form greatly the possibilities and opportunities of the street children in Pelotas. The locational choices for activities are made mainly based on these worlds. They cannot stay at home for one reason or another. The children also can get food only in certain places and work in others. These possibilities are formed by extraneous factors, not by children themselves according to their will.

As evidence of this limited nature of the physical world of the street children are the observations and the stories of the children situated always almost in the same places; Avenida, Centro, Navegantes, Castilhio, Areal and Dunas. When we think about the worlds of Hägerstrand we have to discuss the question why the physical world of these children is so small and which are the places they have access to and why. This brings the interconnectedness of the three worlds into the picture and illustrates also the reasons behind the locational choices of the children for their activities. The development of the physical world of these children is paradoxical in a way. Normally when we think about children in their life path, we conceive that as they get older their world becomes larger too as they progressively get more opportunities to explore their environment. But the reality of the street children is in many ways different from the mainstream children living in so called normal homes. This is the first notion we have to make when discussing the children in general and the street children, these two groups of children cannot be directly compared. As the street children in my research group revealed, they could no longer get into the buss for free as they have become bigger and for this reason had not been to many places they had been to years ago when they were smaller and would not have to pay for buss trips. As we see, the development in this sense has reversed.

If we move a bit closer though, we can see the presence of the socio-cultural world of these children in their activities and the locations. When we think about this phenomenon, the fact that the children actually are living on the streets, brings us to their socio-cultural and mental worlds. The children practice almost the same activities everyday in the same locations than the day before, sleep and work on the Avenida, beg food and money in Centro, on Avenida or in Areal, buy drugs in Navegantes or Castilhio, as mentioned; because these places fulfil some of their needs. According to the idea of Hägerstrand these different worlds give conditions to one another as mentioned. Being so, we have to remember these individual life stories of the children if we want to understand their lives. The mental world of these children includes so many factors which mainstream society cannot even understand. Of course we can read about the domestic violence and abuse but understanding it is different from knowing its existence. Understand requires at least some months with these children, hearing their stories meanwhile observing their faces. I claim that the events in the socio-cultural world of the street children are, in some ways at least, behind the varying reasons they have, to prefer the life on the streets. I wrote earlier that it is impossible to find any one and only reason for this phenomenon, but in the cases of my research the home
circumstances have a lot to blame. Drugs and the situations back home force these children to make this difficult choice to stay on the streets. This is one of the aspects why the socio-cultural- and the mental worlds need to be seen in the activities and the very being of these children in order to understand their lives. It gives often reason for their behaviour and activities. The memories, stories, perceptions and emotions have an impact on the choices people make, also the choices the street children make. But how and why these places are the ones fulfilling the best the needs of these children? The children have a great amount of knowledge how to cope with the street life. They know their city and are aware, which the best locations are for different activities. They also know which locations are possible for their activities. I claim that not many children living in so called normal condition would survive a week on the streets like these children do. My conversation with Dr. Olavo could indicate that there are many possibilities in *bairros* for these children, possibilities to do things and opportunities for education. They have even homes according to Dr. Olavo. Here we have to remember the fact described by Chatterjee. The opportunities need to actualisable, otherwise they will remain unused. Here is an answer to Stedman who was wondering whether characters of the settings are important or the experience of them. Authorities in Pelotas say that there are various activities and possibilities but the children do not experience they had the mentioned possibilities. Probably the experience of the settings is more important then. Places the street children use are not chosen based on the great possibilities the society has created for them to. These children have not chosen to be on the streets voluntarily. We should see that there is something seriously wrong if a child prefers living on the streets and sleeping on the pavement instead of staying home. The places were the street children operate, are chosen as mentioned, for the simple fact that those places offer possibility for them to stay alive; some places offer nutrition, others employment, yet none of them offers complete protection and safety.

**Secondly, the street children need to balance between two societies.** They have well known rules and norms in their own society of street people. Sometimes it sounded even as if they had their own legislations and a legal system on the streets too. But the street children are part of the mainstream society also. None of these societies could be alleged to be child-friendly. As revealed by the children, there are places they are not allowed to enter in or work at. The society sets rules for them which are hindering their living and possibilities. In terms of child-friendliness this is against the recommendations. I claim that the concept of street children is based on the assumptions and the prejudgements of these children. The reality is socially constructed based on people’s definition about the things around them.\(^{116}\) In the beginning of this thesis I cited some texts published in the newspapers describing the street children of Pelotas with whom majority of the mainstream society has not even talked with. The street children are not active agents forming the reality and the concept of themselves. The article written by Sérgio Luiz de Moura argues that discourses on street children are not reflections of reality but a series of interpretations which construct the subject. He claims that social construction on street children creates a fictional character and bans them from occupying any legitimate position in mainstream society.\(^{117}\) Unfortunately I have to agree Mister Luiz de Moura in this. It would be wrong to generalize other way around too, claiming that there are no street children stealing, abusing and misbehaving. Of course there are. In Pelotas though the children I worked with did not have to steal and they explained why. Still they have the mark on their forehead that they are criminals and people treat them as if they were. The children are aware of how they are seen in general and this is one reason why they do not actually feel that people would act strange or wrongly towards them. One boy of fourteen even said, as I wrote earlier, that of course people shut their car windows or pass on the other side of the street when passing by as they were told that we all are criminals and are going to rob them. Again we can see how socio-

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\(^{117}\) Luiz de Moura, Sérgio (2002) p.360 and 363
Concluding discussion – Pelotas through eyes of its street-children

cultural world of the street children affects their everyday life and their mental world and physical opportunities by excluding them. These worlds are very different from other people’s worlds.

As described also by Alessandro Conticini, the children tailor a new social and political space for themselves, sometimes with contradictory outcomes in terms of the norms of mainstream society\(^{118}\). I used the words bedroom, playroom and kitchen to describe some locations and the activities occurred in these places. These are public places in which these children have to try to find their privacy and the sense of place and belonging. These children are expected to be able to accomplish same things than people who have home, meaning the school for instance. The environment is an important determinant how the children see themselves and how much they trust in their selves.

According to my observation these children are very emotional. They have perceptions that in general people do not like them. This affects the way they are, the way they behave and in the end, the places where they do their things. Their lives are limited to the places where they are wanted to be seen. It seems that it means to most of the people that the children are allowed to exist as long as they do not locate on the street which the person prefers taking on his or her way to work. Child-friendly city provides the children a safe environment which keeps them away from harm, violence, abuse, crime, traffic and pollution. Countries agreed on the Agenda 21, actually discussed in Rio de Janeiro 1991 Earth Summit\(^{119}\), which commands cities to construct friendlier environments for the children according to their rights for healthy, caring, protective, educative, stimulating, non-discriminating and inclusive environment. Street children’s Pelotas does not look like that. Can a city with street children ever be called child-friendly?

Thirdly, the street children have their own kind of attachment to place. The mental world gives condition to the other two worlds, as mentioned already. Many researchers concluded that for someone to get attached to a place the place needs to fulfil the needs of the person. According to Ruth Wilson a warm, nurturing, stimulating environment tells children that they are valued and that their way of learning is understood and respected. A dull, disorganized, or impoverished environment, on the other hand, suggests to children that they are not valued or respected. Such messages have an impact strongly on how children perceive themselves as learners and explorers. This, of course, also affects self-esteem, feelings of competence, and sense of rootedness\(^{120}\). If this really is true, it does not sound promising for the street children in terms of getting attached to their home town. These afore mentioned factors of the socio-cultural- and the mental worlds really affect the children’s believe of what they are able to accomplish and what they are capable to do, also in terms of education. This can be seen in my research group. The more a child had spent on the streets the less he or she believed in his or her abilities and qualities. But how can a street child ever feel attachment to any place? I am not completely aware of what kind of research has been done to be able to conclude the characteristics and the requirements for place attachment, but I doubt the presence of any street children in these studies. These theories cannot describe anyway the especial relationship the street children have with their city. Still these theories are used to describe situations all around the world and of all kinds of children. I noted clearly that Pelotas do not fulfil the criteria for a place someone could possibly get attached to but still the children in my study like their city and feel attached to it in their own way. One could ask whether a child can be attached to a place which is not child-friendly. I do not believe they can, not fully. The street children in Pelotas do not have the social world filled with collaboration and partnership with adults. Without such a world I claim that Pelotas is not nearly as child-friendly as it could be and the street children will never be able to get fully attached to the city they live in.

\(^{118}\) Conticini, Alessandro (2005) p.70

\(^{119}\) Pacione, M. (2001) p.177

\(^{120}\) Wilson, Ruth (1997) p.191
Fourthly; the concepts of place attachment and child-friendly cities I have written about in this thesis cannot be generalized to concern all children. These concepts probably give a functioning framework for cities how they should be to guarantee a healthy environment for the children. To be able to understand the street life though, the researcher need to adapt into the street context with its own culture and values\textsuperscript{121}. The researcher has to get familiar with those three worlds of the street children and understand how they overlap. It is needed to understand what the values and the memories of the street children are. I do not think that the concepts of a child-friendly city and a place attachment can be applied to street children, as they are not capable to describe the needs of these particular children, even if the concepts were very useful in so called normal circumstances. Nor do I question that all children, including the street children should live in child-friendly cities in their every aspect.

As Chawla writes though, there is plenty of evidence proving that non-material assets like feelings of affection and social integration are more important for the street children than the material needs\textsuperscript{122}. According to the study of Kelletta and Moore many street children make sense of the situation through their pride in their coping strategies like social networks, sharing resources, mutuality and social care\textsuperscript{123}. In this way the street children phenomenon is resembled around the world, as my study proves the same. It became obvious that the feeling of surviving was guaranteed when the child had his or her peers around and shared their trust. One can wonder whether the street children share the same needs for surviving with people of the mainstream society. The evidence shows anyway another type of need hierarchy for the children living on the streets. This complex system of mutual support of the street children keeping them alive includes exchange of things like caps, t-shirts, food or even information with priority often given to those who are most in need as also was the case in the study of Conticini in Dhaka\textsuperscript{124}. These practices are somewhat altering from the behaviour called “normal”. According to the study of Conticini, the needs of a street child begin with the feeling of love and trusted friends followed by cooperation, money, work and play and only then food and health\textsuperscript{125}. These are the very same things that my research group talked about the most and what they saw as important in their lives. This list is divergent from the child-friendly list which does not mention money and is not favouring child labour either. For people to understand the streets life and the needs of this particular group the development of the children needs to be seen in its own context. In her study, Alves underpins the importance of the context of streets. She discusses some evidence from various authors that proves the special nature of this group of children. They cannot even be studied in the same way and with the same tools than the kids from normal situations\textsuperscript{126}. Some studies actually reveal that the physical and the emotional development of the children who had left home were sounder than their siblings who had stayed home in spite of the dangers of street life. This is declared by the possibilities to get more nutritious food on the streets on one hand and on the other by the abusive situations often immediate at home\textsuperscript{127}. Interestingly enough, Conticini writes in his study that high suicide rates among home-living adolescents have been noted whereas no such cases have been reported among street living adolescents\textsuperscript{128}. I did not study home-living youth in Pelotas but in spite of the circumstances of these children I studied, only one said to have thought about suicide, and only one time. This is why I find it essential to know the situations of these children before we can determine what actually is

\begin{thebibliography}{18}
\bibitem{121} Biasoli Alves, P. (2002) p.306
\bibitem{124} Conticini, Alessandro (2005) p.73
\bibitem{125} Ibid.
\bibitem{126} Alves, Paola Biasoli (2002) p.306
\bibitem{127} Ibid.
\bibitem{128} Conticini, Alessandro (2005) p.79
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the best for them or what kind of environment is friendly for them, not even mentioning what they need for getting attached to a place.

**Fifthly, physical world and mental world form the socio-cultural street reality of the children.** The way the children are seen affects their possibilities to practice their everyday activities and also willingness to explore the new possibilities even if they understood the reason why people see them as they do. But also the physical and socio-cultural world shape the mental one; as Conticini puts it, during the process of street adaptation, children’s relationship with place changes, and they become better able to colonize public places and to transform unknown and dangerous space into home a territory. This can be seen as a reason why those children who really live on the streets saw the streets less dangerous or were less afraid of the dangers confronted on the streets. I asked about adaptation but the children thought that everything happened really fast. There was no time to be too scared or shamed to beg. I claim that a part of the answer for the incompatibility of all theories and concepts of child-friendliness and a formation of attachment to a place lies here. Harper and Marcus et al. wrote that low expectations of the street children can be considered a psychological coping strategy. They are content and untroubled. Small things and even a smile from one normal can make them happy and devoted to a better life in the future. Even if the expectations were not high the children have faith in better tomorrow. This is also common to the street children in general. Although the material needs satisfaction is considered important in the children’s lives, their perceptions of wellbeing is even more dependent on the quality of the social relationships they build with their friends. That would explain why the street children of Pelotas consider being friends with their city in spite of its unfriendliness towards them according to the theories. It was stated earlier that child prefers a place which success the best to fulfil his or her needs. Pelotas probably satisfies the needs the street children have even though in the light of the basic human rights their conditions are highly questionable. This is also one reason why I underpin the importance of dialogue with these children to be able to know and satisfy their special needs.

**Sixthly, the local context needs to be taken into consideration when planning aid projects with street children.** I agree that yes, the worlds of Hägerstrand are highly interesting and extremely important when studying street children and people in general but I think that, something essential is missing. All these concepts including also the child-friendliness are fully concentrated on what is included in those different worlds and what the characteristics of a child-friendly place are for instance. In relation to the street children, I see the actual absence of some things and experiences as important as the things that are characterizing the worlds of the street children or a child-friendly city. These factors are not taken into consideration by Hägerstrand or the developers of the concept of child-friendliness or city planners. According to a much cited writer Erikson, a child needs to achieve some basic steps in his/her development to become a coherent person. He or she must get the basic trust during the first year. Between the first and the third year child should achieve the sense of autonomy and thereafter the sense of independence by the age of six. Erikson states that these are the needs that have to be fulfilled for a child to be able to face his or her physical, emotional and social needs in the everyday life. I find these aspects more useful when considering a place’s child-friendliness. Hägerstrand does not discuss the memories the person concerned never got. Lack of memories of being loved or cared for must have an affect on a person as well as not being included or wanted. Lack of fulfilment of these needs averts the formation of

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129 Conticini, Alessandro (2005) p.80
132 Conticini, Alessandro (2005) p.80
133 Erikson, E.H. (1971)
134 Ibid.
attachment to a place. Unfortunately these are still often a reality of the street children. I find it relevant to concentrate on the factors without which the survival of a child is jeopardized, not right away what every child should have.

If we think about programs helping the children of course funding is also needed. Sean and Jill Nicholson-Crotty have studied the impact of the social construction of different social groups on funding policy. Their findings are scary. They found out that it was more challenging to get funding for negatively constructed groups compared to positively constructed ones. They also concluded that many of the programs are ultimately likely to fail because they handicap implementers at key junctions on the road to success in policies targeted at negatively constructed groups\textsuperscript{135}. For the future success of the street children programs and improvement of their livelihoods, it would be principal to prevent these children to become just some scary and negative myths or stories that people believe without knowing the truth.

Should Pelotas then aspire to be irreproachable child-friendly city? No, I would not say that it should, at least not completely and right away. These children survive by courtesy of their sophisticated coping methods. They work, earn their money, they play and they search for food. They live at constant risk but try not to pay attention to that fact. These children see Pelotas as big but relatively safe city with some great opportunities even though not all of those opportunities are available for them. These street children are clever. Their society on the streets is complex but well a functioning system. This society satisfies some of the needs the common society does not satisfy. They acknowledge how they are seen by mainstream society and for this reason understand people's behaviour towards them. In general they have a great belief for a better tomorrow but they need help. I do not think that it is reasonable for a city in the global south to try to take a huge step and directly be a child-friendly city in its every term. I do not believe that the goal would ever be reached in this way. After all, “not even Rome was built in one day” as the old saying runs. The street children do not have any cooperation with adults and without that the lives of these children are jeopardized. Cities, and in this case Pelotas should let the street children into the society with their particular needs. Other people should be in cahoots with these children. After all we all have the same goal; make Pelotas a better place to live for everyone. In this, a concept of a street child friendly society can be of help.

8 Suggestions for improving the lives of the street-children of Pelotas

What can be done to improve the lives of the street-children of Pelotas? To be able to plan and implement projects in Pelotas which will help the street-children to become part of society and to live normal lives, we have to know the three (physical, mental and socio-cultural) worlds of the street children. One successful project in Porto Alegre (the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul) may not work well in Pelotas.

In Pelotas a lot of things have been done but even more things could be done; not only expensive projects but also related to the image people have of the street children. I think that in the global south in general the social planning should rather concentrate more on the things without which the street children will not survive than to stare too much the western standards, at least in the beginning. I do not believe in grand stories about projects turning the street children phenomenon up site down in one week. Everything must happen step by step.

Above I mentioned a concept called street child friendly society. This concept is a mixture of above discussed concepts including the child-friendly city and place attachment all based on the knowledge of the three world of the street children. In the section of child-friendly city I mentioned some interesting points to take into consideration as a city. One of the points was participation of the young people in the development of the initiatives for children and youth. As I have revealed, the street children have functioning coping methods. We should better take these methods into consideration. This is not a new thing. Conticini stresses the importance of the consideration of street children’s own knowledge of their life. It is highly important that young people themselves are involved determining the nature of the programme or the projects. To be able to find a sustainably functioning project this kind of bottom up method is needed. The projects need to be planned and initiated with the children, not for them. Other point is the participation of the front-line workers and the educators who work with the children in daily basis. There are people working with the children at risk in Pelotas. One good example of this kind of activity is CUFA for instance. I find their work well planned and functioning. They really know the field they work on. They know the street reality and are able to proportion the activities according to what these children need. With CUFA or the project I was starting in Pelotas people can get engaged with helping and knowing the children. This is the way the image of the children can also be changed. When people would know them and smile to them on the streets they would also get a smile back. A street child friendly society can be developed by this cooperation. There is another reason why I believe in this sort of activity. We have to be able to wake up children’s desire to learn and also the belief that they can succeed. Not many of them are enrolled in education and for this reason without possibilities to participate the existing projects. That is something we have to be able to change. Street life though does not give any supporting structure to begin school again after a certain time on the streets. Campaigns like the one we did with my supervisor make the children to want to know more and thirst for knowledge. We just have to innovative with the existing resources, which was one points of the child-friendly city too. With the words of the general coordinator of CUFA; “If we just find a ball, we make a tournament. We do not need any huge facilities, we use what we have”. In this way we can be active without huge investments. Sports and play are also recognized as good ways to stay out of crimes and drugs according to United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). UNICEF states sports and play to be vital elements in health, happiness and well-being of children and youth. I claim that this is the way we can guarantee the operational sustainability of the projects and their impacts, which is one of the points listed out for child-friendly cities. Probably the most

136 Conticini, Alessandro (2005) p.81
137 http://www.unicef.org/sports/index_23621.html 15.5.2009 9:14 am
importantly we have to be able to think outside the box; challenge the conventional beliefs of the existing problems and solutions and recognize this diverse group of people with special needs. We should screen how the street children see the concept of child-friendly city and with this knowledge, using their own abilities, create a street child-friendlier society without compromising the child-friendly environment for the mainstream children.
Suggestions for improving the lives of the street-children of Pelotas

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Interviews

Interview with authority responsible for wellbeing of children Dr. José Olavo Bueno do Passos 11.3.2009

Interview with general coordinator of CUFA Pelotas, Vagner Lemos Borges 10.3.2009 and 14.3.2009

Appendix 1.

Short presentation of the individuals of my research group.

Rafael
Rafael is sixteen years old boy from Dunas. He is on the streets because of his stepfather who is very strict in terms of rules about drugs. As he has a long history of using different drugs he cannot go home always. In the beginning of my study he used more drugs compared to my last weeks in Pelotas. He used crack also which is unusual among my research group. He is tiny in size because of drug use. He is afraid of maiores because they keep teasing him and stealing his belongings when he sleeps. Rafael also is afraid of sleeping per se because someone can come and stab the street children while they are sleeping. He adores ride a bike and often borrows a bike from someone else. He has many times been a victim of maltreatment by police and bigger people living on the streets. The best thing in Rafael’s life is playing around and football matches with other boys. On the other hand the worse things are the drugs. His dream is to be working in a hospital and help other people who live on the streets. He is not enrolled in education. He loves hugs and often wants to stay close to me. Rafael has older brother José.

José
José is seventeen years old and also from Dunas. He is on the streets because of the same reasons that his brother Rafael. He has been in detoxication twice but quit before the end of the treatment. This is the reason why he is denied the access to treatment now on. José has been studying but it was long time ago. He has forgotten how to write or read. José has been using drugs including crack but tries to stay away from that life. He also says that drugs are the worst thing in his life. The best things are other activities like football and artisanal handicrafts that he used to do in different projects for street children some time ago and also the girls that have started to notice him after he stopped using drugs and put some weight on. The worse things in his life are drugs. He says that he has a lot of anxiety inside him and inhaling thinner made him calm but crack made him paranoid. It is difficult for José to comprehend time. He often asked how much time there was before he would have his birthday. José has been in FEBEM which he considers to be a jail for under aged. He told that he had been thirteen at the time of FEBEM but did not know how many years ago it was. He hates to cause his mother abasement and his dream is to have an employment.

Alexandre
Alexandre is fourteen years old. He is not sleeping on the streets even though he already has slept once. He is also from Dunas and the least advantageous site of the bairro. He comes to the streets every day during holidays and sometimes in the evenings. Alexandre normally works at the crossing of the Avenida Bento Goncalves and Rua Andrade Neves. Sometimes he even gets small jobs to do in floriculture of the Avenida. He goes to school and is very proud of it. The problem is though that the money the family gets is bolsa familiar for Alexandre who is the only one of six children studying. One day he said that he should probably stay until late that day as the electricity company had shut off the electricity at his home and his mother would not have money to pay the bill. Alexandre does not use any drugs. He just smokes cigarettes. He complains that often the maiores rob his money. It has happened that Alexandre has been robbed five times per one day trying to earn his money. Alexandre is often alone. Normally he only stays on the streets until he
Appendix

has managed to peg ten reais (about 39SEK). The he returns home with his bike in case it has not been stolen too. Alexandre dreams of having an own computer and getting into the university and become a dentist. When Alexandre gets spare money he goes to play Lanhouse.

Giordano
Giordano is twelve years old and has six siblings. Hey were thrown out from home by their stepfather. His home is in Dunas too but he cannot even go to pick up his winter clothes from there. He is now staying with Marcos, another boy of my research group, with whom he spends the most of his time. Giordano is not studying because his mother did not want to matriculate him. He does not know why. He spends his time on the streets pegging with Marcos. He loves to play and he often goes to a sand heap to practice immortal, a very famous somersault among the street children of Pelotas. Giordano does not use any drugs. He says that he has already been using marijuana and has inhaled glue but now, as he is older (being only twelve) he is more intelligent and does not use anymore. Giordano seems to be starved for affection. He wants to stay close often but he also has difficulties to stay calm. He is jumping around often. He loves street dance and dances well too. He wants to become a policeman when he gets older. Nicest place for Giordano is Laranjal (the beach suburb of Pelotas) because he loves running in water. It is difficult to get there though as he would have to pay for the buss. Giordano calls Marcos as his brother. Once when older men on the streets tried to beat Giordano up Marcos helped him.

Marcos
Marcos is thirteen and tries to stay in his grandmother’s house in Dunas. He has six siblings but his mother gave the boys to be taken care of by their grandmother already as babies. He does not get along with his stepfather who keeps continuously beating and abusing Marcos’ mother. He went to the streets for the first time when he was six years old. It was because the stepfather shot his mother in her belly to kill Marcos’ unborn brother or sister. At this time he tried to collect money and drugs to be able to pay for a hitman to kill the stepfather. Luckily or not the hitman had retired already but this was when Marcos left home. He has had a lot of difficulties with drugs. He has been twice in detoxication and rehabilitation. This has not made him able to get rid of drugs entirely as he started inhaling thinner again during my research period in Pelotas. He has a lot of anxiety inside him and he gets angry very easily. On the other hand he is very loving and polite and shows his emotions which may not be normal for a Brazilian man (they consider themselves to be almost adults already). Marcos is almost always with Giordano. Just when consuming drugs he searches for other company because Giordano tries to hinder Marcos’ consummation. Marcos is not studying at the moment but says that would like to try again. Marcos is very skilful dancer and juggler but many of his opportunities have fallen apart because of drugs. Marcos divides his money with Giordano. He keeps the notes and Giordano gets the coins. In this way they prevent loosing all the money in case one of them gets robbed. Marcos sings very well also and sings often. In one of his songs he praises for having a brother like Giordano even though one of them is dark skinned and other white.

Victor
Victor is one of the older brothers of Marcos. He is fifteen and also tries to stay in their grandmother’s house in Dunas. Victor was very quiet at first but when I got to know him he started talking a lot. Victor has the same problems with stepfather than Marcos. He has problems with drugs also but just with thinner. Victor and Marcos have a lot of disagreements but one can clearly see loyalty between them anyway. Victor is not going to school either. He says that if one does not go and matriculate in time it is extremely difficult to get a place at school afterwards. Victor has a girlfriend (I did not see her during my time) and it seems as though the girl would help him to get strength to stay away from drugs. Victor likes dancing also and dances well. They practice often
together with Marcos and Giordano. Victor is very polite and always tries to use words that I would not have difficulty to understand. One day Victor dreams of having a family and employment. The worse thing on the streets is that no one really listens what they have to say.

André
André is fifteen. Seemingly he has a loving mother but the drugs make him stay on the streets. André's home in also in Dunas. Sometimes he goes home and tries to stay there but the drive to the streets often gets very strong. By this he does not mean street life per se but some activity. He does not just want to stay home. (It is worth remembering that during my study in Pelotas the kids were on summer holiday from schools). André finds it important to tell about their life and is also very interested in Finland and in my study. André does not seem to have any preferential group. He gets along with all of the other children and also seems to be very kind towards the other. André is trying to study every now and then and then and he is not so much behind his age-mates. He says he want to try to examine the firsts years of school so that he could go straight to sexto ano do primeiro grau. André had a bike with was stolen one day during our individual interview. He was afraid of his mother to get mad at him. André has visited Porto Alegre, the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. It was some kind of social projects, he told. He told with shining eyes about the trips. They went to a zoo but the most beautiful things where the bus station of Porto Alegre, which they got to know and an airplane of TAM landing, he told proudly. André has often been beaten by police or other guards but he says one gets used to it. He tells though that sometimes it is difficult because they beat even if one did exactly as the police tells one to do.

De
De is a fourteen years old orphan. His parents died when he was very small (he seems not to remember at which age). De's home was in Dunas too but he does not go to Dunas almost at all. He stays most of the time near Avenida Bento Goncalves but every day he goes to the city centre to peg some food. He says, as so many others, that Avenida is the best place to peg money and the city centre is the best place to get food. De is very polite. He always waits for his turn to talk and take food (I took something to eat to the streets every time I went there). When I met De he did not say anything. He just looked at me and at times said yes, or no but nothing more. The more time I spent with them the more he started to talk. In the end I think that he was one of the most garrulous children and he seemed to be the most honest of all of the children. De did not make any wrangle about his abilities. Even when I asked if he could do something like juggling he said no, but then after a while I saw him in the traffic lights juggling probably better than any other child. The same thing happened with football. De did not want anything and hardly was able to mention a dream he would have. Just during my last week he came to me saying that his dream is to have his own home. After the death of De's parents his aunt became responsible for him but De does not want to stay with her. De uses drugs and he says that the aunt and her family would like to but him to detoxication which is something he does not want (many of the children told that they are afraid of the detoxication clinic of Pelotas and I do not wonder why). De uses any drug he can get, also crack. De always sleeps in the same place; the intersection of Rua Felix da Cunha and Avenida Bento Goncalvez. He is not afraid of sleeping alone even though he admits that street children often get stabbed while sleeping. He just says that when one spends a lot of time on the streets one looses the fear. One gets used to it. De has been run over twice. Both times the driver hit and ran. He does not wonder why, it is normal he says. He also gets often abused by police, but is not afraid of them. He just says that fear does not help anyone. De is very easy going and gets along with everyone yet normally he wonders around with Michael.
Michael
Michael is fourteen years old and lives on the streets. He sometimes spends some nights at his father’s house but very rarely. Father lives in Areal, quite a large suburb near the centre of Pelotas. Michael’s day, as the day of so many others, lapses when pegging money and food on the Avenida Bento Goncalves and the city centre. In the evening he wonders towards Navegantes often with De to buy drugs, mostly thinner or crack. He said to me himself that he is getting too skinny because of crack. Michael too has been abused by police and guards, but like those who have spend a lot of time on the streets, does not have fear. He states also that one gets used to everything. Michael does not go to school. He used to but now when living on the streets it became difficult. He liked some lessons though, especially information technology and would like to learn more about computers and as adult work with them. Michael considers people in Pelotas friendly, at least normally, but reminds that some others are less friendly. Other children told me that Michael would earn some extra money prostituting. He did not want to talk about it himself and I did not push him to tell more. Michael told that it is relatively easy to get money. Children do not have to steal to survive because people give enough. He tells though that the bigger one gets the more difficult pegging becomes as people stop feeling pity. Sometimes os maiores come at night and rob their money because of that, but he is not afraid of that. Michael likes to dance and dances well too. He used to dance in an academy but tells me that he could not go there anymore. He did not know why but I heard from Vagner Borges (general coordinator of CUFA in Pelotas) that the academy became private and thereafter so expensive that the children could not go there anymore. Michael is extremely polite. Sometimes when I came with food or snack for them to eat while having a group discussion he did not eat at all, left his share to the others. When I asked why he said that he had already eaten lunch and did not need. For Michael every day is like any other day. He is not unhappy but not happy either. He says that he is not afraid of anything but does not feel himself safe either.

Erich
Erich is thirteen and pegs especially during the night time or during the day time in the city centre. He does have a home where he returns to, so he does not have to sleep on the streets. This is also because he is awake at night time taking care of cars in front of bars and clubs of Pelotas. Eric is from bairro called Castilios which according to the other children is one of the most dangerous bairros in Pelotas. Eric is very shy and compared to some others he is relatively quiet and do not peg so aggressively. He gets some money if someone notices him. He knows which the places to be in different days are. Saturday may be profitable in front of one bar but very quiet in front of some others. Erich explains that one has to know which bar is busy at which nights of the week. Castilios is so dangerous at the moment that even police stays out of there at night time. Even so Erich has to return there when his “working hours” end. Erich does not hang out with the boys that peg on the Avenida Bento Goncalves during the day time but knows them in appearance. Erich is studying but he is behind his age-mates. As mentioned at the time of my research in Brazil the children had their summer holiday.
Fernanda
Fernanda is thirteen and sister of Giordano. She has the same problems with their stepfather than Giordano but is in a way even less lucky than him. As mentioned Giordano lives at the moment with Marcos and Victor’s grandmother but this old lady cannot let her come too. On one hand she would not have money to take care of them all and on the other hand she would not be able have a girl and the boys under the same roof. She sleeps in various places but at the time I was in Pelotas she was staying in a house of a man who was said to have helped the older brother of Fernanda and Giordano some years ago. I never met this man so I cannot be absolutely sure. Fernanda is like one of the boys. She is very vigorous and will not let the boys allure her. On the other hand in Dunas, where she is from too, the older boys or men even try to kiss her without her permission and at times it is difficult to handle the situations like that. Marcos and Giordano normally help her if something of this kind happen but Fernanda is quite shamed when talking about that so she is at risk when the boys are not around. When the boys are playing football she brings water to them and takes care of the bags and the money. I never saw Fernanda pegging but the boys shared their things with her. As a worse thing in her life she mentions the fear that someone who does not like street children comes and does harm to her or to someone she loves.

Luiza
Luiza is twelve years old. She lives in bairro called Getúlio Vargas. Luiza does not sleep on the streets but she comes to peg to the city centre and Avenida Bento Goncalvez to contribute the family economy. The family is large and they do not enough money to buy school material for instance. Luiza is studying but in order to be able to go to school she need to work too. She has made a bonnet of cardboard where she puts the money she gets. Luiza is very shy too. She often just pegs whereas other children try to juggle. She had her handmade balls but I did not see her using them. Luiza knows the other children that hang around Anevida and the city centre in appearance but does not spend time with them. There are many days during the week she does not come to “work” as she puts it, but on weekends she always comes and there is a lot of movement on the Avenida Bento Goncalvez.