Independent Mobility and Social Affordances of Places for Urban Neighborhoods: A Youth-Friendly Perspective

# Details

## Year

2018

## DOI

10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02198

## Issued

2018

## Language

English

## Volume

9

## Issue

2

## Start Page

## End Page

## Authors

Lopes F.;Cordovil R.;Neto C.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Frontiers in Psychology

## Publisher

Frontiers Media SA

## Place

Aalto University, Finland

## Topics

Digital and socio-cultural environment

## Sample

145 sixth to ninth graders, aged 11-17 years old, from three schools located in the Great Lisbon.

## Implications For Policy Makers About

# Abstract

Meaning of place is usually approached as slow social cognitive construction. However, grounded on the theory of affordances, it may also stem from direct perception-action processes, which enable the formation of immediate perceived functional, social or symbolic meaning of place (Raymond et al., 2017b). In the present study, affordances of places, which are perceived by a specific perceiver in a specific place, were mapped using a web-map survey. Each place offers opportunities for interaction, behavior, use, feeling or meaning, which is directly perceived and actualized there. This paper aims at identifying the degree of youth-friendliness of urban neighborhoods using the hypothetical intertwined model of independent mobility and actualized affordances (Kyttä, 2004) combined with place use and meaning (Broberg et al., 2013a). SoftGISchildren methodology (Broberg et al., 2013a) was adopted to carry out a cross-sectional research, involving 145 sixth to ninth graders of the Great Lisbon area. SoftGIS integrates Public Participation Geographic Information Systems (PPGIS), enabling collection and place mapping of daily subjective environmental experiences in the physical environment, consequently allowing for individuals to be actively engaged in public processes of participation (Brown and Kyttä, 2014). A place based web survey called “Ideal City: a game of graphic imagination” was adopted. Participants were asked to map their home place, select and mark social, functional, leisure and emotional place transactions, and report actual and ideal mobility to these places. Findings on mobility showed that shorter distances to meaningful affordances of places promote active and independent travel; ideally, youths would like to be more frequently active and more frequently autonomous. As for meaningful places, a total of 1632 affordances were localized, with a higher number on social category. Neighborhood area (500 m around home place) was assessed as youth-friendly, where active and independent travel occurred more frequently, and social affordances were the most expressive type. Relational and affectional experience in the neighborhood places was meaningful for youth. Municipalities should consider these features when planning, designing and managing residential areas aiming for the well-being and health of young citizens; and include youths as specialists of space (spatialists) in planning participatory processes (PPGIS).

# Outcome

The use of SoftGIS real-ideal survey mapping has proved to be an effective youth-friendly process that enables participants to digitally report about their immediate place experiences and place meanings as real life actors that simultaneously influence and are influenced by the close environment. This perceptual communality between the physical and the digital place experience and meaning stresses place-based mapping as a more ecological methodology than the use of more traditional methods such as interviews, questionnaires and diaries. It is important to address the neighborhood area as a youth-friendly embodied ecosystem that promotes free roaming and social meaningful places and the claim of increased autonomy of movement by young people. Also, children and young people ought to be considered as pivotal actors and providers of meaningful information for urban planning processes. Public polices to promote youngsters’ health, well-being and happiness should therefore include active processes of participation, where the real and ideal city is critically discussed by youths.