Espacialistas emocionais: a Criança na Cidade

Engl. transl.: Emotional spatialists: the Child in the City (translated by the coder)

# Keywords

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# Details

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* Wellbeing
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## Sample

The group of participants who took part in this study was made up of 52 children, from both genders (48.1% girls and 51.9% boys; 89.6% have bicycle; 89.6% of households own a car), aged between 11 and 14 years old, from a public school, EBI Dr. Joaquim de Barros, located in Paço de Arcos, in the municipality of Oeiras (Portugal).

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

The exclusion of children from urban public space, due to the strong restrictions on its autonomy and freedom of movement, has been worsening in recent decades. This fact is seriously compromising the child's well-being, health and development, as well as prevent him/her from enjoying the city as a primary space for participation, games, leisure, and physical, social and emotional activity.
In this article, we present the methodological devices used in a study on the children's emotional place experiences in the urban context, which is integrated in a broader work developed within a doctorate, which is nearing completion.
Through the methodological complexity presented, we intend to elaborate on the relations
between the child's mobility in the urban territory and the perceived emotional properties
or felt in different public spaces.
In order to carry out this research, a geo-participatory methodology that is friendly to the
child (called SoftGISchildren) was used; having created a questionnaire-map-online
(“Mapionary”) called “Ideal City: A game of graphic imagination!”.
The internet-based SoftGIS methodology was initially developed in Finland in 2005,
at Aalto University. When collecting, analyzing and presenting localized subjective knowledge (Soft) combined with objective “hard” information from GIS data on urban structure, obtained from geographic information systems, this methodology bridges the gap between the specialized technical knowledge and the knowledge experienced by spatialization.
The group of participants who took part in this study was made up of 52 children, from both
genders, aged between 11 and 14 years old, from a public school, EBI Dr. Joaquim de Barros, located in Paço de Arcos, in the municipality of Oeiras.
Through the "mapionary" the children were invited to identify and locate on the digital map their significant experiences of place, resulting from their daily commuting through the public spaces of Oeiras; and report on their actual and desired mobility between home and school and to significant places.
Place experiences, grouped into four categories, are pre-defined in the questionnaire and assume a theoretical transactional dimension operationalized through the Gibsonian concept of “affordance”, framed in the light of Ecological Perceptual Psychology and Environmental Psychology.
For the present study, only the emotional “affordances” were taken into account, understood as sensations or sensory qualities perceived by children in different places where they circulate. The list of 18 predefined emotional “affordances” included “fun” (a place that is fun); “Calm” (a place that is calm); "Good to be"; “Bored”; "beautiful"; "ugly"; "messy"; "Tidy"; "dangerous"; "Insecure"; "safe"; "dirty"; "clean"; polluted"; "no polluted"; "Quiet"; "noisy"; "dark".
From the knowledge of the place generated by the child through the “mapionary”, two more methodological devices essential for the exploitation of data resulting from the
“emotional mobility-affordance-public space” triad were created. The categorization of affordances
emotions in the “sensation”, “aesthetics”, “security” and “stress” clusters and the typology of
urban public space.
The results obtained reinforce the conviction of the pertinence of carrying out studies on the relationship child-place, using child-centered methodologies and from their experiences through
territory as a moving actor. The knowledge generated by this type of research is fundamental for the development of participatory urban planning and design of public space centered on the real interests and aspirations of children. Translated by the coder

# Outcome

Most relevant descriptive results:
1. Territorial graphic expression of significant places:
- 74 places identified and located by the participants as social affordances.

2. Distance from home to school (page 131)
- The average linear distance between the participants' homes and the school was 1727 meters
(SD = 1704). This means that the average number of participants lives 1.7 km away from the school.

3. School-home mobility (real and ideal)
- School-to-home mobility was assessed in terms of mode of travel and type of accompaniment on the route.
- Most children move daily from home to school in motorized mode (by car - 52%), followed by active mode (on foot, by bicycle, or other active mode of transport - 44%) and hybrid (public transport - 4%). Levels of autonomy in school-to-home travel are low (only 36% children move independently or autonomously - route taken alone or with other children). Most participants do
this daily route accompanied by adults (64%).
- Regarding the ideal mode of travel, most children would like to travel actively (76%) and only 20% and 4% would like to travel motorized and hybrid, respectively. Most children would like to move autonomously on the home-school route (82.4%).

4. School-to-home mobility by gender / age (page 132)
- The average age from which children started moving between school and home in active, hybrid and motorized modes were 11.9 (SD = 1.0), 13.5 (DP = 0.7) and 11.5 (DP = 0.7), respectively.
- The average age for independent travel was 12 (SD = 1.0) years old.
- More girls than boys are doing the school-home route actively (54.5% vs 45.5%) and and in a hybrid way (2 girls vs 0 boys).
- Tthe motorized mode was chosen by more boys than girls, 61.5% vs 38.5%.
- Regarding the independent and non-independent travel mode, no percentage differences were found when comparing gender levels.

5. Environmental fears perceived on the way home-school
- The fears pointed out with greater expressiveness by the participants were walking alone (11.5%), other children and young people (9.6%), dogs or other animals (7.7%) and darkening (5.8%).
- As for the fear of motorized transport, only 1.9% refer to the car and the same value occurs in relation to motorbikes.

6. Number of emotional places, or emotional affordances
- A total of 74 emotional affordances were located and identified. There was an average of affordances per child of 1.42 (SD = 1.54) and a minimum and maximum value of 0 and 8, respectively.

7. Variation in territorial distance from emotional places
- The average linear distance between the places where emotional affordances took place and the houses of the respective participants is 893 meters, the minimum and maximum value being territorial displacement to the emotional places of 3 and 5471 meters.

8. Quality of the emotional transaction
- The most prevalent emotional affordances were the “fun” (fun place); "calm"; "noisy"; "safe"; "clean"; "Good to be"; and “dangerous”, with the respective percentages, 12.2%; 10.8%; 9.5%; 9.5%; 8.1%; 6.8%; and 6.8%.
- Regarding the categories in which those are included, the most prevalent are “stress” (36.5%) and “sensation” (33.8%).

9. Appreciation of emotional places (page 133)
- Most of the emotional places were appreciated by the participants as pleasant (72.7%). Only 19.7% of the places were considered unpleasant and 7.6% as both pleasant and unpleasant.

10. Mobility to emotional places (real and ideal)
- The mode of travel most used by children to emotional places is the motorized (71.7%), followed by active (53.3%) and hybrid (6.7%). More than half of the trips made by children to urban spaces where emotional affordances happen is done in autonomy (54.1%).
- The ideal travel mode for going to emotional places mostly expressed by children is the active (82.1%), followed by the motorized (44.6%) and the hybrid (3.6%).
- Regarding the ideal type of monitoring, 62.5% of the trips would be made autonomously.

11. Emotional affordances due to neighborhood area
- The neighborhood area was defined using a 500m circular buffer around the participants' homes. The affordances that are at a distance less than or equal to 500 meters from the houses were considered to be located within the area of neighborhood. It was found that 40.5% of emotional affordances occur within the neighborhood area.

12. Emotional affordances due to typologies of urban space
- The urban spaces most used by children for the realization of emotional affordances are green spaces (24.3%), school (18.9%), water front space (14.9%) and the housing space (12.2%). The street, the outdoor space for games and sports and commercial spaces are less used by children to trigger the emotional socio-physical transactions (6.8%). It should be noted that the “largo or square” category was not chosen as a significant socio-physical space for the participants.

“The descriptive results obtained demonstrate the effectiveness of the methodological device created to investigate the relationships between children and significant places in their territory and geographies, supported by a transactional perspective of this interaction, starting from the child as a participant actor in the city, with an active and dialoguing voice regarding their perception and action on different urban spaces. However, it will be interesting and necessary to deepen the analysis between identified variables, in order to better understand the factorial complexity surrounding the relational dynamics mobility-affordance emotional-urban space. (...) we propose a part of a broader theoretical and conceptual model that has been developed throughout the doctorate. It intends to consolidate the perspective on the child-place relationship. We call this model, the ‘Transactional Model Child-City’". (Lopes, F.; Neto, C.; Madeira, R., 2016: 134).

“The model we propose is divided into four contexts, ‘social’, ‘functionalization’; ‘Functional-activity’ and ‘emotional’. (...) In any type of transactional interactivity, mobility and affordances are interdependent actions where the the first is a key condition for the second to be realized. The space is lived by the child through a co-emergent relational process between him/her as a participating actor and the diverse urban spaces.
Thus, and within the scope of this work, the child-space transactional relationships are always specified by the emotional affordances perceived and / or performed by the child, as an ‘actor-body’. These affordances allow the child to make ‘Embodied’ meanings of the experiences of places emerge simultaneously with other types of emotional affordances and other categories” (ibidem). Quotes translated by the coder.