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The flows of things – exploring babies' everyday space-making

Alex Orrmalm 

Department of Thematic Studies – Child Studies, Linköpings University, Linköping, Sweden

ABSTRACT

This article draws on a larger ethnographic study conducted in the homes of babies aged between one and 18 months and their families in Sweden. The article explores how everyday space is made in the homes of families through babies' engagements with material things by methodologically working with maps, images, lists, and stories. Three themes – the practices of spreading things out, the height at which activities take place, and the multiplicity of things – are highlighted as important for understanding babies' space-making practices. These practices are discussed in terms of *the flows of things*, which highlights how the practices of moving a multiplicity of things come to matter in the making of space in the homes of babies and their families.

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Introduction

Wilma's room is located on the second floor of her family's house. In the room there is a changing table and above it a mobile from which small soft animals are hanging. There are stuffed animals and toys suitable for the youngest of children, a pair of tiny shoes that look unused, and baby clothes on a hanger. The room looks well-organised and clean. There is no bed in the room because Wilma sleeps in a crib next to her parents' bed. It is easy to see that this is Wilma's room even though she does not seem to spend any time in it except when her parents change her nappy on the changing table located there. The room caught my interest, not because it said much about how babies themselves engage in space, but because I was fascinated by the sharp contrast between this neatly organised baby room and the spaces in which the babies in my study were actually spending time while I was visiting. The everyday lives of these babies and their families were mostly going on somewhere else in the homes and through other space-making practices than through creating or shaping specific baby rooms. When arriving at the families' homes, I saw what I interpreted as spaces made *for* babies in other rooms, and through the gathering of things that seemed to belong to the baby in certain locations. I started to think about these locations of gathered material things as toy-spaces. When analysing the research material, I started to wonder: is it possible that it was so easy to identify these toy-spaces because the gathering of things in specific locations aligned with my adult perspective on the organisation of everyday space? And do babies make everyday space differently?

Research with 3–5-year-olds and their families has shown that both children and adults actively shape what they call homemaking practices through, for example, storage practices and cluttering (Stevenson and Prout 2013). This suggests that attending to how things are moved within homes is one way of accounting for ways of shaping and reshaping space before children can speak about their experiences. When focusing on what the babies in my study were doing with material things

CONTACT Alex Orrmalm  alex.orrholm.makii@liu.se

outside of their families' toy-spaces, I realised that things were not only gathered in bins or corners, they were also spread out in different parts of the homes. I also noticed the number of material things that were present and accessible to the babies and, more importantly, that the babies spent most of their time throughout my visits engaging with these things.

Approaching everyday space through practices that the babies themselves spend a lot of their time engaging in can tell us something about how babies *ongoingly* (cf. Horton and Kraftl 2006) shape and reshape space in the everyday lives of their families. The difference between the spread-out-ness of spaces and material things and Wilma's room was, I realised, the presence of the babies themselves. This argues for the importance of attending to babies' own practices, not only for understanding what babies are doing with material things, but also for understanding how everyday spaces are made by babies and their families (cf. Orrmalm 2020a). More specifically, how is everyday space made in the homes of families through babies' engagement with material things?

Babies' and young children's geographies

Research involving babies has been relatively limited within the field of geography (e.g. Tebet and Abramowicz 2019, Antonietta and Tebet 2019) and the limited research about babies can be understood as mirroring the previous absence of children and young people within geography and social studies (Holt 2017). Moreover, research into children's mobilities has often focused on children's 'independent movement' between places like home and school, which has been pointed out as one reason why there is a lack of research into young children's mobilities (Cortés-Morales and Christensen 2004). There are, however, some examples concerning babies and young children's geographies, suggesting that the interest in this age group of children is increasing (Holt 2013, 2017, Tebet and Abramowicz 2019, Aitken and Herman 1997, Horton and Kraftl 2010, Antonietta and Tebet 2019). Within research into young children's mobilities, calls have been made to focus on other forms of children's mobilities as well as material things. One such suggestion is to focus on prams or slings to capture young children's and their families' everyday mobilities (Cortés-Morales and Christensen 2004, Cortés-Morales 2020, Murray and Cortés-Morales 2019, Jensen 2018, Whittle 2019, Clement and Waitt 2018). Another way of dealing with the issue is to approach children's movements at micro-scales, such as movements within the space of the home or even through the movements of the body while located in one spot. A micro-scale approach to children's movements challenges both the idea that very young children are immobile beings who primarily stay at home and that being at home is necessarily characterised by immobility (Murray and Cortés-Morales 2020).

The home, I argue, is a promising focus for gaining insight into the micro-scale of babies' movements because it makes it possible to attend to babies' practices both within and outside the interaction or gaze of their parents. Babies, at least the ones participating in this study, are less supervised and/or constrained when they are at home, which allows for explorations into babies' movements that are not limited to their movements when with parents or other adults. In Sweden, moreover, the home becomes central in babies' everyday lives as they tend to spend a lot of time there because they cannot start day-care until they turn one year old. Focusing on babies' movements at home is also a way of gaining insight into how a broad range of material things that are accessible to the babies come to matter through babies' choices of engaging with them. Therefore, this becomes a way of approaching babies' mobilities through 'zooming in' (Murray and Cortés-Morales 2020) to a small scales, small movements, and small things.

Space as open and in movement

To explore how babies' relations to material things become important for how everyday space is made, I have chosen to approach space as open, ongoing, and unfinished (Massey 2005). While the idea of space as open might sound abstract, Massey (2005) is questioning the counterposing of place and space, where place is understood as where the everyday is going on while the wider space exists outside

of place. Drawing on Massey (2005), an approach to space as *both open and concrete* means to think space relationally – as a sum of all its connections. Massey (2005) also highlights the importance of acknowledging the element of surprise, which is important for understanding how babies' practices can make and re-make space in unexpected ways. I am combining this approach to space with Ingold's (2011) discussion on movement in order to explore more concretely *how* the movements of things make everyday space open, ongoing, and unfinished. Attending to how everyday space is made along the paths of babies and material things means following babies and their space-making practices *throughout* their everyday lives, rather than focusing, for example, on their practices *in* certain spaces allocated to them, or in their engagement with certain material things (cf. Ingold 2011).

Combining these theoretical approaches means understanding space as ongoingly made through babies' engagement with and movement of material things in their homes. Everyday space, then, is not an abstract idea about what is 'out there' (Massey 2005); rather, it is situated within concrete and embodied relations and practices. This means that adults are not living in a stable, fixed space that a baby's arrival disrupts and changes; that is, the space into which the baby arrives when born is already unfinished. What becomes important, then, is not so much whether the babies, or their parents for that matter, are knowingly or actively attempting to organise or make space in specific ways. In this approach, space is as much a conscious ordering as it is the emerging unplanned effects of negotiations, relations, and embodied practices.

Methodological departure point

This article draws on a larger study with the aim of exploring babies' engagements with material things in their everyday lives. The study is being conducted in Sweden with babies aged between one and 18 months and their families. The families were recruited through the snowball method and live in cities ranging in size from small to large.

Ethnography with babies

To gain an understanding of the babies' everyday lives, I conducted a video ethnographic study, including participant observation of the babies and their families, unstructured interviews with the parents, and the use of activity diaries (cf. Pink 2001, 2015, Fangen 2005). During my visits, I used a small hand-held video camera to record the babies, and a smartphone for taking images. I made 24 visits to seven families participating in the study and most of the fieldwork was conducted in the homes of the babies and their families. In three of the families, an older sibling was also present during fieldwork and in another three an additional baby aged 0–18 months visited with their parents during the time I spent with the family. In total, I video recorded 10 babies extensively. The research material includes around 70 h of video recordings, 100 images and 60 pages of fieldnotes taken during or after the visits. In this article, I will use research material from visiting five of the babies and their families. Research material from Wilma's, Ella's, Lia's and Milo's families is discussed in detail, while research material from Alva's families is discussed more briefly.

Wilma is between eight and nine months of age. She lives with her two parents in a two-story house and is the only child in the family. The examples span the time when Wilma is learning to move by dragging herself along on her backside.

Ella is between 10 and 12 months of age. She lives with her two parents in a three-room apartment and is the only child in the family at this time. Currently, she can move by dragging herself along on her backside.

Lia is around nine months of age. She lives with her two parents in a three-room apartment and is the only child in the family. Currently, she can move by dragging herself on her backside and by walking while holding onto furniture or other people.

Alva is around one year of age. She lives with her two parents in a three-room apartment. She is currently the only child in the family and can move by dragging herself along on her backside.

Milo is one month old. He lives with his two parents and an older sibling in a two-story house.

Working with maps, images, lists and stories

The purpose of the maps in [Figures 1](#) and [2](#) is to illustrate how we can interpret space depending on how we approach babies' material things. The maps were created from the video material recorded during one of the visits to Wilma's family. The map in [Figure 1](#) was created by mapping out the area where most of the things belonging to Wilma were located; that is, what I at first identified as the toy-space. The map in [Figure 2](#) was created through keeping track of the things that I interpreted as toys, and things that Wilma engaged with, over one day while I was visiting. Every dot represents one material thing. When things were moved by the baby, I have chosen to note their location where I last saw them in the video recordings. The map, then, is an *example* of how spread out toys, and other material things Wilma engages with, can be.

The purpose of the images in [Figure 3](#) is to give a visual idea of the things spread out in the homes of the families. These images were created through making screen shots from the video material, and to ensure anonymity these were taken from moments when neither the baby nor either parent was visible in the recordings. As I spent most of my fieldwork on the floor trying to film at the height of the babies, the video recordings rarely provide broader images of what was going on around the babies, but what they do show to a larger extent is what the homes look like from the approximate height of the babies (cf. Orrmalm 2020b). The images in [Figure 3](#) were taken in the homes of four of the families.

The purpose of the list in [Figure 4](#) is to illustrate in more detail the multiplicity of things that are present, and accessible, to the babies in their everyday lives. The list is based on one of the activity diaries by listing all the material things that Wilma's mother wrote about Wilma engaging with. I gave three mothers who agreed to keep activity diaries the instruction to fill them out during one or a few days in as much detail as they could. In the activity diary, there were columns for filling out which material thing the baby was engaging with, how the baby engaged with it, who initiated the engagement, and who participated in the engagement. Wilma's mother reported that she filled out the diary during a three-day period when Wilma was around eight months old and for one day when she was around nine months old.

The purpose of the stories is to give more detailed glimpses into the babies' and parents' engagements with material things in their everyday spaces. The stories are either created from viewing the video material or by translating text from the activity diary and creating a story out of it.

Flows of things – analysing babies' everyday space-making

Below, I will explore how we can understand babies' space-making practices through engaging with three themes: spreading things out, the height of things, and the multiplicity of things. These themes highlight aspects of babies' space-making that emerged as important when analysing the different research materials. When conducting the analysis, the focus has most importantly been on trying to understand how babies themselves make everyday space but, in order to do that, I also needed to critically reflect upon my adult approaches and understandings of space.

Spreading things out

[Figure 1](#) shows what I identify as a toy-space in Wilma's home. This space could be interpreted as parents making space *for* their baby because it seemed important to them as a space where they gathered things intended for the baby and as a space where they could spend time close to the baby on the floor (cf. Olwig and Gullov 2003, Rasmussen 2004).

[Figure 1](#) is, therefore, not so much a map that I believe presents babies' space-making practices, as a visual representation of my adult perspective on the parents' organisation of the family's everyday

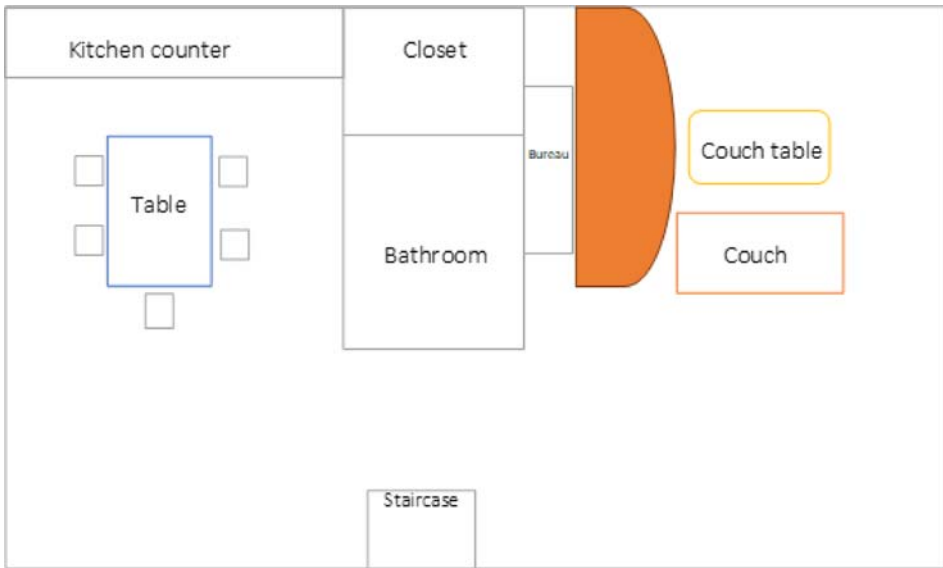


Figure 1. Map of the gathering of material things in Wilma's home.

space. The ease with which I identified this area as interesting during fieldwork was not because it is especially important for understanding babies' space-making practices. Rather, it is quite possible that this space caught my interest so quickly, and for quite some time felt important for the research project, because it was *familiar* to me (cf. Walton-Roberts 2010, Antonietta and Tebet 2019).

When Wilma's parents were not sitting down in this area with her, she rarely spent any time in it during my visit. Instead, she spent most of her time moving around and engaging with material things in different locations across the ground floor of the house. As can be seen when mapping Wilma's material things by marking them (Figure 2), the area highlighted in the map in Figure 1 starts to dissolve.

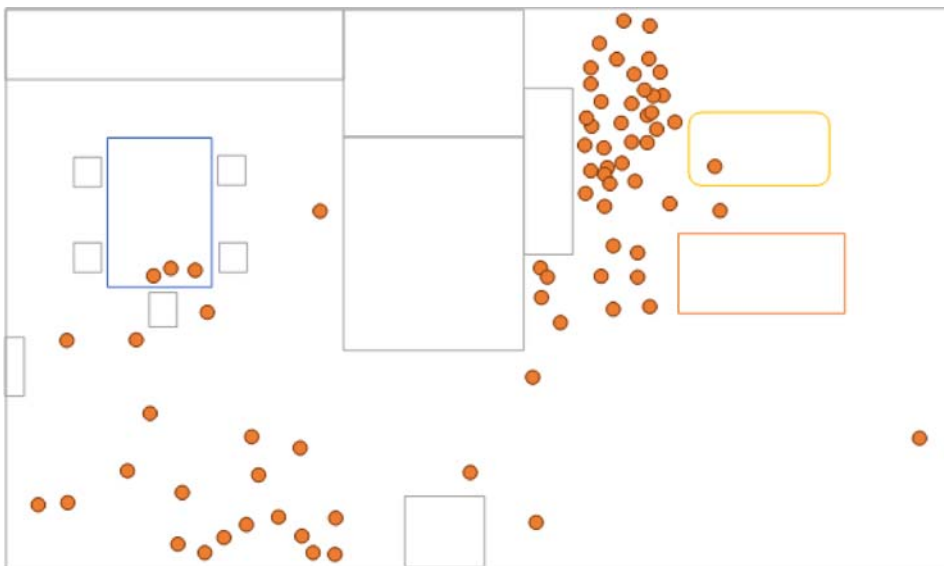


Figure 2: Map of the spread out ness of material things in Wilma's home.

While the dots marking the things on the map are fixed, many of these things were moved around during the hours of video recording upon which the map is based. The flows of things do not only mean that things move around over distances in the home, but also entails a range of different, more subtle movements (cf. Murray and Cortés-Morales 2020). In the video recording upon which Figure 2 is based, a black kitchen ladle, for example, has been moved from the organised toy-space in the living room to and around the kitchen and hallway. The way in which this ladle has been moved by Wilma is not straightforward and entails much more than Wilma moving it from location to location. It also entails moving it over her body while sitting in the same spot. Her parents have also moved it up and down because it has been both taken away and then later given to her again.

Wilma is not engaging with material things inside space, but rather in movement to, from, through and around space (cf. Ingold 2011). While the location of the toy-space mapped as an area (Figure 1) appeared to be more or less stable during my visit, the things that were spread around (Figure 2) seemed to be continuously on the move. This, I argue, can be understood through what I call *the flows of things*. Through the flows of things, the everyday space of the babies and their families can be understood, drawing on Leder Mackley et al. (2015), as continuously shifting and changing.

While the parents did seem to expend a certain amount of effort on gathering (cf. Ingold 2011) things into boxes and certain locations in the homes, like the toy-space in Figure 1, these spaces were also part of the flows of things. They often looked quite messy and the boxes in these spaces were often either overflowing or empty. Thus, the somewhat gathered, somewhat spread out, everyday spaces of the babies' homes do not emerge as clear-cut productions of either babies' or parent's space-making practices. Rather, they can be understood as examples of how the negotiations of different imaginations and embodied ways of making and engaging in space create something new (cf. Hackett et al. 2018).

The height of things

The material things marked as dots in Figure 2 are, with only a few exceptions, located on the floor. Tebet and Abramowicz's (2019) discussion of research about babies and space conducted in institutions like day-care centres highlights the importance of the floor for understanding babies' experiences of space. While the babies I met in this study at times engaged with material things while sitting on someone's lap or in a high-chair, they all spent most of their time on the floor, both in their homes and when visiting other spaces. Their everyday lives, then, while going on in the same house/apartment or rooms as those of the adults, are often going on at a different *height*. The images below (Figure 3) show how the spread-out-ness of things looks from the approximate height of a baby sitting or lying on the floor.



Figure 3. Images of the homes from the approximate height of a baby.

At the height of a baby sitting or lying on the floor, the visual perspective is very different from looking at the home from above, or even from the height of an adult standing up. If we had looked at these images from above, we would have been able to see how things are spread out across the whole floor. Between the different things, we would have seen both small and large areas of open space. We would also have been able to see some things in the toy boxes. However, in the images in [Figure 3](#) these spaces do not appear to be especially open. Instead, some of the material things in these images appear as obstacles for looking and possibly even moving if you adopt the position of the baby. The consequences of parents gathering material things into boxes could, furthermore, mean that the babies lose visual sight of them altogether.

While it might be easy to interpret things spread out across the floors as messier than gathering them into boxes in the corners, it is important, I believe, to ask what messiness could mean in this context. Massey (2005:111) argues that ‘/ ... / what may look to you like randomness and chaos may be someone else’s order / ... /’. While I do not mean that the babies can necessarily be understood as ordering things, their practices of spreading things out by pulling them out of the boxes are changing the possibilities of engagement with these things. While gathering things into boxes might possibly give the parents a sense of knowing where things are (tucked away in a box), it is possible that spreading them out might give the *babies* a better sense of where they are, because they can now more easily see and touch these things.

Height also becomes important for recognising that the flows of things go in different directions, not only around the floors, but also moving up and down. This can be seen when Lia starts climbing onto an armchair where a laptop is almost completely hidden behind a few cushions. Lia’s mother says: ‘No, Lia, no no! Why do you have to be so naughty? No!’ while she removes the cushions and drags the laptop out from under Lia, who has climbed on top of it. Lia’s mother then says: ‘You can have the computer on the floor!’ and places it on the soft carpet. Lia first sits down in the armchair with her arm on one of the armrests and makes a few mumbled noises (because her dummy is in her mouth).

It is possible that Lia was never interested in, or even saw, the laptop lying in the armchair before she climbed up, but her practice in this moment seems to be interpreted by her mom as an attempt to get hold of it. The comment about Lia being naughty, and the location of the laptop under the cushions, further indicates that her mother does not want her to engage with it. However, this is renegotiated in relation to Lia’s practices of climbing, and instead of her mother moving the laptop somewhere else, she places it on the floor where Lia can engage with it (without the risk of her, or the laptop, falling out of the chair). Lia’s increased ability to move up and down furniture suddenly gives her access to things higher up than before, and therefore limits the possible locations where Lia’s parents can put things without her being able to get hold of them. In this example, Lia’s practices can be understood as having the effect that another thing is being added to the spread-out-ness of things already present on the floor. Attending to the role of height in the flows of things therefore also becomes important for understanding how things are not only spread out on the floors in the babies’ homes, but are also spread out in height.

The multiplicity of things

The flows of things in these babies’ everyday lives do not only include toys, as the example of the laptop shows. The movements of things may also shape and reshape the ways in which things are ordered in the home by adults. Here, I will engage with the multiplicity of material things in the babies’ homes by discussing the list of all the things that Wilma’s mother wrote down that Wilma engaged with in the activity diary.

When looking at this list of things, it seems as though Wilma was not only engaging with toys or other material things that I interpret as being intended for her. She also engaged with household items, like a ladle, an apron, and a plastic container. In addition, she engaged with things intended for herself, including a car safety seat, a baby’s winter suit, and a feeding bottle. And finally she

Wilma at 8 months	- Soft book	- Abacus in metal	- Wine bottles in wine rack
- Soft cat with rattle	- Soft ball	- Plastic mugs	- Plastic ladle
- Plastic helicopter	- The activity diary	- Small towel	- The legs of the highchair
- Hard toy with buttons that makes sounds	- Book with mirror	- Doll	- Leather bag on a chair
- Soft book with mirror in	- Music box with buttons	- Music box in plastic	- Shoes in the shoe rack
- Soft sheep combined with chewing toy	- Soft train with string	- Feeding bottle	- Shoes
- Activity gym	- Soft horse	- The string to the music box	- Slippers
- Cell phone	- Maracas egg	Wilma at 9 months	- Rattle
- Tag on overall	- Activity board	- Shoes	- Power cord to baby monitor
- Plastic spoon	- Plastic book	- Baby winter suit	- Water bottle
- Remote	- The cabinet in the living room	- Car safety seat	- Soft book
- Activity toy on wood	- Stuffed animals	- Book in plastic	- Strings to apron hanging on the wall
	- Soft book with maracas	- Laundry from washstand	- Power cord for lamp
	- Lunch box		

Figure 4. List of things Wilma engaged with.

engaged with things that I imagine are not at all intended for the baby, like a perfume bottle, wine bottles, and laundry on a washstand. The material things that babies engage with are therefore multiple in the sense that they are many, but also in the sense that they could be understood as belonging to multiple locations in the home, having multiple functions or usages, or belonging to multiple people.

Between the first list in [Figure 4](#) when Wilma was eight months old, and the second when she was nine months old, her mother reported that she had learned to move herself by dragging herself along on her backside. Most of the things in the first list are toys, while very few of the things in the second list are. The increased mobility of starting to move by herself seems to have changed the type of things that Wilma chose to engage with. However, her engagement with things does not seem to have been limited to toys even before she could move herself, and she gets hold of, for example, a mobile phone, a remote, a lunch box, and the activity diary. The babies' engagement with a multiplicity of things seems to depend not only on what they can get hold of themselves, but could also be understood as interwoven with their and their parents' negotiations around things and everyday space (cf. [Hackett et al. 2018](#)).

This can be seen in an example when Wilma's mother finds a measurement cup among the toys in the living room. She picks it up and says: 'Oh, this is where mum's measurement cup is! Is that what you've been playing with? Is that what you took out of the dishwasher yesterday?' While Wilma's mother might not have intended for Wilma to engage with the measurement cup, she does not pick it up or take it back to the kitchen (at least not during the time I was there). However, she does take it and throws it further away from Wilma after Wilma puts it in her mouth, telling her she could hurt herself doing that. However, Wilma moves to the cup and picks it up again. Quickly thereafter her mother takes it again and throws it even further away from Wilma. This does not discourage Wilma, who again finds it. A moment later, Wilma and her mother engage with it together. Wilma hits the measurement cup against a ladle, and both shake their heads at the sound of it.

Practices around finding, moving, and engaging with material things seem to matter to the babies, considering how much time they spend doing this. At times, parents not only allow babies to engage with things that are not intended for them but enable these engagements in different ways, as in the example of Lia and the laptop. Another example from one of the activity diaries is when Ella gets hold of her grandpa's snuffbox, a box containing moist tobacco. Ella starts chewing

on it while laughing, and when the labels starts to fall off her dad takes the snuffbox away from her. He washes the labels off and then gives it back to her. In this example, Ella's dad can be understood as intervening in *how* Ella engages with the snuffbox, rather than ending the engagement altogether. These examples reveal that babies' practices of moving with things does not entail a fixed set of things that are accessible to them, but that the things accessible to the babies are also changing and shifting (cf. Leder Mackley et al. 2015).

The idea about babies' engagements with a multiplicity of things can also be discussed in relation to parents' practices of placing babies in or on material things in the home. Milo is only one month old when I visit him for the first time. Over the course of a single day, he is placed in multiple material things: the top part of the pram standing on the floor, a car seat, a sling, a bouncy chair, and a baby gym. These things are moved both inside and outside the home, and between rooms in the home, both with and without Milo lying in them. In the example below, Milo is lying in a baby gym on the kitchen floor sleeping while everyone else is sitting at the table having dinner.

Milo wakes up and makes sounds while stretching, waving, and kicking with his arms and legs. After a while, his noise increases and his older sibling crawls into the baby gym and lies down next to him for a while. Milo's noise decreases, and his sibling strokes him on the head and asks their mother if she should give him the dummy. Their mother says "no", and Milo's sibling engages with the soft figures hanging in the baby gym before returning to the table. After that, Milo continues to move his body, making sounds every now and then. When the crying sounds get louder, his mother picks him up and they move out of the camera frame.

Milo's practices of moving his arms and legs, rocking or stretching his body, and making sounds can here be understood as having different kinds of effects on how his mother and older sibling engage with him while he is lying in these things. But by making someone else move down to the floor, or by making someone move him up from the floor, he also produces *material* effects. While Milo is not able to move in or out of these material things by himself, his embodied practices can be understood as important for how others organise the time he spends in these things, and possibly also how these things are moved around within the home.

Final discussion

This article has 'zoomed in' on the small scale, small movements and small things in babies' everyday lives to make visible how everyday space is done in often subtle, mundane, and brief moments and movements. Recognising these engagements as being part of babies' mobilities means that neither the home nor the babies can be understood as characterised by immobility (cf. Murray and Cortés-Morales 2019). I have highlighted how the spread-out-ness of things, the height of activities and things, and the multiplicity of things, can be understood in terms of babies making space through engaging in *the flows of things*. Attending to the flows of things is one way of recognising the often subtle, mundane, and brief movements going on in babies' everyday lives and shows how babies' embodied practices set a multiplicity of things into motion, in different directions, in their homes.

Exploring babies' engagement with the flows of things not only gives insights into how babies are making everyday space but also draws attention to parents' engagements in spreading things out in their homes, moving them to and from the floors, and both enabling and intervening in babies' engagement with things not intended for them. This resonates with arguments concerning the effects that movements with things, like prams or slings, have on the mobility of young children and their families (e.g. Cortés-Morales and Christensen 2004, Murray and Cortés-Morales 2020, Jensen 2018, Whittle 2019). This article contributes to this discussion by focusing on the practices of the babies themselves and bringing insight into the multiplicity of things that babies bring into their and their parents' negotiations of everyday space.

The central argument of this article is that babies should not be understood as disrupting or messing up a space that is already organised in certain ways by parents. Babies' should rather be

understood to be making everyday space in ways of their own through embodied practices that matter both for the babies themselves and for the making of everyday space in their families. The focus on the movements of material things is important for making this argument because it recognises, and attends to, the importance of a practice that the babies spent much time and devotion engaging in.

It also brings attention towards how babies' practices can be understood as shaping parents' engagements with things in the home. It was not only the things the babies engaged with that were moved around, and lifted up and down from the floors, during my visits. Things *for* the parents, like coffee cups or mobile phones, were also moved around by the parents when spending time with the babies on the floors for example. Moreover, parents' practices of keeping things away from their babies – by throwing them further away or hiding them above floor level – seems at times to be guided by concerns about safety. As I have shown in the analyses, this does not necessarily mean that babies lose access to these things. It can also mean that parents only make an object inaccessible for a while, until the baby finds it again or one of the parents gives it back. It can also mean that parents make changes to the thing – like washing the labels off the snuffbox – or make it accessible at a 'safer' height, like the floor. This suggests that parents' concerns and practices around what things are safe or good for babies to engage with could also be understood as changing and shifting (cf. Leder Mackley et al. 2015) and, at least to some extent, negotiated in relation to the babies' practices.

These negotiations can also be understood as conducted in relation to babies' changing corporeality as their increased mobility – when they start crawling or climbing, for example – changes their access to spaces and things. This also points to the importance of recognising how babies changing corporality might come to matter for the babies themselves and towards how babies' practices of getting access to or engaging with things change over time and between babies. Attending to babies' engagements with things is therefore one way of exploring what babies themselves choose to do with their specific corporality in a given moment or with a newly acquired ability. This means that babies' embodied practices are an unstable category partly because babies' corporality in a more general sense changes quickly over time. It is, however, also unstable because babies themselves make different choices around what do to with their bodies and abilities.

The example of Milo, who can only move while lying in the same spot, also brings our attention to how the *very* subtle, or even lack of, visible movement comes to matter for how others move or engage with the material things that babies lie on or are moved in. This can be understood in relation to Murray and Cortés-Morales' (2020:101) discussion of the effects of 'movements and non-movements performed together', as the lack of visible movement when a baby sleeps, for example, has effects on the movements of others around them. This example suggests that babies' embodied practices do not only affect how they or material things are moved in their homes, but also *if* they are moved or not. Moreover, attention to the multiplicity of things that Milo lies in shows that he is not only moved *in, to, or from* things, but he is also moved *between* things. The idea that specific material things have soothing or calming effects on babies has been discussed by for example Lupton (2013). However, the attention to the subtle and brief ways in which a multiplicity of things come to matter in babies' everyday movements raises questions concerning the possibly soothing or calming effects of being moved between things (and humans!).

Finally, a few words about how babies' engagement with things can help us to think about the presence of material things in the homes of their families, which I discussed at the beginning of the article. While the multiplicity of things visibly present in the babies' homes could at first glance be interpreted as primarily the effects of parents' accumulation of things *for* the babies, attention to the babies' practices opens up opportunities for other ways of thinking about how the multiplicity of things comes to matter in babies' everyday lives. It draws attention to the range of other opportunities for engagement that are already present in their homes. Opportunities that emerge when babies' engagements move beyond the boundaries of both spaces and things intended *for* them. This means that the babies cannot be understood as making choices around the things that are

made accessible for them by their parents. The analyses show that babies' practices could be approached as important for understanding *how* and *which* things become accessible for them and what they actually engage with. This is done through a myriad of small movements that does not necessarily become part of any direct negotiation or interaction with their parents. It is possible that the multitude of these engagements could have a *slow* or *subtle* effect on how the everyday spaces in the families are made and re-made over time.

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ORCID

Alex Ormalm  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2946-3490>

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