



*The Malta Foundation
for the Wellbeing of Society*

FIL-BERA#

CHILDREN'S USE OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Produced by The National Institute for Childhood
within The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society

Authored by Bernadine Satariano, Maureen Cole, Valerie Sollars, Sandra Hili Vassallo
Assisted by Xanthe' Schembri





FIL-BERA#

CHILDREN'S USE OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Authors: Bernadine Satariano, Maureen Cole, Valerie Sollars, Sandra Hili Vassallo

Research Support Assistant: Xanthe' Schembri

Acknowledgements

The 'Fil-Beraħ' project would not have been possible without the human and financial resources of the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society (now The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society) and the much-valued support of several entities and individuals, namely:

- H.E. President Emerita Marie Louise Coleiro Preca for her personal interest and commitment to the project;
- The children and young people who participated in the project, there would have been no project without them;
- The parents/guardians who facilitated the children and young people's participation;
- The Xgħajra Local Council, more specifically Mr Anthony Valvo (former mayor), Mr Ranier Busuttil (Executive Secretary) and Mr Neil Attard (current mayor);
- Mr Jeffrey Caruana, former Head of St Margaret College Primary School in Xgħajra;
- The National Institute for Childhood (NIC) which saw the project through from its inception to its conclusion;
- Dr Daniel Mercieca, for his important contribution to the design of the project;
- Dr Marie Briguglio for her valued input during the early stages of the project; and
- Dr Ruth Farrugia, former Director-General of the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, Dr Sharon Attard De Giovanni, Ms Therese Cini Sarreo, Ms Raisa Bartolo and Ms Stephanie Zammit, current and former employees of the Foundation for supporting the project in various capacities.

Published in June 2021

ISBN: 978-99957-933-7-1

Design & Print: Salesian Press

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	v
ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Aims	4
1.2 Research Questions	5
1.3 Target Community and Choice of Locality	5
1.4 Research Methodology	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 The Benefits of Public Spaces for Children	11
2.2.1 Spaces and places in neighbourhoods	12
2.3 Challenges to Children’s Use of Public Open Spaces	13
2.4 Children in Participatory Planning of Public Spaces	15
2.5 Case study: Malta	17
2.5.1 Densely built up spaces	17
2.5.2 Roads and cars	20
2.5.3 Child Obesity	21
2.6 Conclusion	23
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	25
3.1 Introduction	27
3.2 The Mosaic Approach and Participatory Action Research	27
3.2.1 The Research Process	28
3.3 Recruitment of participants	31
3.4 Data collection	31
3.4.1 Focus group meetings with the Children’s Committee	32
3.4.2 Travel Diary	33
3.4.3 Drawings	34
3.4.4 The use of photos	35
3.4.5 Cognitive mapping	35
3.4.6 Place Mapping	35
3.4.7 Use of video recording to assess open spaces	36
3.5 Conclusion	36

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	37
4.1. Introduction	39
4.2 Factors affecting children’s use of public open spaces	39
4.2.1 Time dedicated to school	40
4.2.2 Absence of children in the open spaces	41
4.2.3 Availability of open spaces for children’s use and socialisation	42
4.2.4 Limited and inadequate equipment	44
4.2.5 Streetscapes and connectivity / street design and accessibility	48
4.3.6 Pride and disappointment	51
4.2.7 Adults’ perception of adolescents	56
4.3 Open spaces with therapeutic effects	58
4.3.1 Active agency	60
4.4 Neighbourhood social processes	62
4.5 Conclusion	65
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	67
5.1 Summary of main findings	69
5.2 Methodological contributions	72
5.3 Recommendations	74
5.4 Challenges encountered during the project	75
5.4.1 Difficulties at the recruitment stage	75
5.4.2 Difficulties during the running of the project	76
5.4.3 Challenges encountered in the locality	76
5.4.4 Problems encountered due to children’s educational system	76
5.5 Conclusion	77
REFERENCES	79
TABLE OF FIGURES	
Figure 2.1 Land use and land cover in Malta, Gozo & Comino	18
Figure 2.2 Signs listing prohibitions at local gardens	19
Figure 2.3 Road congestion Index 2013	20
Figure 3.2 A sample travel diary	33
Figure 3.3 Drawings collected during the first stage of the data collection	34
Figure 4.1 The potential & limitations of playing field equipment	45
Figure 4.3 Designing an open space	48
Figure 4.4: The limitations of street safety	50
Figure 4.5: Neighbourhood analysis applying the photo analysis as a layer on the map	50
Figure 4.6 Assessing a local green area	52
Figure 4.7 Assessing the conditions of the neighbourhood	53
Figure 4.8 Map Labelling with positive and negative aspects of the neighbourhood	54
Figure 5.1 Presenting results to the members of the local council	71
Figure 5.2 Discussing solutions for several open spaces in Xgħajra	72

FOREWORD

The Fil-Beraħ project is founded on the core values of the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society. It is an excellent example of how the Foundation is implementing one of its main aims for the period 2019-2022, that of promoting active citizenship and focusing on children.

Children are and have been at the centre of the Foundation's work since its inception. This has been reflected through the work of the Children's Hub, the Children and Young Persons' Councils and the National Institute for Childhood which was responsible for this research project.

One of the main aims of the National Institute for Childhood has been to promote children's wellbeing through research which endeavours to create spaces where children's voices are heard and acknowledged. This research project has done just that through a participatory research methodology which ensured that the children were co-researchers with the adults who led the project. The research methodology used was ethically sound stemming from a deep respect for children whilst promoting their agency.

The project has focused on a matter of deep concern to children which is their access to, and use of public open spaces. During my many encounters with children, access to safe open spaces for play and recreation has frequently been the focus of our conversations. Children have often lamented the lack of such spaces. This project was a direct response to these concerns. This research project has offered a group of children the opportunity to share their views about such spaces. It has also given them the chance to communicate their wishes to the members of their locality's Local Council.

It is commendable that this publication is being issued with a sister publication which is a tool-kit intended to support any entity or group which wishes to undertake a similar project with children. The tool-kit is available in both Maltese and English to ensure wider usage. It is intended to encourage all those who initiate projects with children to carry these out such that children's participation is ensured throughout the project.



As stated in Article 12 of the child-friendly version of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

“Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously”.

It is augured that these publications will serve as a platform for ensuring that this article of the Convention comes to life through an increased interest and readiness to engage children of all ages in participatory processes.

Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca

Former President of Malta

Chair of The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society

ABSTRACT

This document reports about the project, '*Fil-Beraħ*', which sought to give a voice to children by exploring what facilitates or hinders children from making use of public open spaces within a Maltese context. Spending time outdoors is highly desirable as it helps children develop physically, socially, cognitively, and emotionally (Hoskins, 2008; Aziz and Said, 2015). In addition, the way children interact with people, equipment and the available outdoor spaces is important for their health and wellbeing. For a variety of reasons, over the last decades, children's independent mobility and use of public open spaces has decreased substantially (Valentine, 2004; Karsten, 2005; Schoeppe et al., 2015; Show et al., 2015).

This project engaged with five children from one locality in Malta. Their participation in the study was facilitated through multiple methods including artwork, travel diaries, photo and video narratives, interactive mapping and designing of open spaces. By adopting the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2003), as the overarching framework, participating children were actively engaged and, more importantly, their contributions, voices and perspectives were acknowledged and valued as citizens of the locality. The children were empowered to engage with adults in their community thus sharing their opinions and increasing the likelihood that their contributions could be acted upon.

As a result of the children's input and direct participation, three key issues were identified:

1. The importance of natural spaces for children and adolescents;
2. Issues associated with road safety and stranger danger need to be addressed to encourage children's independent use of public open spaces; and
3. Societal norms can be detrimental to children's and adolescents' health and wellbeing.

The study has also highlighted the responsibilities which authorities have towards children and adolescents. Ideally, addressing issues relevant to all children and adolescents coupled with an increase in investment should be priorities of relevant authorities. This project serves as an eye-opener to individuals and authorities who have the health and wellbeing of children at heart.

In addition to this publication which includes a detailed review of the *Fil-Beraħ* project, a step-by-step guide is presented in an accompanying *Toolkit* that offers guidance and insights for entities willing to give children and adolescents a voice and act on their concerns and needs within the context of Maltese society today.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Within the Maltese context, various initiatives have been undertaken where children and young people are key participants in events, activities and projects. Most of these initiatives provide children and young people with opportunities that give them the space to make their voices heard and even put them in decision-making situations. Some initiatives have also prompted children and young people's use of and interaction with the outdoor space. *Dinja Waħda*¹ "taps into young people's innate fascination with nature and seeks to develop it into a sense of responsibility towards the natural world". *EkoSkola*² empowers children and supports them to take sustainable decisions and actions. *Il-Parlament taż-Żgħażaġħ*³ provides a forum for young people to debate and discuss issues of interest with a view to proposing solutions.

The project *Fil-Beraħ* sought to bring together two dimensions of direct relevance to children and young people. On the one hand, *Fil-Beraħ* sought to find out how children make use of available, open public spaces. Simultaneously, the members of the National Institute for Childhood- the entity within the former President's Foundation for the Well-Being of Society (PFWS) which was responsible for the *Fil-Beraħ* project - wanted to promote participatory research. Therefore, this was not a research project **about** or **for** children and young people; but a research project **with** children and young people - where the young participants collaborated in the research process.

The need for children to have public open spaces where to play, socialise and grow healthily emerged as an important theme within the Children's Forum and the Community Forum of the PFWS. Preliminary results from the *International Survey of Children's Wellbeing* conducted amongst children growing up in Malta had also indicated the need for more appropriately developed open, recreational and social spaces within our communities (Cefai, 2015, 2018). Environmental health concerns, particularly on obesity draw attention to the need for improved mobility (Grech, and Farrugia Sant'Angelo, 2009; Farrugia Sant'Angelo and Grech, 2011, Aquilina et al., 2019).

The *Child Forum* within the PFWS was deeply committed to viewing children as knowledgeable agents. However, as Mand (2012) echoing James (2007) notes, listening to children is not enough. It is vital to explore the implications of what children are telling society whilst considering the diversity within children's voices and ultimately committing to scrutinising the link between data and action. This participatory research project sought to explore children's views about physical and social spaces within their neighbourhood. In this document 'participatory research' refers to a methodological stance which is translated into specific data

1 <https://birdlifemalta.org/environmental-education/schools/primary-education/dinja-wahda/> retrieved on April 15th 2020

2 EkoSkola <https://www.ekoskola.org.mt/>

3 Il-Parlament taż-Żgħażaġħ <https://www.facebook.com/events/il-parlament-ta-malta/parlament-nazzjonali-ta%C5%BC-%C5%BCg%C4%A7a%C5%BCag%C4%A7/603682826708442/>

collection strategies (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). This project sought to promote a bottom-up approach, while simultaneously recognising that adult researchers are the initiators of this initiative. Thus, this research cannot and does not purport to be emancipatory research (Punch, 2002) where the research participants control the research process fully. However, it is participatory in terms of involving children in data collection and analysis.

Within the local context, participatory research with children is still a rather innovative concept and thus, this project offers insights into promoting and nurturing ways through which children can participate in local knowledge generation and development. As such, this was a pilot project which sought to encourage and support similar initiatives within other communities.

1.1 Aims

The project aimed at undertaking a critical investigation of relational spaces (Massey, 1994) within one neighbourhood in Malta. This investigation attempted to integrate physical and social elements by documenting children's experiences of the use of public spaces within their neighbourhood and the relationships obtained within these spaces with a special focus on intergenerational interaction. Moreover, this project wanted to involve children when recommending improvement in the design and provision of local places and spaces where children of all ages and abilities could feel safe and confident when making use of their neighbourhood for play activities. To promote maximum participation, this project opted for a bottom-up approach; empowering children to propose the best way to assess and renovate their locality for their better use of open public spaces.

The project attempted to address the following aims:

1. Liaise with a local council, stakeholders and community groups in order to embark on a process of social dialogue where genuine consultation with children would be undertaken through participatory action research tools.
2. Research and represent the views of children with regard to:
 - a. Identifying existing and missing assets within their neighbourhood;
 - b. The identification of spaces and how they impact children's health and wellbeing;
 - c. The potential assets of a specific space within their neighbourhood; and
 - d. The management of a chosen space.
3. Facilitate children's participation in the data collection and analysis of this research.
4. Influence the planning and implementation of actions within the neighbourhood, in line with the emerging data.
5. Document the research process with the intention of replicating similar participatory processes whilst also problematising aspects of the process and suggesting further developments.

6. Explore how participatory processes with children can be conducted in the context of the development of public spaces in Malta.
7. Design the methodology to be as cost- and time-effective as possible with a view to enable replication.
8. Explore determinants that are affecting children's daily use of public open spaces within a Maltese context.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to address the aims of the project, the following research questions were drawn up:

1. What is the state of play within the local context on the use of public spaces, relationships and children's participation?
2. How do children perceive public spaces within an identified neighbourhood?
3. According to children, which physical/non-physical assets are available; and how can such spaces be maintained?
4. How can participatory research influence the management of such public spaces?

Defining childhood tends to be difficult because different age brackets are used to define childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Some classify childhood according to children's biological growth (Mosby, 2013), others in terms of their psychological development (Toga et al., 2006). Some consider children as the age group which is still dependent on adults for care and protection, whilst adolescence starts when children become more autonomous and can construct their own identity (UN, 1990). The definition of childhood is not universal. It is socially constructed according to the social processes and culture of the place and likely to be dynamic across time (Boratav, 2005; Evans, 2006).

1.3 Target Community and Choice of Locality

One of the main aims of this project was to encourage and possibly guide other localities to take the initiative of involving children in consultation about the use of public open spaces and follow similar participatory processes. The choice of locality for this study was determined by the criteria of transferability and future applicability. When considering potential localities for this study, unique localities such as Valletta and Mdina were eliminated as replicability would not be feasible. Consideration was given to localities which have all possible public open spaces, namely urban (built up) spaces, green (countryside) spaces and blue (coastal) spaces. Ten localities were shortlisted. As this project focused on the involvement of children, a demographic and socio-economic analysis of these localities was conducted with a focus on the child population in the locality. According to the 2010 Census (NSO, 2010), the locality with the highest child population was Xgħajra followed by Pembroke and Marsascula. Hence, Xgħajra was chosen for this pilot study.

Xgħajra is approximately 1 square kilometre and has a population of less than 2000, with a child population density of 22.3 % (NSO, 2010). It is a coastal locality and may be considered as a suburb of Żabbar due to its proximity and the fact that many resident families hail from Żabbar. Although Xgħajra has its own local council and primary school, it does not have a parish church and the community celebrates the feast of Żabbar reinforcing the deep attachment to the larger town. Xgħajra residents also share basic amenities with Żabbar including the bank and health centre.

The built environment of Xgħajra sprawls along the coastline with small houses erected some forty years ago as summer residences facing the sea. Another type of housing developed around 20 to 30 years ago consists of detached houses built on two storeys. Recently built dwellings consist of apartment blocks, some of which have a common public courtyard.

With the development of Smart City close to Xgħajra, foreign nationals have taken up residence in the locality, contributing to an increase in its population. It is thus developing into a locality where both Maltese and foreign nationals reside.

1.4 Research Methodology

In this study, the Mosaic approach offered the ideal overarching framework enabling the adult researchers to give a voice to the child and integrate data coming from different sources (Clark and Moss; 2001; Clark, 2003). The Mosaic approach does not consider children as passive objects but as social actors in society; they are 'beings' rather than 'becomings' (Qvortrup et al., 1994, p.2). The Mosaic approach as applied within the context of Reggio Emilia preschools, credited children with being competent persons, applied a pedagogy of listening and established the notion and development of a pedagogy of relationships. The mosaic framework emphasises multiple and participatory methods for data collection; puts children's lived experiences under a spotlight and requires researchers to be reflexive and adaptable. The Mosaic approach was chosen for the current project as it facilitated bringing together children and adult researchers, keen on embracing diverse research methods to identify, record and publicise children's perspectives, voices and opinions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW



LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

There is an important association between the role of public open spaces and the health and wellbeing of people who make use of these spaces (Wood et al., 2012). Children need to be present in open spaces to experience direct contact with the physical environment, have contact with nature, appreciate the built environments with aesthetic preferences and enjoy recreation (Kellert, 2005).

This chapter introduces the role of public open space for children and its impact on their health and wellbeing. The literature review highlights the benefits of public open spaces together with an analysis of challenges that children encounter to access public spaces. This chapter also considers the importance of including children in participatory planning of public spaces and concludes with an analysis of local research in relation to children's use of public open spaces.

Space may be interpreted in multiple ways. At a very rudimentary level and from a Euclidean perspective, space is that which is located on a map and which is considered a blank canvas where people's actions take place. Yet space should also be regarded in a way that helps people understand how 'space produces society [just] as much as society produces space' (Nairn and Kraftl, 2016, p.3). Indeed, some spaces can contain or channel positive experiences amongst people resulting in improved health and wellbeing while other spaces can pose risks and consequently inhibit development or contribute towards a negative experience of place. This emphasises the concept that 'any notion of sociability implies a dimension of spatiality' (Massey, 2005 p.189).

There may be various open spaces in a neighbourhood: immediate surroundings, streets, squares, local parks, designated playgrounds and diverse natural settings. These spaces are understood and experienced as the result of social relationships and interactions that can occur within specific local culture, politics and institutional structures (UN, 2008).

An in-depth understanding of how children perceive and experience space is of particular relevance to the current study. The experience of public open spaces is extremely important for children as it provides them with their first independent opportunity of forming relationships with people who are not members of their family. The streets, amenities and destinations close to home are the places where a child should feel free to play, socialise and explore independently (Chawla, 2002). The use of public open spaces gives the child a sense of belonging, identity formation and healthy development (Proshansky and Gottlieb, 1989; Moore and Wong, 1997; Gleeson and Sipe, 2006).

Unlike adults, children have different affinities towards the environment, as they view a place according to what it can offer and the extent to which it allows them to experience enjoyment. It is important to appreciate that children's uses and preferences of an open space and their reactions towards it differ to those of adults. Children have different needs, aspirations and behaviours and make use of a space differently to adults (Ramezani and Said, 2013).

The challenges in providing public open spaces are continuously increasing. Urbanisation across the world is occurring rapidly with most children living in urban environments (Oliver et al., 2011). Adults are attracted to live in urbanised places as there are better possibilities of employment, access to healthcare and education. Many urban development projects have been characterised by specialisation of spaces for commerce, production, health care, and recreation accompanied by traffic expansion.

Urban environments across the world are under intense pressure from social, economic, political, and environmental agendas and issues- in turn posing opportunities, challenges and threats to the everyday lives of children and young people living within such contexts. These challenges raise certain questions.

Are urban planners catering for children's needs? How are children adapting to the changing environment in their streets and neighbourhoods? How much space is dedicated to independent, safe mobility and play in one's neighbourhood? Are the needs of all children and adolescents taken into consideration when a space is planned?

Apart from spending time at school or at home, children engage in activities in the neighbourhood and outdoors. It is very important that the neighbourhood includes child-relevant outdoor public spaces so that children can spend time playing, travel safely from one destination to the other, meet friends and interact with different groups of people (Rogers, 2012; Hooper et al., 2015; Carroll et al., 2015).

Neighbourhood streets and public spaces are important sites for children's play and exploration. The international literature suggests that public open spaces offer settings where children spend time, are physically active, interact with friends and develop important skills for healthy development (Day and Wagner, 2010; Freeman and Tranter, 2011). Although adults may assume that children would automatically benefit with improved neighbourhood conditions, in contrast to adults, children are very vulnerable to drastic and rapid changes of urbanisation. Children need opportunities which promote exploration and socialisation. Reducing the availability of spaces has a negative impact on children's physical health due to reduced mobility and on their emotional wellbeing as they are not experiencing feelings of belonging. Reduced space impacts children's independence and problem-solving capabilities as well as their social wellbeing arising from minimal social interaction (Malone, 2008).

2.2 The Benefits of Public Spaces for Children

Outdoor play is important for children as it enables them to develop physically, socially, spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, intellectually and cognitively. Outdoor play enhances children's problem-solving abilities and promotes creativity (Titman, 1994; Isenberg and Quisenberry, 2002; Clements 2004; Stagnitti, 2004; Kellert, 2005; Ginsburg, 2007; Pellegrini, 2009; Little and David, 2010; Aziz and Said, 2015). In public open spaces children and adolescents meet each other and experience elements of freedom where they are not necessarily controlled or supervised.

Outdoor spaces give children the possibility to vary their activities and play with a sense of freedom and open-endedness (Stephenson, 2002). When children play, they use their imagination and thoughts, and transfer these to physical activity and active behaviour (Oliver et al., 2011). Public open spaces such as parks, playgrounds, school grounds and the natural environment, such as woodlands and grassy areas, provide spaces and places for outdoor play (Fjørtoft, 2004) where children interact with peers (Kyttä, 2002) and where they can experience diverse social interactions (Hoskins and Deakin Crick, 2008). Where open spaces in the neighbourhood are available and accessible, children are enabled to develop various skills, including problem-solving, spatial analysis and the understanding of the environment (Cornell et al., 2001; Rissotto and Tonucci, 2002).

Open spaces designated for children (e.g. playgrounds) do not only enable children to meet other children and play (Trawick-Smith 2010) but also provide children with a range of physical challenges, such as risk-taking and the ability to accept challenges and develop resilience (Stephenson, 2002, Little and Wyver, 2008). Indeed, according to Piaget (2007) open spaces give opportunities for children to give value to and enjoy playing and learning through self-taught experiences. Play should be fun, passionate, spontaneous, self-initiated and purposeless (Hewes, 2014). The purpose of play is not to achieve an outcome but to enjoy and experience the activity through elements of exploration, discovery, failure and success.

Outdoor play is also important since children increase their contact with nature. Children's engagement with nature enhances their intellectual, emotional and social development together with problem-solving, critical and thinking skills (Kellert, 2005). Nature provides opportunities for children to experience and consider its features as stimulators and components of their activities (Sebba, 1991). Children's play in natural settings increases awareness on weather elements and the natural ecosystem; develops their knowledge and concern about the relationship between human beings and nature; and enables them to become responsible adults (Wells and Lekies, 2001; Freeman and Tranter, 2011).

Play in open spaces provides opportunities for physical activity. Physical activity is important for children's physical development, motor skills, maintaining a healthy weight and as a buffer against chronic disease in adulthood (Hallal et al., 2006; Dencker and Andersen, 2008; Janz et al., 2010). Being active improves blood pressure and HDL cholesterol levels (Ekelund et al., 2012, Cliff et al., 2013). When children are physically fit there is a lower possibility of developing body fat in adult life (Janz et al., 2010). Other benefits include improvement in

bone density, blood lipid and lipoprotein profiles, glucose metabolism, reduced adiposity and blood pressure (Sothorn et al., 1999).

Despite the plethora of benefits associated with play, and despite the fact that play is considered a right for all children (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2002), several studies have reported an alarming decrease in children's use of outdoor open spaces for play (Hofferth and Sandberg, 2001; Gray, 2011).

2.2.1 Spaces and places in neighbourhoods

Apart from outdoor play, another way for children to be physically active is through daily travel on foot or by bicycle (Loprinzi et al., 2012). Active travel within public spaces not only reduces children's sedentary time but increases the possibility for children to make friends, have fun, improve social and cognitive skills and better understand navigation within their local spaces and neighbourhood environment (Mitchell et al., 2007; King et al., 2011).

Independent mobility has an important function in childhood development. Children learn through autonomous interaction with the people present in the surrounding places, (Morrow, 2003) while the experiences of place contribute to self-identity, security, and social competence (Proshansky and Gottlieb, 1989).

Neighbourhood play and mobility also shapes children's sense of place and facilitates experiences of social inclusion and belonging that are crucial to identity formation and wellbeing (Gleeson and Sipe, 2006; Tranter and Pawson, 2001). The absence of children in public spaces reduces the sense of place and social cohesion experienced by other members in society (Weller and Bruegel, 2009). A sense of place is developed when a network of friends habitually meets at a common place. These places within spaces develop into a meaningful place as children use the features within this space, interpret, and negotiate them. The experience of outdoor open spaces strengthens the children's sense of place, helps them to feel included and enhances their personal identity (Proshansky and Gottlieb, 1989; Spencer and Wooley, 2000, Carroll et al., 2015). Some spaces or specific locations in these spaces such as a tree, a bench or a porch of an apartment block may be considered important since this place may serve as a meeting place, a place where friendships are formed or where children enjoy themselves. Thus, children develop personal history associated with specific places in open spaces. They are the places which children know best. Since children look at the environment according to its valuable and functional objects (play tools), children learn to appreciate their presence or even note their absence (Carroll et al., 2015).

When positive emotions are repeatedly experienced within a place during childhood, this fosters a level of rootedness to a place. This develops further in accordance with the level of social connection one experiences with other people within a place (Jack, 2012). Research concludes that the more children spend time outdoors, the more possibilities they have for social interaction and the more likely they are to experience positive health and wellbeing through features of social cohesion and social networks (Veitch et al., 2010; Wen et al., 2009).

Children are highly attracted to play in a space where there are other people or children (van AnDEL, 1990; Veitch et al., 2006, Castonguay and Jutras, 2009) as it gives them an opportunity to meet others and form social connections and friendships. This is related to the theory of social capital which emphasises that the social neighbourhood environment can provide individuals with opportunities of bonding with others in the neighbourhood which is highly important for health and wellbeing. Children desire and need public spaces to be with friends, to 'hang out' and to experience socialisation, enabling them to feel a sense of belonging and helping them gain autonomy and create rules of engagement (Skelton and Gough, 2013; Fraser, 2013). It is important for children and adolescents to experience social interaction with other young peers and adults in the neighbourhood. When a local community is caring towards the needs of others, it helps in the formation of features of reciprocity and social belonging. It also involves the inhabitants in the formation of social networks which in turn creates social support (Cattell, 2001; Berkman and Glass, 2000). All these aspects of social capital contribute to health through psychosocial behaviour and psychological and material pathways (Satariano, 2020). According to Karsten (2005) children are capable of building bridges between different ethnic groups and are regarded as the social 'glue'. Establishing friendships provides social and emotional support which are important buffers for mental health and wellbeing.

2.3 Challenges to Children's Use of Public Open Spaces

Children's movements in outdoor open spaces are becoming more controlled (Tezel, 2011). Nature and the environment where children play have changed drastically (Burke, 2005; Karsten, 2005) with the largest impact being on children's free outdoor play (Hoffert and Sandberg, 2001; Gray, 2011). Whereas children could play outside in the public open spaces safely until a decade or so ago, this is no longer possible because of increased urbanisation. Ill-planned urban environments with little accessible pathways, and an increase in traffic which causes pollution and heightens the risk of road accidents are among the reasons inhibiting children from spending time in open public spaces. Consequently, children are spending more time indoors or travelling in cars (Karsten, 2005; Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2008; Pooley et al., 2005).

Adults too, are changing their ideas about the role of play in outdoor spaces, resulting in more concern about the risks that may be present in the neighbourhood than about the benefits that children gain when playing outside. Indeed, one of the main factors restricting children's use of public open spaces is the heightening concern of parents regarding their children's safety. Parental fears related to traffic as well as dangers from strangers are restricting children's independent mobility and play in public spaces (Prezza, 2001; Min and Lee, 2006; Veitch et al., 2006; 2008; Castonguay and Jutras, 2009, 2010). Parents restrict children's unattended use of outdoors, whether for play or for travel, owing to the risk of potential injury in the streets or on playgrounds and for fear of crimes such as assault, bullying or child abduction (Valentine and Mc Kendrick, 1997; Krahnstoever Davison and Lanson, 2006; Ferreira et al., 2007; Carver, et al., 2008; Tester, 2009; Fyhri et al., 2011).

Several studies analyse road safety by measuring traffic speed and density, the number of roads one must cross, the presence of road barriers and pedestrian and cyclist safety. The majority of the studies argue that the more traffic there is and the poorer the road safety, less use can be made of neighbourhood spaces by adults and children (Davison and Lawson, 2006; Sallis and Glanz, 2006; Limstrand, 2008; Saelens and Handy, 2008; Pont et al., 2008; Ding et al., 2011; Aziz and Said, 2012). The younger the children are the less likely they are to be mobile and independent in their neighbourhood (Ding et al., 2011) with the increased likelihood of constant surveillance when outdoors (Hillman et al., 1990; Mackett et al., 2007).

Literature on neighbourhood safety also focuses on the incidence of crime, neighbourhood disorders, especially in deprived areas, and kidnapping (Davison and Lawson, 2006; Ferreira et al., 2007; Limstrand, 2008; Pont et al., 2009; Ding et al., 2011; de Vet et al., 2011). Although sporadic occurrences may not reflect reality, media representations of child abduction or harm by strangers have contributed to the decrease of independent mobility amongst children, even though these events are rare (Carver et al., 2008).

News items reporting traffic accidents and assaults put social pressures on parents and their parenting practices. Whilst it was once accepted that children walked or cycled to school, or ran errands, parents are more likely to feel obliged to accompany or chauffeur their children. This is thus making parents much more reliant on cars, resulting in strengthening an auto-centric urban design and contributing to an increase in a sedentary lifestyle, even for children. The increase in 'backseat' children (Karsten, 2005) implies that children are spending their leisure time being chauffeured rather than travelling actively and independently (Valentine, 2004; Karsten, 2005; Badland et al., 2005; Fyhri et al., 2011; Schoeppe et al., 2015; Shaw et al., 2013). Parents chaperoning children in cars creates a social trap resulting in fewer children on the streets and more cars.

Another challenge to unsupervised outdoor play in the neighbourhood spaces and public places arises from an increased concern about children's academic achievements together with the importance attributed to extracurricular activities (Isenberg and Quisenberry, 2002). Parents are giving more priority to structured supervised activities (Karsten, 2002; Mackett et al., 2005; Copperman and Bhat, 2009; Gray, 2011) rather than allowing children to play freely in the neighbourhood's outdoor spaces. The challenge has been exacerbated through the increase in the use of technological devices used for play purposes, further encouraging children to play indoors (Tandy, 1999; Clements, 2004, Copperman and Bhat, 2009).

Prolonged periods of sedentary behaviour during school hours, modes of travel, participation in structured activities and engagement with computer games all impact children's health and wellbeing. It is of great concern that such behaviours coincide with increased risks of obesity, metabolic syndromes, type 2 diabetes and other chronic disease (Grech et al., 2017; Stamatakis et al., 2013; Short et al., 2009; Hale, 2004).

Children's independent use of public open spaces is also conditioned by their age and gender. Older children are more likely to move about freely in the neighbourhood whereas younger children are more likely to make use of their own home yard as an open space for play (Prezza, 2007; Castonguay and Jurtas, 2009, 2010). Boys are allowed greater freedom to explore their

neighbourhood environment (Brown et al., 2009) while girls are likely to be less active than boys and use the open spaces in the neighbourhood when accompanied by other friends (Min and Lee, 2006).

Children's physical activity may also be influenced by interpersonal, social and physical environmental factors (Sallie and Owen, 1997). If a neighbourhood lacks access to amenities, green spaces and open safe spaces it is more likely that children are forced to remain inside (Morrow, 2003; Prezza et al., 2005). Children living in areas which house people from low socio-economic groups are more likely to be physically inactive and at risk of obesity (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2006).

Parental permission for their children's use of public open spaces also depends on the presence of neighbours in these open spaces. When there are 'eyes on the street' (Jacobs, 1961) there is indirect surveillance of what is happening in the neighbourhood. This provides reassurance for the parents that if something happens to their children, people in the surroundings would step in to help. In these circumstances, parents are more likely to give permission to their children to travel around unattended (Prezza et al., 2005; Whitzman and Mizrachi, 2009).

Structural factors impact on the possibility of children's daily use of public open spaces. Access to parks or open spaces are likely to increase the likelihood that children spend time outdoors playing, thus being physically active (de Vet et al., 2011). The more distant these recreational spaces are, the less likely are children to travel regularly to use them (Pont et al., 2009). Ding et al. (2011) concluded that children living in neighbourhoods where there are residential, commercial, cultural and open spaces, are more likely to make use of outdoor open spaces. Infrastructure such as adequate pavements (Davison and Lawson, 2006) and safety aids which facilitate street crossings (Sallis and Glanz, 2006) support mobility within the neighbourhood.

Aziz and Said (2015) suggest that spaces can be 'friendly', 'adapted', 'restrained' or 'neglected'. A 'friendly' environment is the space mostly enjoyed by children as it offers potential for their needs and preferences for play. An 'adapted' environment is one that does not have the maximum potential that children would enjoy, but children have to make adaptations to enjoy play. Although adults perceive these spaces (e.g. staircase or field) as inappropriate for play, children may make some adaptations to the environment to create and enjoy play. There may also be environments, access to which may be restricted by adults, despite offering potential for children's play, and thus, minimal use is made of such places. A school playground may be perceived as a 'restrained' environment since children wouldn't have access to it during weekends and holidays. 'Neglected' spaces offer the least attraction for children. Often seen as unattractive environments, they offer minimal potential for play and are thus perceived by children as inappropriate.

2.4 Children in Participatory Planning of Public Spaces

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* provides a strong acknowledgement of the fact that children are human 'beings' and not only humans 'becoming'. Children have rights and where universality of rights is acknowledged, children are given a voice like other full members of society. It is their right to be heard and to participate in decisions which

impact their daily life, their health and wellbeing. Thus, where public open spaces and their use are concerned, children should be given a voice and consulted about their experiences and views for adults to understand children's needs and desires.

In today's urbanised spaces, the environment is becoming less adaptable for children's needs and interests. It is often mostly designed to accommodate adults (Bartlett et al., 1999). Children are living in 'spaces within adult-constructed worlds' (Ennew, 1994 p.127). In a study conducted with parents they admitted that they are reluctant/unwilling to give their children permission to make use of public spaces freely acknowledging that they themselves had more freedom to wander in their neighbourhood when they were children (Ennew, 1994). In urban neighbourhood environments, children are continuously negotiating spaces where they can play and where the land use was planned exclusively for adults (Christensen and O'Brien, 2003). The lack of adequate spaces for children and the parental fears of traffic and crime on the streets are inhibiting children from enjoying outdoor daily play. This thus raises the question of justice and fairness as well as social inclusion in urban spaces, since the planning of cities is predominantly, if not exclusively, targeted for adults' needs (O'Brien, 2000). Public spaces should be planned for all members of the community- including children.

Skelton and Gough (2013) note that marginalizing rather than involving children in urban planning is highly problematic as children are important members of society. They are also the ones most likely to use the open spaces for substantial periods of time and have a nuanced experience of the neighbourhood environment. Children's development is more likely to be affected and shaped by the neighbourhood's social environment (Matthews and Limb, 1999; Davis et al., 2006; Horton et al., 2014).

Acknowledging children as an important group in the urban fabric is vital (Lynch, 1977) and they should be involved in planning and design. Backed also by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's voices and opinions should be taken into consideration and thus their views should influence the decision-making process (UNICEF, 2014). UNICEF's *Child Friendly Cities Report* emphasises that children should live in a safe, healthy and adequate neighbourhood where they can play, participate in local governance and in the social and cultural life of the community (Wilks, 2010).

Children choose environments that offer potential and actualised affordances; environments that allow them to engage using their physical and social skills (Kytta, 2003). Every place is thus perceived differently by children of different ages and gender as the perception of the environment's potential and the realisation of the perceived possibilities may vary. This implies that plans and designs drawn by adults for children do not necessarily address their needs or the needs of boys and girls of different ages.

Children are less likely to be motivated by an environment which limits their potential to actualise their plans; such places leave them dissatisfied to the extent that they might avoid using such spaces. In contrast, children's wellbeing can be improved when a space is perceived as enjoyable and matches the needs of the individual. Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) argue that the characteristics of a physical environment are perceived by individuals according to the

coherence of information, complexity and mysteriousness. For example, a space identified as a playground has suitable equipment implying that the space and place allow for certain activities. Once the space and its environment are embellished and include additional features which encourage exploration, children become more attracted to the place (Kaplan et al., 1998). The more sophisticated a place is, the more mysterious and challenging an environment it is perceived to be (Zhang and Jin Li, 2012). Having such characteristics contributes to retaining a high level of interest because of the exploratory behaviour it promotes (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989).

Involving children in planning and designing their public environments is still not a common occurrence. However, there is increasing interest in such collaborations. Apart from geographical studies analysing children's urban geographies (Valentine, 2004; Philo, 2000, 2003) emphasis is directed towards involving children and enabling their participation in spatial design (Lynch, 1977; UNICEF, 1997; Adams and Ingham, 1998; Francis and Lorenzo, 2002; Clark and Percy-Smith, 2006; Halsey et al., 2006; Clark, 2010; Rayner et al., 2010; Day et al., 2011; Patsarika, 2011). Other studies have considered children who, together with adults, were involved in decision and policy-making (Driskell, 2001; Hill et al., 2004; Tisdall and Davis, 2004; Day et al., 2011).

Elsley (2004) contends that local agencies should secure children's involvement in their community. Such involvement can be achieved where children are invited, engaged and actively participating. When taking stock of children's use of public open spaces, policy-makers are in a better position to address the needs of the children and provide the necessary resources to meet the children's interests when children have been involved.

2.5 Case study: Malta

The following section analyses the Maltese context comparing the experiences of children in Malta to those living in urban environments across the world, with regard to the use of their neighbourhood, public open spaces and factors which impact the use or otherwise of available spaces. As illustrated in the subsequent sections, Malta offers an interesting case study which merits research owing to a host of reasons.

2.5.1 *Densely built up spaces*

Malta is a densely populated and built up country. Its population density has undergone a steady increase owing to a high influx of international migrants (NSO, 2016). According to the LUCAS survey conducted by Eurostat (2018), 23.7% of the Maltese surface area is built up. Malta has the highest percentage of land covered by man-made surfaces in comparison to other EU countries (CORINE, 2008). Towns are merging and green non-urban areas are becoming urbanised (Ergen, 2014). The land around the Grand Harbour has high economic value and few spaces are unused. This area is densely populated and heavily built up. Most of the agricultural and natural environment is located away from the built-up area. Figure 2.1 shows the land use of the Maltese Islands in 2018. The areas shaded in red and dark red are the urban built-up areas; the areas shaded in light pink are the green, urban spaces; the

areas in white indicate the spaces for sports and leisure. The areas shaded yellow indicate the land used for agriculture while the areas shaded in green are the public green spaces. Areas available for public leisure within the urban space are limited and green open spaces are mostly located on the periphery of the Island.

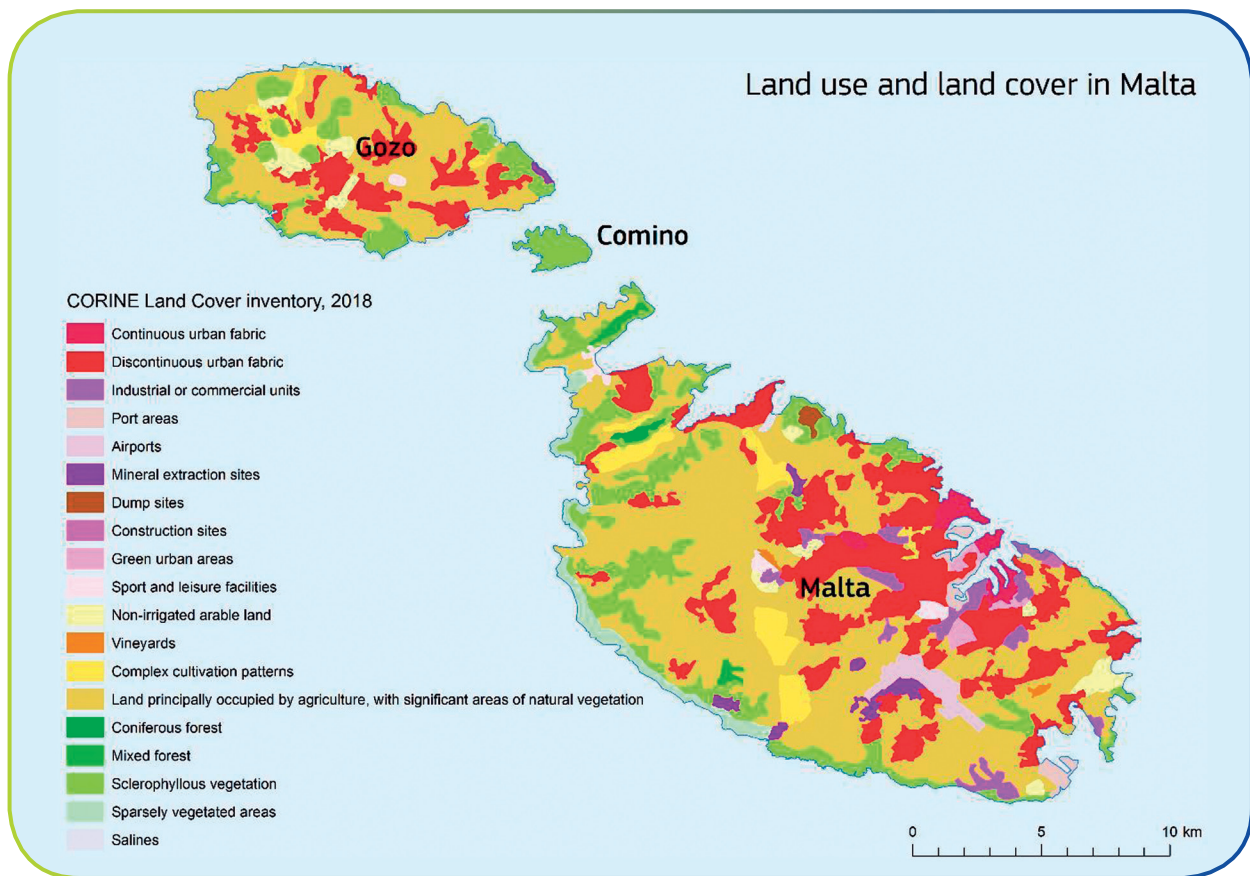


Figure 2.1: Land use and land cover in Malta, Gozo & Comino⁴

Although not visible on the map, within localities there are small pockets of open spaces such as gardens, squares or playgrounds. The open spaces found in the urban environments may not always be suitable for play or attractive for children to use and meet their friends. Several public gardens have signs indicating prohibitions (Figure 2.2) restricting possibilities for certain types of play.

Playgrounds are only attractive for children up to the age of ten as the equipment for play is not sophisticated and unappealing to teenagers and youths. To enjoy outdoor spaces and places, older children and teenagers have to travel to areas outside their neighbourhood where wide-open green areas are located. However, adolescents and youths have very few spaces where to spend their free time (Malta Independent, 2018). The Commissioner for Children has expressed concern that these limitations for adolescents may increase the risk of teenagers frequenting places which are not ideal for them.

4 Source: CORINE Land Cover inventory 2018.



Figure 2.2: Signs listing prohibitions at local gardens

The Commissioner for Children emphasised the need for green spaces reflecting on a local malaise ‘As Maltese, we seem averse to open spaces – we always feel we need to remove trees and fill it up with concrete. Greenery and trees are maltreated – it’s as if we can’t stand the sight of trees in urban areas.’ (Times of Malta, 2016).

This reflection arose from the conclusions of a quantitative study conducted with 2,777 eight to twelve-year-old Maltese children who despite enjoying a stable and happy life with a positive attitude about their health and wellbeing, were least happy about the area where they live (Cefai and Galea, 2016). Around 40% of the children identified the need for places to play or have a good time while around 35% expressed doubts about safety in their neighbourhood. These results suggest that the neighbourhood environment is of considerable concern for the children.

In addition to a reduction in public open spaces, space for households is also shrinking. Increasingly, houses are making way for and being replaced by high rise buildings with limited indoor space and no access to yards, gardens or roofs where children can play. Indoor yards are often service shafts designed for sanitary amenities. Many apartments do not have access to the roof, further restricting outdoor, private space which could be used by children.

2.5.2 Roads and cars

Most of the public spaces in the neighbourhoods of Malta are taken up by traffic, the building of new roads or widening of existing ones. Malta has a high number of motor vehicles per person. By 2010 it was calculated that for every three residents in Malta there were about two motor vehicles (Attard et al., 2015) and by 2017, there were 613 cars per 1000 inhabitants (Eurostat, 2017).

Having such a large number of cars is a national concern for people’s health (WHO, 2009). Road traffic is causing high levels of urban air pollution which is higher than the EU threshold values of concentrations of particulate matter (WHO, 2009). A high number of unintentional injuries are caused by traffic accidents (Attard et al., 2015). Cars are also the cause of high levels of noise pollution.

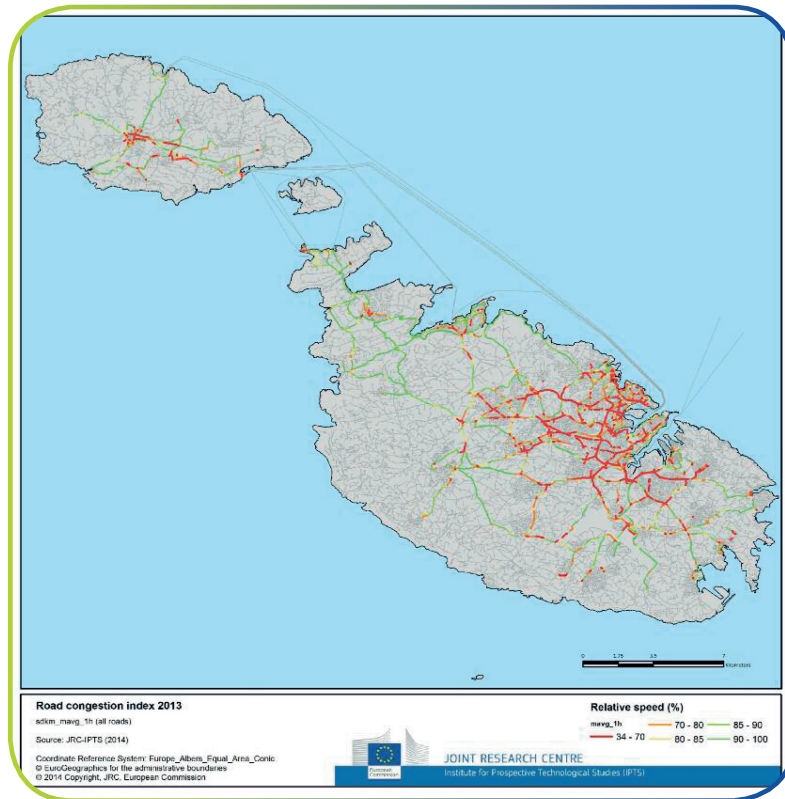


Figure 2.3: Road congestion Index 2013⁵

As illustrated in Figure 2.3 high levels of congestion are evident in the densely populated areas. Car congestion and the resulting air pollution is contributing to a steady increase and prevalence of asthma amongst children and adults. Between 1994 and 2001, there was an increase of 8% in allergies and asthma amongst 5 to 8-year-olds (Attard et al., 2015). The prevention of respiratory diseases in outdoor and indoor air pollution and the increasing asthmatic attacks in children is acknowledged as a regional priority (WHO, 2009).

High car dependency together with the lack of trust in public transport has resulted in pollution and congestion which in turn have negatively impacted health and the environment (Attard et al., 2015). The increase in cars led to demands for the provision of wider roads which in turn resulted in the loss of natural land; land which could have instead yielded multiple benefits had grants been assigned for incentives for active mobility (WHO, 2009). The Commissioner for Children emphasised the need for better connected and managed pedestrian zones which provide safe spaces for children and allow for more mobility (Malta Independent, 2018). This could also encourage bicycle use rather than travelling by car.

5 Source: Joint Research Centre (Attard et al., 2015)

Maltese weather conditions may also contribute to the local reliance on cars. Summer temperatures are high. Health Authorities annually advise against walking or spending time outdoors (between eleven in the morning and five in the afternoon) especially for children who are more vulnerable to high UV rays. Being exposed to high UV rays increases the risk of skin cancer and leukaemia. In comparison to the EU average, the occurrence of skin cancer and leukaemia amongst children in the Maltese population is considered high (WHO, 2009). On the other hand, in winter Malta experiences flash floods which can make active mobility dangerous. Since several Maltese roads around the harbour area are built across valleys and most of the land is tarmacked and surfaced with concrete, these areas are prone to severe flash floods.

2.5.3 Child Obesity

Malta has the highest rate of adult and child obesity in Europe (Inchley et al., 2016). Some 40% of Maltese children are not physically active, contributing to health risks related to hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and cancer in adulthood.

Several studies focused on obesity amongst children in the Maltese islands. Grech et al. (2017) undertook a national study on the levels of obesity and overweight amongst school children by measuring their BMI. They analysed how the rate of obesity is linked to the family socio-economic conditions by taking the type of school the children attend as an indicator. Decelis et al. (2013) suggest that the high prevalence of obesity in Malta is comparable to the rates of child obesity in Greece and Italy, thus indicating that this may be in part due to the Southern European Mediterranean culture. Martin (2015) analyses obesity amongst Maltese children from a socially constructed perspective where for example a 10-year-old overweight child is perceived negatively while a chubby 5-year-old is regarded as cute.

Several entities, such as the Ministry for Health have acknowledged that more should be done to tackle this problem. Subsidised after-school sports activities are available through the Malta Sports Council to counter the sedentary lifestyle of children and students. Other projects focus on healthy eating policies within the schools (Times of Malta, 2017) or localised initiatives such as walking or cycling to and back from school (Times of Malta, 2006).

Obesity in children can be prevented with the provision of a safe environment that encourages personal mobility and physical exercise (WHO, 2009). There is a great need for safer spaces in Malta for improved mobility (including pedestrian and bicycle use) and adequate, attractive spaces for play and physical activity.

Another determining factor which is inhibiting children from enjoying free play is the fact that in Malta, educational attainment, the amount of homework and structured activities are highly valued by parents (Clark and Cassar, 2013). Extra-curricular activities including art, music drama, sports and dance are also given importance since parents consider them essential to provide better opportunities in the future. Apart from participating in these extra-curricular activities, primary and secondary children usually have daily homework, further reducing children's time to play. Indeed, in comparison to children living in other European

countries, Maltese children feel the most pressured by schoolwork (Inchley et al., 2016). Maltese adolescents have reported feeling nervous more than once a week and experiencing headaches more than once a week (Inchley et al., 2016).

Extra-curricular activities are not necessarily organised in the same locality where the child lives, with the result that parents need to either chauffeur their children to their activities or take them by bus. Clark and Cassar (2013) report that given a choice, children in their study preferred having leisure activities closer to home. Being driven from one place to another reduces the possibility of social interaction and restricts physical activity.

Another extra-curricular activity which is compulsory for children and families who are preparing for the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation concerns catechism lessons, generally held twice a week. As these lessons are provided in the same locality, often children can walk from home to attend them. Some religious organisations organise weekend activities where children are accompanied for walks in the countryside or for swimming in the summertime. However, with the increased plurality in religious beliefs, more choices among extra-curricular activities and a decrease in members of the main religious organisation, social activities are not organised in all communities across Malta (Sollars, 2006).

Children's use of public open spaces may also be determined by gender. Maltese parents are more likely to give permission to their sons to meet friends outside rather than their daughters. Malta is one of the countries with the biggest difference across age groups where the percentage of boys meeting friends is double that of girls meeting their friends (Inchley et al., 2006).

When all these factors are taken into consideration, it is not surprising that children spend much of their time playing indoors. Statistics show that Maltese children make high use of the internet, online games, social media and computer games (Clark and Cassar, 2013). In comparison to other European children, Maltese 15-year-olds are most likely to use computer games for two or more hours during weekdays (Inchley et al., 2016). This type of indoor play may be considered by the parents as safe play as there are no risks of traffic accidents and or participation in illicit behaviour. However, Maltese children experience a high prevalence of cyberbullying in comparison to other European children (Inchley et al., 2016; Farrugia and Lauri, 2018). Therefore, parents cannot assume that children are at risk only when they play outdoors as spending time on online gaming can also pose dangers for children's health and wellbeing.

2.6 Conclusion

This analysis highlights the urgent need to provide public open spaces which take into consideration children and young people's health, well-being and development. Adults are obliged to give children a voice to understand their experiences and daily negotiations in a changing, urban environment. Like all members of society, children and teenagers have- and should be given- a right to enjoy public spaces safely. They should be given the possibility to express their opinions to contribute to better urban planning.

Several factors determine children's use of public open spaces. The neighbourhood where children live determines their use of these spaces. Potential use of spaces depends on street connections, safe and accessible walkways, traffic, the presence of attractive open spaces, the distances one has to travel for a variety of activities, services and the presence of people in the streets.

The second factor relates to the nature of parenting. Some parenting norms are influenced by the family's socio-economic conditions, parents' social connections with the neighbourhood and parents' habits concerning transport. When both parents work there is a higher probability that less time is available for socialisation in the neighbourhood or to travel on foot. Safety concerns related to traffic and also to rare cases of 'stranger danger' influence parenting. Unaccompanied children making use of public spaces or travelling in the neighbourhood, are considered to have parents with poor parenting skills. Where children attend schools beyond their neighbourhood, they are travelling by car or school transport, missing out on opportunities to socialise with people from all walks of life in their neighbourhood.

There is broad consensus that in developed countries children are making less use of public open spaces. Similarly, children growing up in Malta need to have outdoor public spaces in order to play and be physically active. Local studies emphasise that features of social capital such as social bonding and social cohesion positively impact on the health and wellbeing of Maltese people (Mizzi, 1994; Satariano and Curtis, 2018). Yet, if children are not having opportunities to experience these features of social capital, they are at further risk of not enjoying positive health and wellbeing today and in the future.

Children growing up in Malta have rarely been involved in urban planning. It is beneficial and essential to encourage the engagement and involvement of children in the planning of spaces in the neighbourhood. This could offer opportunities for the realisation of children's needs and better use of public spaces. Involving children in the planning and designing of public spaces would help adults take children's perspectives into consideration and consequently design spaces suitable for children in which to play and socialise.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY



METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Several researchers and policy-makers have emphasised the need to investigate the environment from children's and adolescents' perspectives to cater for their needs, (Chawla, 2002; Worpole, 2005; Clark and Uzzell, 2006). The aim of this chapter is to present the research methodology adopted and provide an overview of the research process adopted during the *Fil-Beraň* project.

This project sought to employ diverse participatory methods which encouraged the participation of children and young people and - to the extent possible - would be led by the young participants. In so doing, the study would promote and explore children's agency within their day-to-day activities. Although there has been a substantial increase in research with children, few studies have focused on the children's activities, daily interactions and experiences in their neighbourhood. The study sought to explore how children's experiences are embedded within the physical, social and cultural neighbourhood context and how they are affected by this context.

This study could pave the way for similar projects which would embrace children's participation especially in projects which focus on exploring the use, planning and design of public open spaces.

3.2 The Mosaic Approach and Participatory Action Research

The Mosaic Approach has generated lots of interest in using qualitative and participatory methods of data collecting when researching the daily experiences of children in their environment. Visual and interactive methodological strategies are recommended when exploring children's experiences of their environments (Oliver et al., 2011).

The appeal of using visual methodologies has spilt over into research which focuses on the interactions and engagement of children and adolescents (Christensen, 2003; Newman et al., 2006; Kullman, 2012). Visual resources, such as maps, satellite photos, photos, diagrams and drawings, can help children to express themselves about locations. Creative participatory methods serve as constructivist tools that assist participant children to describe, explain and analyse their experiences in life. These participative methods facilitate the process of knowledge production rather than knowledge gathering (Chambers, 1997). They enhance the possibility for reflection, debate, argument, and consensus in a context where all children and adolescents can voice their opinions- thus increasing children's empowerment within an adult-centred environment.

The Mosaic Approach and Participatory Action Research emphasise the importance of sharing power with the participants of a research study at different stages of the process (Clark, 2010). The Mosaic Approach empowers children by using a range of methods, thus providing them with roles in collecting and analysing data.

3.2.1 The Research Process

Although the research design was conceived and proposed by a team of adult researchers, this study relied on children as the decision-makers who had to choose and apply methodological tools to help them examine their neighbourhood and articulate their views about the available spaces. In this study, children were considered as co-researchers and to this end, the project envisaged the setting up of a Children's Committee. This Committee played a central role in the data gathering and research processes. Where necessary, the Children's Committee was accompanied by adult researchers.

The adult researchers had several roles to fulfil in this participatory action research study. First, they acted as facilitators to organise meetings and enable communication among children, parents, local council members and educators. One important activity organised by the adult researchers was a team building activity. This helped the children to get to know one another better and set the scene and tone for confident interactions in subsequent activities. Where participants know each other, they are less likely to feel intimidated by others in the group (Woolley et. al., 1999; Krueger, 1995), more likely to contribute willingly and share their concerns and interests (Agar, 2006).

Secondly the adult researchers helped the Children's Committee to identify what could be important for them to explore in their neighbourhood's open spaces, provided them with tools to make the tasks achievable and prompted them with ideas and solutions to the problems they encountered in the process of the research. As a result of being presented with an array of tools for data collection, adult researchers were ensuring that every member of the Children's Committee was empowered according to individual strengths, personalities and potential, thus contributing to having a study which was as inclusive as possible. Some children showed excellent analytical and observational skills, others had good verbal communication, some exhibited solution-focused skills, while others were good in design and logistics.

Third, and in line with the demands of Participatory Action Research, adult researchers took the role of an 'authentic novice' (Clark and Moss, 2005), the implication being that the adult researchers lacked a clear understanding of the neighbourhood context under investigation. In Participatory Action Research, adult researchers take the role of learners whilst allowing child participants to take the lead. Children are given the opportunity to become co-researchers while the adult researchers take a secondary role. In the current study, the Children's Committee was responsible for exploring the experiences of children and adolescents in the open spaces of the neighbourhood and informing the adult researchers of their findings and conclusions.

The various stages in the design and implementation of the project are illustrated in Figure 3.1

Date/ Duration	Action	Purpose	Who was involved?
January – July 2018	Planning project Preparation of documentation in English & Maltese Communication with Local Council	Submission of proposal for Ethics Approval Information flyers and <i>consent form 1</i> were to be distributed in chosen locality to recruit participants Local Council had a role to facilitate contact with organisations and the school in the neighbourhood.	Adult researchers
August – September 2018	Meeting with Local Council Distribution of flyers Door-to-door visits in Xgħajra	Explain project in detail and seek commitment and assistance to support children’s participation Recruitment of participants Recruitment of participants Collection of <i>consent forms 1 and 2</i>	Adult researchers
December 2018	1 st and 2 nd Children’s Committee meeting	Getting to know the children participating in the study. Introduction to the project – setting up the Children’s Committee Introduction to methodologies. Helping children decide on research methodologies.	Adult researchers and child participants

	Compilation of travel diaries	Children kept travel diaries for two weeks	Child researchers
March 2019	3 rd Children's Committee meeting: Visit to San Anton – Meeting HE the President	Children were invited to San Anton, to meet HE, The President of Malta and speak about project activities. Child researchers followed a workshop session to help and prepare them for sharing their views with adults.	Adult researchers Child researchers
	Neighbourhood assessment with the use of photos	Child researchers to take photos of locations in the neighbourhood ahead of the next Children's Committee meeting.	Child researchers
	4 th Children's Committee meeting Mapping activity	Children narrated their experiences of the neighbourhood environment whilst making reference to the photos. Locations identified in photos were linked to the map (physical GIS) through a mapping exercise.	Adult researchers Child researchers
April 2019	5 th Children's Committee meeting	Designing of an open space considering aspects raised in earlier meetings.	Adult researchers Child researchers
	Video analysis	Analysis of the open spaces in the neighbourhood as recorded on video.	Child researchers
June 2019	6 th Children's Committee meeting Analysis of quotations	Analysed the coded quotes and added further analysis to the emergent themes.	Adult researchers Child researchers
July 2019	7 th and 8 th Children's Committee meeting with the Local Council	Children presented their research, concerns and solutions about areas in the locality which required attention for improvement. Local council members explained difficulties they encounter when designing and maintaining the open spaces in the neighbourhood.	Local Council, Adult researchers Child researchers

Figure 3.1: The design and implementation stages of the project

3.3 Recruitment of participants

To give all children in the locality an opportunity to participate in the study and voice their views, an informational leaflet was distributed to all the households in Xgħajra. This decision ensured that all children of different ages, gender, nationality and ethnicity were informed about the study.

The leaflet (Appendix A), which was printed in Maltese and in English, included information about the aim of the project together with details about children and young people's active participation. Potential participants were informed that they would be invited to share their views, voice their concerns and expectations and make suggestions and recommendations for improvements about their neighbourhood with specific reference to the availability and potential use of open, public spaces. Participants would be able to do this through drawings, pictures or in writing.

Following the distribution of leaflets, all households in the locality were visited to collect *consent forms 1* and where necessary, give further explanations about the project. Through the door to door recruitment process, 48 children and adolescents were approached. Twelve children returned the *consent form 1* and 2 together with their initial drawings and/or comments. Of these, five participants committed to participate fully in the study. These five participants thus formed the Children's Committee.

The five participant-children included three girls whose ages ranged from eight to twelve years, pseudonymised as Abigail, Charlotte and Shazia; and two boys who were between twelve and fourteen-years old pseudonymised as John and Isaac. For the study, two girls were considered as children, by virtue of their still attending primary school and being younger than ten; three participants – one girl and two boys – were considered adolescents. All three were in secondary school and were twelve years or older.

3.4 Data collection

In keeping with the strengths of the Mosaic Approach, different methods were employed to collect information and insights from the participants. These methods were explained to the children and adolescents during the first focus group meeting to help them to choose the best methods to facilitate their participation and ensure informed contributions. The children would thus feel empowered, knowledgeable, and involved in the choices of methodologies. These methods were intended to help the children express themselves better and for the adult researchers to understand which methods appealed most to the children and would thus further facilitate their sharing of experiences.

When conducting research with children, the researcher should be equipped with various tools according to the interest and the ability of the participants (Morrow, 2001). Children have different personalities and react and engage differently with different techniques. Those who are less confident to talk in a group may find it easier to express themselves through drawings and non-verbal activities. Adolescents may find it easier to express themselves

verbally or in writing as they may feel that their artistic skills are not up to standard. (Clark, 2010) Therefore, the researcher should offer/share diverse methods which lead to the same goal while addressing variations in participants' preferences and abilities.

The following sections provide details about the methodological tools used throughout this study to enable the participants to illustrate and share their experiences about public open spaces. The tools included travel diaries, drawings and photos, place mapping, designing of open spaces and video recording during the Children's Committee focus group meetings.

3.4.1 Focus group meetings with the Children's Committee

A focus group generally involves a small number of participants who get together for a discussion. They are led by a researcher or a moderator who strives to gain insights about the participants' experiences, attitudes and perceptions. A group interview stimulates diverse individuals to discuss points that are important for the participants but might not be discussed adequately in a one to one interview. Group interviews should: involve individuals who have things in common; explore the subjective experiences of the participants; and be led by a researcher (Bogardus, 1926; Merton and Kendall, 1955).

Focus groups offer several benefits for young research participants. Support is offered to individuals to help them be open (Vaughn et al., 1996). Peer support provided in a small group helps equalise the power imbalance between adults and children that may be present during one to one interviews. When children discuss together, they might feel less inhibited about expressing their opinion, and they may also remind each other about points that are important (Hill et al., 1996). In focus groups, children feel empowered as they are considered the experts in the field (Levine and Zimmerman, 1996).

Focus group discussions are not without challenges. Although a focus group is perceived as being economical it requires time and organisation. Practical issues such as finding a common time and place may prove challenging. The dynamics of the participants within a group must also be considered. Turn-taking should be respected with no individual allowed to dominate the discussion. Some individuals may try to intimidate others and therefore the moderator must ensure individuals do not inhibit others from speaking in the group (Lewis, 1992). Allowing every individual the opportunity to express an opinion contributes to a broader discussion. The moderator has the responsibility to steer the conversation to avoid having individuals dominate or have individuals agreeing with particular views in order to fit in a group.

The moderator should be sensitive to children's needs and monitor their confidence, age and relationships with other members of the focus group as these may influence one's ability to discuss or share opinions with others. Having a friend helps individuals feel supported and stops them from feeling shy if they had to be alone (Mayall, 2000). Having participants of mixed ages may also offer a challenge. In such situations, it might be necessary to divide the focus group. Two moderators would need to supervise or steer the focus groups simultaneously and decide where there is the possibility of a common discussion and when to separate the group for a detailed, fair and balanced discussion. Vaughn et al. (1996) recommend that if the children are under the age of ten, then each focus group should take less than 45 minutes.

In the current study, six focus group meetings were organised to gain insights into how the children made use of public open spaces in their locality. Although the participants in the Children’s Committee were of different ages, they interacted well with each other and gave each other space and time to communicate. Dividing the group by age was not necessary. Each meeting lasted between two and three hours. All meetings were moderated by two adult researchers⁶. Information about the main methodological tool/s which were to be used during the meetings were communicated with the parents and the children in advance.

3.4.2 Travel Diary

The first hands-on methodological tool used was the travel diary. A travel diary provides a record of the activities and daily movements of a person (Oliver et al., 2011). In the current study, the diary helped as a tool in exploring the children’s daily schedule as they went about their neighbourhood. Activities, events and movements were recorded with the use of the booklet over a two-week period. Children were asked to complete a diary of a normal school week and a diary of a week during holidays.

The participants could illustrate how they had spent their free time and the places they had visited on weekdays and during weekends; the amount of time they spent at school, time spent doing homework, attending activities, travelling to school or within the neighbourhood and the mode of travel.

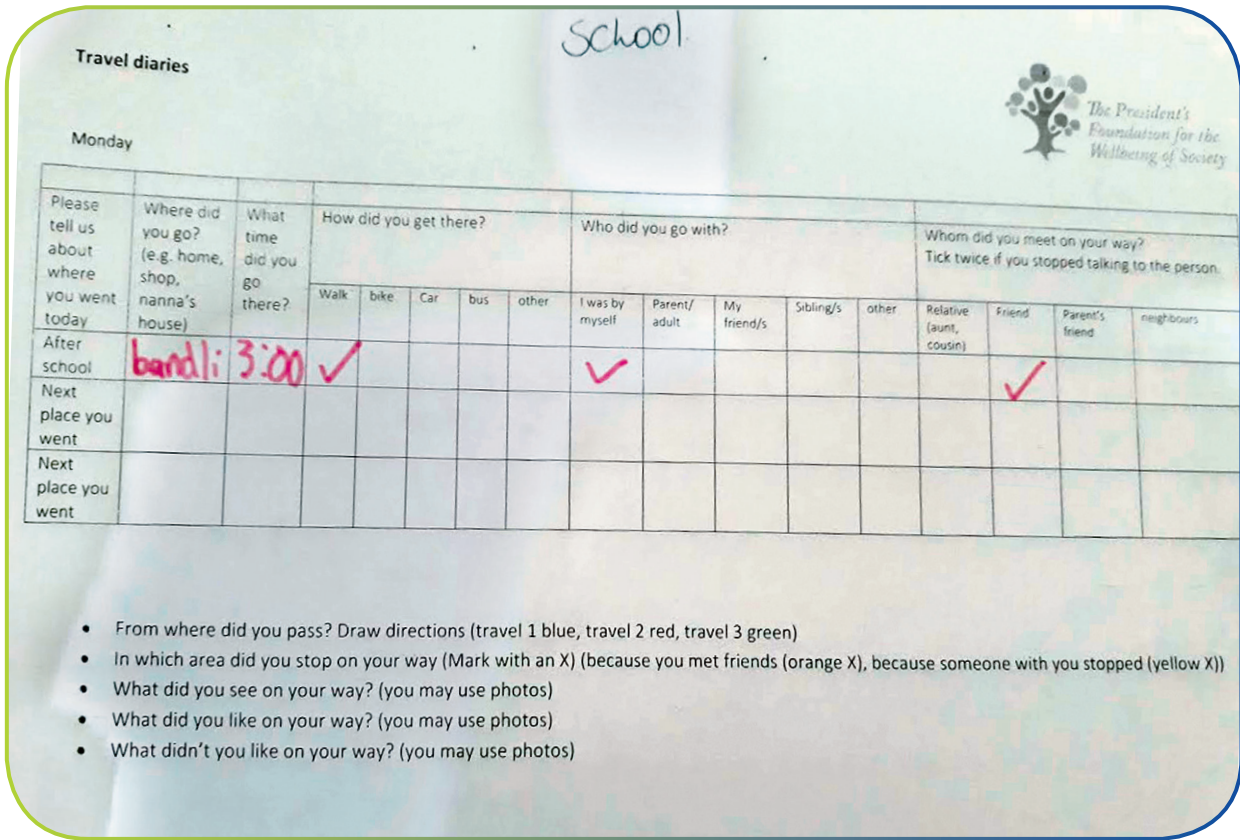


Figure 3.2 A sample travel diary

6 In this project, researchers accompanied the children during the different research activities and hence the term ‘researcher/s’ rather than ‘moderators’ will be used.

The diaries helped the children indicate how much time they spent outside, places they visited, whom they met and interacted with. Travel diaries illustrated the value the children attributed to public open spaces in the neighbourhood and shed light on the possibilities for engagement that children had within their neighbourhood. The diaries also shed light on children’s actual mobility or modes of transport relied upon as they went about their activities. Recording activities and events helped the children to reflect about their significance when these were discussed during the focus group meetings.

3.4.3 Drawings

Drawings are a popular method for children to express themselves: they offer freedom of expression and are manageable even by children with low literacy skills (Young and Barrett, 2001; Mauthner, 1997). Drawings give children control and, from a research perspective, offer a representation of the children’s view of their environment (Golomb, 1992).

From the age of 7, children begin to master the symbolic meaning of drawing as a tool that helps with self-expression similar to signs and language (Vygotsky, 1935, 1978). Drawings enable children to share something that is important and meaningful to them, while simultaneously attracting the attention of others.

Free drawing was used for various tasks and at various stages during the current study. At the start of the project, free drawing was used by children to illustrate their preferred spaces and places in their neighbourhood. Subsequently, drawings were used during the Children’s Committee meetings as they enabled the younger members to express themselves better. Drawings assisted children to illustrate the ideal spaces for their neighbourhood as they considered the needs of children of different ages and abilities.



Figure 3.3 Drawings collected during the first stage of the data collection

3.4.4 The use of photos

Photos were another resource used to find out about locations of importance for the children as well as to elicit their narratives, experiences, reflections, considerations and recommendations for their neighbourhood. Photography of and in daily life has become very accessible and popular. Cameras are readily available and visual materials are easily circulated through social media.

Photographs help to express and aid communication in telling a story. Photographs have been used as a medium that allows individuals to express feelings of particular moments in time (Latham, 2004). Through photographs, one can talk about the light, colours, ambience and mood. Photos offer a visual method that captures emotions and experiences (Pink, 2009). The interpretation of images may be complex and therefore visual methods are best used to help the informants express their feelings.

Photos were used at different stages of the research project by the adult and child researchers. Photos of landmarks within the neighbourhood were first used by the adult researchers to stimulate discussion and to help young children locate important spaces. Subsequently, the child researchers were invited to take photos to help them with their descriptions and narratives of their regular experiences associated with locations within their neighbourhood. A collection of such photos would illustrate places which were important from the children's perspective. In addition, by virtue of sharing the photos, children would be empowered and consequently, would decide on important matters to discuss during focus group meetings. The photos taken during neighbourhood walks were also used during a mapping activity where children were provided with the opportunity to visually record their experiences.

3.4.5 Cognitive mapping

Cognitive mapping was a tool which was briefly considered as it could have been used as a means of collecting data. However, this proved to be complex for the children's conceptual understanding of maps and spaces, and they did not show much interest in using this tool. When asked to draw a freehand map of locations they had visited in the neighbourhood, the younger children had limited mapping skills and found this difficult. The adolescents did not seem keen on drawing. This method was not going to be worth pursuing. Cognitive mapping has been criticised for several reasons. Children sometimes draw that which is perceived as important for children, namely home, the school and playgrounds (Downs and Stea, 1973) rather than that which appeals to them directly. Moreover, this method relies heavily on the individual's drawing competence. Therefore, individuals who are unable to include details in their drawings may not express themselves clearly (Blaut and Stea, 1974).

3.4.6 Place Mapping

Place mapping offered yet another means of inviting children to share their perspectives and insights about locations within their neighbourhood. Using maps raises the possibility of adults' understanding of spatial experiences as interpreted by children. It helps to

investigate how children and teenagers engage and interact in the public spaces of their neighbourhood environment. It also helps to explore the micro geographies of children and adolescents (Matthews et al., 1998) and what influences their use of space. Place mapping is a methodological tool that helps children and adolescents document and narrate their experiences within public places. In this study, place mapping allowed the children to express the significance of specific places for them and for other young people in their locality. It enabled the Children's Committee to discuss specific locations and identify places that are associated with positive experiences and locations that are perceived negatively.

3.4.7 Use of video recording to assess open spaces

Videos are tools that capture complexities and encourage children to participate in a research activity (Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2015). Video-based methodologies emphasise the idea that children are active participants in their communities capable of voicing their concerns and thoughts to adults. This also allows them to conduct and be involved in research (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008). However, taking videos might give rise to issues related to ethics (Flewitt, 2005). In the current project and throughout the meetings, the adult researchers realised that the children needed to express themselves better with regard to specific locations in the neighbourhood. Consequently, it was agreed that children would record a video which would later be used to help them share and explain concerns about specific aspects present on the site which offered them opportunities for play.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research process, the procedures adopted to recruit participants and detailed the range of methodological tools used in line with the Mosaic Approach. The combination of the methods explained in this chapter enabled the children to voice their experiences of their neighbourhood environment and empowered them to express themselves through multiple ways. Different methodological tools have their benefits, and they enable participants to express themselves in their preferred manner. Using participatory methodology with children is highly effective in increasing adults' understanding of children's use of their neighbourhood (Loebach and Gilliland, 2010).

The following chapter presents the findings that emerged using the different methods. The reporting of findings, predominantly through children's narratives, is accompanied by an analysis of the insights obtained from the children's perspectives as well as insights garnered from this study about children as co-researchers involved in participatory research. Finally, aspects which were identified as important for children's use of public open spaces and features which determine and condition their daily use of public open spaces are also presented.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the childrens' and adolescents' experiences of their neighbourhood environment, by addressing the research questions, namely:

1. What is the state of play in the local context on the use of public spaces, relationships and children's participation?
2. How do children perceive public spaces within an identified neighbourhood?
3. According to children, which physical/non-physical assets are available, and how can such spaces be maintained?
4. How can participatory research influence the management of such public spaces?

Responses to the first three research questions are provided through the analyses of themes that emerged from children's narratives about their local context. In addition, as part of this child-led project, the children reflected on their own narratives and commented on their experiences. These analytical narratives are presented in text boxes as an additional and separate layer of analysis.

The fourth research question was not addressed. Answering it would have required a post-hoc evaluation of the impact of the project on the management of public spaces. Unfortunately, this was not possible within the time-frame of the project.

4.2 Factors affecting children's use of public open spaces

In the first part of this section, factors that are impacting on children's use of public open spaces for play, travel and interaction are presented. This is followed by an analysis highlighting what the children are proud of and what they enjoy and love about their locality.

The children identified locations that they make use of in public open spaces. These included green spaces, playgrounds and the coastline area. However, several factors inhibit children and adolescents from moving around in the neighbourhood freely and comfortably. Issues raised by the children included safety on the roads, time limitations, the absence of children playing outdoors and the presence of unfamiliar people in/around their community. The children also shared their perspectives on the local social neighbourhood norms which further shaped their experiences within public open spaces.

4.2.1 Time dedicated to school

Limited free time is one aspect which restricts children's use of public open spaces in their neighbourhood. As the children explained, during weekdays they usually arrive home from school between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. As a matter of routine, they have to finish their homework and sometimes participate in extracurricular activities. This leaves them with limited time to play outdoors. Demands associated with school and academic work hamper children's opportunities from playing outside as it is culturally expected for children to be assigned homework daily.

During the first round of data collection children reported that they habitually finish their schoolwork and other activities at around seven in the evening. By this time during the winter months, it is dark and therefore children are more likely to play indoors, often engaging in digital games and activities.

I don't think that children play outside more than they play on the PlayStation or on the tablet... I do play 'Pub G'. You can play this game on your computer, mobile or tablet... I think many children prefer to play computer games rather than go outside because they finish their homework at around 7, and it would be too dark to play outside. So they stay at home playing computer games. (John)

The members of the Children's Committee stated that playing online games is more popular than playing outdoor games.

It is very seldom that I go to play in the playground during weekdays after school as I arrive home at 4 o'clock, and then I have to do my homework, and then it would be too dark or cold to play in the playground. It is only when I have a holiday that I go as I would have time to do my homework. ... in summer we only go to the playground in the evening as in the morning and around noon it would be too hot (Shazia)

In their analytical interpretation of their previous narratives the Children's Committee explained that due to the limitations of outdoor play many children and adolescents tend to play online games.

Abigail: I think [they prefer] online.

John: In fact, all my class mates play online more than they play outside, it is only I who does not stay so long online, they say that they play from 7 till about midnight and then they still have to wake up early.

Isaac: I do it sometimes but I still wake up early, I do not frequent the playground so much because I have changed my hobbies and now I play the guitar, and I am learning it on my own at home.

In their analytical interpretation the members of the Children's Committee explained that there are some limitations in making use of the playground both in summer and winter.

Isaac: Sure.

John: Well, not in winter. In winter we play every Sunday, not during schooldays.

Abigail: During the weekend.

Charlotte: In summer you have more time to play than in winter.

During their summer vacation, children have ample time to play. Participant committee members such as John, Charlotte and Abigail explained that in the evenings, most of the parents in the neighbourhood go for walks along the coast or relax in coffee shops by the sea while the children play in the open spaces nearby. Therefore, parents allow children to play outdoors. However, although summer offers children possibilities for more play, the children explained that it is too hot to play outside during the day, and thus they are constrained to stay indoors for long periods of time as well.

4.2.2 Absence of children in the open spaces

The lack of companionship through the presence of children playing outside in the open spaces has drastically decreased, and this factor has affected children's interest in playing outdoors. The children argued that older children are less likely to find friends of their age group with whom to play. Isaac explained that this may be because some parents prohibit their teenage children from playing outside fearing that they may associate themselves with children who show antisocial behaviour. Older children and adolescents are unable to develop friendships because there are no children with whom to engage outdoors.

There aren't many kids my age who are given permission to play outside. I only play when my cousin comes over, and then we go to play outside. (Isaac)

Another aspect which children referred to and which curtails their opportunities for outdoor play is safety. The children indicated that their parents trust members of the family, and therefore they are granted permission to play outside only when relatives and cousins are visiting.

Family set-ups and arrangements may also impact children's friendships. Some children may divide their time with their parents in different locations, spending weekdays with one parent and weekends with another parent. This may affect the possibility of forming friendships in the neighbourhood, impacting the sense of belonging that the children have with their neighbours.

The only friend I have doesn't go out so much because his mother is a bit strict and during the weekend he goes to his father's place. (Isaac)

4.2.3 Availability of open spaces for children's use and socialisation

Some open spaces are not always available for children's use. Within the neighbourhood environment where the current study took place, some spaces designed for play are inaccessible to children most of the time throughout the year. Two such examples are the school and the football grounds.

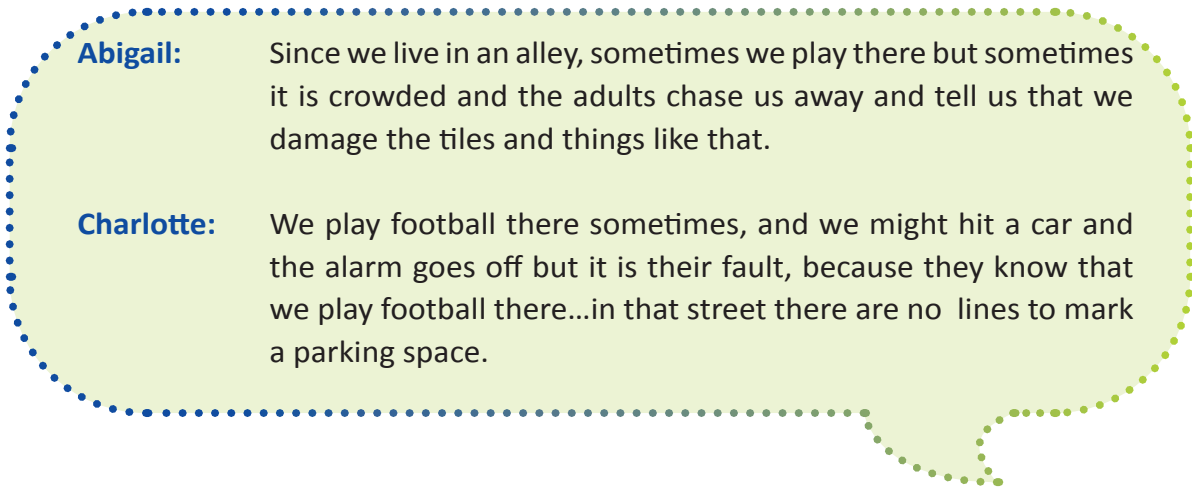
If there is no training the football ground is most of the time empty...I don't think you have to be a member of the club to play in the local football ground, however I never used it. I think that if the children in my neighbourhood are aware that they can freely use it they would. (John)

The younger members of the Children's Committee commented that the school yard is closed during weekends as well as during summertime when children have more time to play.

I wish that we could play longer in our school ground because we can only play for half an hour during the break and I really like that playground. It is a pity that we cannot use it when the school is closed. (Abigail)

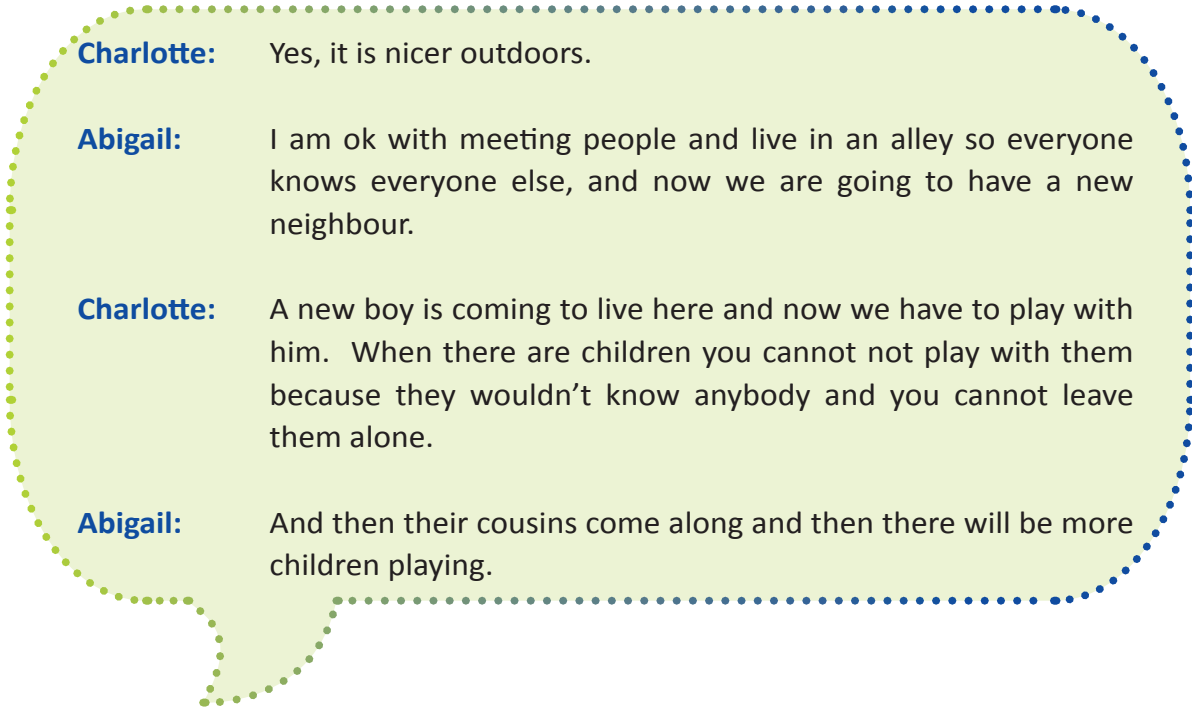
Another determinant that impacts children's outdoor play is the location of the street where they live. If the street is free from traffic, it is more likely for the child to be given permission to play outside. Furthermore, if the parents know that there are other children playing outside or that there are adults present who are supervising the children, it is more likely for the parents to give their children permission to play outside.

I do play for some time on the PlayStation, but I like playing in my street because it is wide and not so many cars pass by ... and my neighbours come out and we play... and we play together. (John)



In their analysis, the children point out that where there are no markings on the street, they have a right to play and the car owners should not expect to take all the space. These outdoor spaces are important for the children to play in as it is here that they can develop memories of play with their friends in their community. Children claimed that they have the right to use undesignated road spaces for play and that the cars should not always be given priority over children’s needs. Children and adolescents are therefore feeling that they are continuously in competition for space and access to public open spaces that are predominantly occupied by cars and other adult use.

This claim echoes findings from earlier research which concludes that when friends habitually meet at a common place, the location becomes meaningful and important for the children as it gives them a sense of belonging and a sense of identity (Proshansky and Gottlieb, 1989; Spencer and Woolley, 2000 and Carroll et al., 2015).



In their analysis, the children also emphasised the importance of social interaction in the neighbourhood - especially with other children. The children here referred to forced friendships in the neighbourhood, as parents obliged them to be sociable and welcoming to newcomers. The intention is to create features of a close-knit community, although this

may exert psychological pressure on the children themselves. The neighbourhood therefore becomes a place for new friendships, socialisation and social inclusion.

One participant specified that open spaces need to be appealing for adults as well as for children. Most of the time the parents accompany the children to the playground and if this space is not attractive for parents it is less likely that children will be taken there. One participant stated that it is important to have a cafeteria or even a coffee machine where the parents can have something to drink while relaxing, waiting, or supervising their children during play. They also recommended features that provide shelter from the wind in winter and from the heat in summer. The children proposed the planting of more trees in the playgrounds so that they and their guardians could enjoy contact with nature as well as experience a therapeutic and relaxing environment.

For me, it would be great if there would be a small cafeteria so that the adults would enjoy it and those children who would be thirsty and hungry can buy something to eat or drink... and there would be benches where to rest under the trees close by for shade. (John)

This reinforces the argument made in earlier research which suggests that children are attracted to play in spaces where they feel safe in the presence of adults (van AnDEL, 1990; Veitch et al., 2006 and Castonguay and Jutras, 2009).

4.2.4 Limited and inadequate equipment

The equipment available for children to use in public local playgrounds is another factor which impinges on children's use of outdoor open spaces. The Children's Committee pointed out that playgrounds should be designed to be more attractive for all. This would enable all children to enjoy the playground environment.

Researcher: Why do you like the family park in Marsascala so much?

Isaac: Because there is a zipline, a football area, a very long and high slide and a seesaw.

Researcher: And what about your local playground?

Isaac: I like it, but there aren't things to play with for my age like there are in the family park.

All members of the Children's Committee pointed out that both local playgrounds are not sufficiently equipped to be attractive for all age groups. They remarked that most available equipment is designed for children up to the age of eight. The adolescents stated that while they understand that very young children need to play for their physical and cognitive development, older children's needs have to be addressed as well, and it is also their right to have spaces with adequate equipment to play in. In fact, older children feel constrained to

use the equipment available, very often designed for younger children, with the risk of their getting injured if not damaging the equipment unintentionally.

The consideration of adequate equipment as a limitation to play is rarely referenced in research. Yet from this study and as seen in Figure 4.1, it became evident that this shortcoming adds to the factors that bar teenagers from making use of public open play spaces.



Figure 4.1 The potential & limitations of playing field equipment⁷

In their analysis, the Children’s Committee clearly explained that design features of some equipment limited or prevented older children from engaging actively. They also indicated how certain equipment could be modified in order to create interest and offer a challenge in play.

Charlotte: This monkey bar rod is very unstable, so it has to be repaired and even this monkey bar has to be larger and made to jut out a bit more. For example, there has to be two more rods like this one, Even if the monkey bar were to be placed further up, it would be much better.

Moderator: So you mean that there should two levels for two different age groups, and whoever is taller can reach different areas?

Abigail: The monkey bar ladder has to be longer and larger so you’d have a better grip.

Shazia: And this rope is not long enough and it is not so fun because it is almost useless, but the rings are fun to play with and spin around and my cousin and I use them a lot.

7 Committee members demonstrating different ways of how the equipment is used for play while assessing potential and limitations. (Photo taken by researcher during video focus group)

- John:** For me, this (2 metres long slide) I do not use this a lot because it is too babyish.
- Abigail:** I use the slide to climb up instead of down.
- Charlotte:** Yes, it is too small.
- Abigail:** And lately there have been children who have damaged the OXO.
- Shazia:** Yes, but this (2.5 m slide which spins) is also small, but if they were to lift it up a bit higher it would be better, even the top part has to be lifted, so that it is higher, not like this, and if it were higher, and taller, it would be better, it is too boring like this.
- Researcher:** So, is that why you jump from it?
- John:** Yes, because it is boring and because I enjoy jumping... like a monkey.
- John:** There have to be more things for older kids. Those in place are for the little ones and they are not good for us.
- Abigail:** There are two for the babies and two for the older ones, but it would be much better if they were to put some more.

In the absence of suitable equipment, the children readily spoke about the games they made up including, 'hide-and-seek' 'prisoners', 'catch' and 'hello neighbour'. Often, they hid behind dilapidated buildings, bushes as well as abandoned tables and chairs of the coffee shops along the coast. Such games enabled children of different age groups to play together.

Sometimes we go to the playground near the sea. I don't like it because the swing and the seesaw are all broken, but we can play hide-and-seek. We hide behind the toilets or behind broken chairs and bushes... We would usually be around 7 of us... mostly in summer time. I am usually the youngest, the others are all around 12 to 14 years old. (Shazia)

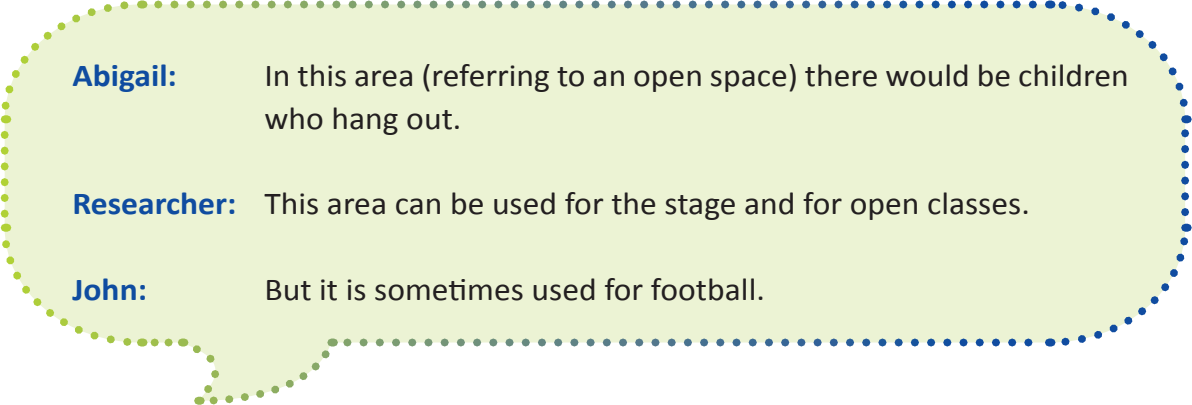
Sometimes these games stimulate competition rendering them daring or even risky. The children also stated that sometimes they introduce an element of competition by engaging in activities where they try to out-do each other, for example by competing to see who would swing the highest or who would climb and jump the highest wall.

These findings suggest that in the absence of equipment, children overcome the limitations and still have fun through self-styled games which allow them to be creative and challenge

themselves. Such activities promote socialisation and teamwork. These situations are important for children’s personal development and self-confidence (Barker and Weller, 2003).

Sometimes we play ‘hello neighbour’ and we have to jump over low walls. Yes I do fall sometimes when I try to jump over the wall! But it is fun... there is nothing else to play with. (Shazia)

While analysing their narratives the Children’s Committee highlighted that, it is important to have space that can be used differently by different groups of children and adolescents, thus allowing for creativity and social interaction.



Abigail: In this area (referring to an open space) there would be children who hang out.

Researcher: This area can be used for the stage and for open classes.

John: But it is sometimes used for football.

The children’s narratives suggest that children and adolescents need to express their opinion on how an open public space should be designed: if spaces are to be attractive and relevant to different members of the community, then an open space should not be designed in a stereotypical manner. On the contrary it should be designed to appeal to and attract boys and girls of different ages and appeal to a broad range of interests.

Drawing on the comments and illustrations made by children in the neighbourhood and collected when the *Fil-Beraħ* project was launched, the Children’s Committee designed their ideal public open space for their neighbourhood. The Children’s Committee decided to organise activities and equipment depending on compatibility, agreeing that activities which have something in common should be located close to each other. In their designing and organising an outdoor area, the sandpit, the clay area as well as the small toys and dolls area were all located in close proximity. Similarly the basketball area was located near the football area. The Children’s Committee also considered safety and surveillance. The first aid area was centrally located for ease of accessibility. Trees were planned for different locations with benches close by for the parents to rest and supervise children. Furthermore, in their design, the Children’s Committee made sure that all the areas and entrances are accessible to wheelchairs and pushchairs. The Children’s Committee also thought about different personalities and suggested a platform where extrovert children could dance, sing and perform while introverts and calmer children would have an assigned area for quiet activities such as reading a book or browsing on their devices. Adolescents who enjoy skateboarding and cycling were assigned space around the perimeter. The members of the Children’s Committee showed that they were able to assess the needs of various groups of children, optimising the available space for people having different ages, interests, needs and abilities



Figure 4.3 Designing an open space⁸

4.2.5 Street design and accessibility

Another serious concern reported by the children was the lack of road safety and the fear of traffic accidents. They reported that reckless drivers speed through the narrow streets without being stopped by the authorities. Moreover, the pavements are narrow and dangerous. There are no bicycle lanes and few pedestrian crossings enabling children to go about safely. The children emphasised the need for increased police patrol to safeguard the neighbourhood.

8 Photo taken during outdoor focus group

Some pavements are really not safe. Some of the pavements are very narrow... the one near the playground... and the one leading to the sea from the church ... the street near the school is so narrow and without a pavement...even the one behind the pet shop. They are very dangerous (John)

Near the school the headmaster always stays in front of us so that we don't get hit by a car! (Abigail)

Even near the bakery it is very dangerous and I cannot go and buy bread for school because it is dangerous. I always have to go with an adult. I don't feel safe on my own (Shazia)

In the morning it is dangerous as well where we live... sometimes there would be drivers going round the roundabout in a very dangerous way... they would leave brake marks on the streets... I am always afraid when this happens (Isaac)

The children and adolescents emphasised that spatial planning should really take into consideration the presence of children and young people in rural environments and their needs to travel and move about safely.

Researcher: You mentioned cars because they are dangerous and when you use a bicycle on the pavements there is not enough space.

Charlotte: Sometimes when there are cyclists, there should be clear signs everywhere because that would ensure safety.

During the reflections and photo analysis (Figure 4.4) the children reiterated the need for better road infrastructure that would enable them to walk or use the bicycle safely in the neighbourhood.

This discussion was further reinforced during the mapping exercise when children identified precise locations which they considered unsafe to walk or ride the bicycle. Using the map and layering it with images of locations (Figure 4.5) enabled the children to narrate specific incidents and limitations they encounter daily. Where pavements do not run the whole length of the streets, the children have to step down with the risk of being run-over by cars. As pedestrians, children interpret this as an indicator that their neighbourhood is unsafe and priority is given to vehicles and motorists. In comparison to motorists, children feel that they are treated unfairly as they cannot move freely within the neighbourhood to get to the open spaces independently and safely. Children are forced to rely on their parents to accompany them to every destination such as school, the playground, church or the shops in light of the limited accessibility for people to walk to such destinations.



Figure 4.4: The limitations of street safety⁹

I cannot use a bicycle in some places as there is no pavement or safe roads. Even if you walk beside the bicycle it is still not safe. (Shazia)

Studies have emphasised the importance of active travel in the neighbourhood for children’s physical, social and psychological wellbeing (Loprinzi et al., 2012; King et al., 2011 and Morrow, 2003). Such activity increases children’s sense of place, feelings of social belonging and inclusion. Lack of planning and infrastructure in the neighbourhood harms children’s health and wellbeing as they are prevented from experiencing healthy physical development and mental wellbeing.



Figure 4.5: Neighbourhood analysis applying the photo analysis as a layer on the map¹⁰

9 Photo taken by children during their neighbourhood assessment

10 Identifying issues children and adolescents encounter in the neighbourhood. Photo taken by researcher during mapping session.

Children feel that they are not respected or treated equally to other members of their community. From the children's perspectives, the authorities give preference to adults' needs ; providing parking lines along the streets to reserve spaces for cars without retaining reserved places or spaces for children to play within.

They draw parking spaces with paint on the streets, but I have never seen parking spaces for play or for games like passju!(hopscotch) (Abigail)

During the focus group meetings, members of the Children's Committee reported that they are sometimes ignored by the authorities as their needs are not considered important. Children were also disappointed that the authorities are more willing to dedicate money to large infrastructural projects rather than investing in spaces and infrastructure for children's use.

There is this place which is safe for play, but there are always cars parked there, and so we can't play because we might hit a car... it is so annoying that they [authorities] spend so much money for land reclamation or the tunnel or the roads, but they never think about us...the children. Can't they dedicate one million for children and adolescents across Malta? (Isaac)

4.3.6 Pride and disappointment

When children develop a sense of identity and connection with a location, they feel highly disappointed when this is not well maintained. The children were upset that the green open spaces in their neighbourhood are favourite places by people walking their dogs, leaving litter behind. As noted during an outdoor focus group at one of the green areas in the neighbourhood which was captured on video (Figure 4.6), the place was littered, thus restricting children's opportunities to enjoy the space and engage in potential rough and tumble activities. Spaces are rendered unhygienic and unsafe. In fact, the children stated that because of the presence of litter, their parents refrain from taking them to visit and enjoy these green open spaces.

The children are in favour of having pets in the neighbourhood. However, they are rightly annoyed that some adults are not responsible for the upkeep of their neighbourhood. This is rendering the available green spaces unpleasant and unwelcoming.

People here really like pets, but they never clean after them and you always see dog litter in the streets. I am always about to step on it. (John)

They leave a lot of rubbish and dirt in the playground. (Shazia)



Figure 4.6 Assessing a local green area¹¹

11 Photos taken by researcher during outdoor focus group and video recording session

Acts of vandalism, writing foul words or satanic drawings on walls also damage children’s health and wellbeing not to mention giving them conflicting messages about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. They wish that the walls would be whitewashed as they are an eyesore for all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

On the wall of the building where our doctrine lessons are held there are pentagrams etched and even rude words written in big letters. (John)

An equal concern is the litter and pollution in the sea. Children regard plastic bottles and other items floating on the water together with car tyres, pieces of metal, and other waste on the seabed as highly repelling. The fact that the inhabitants are surrounded by such waste is damaging their sense of pride.

Researcher: Are there places that need to be cleaner?
Isaac: In the sea...I dive for litter and rubbish, and I collect bottles, syringes, food wrappers, tissues.

The Children’s Committee argued that land, sea and air pollution are all drivers of climate change. They are aware that they are experiencing the results of climate change and its impact on children’s wellbeing.

John: All this pollution is bad to breathe in. For me this year because of climate change, winter was like summer and on the contrary summer was like winter and so children feel uncomfortable because they would be eagerly awaiting summer and it is like winter and then they would not be able to go swimming.

During the mapping exercise the Children’s Committee expressed their anger at people who leave litter in a specific corner close to the church. Although there is a sign warning people not to throw rubbish, litter is still left there. To their knowledge, nobody is fined. Children thus concluded that the authorities are not taking necessary action about these contraventions. Society is transmitting conflicting messages to children and adolescents. Authorities do not always take action against people who break the law.



Figure 4.7: Assessing the conditions of the neighbourhood¹²

12 Photos taken by the children

John: For example near the church there is a sign that if you leave rubbish you will be fined. Come here early in the morning and see how much rubbish there is. No one was ever fined.

Charlotte: There is the need of cameras [to enable law enforcement].

During the mapping exercise (Figure 4.8), the children indicated and labelled the police station which is closed for long periods of time enabling and facilitating all kinds of misconduct to go unnoticed and unchecked. In their analysis, the Children's Committee explained that the absence of security in playgrounds or actual police presence is highly damaging to children's health and wellbeing since it is providing opportunities for extreme bullying.

Abigail: There should be more security ...because even though there is security the place (referring to family park) is huge.

Researcher: And do these places have cameras?

Isaac: There are but the cameras are there to act as a deterrent but they would still not be functioning, or else, something happens and if the cameras are in one place and the TV (monitor?) is in another place, there is no security aimed at them.

John: The priest at our school went to a conference and he went to the police headquarters and they told them whether he knows any kids who play fortnight because many children are playing it and they use swear words with their friends and the police would take them to court!

Researcher: Yes, but that is online. So you are saying that there are bullies in the playground as well as online.

Charlotte: Yes, there are bullies as well there.

Researcher: You said that this is common?

John: Yes.

Researcher: Is it common even more than at the playing field?

Charlotte: I think even more because everybody is shouting abuse at everybody else, everybody is showing off and such and everybody can turn against everybody else and everybody starts to offend you. But nobody reports anything!

In their analysis, the children emphasised that the monitoring and security of children's spaces are required within public open spaces as well as online, within virtual spaces of play and discussion. This thus indicates that there are multiple spaces of danger that are impacting children's health and wellbeing and that physical and virtual spaces should always be monitored to safeguard children's health and wellbeing.

4.2.7 Adults' perception of adolescents

Another factor that emerged during the Children's Committee meetings is the negative attitude of adult members in the community towards adolescents. Some members of the Children's Committee explained that while some open spaces such as Smart City are safe from traffic, they are not permitted to play in the open area. The adolescents feel that they are perceived as dangerous and are associated with violence and vandalism. They are very unhappy about this as not all adolescents are antisocial or vandals. Furthermore, the adolescents observed that young children can enter the area with scooters while they are not permitted to do so with a bicycle even when they are not riding it. Adolescents feel discriminated against in relation to their younger companions and siblings who can freely enter this open space.

My mum always lets me play near Smart City, but there is always the security guard, and he always sends us away... and so we always have to leave... they think that we will do something illegal... as if we are a nuisance. (Shazia)

It is very disappointing for children who are in their early teenage years to feel excluded and unwelcomed. Sometimes this also happens in the streets when adults do not show them respect. One of the Children's Committee members narrated that adult members of the community may sometimes be controlling and adopt an antagonistic attitude towards them.

I think that once they see you as an adolescent they think that you will cause trouble. Once, an off-duty policeman was running in the street not on the pavement and I was cycling, and he thought that I was going to bump into him, and he started yelling at me for no reason at all. I was quite offended because he was supposed to be jogging on the pavement. He knew that I could not cycle further out onto the street as cars would hit me. I was not doing anything wrong. Why do they shout at us when they know it is not our fault that there are no bicycle lanes? (Isaac)

Disapproval or stigmatisation of adults towards teenagers is rarely analysed in research on children's use of public open spaces. However, adolescents in this study were very conscious about being discriminated against. This study suggests that children and adolescents who are active in their neighbourhood and who frequently make use of public open spaces may be perceived as individuals who exhibit anti-social behaviour. The Children's Committee argued that there is a negative image of young people as some show off when riding their bicycles. There is also a negative perception of girls who may be perceived as neglected by their family if/when they are socialising with their friends in the neighbourhood's public areas. This in turn suggests gender discrimination.

John: My mother is like that, because they seem to be low-class [referring to the fact that his mother does not permit him to play with children from the neighbouring town who are loud and rowdy and always riding a bicycle].

Abigail: Once there was this teenager and she was on her bike and she just swept by almost squashing my toe.

Shazia: And sometimes they show off as well.

Researcher: So there is a reason why adults perceive teenagers on a bike as dangerous.

Charlotte: Because some might be creating a dangerous situation and because they show off, but not everybody is showing off either.

Researcher: John do you think that you have ever been considered a show-off because you are on your bike?

John: Could be but I do not show off but there are people (who do) but when I am on my own they look at me as well because I'd have a shopping bag ... and I do not like it when they stare at me they do not know me.

Charlotte: Sometimes we used to be with our cousin and he has a bike and he swerves to fool around and to make us laugh but he is not rude.

John: I go out. For example on Thursday I went to Zabbar on my own and in fact on my way there I saw a friend.

Abigail: But sometimes when people go out, these teenagers hang around talking and sometimes they do bad things as well.

Charlotte: Sometimes we saw teenagers smoking or writing with markers on the slide.

John: Yes, and they write rude words as well and that is wrong.

Abigail: And that is bad for small children because they might read them and then they repeat them.

John: When I went to the family park, sometimes I saw them as well.

Charlotte: But even the existing slides, they are no good, the small one makes you feel as if you might fall off it or it jolts you.

John: It's true, it spins you 360 degrees and I was spun round and fell on my tummy.

- Abigail:** And when the older ones are there, they start shouting abusive words at you to go away.
- Researcher:** And how old do you think they are?
- Abigail:** Between 16 and 20.
- John:** They are bullies, and sometimes for example, to vent out they do not speak but they start scribbling on the swings and on the slide. So one thinks that they are all like that, but they are not all like that.

The Children's Committee also explained that even within safe spaces such as the courtyards within the housing estates, they are not welcomed, and they are regarded as intruders.

There is that open space ... like a big courtyard in the middle of a housing block, and I was playing with my friends and one of the residents started shouting at us that we are going to break the floor tiles and that she is going to call the police if we continue playing there. What is annoying is that the person who shouted at us is not from my town, and they have been living here much less than me... so she has no right to shout at me as this is also my neighbourhood. (Isaac)

Such adults' attitudes suggest that adolescents and their needs are less important than the needs of others in the community. This may in turn trigger feelings of rejection, which may lead to antisocial behaviour amongst the adolescents. The children are angry at this minority of antisocial adolescents and young adults as they are conditioning their possibility of using safe, open spaces due to the negative connotations attributed to all adolescents.

4.3 Open spaces with therapeutic effects

The Children's Committee is highly proud of the presence of green and blue spaces in their neighbourhood. Children recalled their experiences near the sea as important and defining moments in their lives. They explained that they highly enjoy swimming in summer and playing near the sea, while in winter they enjoy walking along the coast.

The sea is one of the most important places that provides a therapeutic experience for the children. The children happily spoke about their free time spent near the sea and explained that the coastal promenade is an ideal space for play. This area is wide enough for children to play and run around safely in the presence of adult supervision and the absence of traffic.

My mum always emphasises that we need to spend time outside for fresh air. We enjoy playing by the sea. We can play without being afraid of car accidents. (John)

Children also enjoy spending time by the sea because of associated activities including snorkelling, diving and fishing. Spending time by the sea also offers the possibility for children to meet with their extended family including cousins and grandparents. When children socialise and interact with different groups of people, they can form new friendships which are highly important and beneficial for their personal and socio-emotional development.

We enjoy swimming near 'tal-patrijiet'. We swim there even though it is deep. Sometimes we look for crabs, or we collect jellyfish with our fishing net.
(Charlotte)

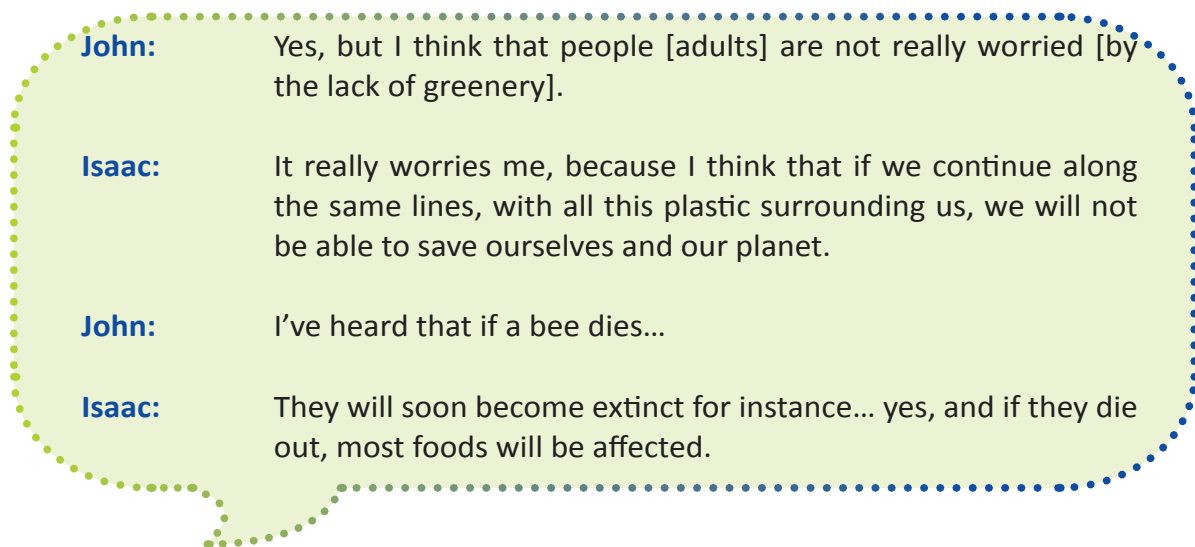
I would be so disappointed if they ruined our sea. I grew up swimming here.
(Isaac)

- John:** I feel sick cooped up inside the house.
- Abigail:** I love the outdoors and I love to go swimming.
- Researcher:** You said that in summer you are all the time swimming and diving in the deep waters.
- John:** Yes, and I catch sea urchins and (bekkuni)?
- Abigail:** Yes, and we dive and catch crabs and once we caught a fish.
- John:** I have a harpoon and sometimes I go fishing and sometimes there are octopuses and I try to catch some.
- Abigail:** Once I went with my cousin and he caught a starfish but we threw it back in.
- John:** I saw one as well and it was orange and I turned it upside down to have a look and I threw it back in.
- Charlotte:** I also saw one a black one, but we still did not catch it and left it there.

In their analysis, the children also underlined the important role and the beauty of the sea and its varied natural ecological systems within their neighbourhood's coastal environment. These narratives show the affinity the children have developed with the sea as it kindles many memories that they may have experienced during their childhood. The coastal neighbourhood environment also helps the children to enjoy a love for the place enabling them to develop a sense of identity associated to their locality.

The sea and the coastal areas provide a sense of 'topophilia' (Tuan, 1974) since the area serves as a therapeutic landscape with its natural properties enabling the children to socialise and interact with different groups of inhabitants in their locality.

Love of place and memories of the place also develop when the children participate with their parents in certain activities in the neighbourhood. For example, the children narrated their delight at collecting snails in the green spaces after the rain.



The children stressed the need for environmental conservation. They showed concern about the lack of interest and knowledge of adults on this issue.

4.3.1 Active agency

Due to their affinity for their neighbourhood's coastline, the children showed great interest in the news about the plans for land reclamation that were being proposed for their locality at the time the project was underway. They were concerned about the changes which the coastline could undergo. They showed a level of attachment to the sea and the surrounding coastal environment in sharing and reflecting upon their experiences.

The Children's Committee proposed land reclamation to be considered along coastlines which have already been environmentally spoiled rather than on their neighbourhood's pristine coastal environment. The Children's Committee members felt the need to voice their opinions about their surrounding natural environment. They shared concerns that adults would be less likely to oppose development due to financial and economic gains and employment. However, they strongly felt that it is their right to protect, preserve and conserve the natural environment within their neighbourhood for future generations to enjoy. One of the children even expressed a wish to vote in elections to be able to protest against the lack of natural conservation.

Isaac: We can form a group of children and protest. Why would they want to do it [the land reclamation] here. Why not in a quarry or in a dock where the land is already ruined?

Abigail: I feel that we need to have a say... we need a right to vote... none of the children would want this.

Isaac: The land is already ruined with apartments everywhere... do we have to ruin the sea as well!

Another member of the Children’s Committee stated that he is ready to go swimming on the day that the land reclamation would be taking place to halt the process.

You can arrange things around a town without making it look like a city. There is no need to build everywhere. Our town is not well maintained, but it is still not in ruins... there is the need of fixing the streets and arranging the pavements and making open spaces for children... but the government chose our town for land reclamation... to ruin it... it is so unfair! I would surely not vote! (Isaac)

Researcher: You had also mentioned land reclamation.

Isaac: I think that the Local Council commented on it and is against it. We’ll see!

The children’s analysis also indicated that the adults in the community, together with the local council, are working together and opposing land reclamation, and therefore they feel that they should wait for further decisions.

The sense of pride and the urge to take action and make their disapproval known was palpable. The children strongly disapproved of the way adults are planning, designing and ill-treating the environment which is highly important for its contribution to children’s wellbeing and for their future. Not many international studies have emphasised this aspect. The children who participated were clearly agentic and some of them were sufficiently knowledgeable to oppose what they consider ‘bad’ decisions taken by the authorities.

Charlotte: Yes, when we go to the Marsacala playing field, people leave a lot of rubbish lying around, not like us, we always clear up our rubbish and we do the same for theirs.

Abigail: Sometimes people do not really care and leave it there or they chuck it away.

John: I don’t know but I would like it if we were not to use our cars once a month for a whole day and to use the bus, I am seeing too much pollution everywhere.

- Abigail:** And [cars emitting exhaust fumes] are still being bought.
- John:** And a lot of foreigners are coming and now there are 600 k and everybody is polluting.
- Abigail:** In Malta there are a lot of people.
- John:** Because take Iceland for instance, it is much larger than Malta and there are less people than here [implying that in Iceland nature could be preserved while in Malta nature cannot be preserved due to the increase in population].

The children also showed concern about pollution and lack of action taken by adults. They explained that living in such a densely populated island results in increased levels of pollution and pressure on the natural environment. They proposed effective ways of reducing pollution such as reducing car use that may address climate change. Furthermore, they made comparisons between the local context and foreign situations. Yet they acknowledged that matters are complex. This can sometimes make the children feel helpless.

4.4 Neighbourhood social processes

Socialisation in the neighbourhood is important for children's health and wellbeing (Greene and Hogan, 2011). Children narrated the positive experiences they have with the elderly and their family's friends in their neighbourhood. This familiarity fosters feelings of trust encouraging the children to be ready to help other members of the community. The elderly members often reward the children with little gestures of gratitude by giving them fruit, sweets or other little gifts.

The locals are very friendly. I love them so much!

Sometimes we go to buy things, and they do not keep the money... they give them to us for free! They know us and they love us. Even when we go and visit our grandma her friends give us sweets, they love us! (Abigail)

Even when for example something happens to us, they are ready to help us in every way. For example once I fell, and I had blood streaming from my leg, and they came to help me.... Once they also came to help us at home. (John)

This community spirit can only be developed when children encounter others in the neighbourhood, get to know them and are able to share their experiences with them (Cattel et al., 2008). However, the Children's Committee members explained that the new residents who recently moved to their neighbourhood are not integrating fully with the rest of the community. The children feel that these new residents are damaging the social connections and networks present in the neighbourhood. They reached this conclusion as the children feel that the newcomers show hostility, sometimes even towards them.

Charlotte: At Zabbar there are Maltese who are show offs and they break things up.

Researcher: And are you afraid of them?

Abigail: Yes, in Xgħajra there aren't these dangerous Maltese who frighten me because they are familiar.

The children explained that some Maltese who are not from their locality, can instil in them feelings of fear and anxiety due to their behaviour, in comparison to the locals whom they know and trust.

This lack of social integration in what was once a close-knit neighbourhood is worrying the children because they are aware that there is an increase in homelessness in their locality. The children observed migrants trying to collect clothing from skips, sleeping in the local bus shelters and in the neighbourhood's public gardens. The children regard these people as 'mysterious strangers' and this results in their feeling fearful and anxious in their regard. This is exacerbated by the fact that the migrants are not able to communicate with the children and due to adults' messages to the children that they should stay away from these migrants and not to trust them as no one knows their history. The Children's Committee pointed out that they are sure that the authorities are aware of these homeless individuals yet in their opinion nobody is trying to help them. This outcome reinforces findings in international studies which concluded that parents' fear of strangers hinders children from playing and moving freely outside (Valentine and Mc Kendrick, 1997; Tester, 2009; Fyhri et al., 2011).

Abigail: I am very afraid of black people.

Charlotte: There was this Arab man and we were waiting at the bus stop with our friend and this Arab man was all the time pestering us and it was really bothering us and he was trying to come near us and we had to cross the street and to call someone to come and pick us up because we could not stay there.

Researcher: And do black people do the same thing?

Abigail: But not all the black people.

Charlotte: Sometimes when we are on the bus, there is one who tells us "how are you today, you look nice today" so it is not all of them.

Abigail.: I am afraid just the same, when they kill someone because that is what they show on tv.

Charlotte: And it seems that people look once at them and they are offended.

Abigail: Once we were on the bus and the door closed and our parents got off and we were left with our aunties and the black people were shouting for the doors to be opened.

Researcher: So not everybody is the same?!

Charlotte: Yes there are those who are ok and those who are not.

The children concluded that they had experienced instances where individuals who are of different ethnicity and who are sometimes perceived as fearful strangers were helpful towards them.

Another great concern shared by the children is related to drug abuse in the neighbourhood. The presence of drug addicts greatly instils fear especially if the children have to walk through their neighbourhood late in the evening. This suggests that social neighbourhood changes potentially impact children's use of public open spaces.

The Children's Committee proposed ideas on how to create a more cohesive social neighbourhood environment. They expressed a wish to have more activities where all members of the community, even those of other ethnic communities, participate and socialise. Some commented that summertime is the ideal time for these activities to be held where families and children can enjoy social interaction.

*I almost never go out in the evenings [during winter time]... but during summertime I am more free. However, in the evenings if there is no one I know outside I will still stay inside. The last time that I really enjoyed staying outside was the time when they organised events and activities of Lapsi [a religious and cultural event] and there were a lot of people, and it was fun. It was organised by the local council and there were the police, so it was safe and enjoyable. But they stopped this event, and they didn't organise these activities any more.
(Isaac)*

Social events provide opportunities which can help socially excluded groups of individuals to integrate in the community. This helps the neighbourhood community to become less segregated and more cohesive.

4.5 Conclusion

This analysis presented in this chapter has shed light on prevalent factors that are affecting some Maltese children's use of public open spaces. With the assistance of the range of tools and methods used to assist and facilitate children's participation in this research project, the complexity of experiencing open public spaces in neighbourhoods, as seen through the children's eyes, came to the fore.

Physical, educational, parental and societal issues contribute to the challenges which children face in their use of public open spaces. The built environment and infrastructure prevent them and other children from walking and cycling in their neighbourhood. They were sensitive to the lack of planning of play spaces for children and adolescents together with a lack of investment in play equipment adequate for children of different age groups. In their narratives, the Children's Committee also pointed out that parents too may inhibit children from making use of public open spaces, as they prioritise educational attainment. The lack of foresight in the design of street accessibility and play areas also stops parents from giving permission to the children to play outside.

The sense of belonging within a community also impacts children's use of public open spaces. Where there is a sense of community, the children enjoy their time outside. However, in the absence of familiar people out and about in the neighbourhood the children experience 'stranger danger'. Society also generates norms on who can make use of open spaces. Children and adolescents claimed that they experience stigmatization and could be perceived as either neglected girls or antisocial boys if allowed to spend time without adult supervision in open spaces. Such beliefs are hindering children's social interaction. All these factors result in children and young people spending most of their time indoors. Yet the children themselves pointed out that although some parents might feel that this is the safest option, in reality, children face other challenges and dangers as they turn to digital technology and online activities to entertain themselves.

The findings suggest that children would love to make use of the available open spaces and are keen to improve their neighbourhood and the environment in sustainable ways. The children showed a great sensitivity towards their peers and the wider community with their suggestions about potential features and designs for open spaces which would appeal to and encourage children to spend time outdoors. They also showed genuine concern about the natural, outdoor environment especially with the proposed plans for the coastline. These children showed a great affinity with the natural landscape as it offered outdoor space where they had already forged memories and experiences, contributing to their sense of identity.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



TRN CREW

Yellow sticky note

Small yellow sticky note

Small yellow sticky note

Water Treatment
Plant

Water's Edge

Water's Edge

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has contributed to research on children's experiences of public open spaces in Malta. It also adds to research which promotes children's voice and children's rights concerning their use of public open spaces in their neighbourhood. The use of different methods for data collection enabled children to express themselves on matters which are important to them. In addition to summarising the main findings and contributions from the *Fil-Beraħ* project, this chapter includes retrospective reflections on the research tools of this study indicating how the research tools proved to be effective in giving a voice to the child.

Although this was a pilot study, the results shed light on the benefits children enjoy as well as the challenges they encounter regularly in their attempts at engaging in open spaces. Children's experiences impact their physical, personal and social development including relationships. The participants spoke about, illustrated and reflected on the extent to which play opportunities and availability of public open spaces are affecting them, physically, socially and psychologically. These findings should be of interest to entities and authorities who are concerned about children's wellbeing. Although this study cannot purport to have identified all the aspects that influence Maltese children's experiences in their respective neighbourhood environments, the findings contribute to adults' understanding of how growing up and living in the Maltese context is affecting children.

5.1 Summary of main findings

Access to and use of open public spaces in a neighbourhood is highly contested and complex. The five participants complained about the lack of play areas, lack of equipment suitable for all age groups, lack of well-designed spaces and littering. The children expressed their disappointment that the few remaining open spaces available for them to play are being encroached upon. Parking spaces are given priority, further reducing space and consequently opportunities to play outdoors. The increase in traffic, lack of road safety and inappropriate infrastructure were also cause for concern. In addition, the equipment available in specific open spaces, such as playgrounds, was limited, inadequate and inappropriate for some age groups. Despite these shortcomings and resulting anxieties or hesitancy to use outdoor public spaces, the children still succeeded in using what was available in multiple ways, enabling them to enjoy play. Impromptu games were highly inclusive and creative.

Children's concerns and anxieties seem to reflect parents' views. The participants' identification of road safety and stranger danger corroborates earlier literature (e.g. Davison and Lawson, 2006; Sallis and Glanz, 2006; Limstrand, 2008; Saelens and Handy, 2008; Pont et al., 2008; Ding et al., 2011; Aziz and Said, 2012) but the hesitancy to go about the neighbourhood independently may be heightened by parents' concerns. The children believed that parents

may be influenced by behavioural and societal norms, where giving permission to children to walk around freely in the neighbourhood is perceived as irresponsible. Therefore, while parents toe the line and adopt social norms which emphasise the notion of protecting children from traffic or dangers, a social trap is being created where children are prevented from interacting with other people in the neighbourhood. In addition, where parents have a tight time schedule because of employment and/or family commitments, children are compelled to remain indoors since parents cannot accompany them to the playground.

Restrictions to independent outdoor experiences in public spaces is not limited to young children. Adolescents may also experience social control and must negotiate their right of use of spaces for play and for travel in the neighbourhood environment due to multiple pressures exerted on them by adults. The findings from this project suggest that gendered social norms are influencing children and adolescents' use of public open spaces in their neighbourhood. Adolescent girls are potentially experiencing a tighter grip on their mobility which stops them from outdoor activity. Participants suggested that cultural assumptions consider teenage girls who spend time outdoors as being promiscuous. The experiences recalled in this study suggest that from the age of eleven, girls are the least likely group to make use of public open spaces. This corroborates research on obesity where Maltese adolescent girls are observed to be at high risk (Inchley et al., 2016). This invisibility of girls in the outdoor spaces differs to conclusions in the international literature (Min and Lee, 2006) and merits further research. Strong traditional social processes influence female adolescents' outdoor presence in their neighbourhood. On the other hand, although sometimes perceived as anti-social, it is socially accepted for boys to be outdoors in the neighbourhood. They are more likely to engage in outdoor activities that present risk and challenge, for example, using bicycles or skateboards to challenge themselves.

Although none of the children narrated incidents of stranger danger, they are advised by parents to retain a safe distance from strangers and not to trust them. The children's narratives indicated that trusted individuals are elderly friends or relatives. Parents reportedly had a low level of trust of children they do not know in the neighbourhood, with whom their children could play. Independent play activities were more likely to occur with relatives whom the parents know and trust. This lack of trust may contribute to a lack of social cohesion, social belonging and social trust which in turn may increase children's and adolescents' anxieties and fears of strangers in the neighbourhood. Children should be provided with spaces where they can engage with children of similar ages in community spaces. The design of these spaces should be as inclusive as possible to accommodate for the needs of all, regardless of age, ability, economic or ethnic background. Children should be able to interact in an inclusive neighbourhood environment. The family has a strong influence on children's activity and behaviours. Parents are the main gatekeepers and are those who can change the social behavioural norms in the neighbourhood that are causing barriers and possibly limiting children from making frequent use of public open spaces.

Climatic conditions also impact children's outdoor play. The cold damp weather in winter greatly limited children's use of play areas. Similarly, during the summer, due to the increase in temperatures and harmful UV rays, children were prevented from frequenting open spaces. The children emphasized that the open environment near the sea is one of the spaces they

feel free to use during the summer months, while it is only in the evenings during summer that they are likely to make use of the playground or other open spaces for play. Through sharing their concern about proposed land reclamation in their locality, the children indirectly emphasised that places that are important to them should be cared for and respected. It is important to listen to children's perspectives because when open spaces and places are repurposed, children's health and wellbeing will be greatly affected.

Studies have emphasised that often children are considered as marginalised groups within cities (Winchester and White, 1988). This project explored children's opinions and rather than marginalised groups, they were considered as citizens who can make valid contributions about the same neighbourhood environment they share with adults daily. Although the participating children felt powerless within their community, they were aware of other groups of individuals living in the same neighbourhood who are vulnerable and marginalised. These included migrant people coming from African countries as well as drug addicts who sometimes frequent the open spaces in their neighbourhood. Fear and discrimination about others create barriers to children's sense of trust and social cohesion. Better planning and measures that help develop family-friendly physical and social environments where everyone can be included are necessary.

Authorities and local councils play a key role in providing spaces that are adequate for all inhabitants in the neighbourhood and in this respect, one of their responsibilities is taking cognisance of children's requests. *Fil-Berañ* helped children to participate in consultations about the environment and propose ideas to the Local Council with the aim of embellishing

Figure 5.1 - Presenting results to the members of the local council



and improving their neighbourhood by having inclusive and friendly spaces for vulnerable groups. Designers of open public spaces, spatial planners and relevant authorities should consult, involve and engage with children and adolescents when drawing up plans for public spaces in neighbourhoods.



Figure 5.2 - Discussing solutions for several open spaces in Xgħajra

As illustrated in this project, children need to be included in the designing of public open spaces; they need to be given a voice and their contribution needs to be considered. Such initiatives create opportunities for dialogue among the inhabitants of a locality as well as provide a platform where children and adolescents can develop and succeed in their aspirations. Such participation empowers young people and contributes to improved social cohesion among communities. The children who participated in the project proposed ideas for reducing differences between groups of inhabitants in the neighbourhood. They suggested activities promoting social participation, enabling people to experience a sense of belonging in the community and a sense of cohesion in everyday life.

5.2 Methodological contributions

The participatory methodologies used in this project acknowledged and supported children and adolescents to engage as active citizens. This study provides insights about the extent to which children understand what is important within a neighbourhood and how knowledgeable they are in suggesting how their neighbourhood can be improved for everyone's benefit. The study enabled children to identify places in the neighbourhood which they consider to be important. Neighbourhoods should not be limited to destinations such as playgrounds, but they should encourage the design of a wider city environment adequate for everyone in the neighbourhood (Freeman, 2006).

This study paves the way for including children in the designing and consultation of the neighbourhood environment. It proposes the combination of innovative methods that help children assess and analyse aspects of the neighbourhood environment that are beneficial or detrimental to their health and well-being. This project moved beyond the typical approach used in studies with children (e.g. drawings and interviews) but incorporated multiple methods to help the children analyse and reflect on their experiences of the neighbourhood environment. Different methods enabled children to express themselves and discuss aspects in the neighbourhood that are important for them. These methods empowered the children to decide how best to conduct the study and enabled them to think about and provide solutions for the limitations that they are experiencing.

Visual data collection helped children express themselves. Photo interpretation gave children autonomy and control to guide the movement of the research process. Taking photos and videos allowed the children to capture images which are important for them in the neighbourhood. They focused on places where they could provide insights about locations based on their experiences. Photos helped to nudge children's memories and recollections making their narrations and experiences easier for the adult researchers to comprehend. The fact that they were given opportunities to voice their stories was empowering.

The mapping of a place helps in obtaining a cartographic narrative of the places. Place mapping helped the Children's Committee to identify their preferred localities in their public environment, as well as reflect upon embellishments or modifications. The committee members were able to express themselves confidently about locations where they felt comfortable and locations which they perceived as hostile. Following through the streets of the map they made suggestions of how some features in the neighbourhood might be modified so that these spaces in the neighbourhood would be more child-friendly.

The place mapping tool was highly effective as both children and adolescents were involved simultaneously. The younger members of the Children's Committee were shown photos of landmarks to help them visualise the landmarks on the map and make up for their inexperience with reading complex maps. Older children could understand mapping concepts.

The mapping exercise helped the participants to visualise who, what and where encounters were likely to occur. Reading maps is not simply a matter of locating a place but requires the visualisation of movement through the streets of the neighbourhood. Such visualisation helps in eliciting narratives of children's neighbourhood experiences (Kaplan, 2000) including their preferences and their social encounters (Andersson, 2002). Moreover, through this tool one is also able to explore the similarities or differences in the experiences of various children about the neighbourhood. The map helped as a prompt to develop rich narratives of locations and assisted participants in remembering the social life associated with them. Moreover, the map provided an indication of the places they did not frequent and were of no particular importance or value.

With the use of video recordings, the children wanted to record and assess the condition of the play equipment available and the use that could be made of such equipment and of the open spaces in the locality, taking into consideration weaknesses in the infrastructure. The video tool was a very effective on-site tool as the children recorded their emotions and experiences, their concerns and suggestions. The children could easily assess specific things in the open spaces that might not be assessed accurately by adults.

Providing the Children's Committee with a platform at par with the adult researchers reduced the power tensions between the adults and the children, helping them to feel respected and equal to others. Making use of participatory methodologies with children is a step forward to understand important and necessary aspects that enable the design of an inclusive environment (Haider, 2007). This addressed the lack of equity faced by children in the neighbourhood community.

5.3 Recommendations

This study highlights the need for children and adolescents to have adequate spaces in their neighbourhood. It is also evident that children and adolescents need to be involved in spatial planning and urban regeneration within public open spaces. Whoever has the responsibility to regenerate areas in a locality should ensure children's participation in the designing of open spaces; their views should be considered in every policy-making exercise. National agencies and Local Councils should address more attention to the needs and wishes of children and adolescents.

Spatial planners and policymakers should ensure that the actual design of an area reflects the suggestions and experiences of children rather than assumed or perceived needs of young people. The everyday experience of children should influence spatial planning. The participation of children and adolescents should be regarded as a prerequisite by the authorities, Local Councils and policymakers to ensure that the design of open spaces targets the needs of all the inhabitants within the neighbourhood.

Those involved in the planning of new neighbourhood open spaces acquire data on the use of the neighbourhood environment by involving children and adolescents who make active use of a variety of spaces in the neighbourhood under study. It is through this method that the future design and planning of open spaces can really target the needs of the children and adolescents concerned. This study can act as a pilot for other neighbourhood projects as it has identified benefits and barriers that children encounter regularly in public open spaces in their neighbourhood. These findings, together with participative methodological strategies can be applied to other localities where there is a genuine interest in having more child and adolescent friendly spaces.

As indicated in Chapter 4, the fourth research question could not be tackled within the project time-frame. Therefore, it is recommended that a follow-up to this project would assess the impact of this project on the management of the public spaces under study.

5.4 Challenges encountered during the project

Participatory methodologies are becoming increasingly popular in research with young people (Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Loebach and Gilliland, 2010). These practices stem from a desire to reduce the power differential between adults and children and to construct knowledge with young people rather than for them. This does not mean that participatory methodologies with children and young people are free of challenges. In the subsequent sections, the difficulties encountered in the project are listed.

5.4.1 Difficulties at the recruitment stage

- The promotional material had to include extensive information to ensure that prospective participants could make an informed decision. The material was to be presented in the two official languages and had to include a formal request for participation in line with ethics requirements. The downside was that the length of the leaflet did not encourage the parents and children to read and take interest in the project. Many disregarded the leaflets which had been distributed and to introduce the project more time had to be invested in face to face conversations.
- Door-to-door meetings helped researchers learn more about the neighbourhood environment; the children and adolescents who were interested in the study and contributed to building trust. Those who volunteered to participate were all recruited because of this exercise. However, difficulties arose at the outset.
- The parents sometimes acted as barriers to the project as they made decisions on behalf of their children. Without asking their children, some parents took the decision that their children could not participate. Other parents prevented their children from participating even though their children showed great interest in the project.
- Some parents showed scepticism about the value of the project and did not transmit enthusiasm to encourage their children to participate. When asked about their possible interest in the project, the children sought their parents' approval and then declined the invitation to participate.
- Although the project focused on giving a voice to the children, the documentation had to be addressed to the parents in the first instance on account of the necessary parental consent. This disempowered young people and affected their involvement and interest from the outset.
- Some children did not want to participate even though their parents encouraged them to do so.
- Some children and parents volunteered to participate but then did not turn up on the day of the focus groups even though the researchers had contacted them through a phone call to remind them about the meeting.

- Some children were discouraged from participating because their friends were not interested in taking part in this project.

Participant recruitment may be improved if a meeting with parents is held before the distribution of the leaflet in order to facilitate their understanding and scope of the project through face-to-face communication.

5.4.2 Difficulties during the running of the project

- Electronic equipment malfunctioned and ran out of memory space during the recordings. Having backup equipment is crucial.
- Limited available time and space to conduct the different methodologies. The meetings were mostly held during holidays within the premises of an old library. Locations where to hold the group meetings should be identified in advance.
- Maintaining children's interest in this study. In order not to lose momentum, participants were contacted and updated about the project development on a regular basis. Having a clear outline and frequent contacts to maintain everyone's commitment is crucial.
- Transmitting hope to the children and adolescents when the Local Council was considering the value of the project. Securing the interest of young participants was not the only hurdle. The Local Council's attention and interest in participating was also crucial.

5.4.3 Challenges encountered in the locality

- Many of the parents felt overwhelmed with the amount of written text they were presented with in the leaflet (Appendix A) and did not give the project any importance. In view of this a short leaflet informing them about the initiative of the project should be sent home and then a detailed leaflet should be given during door-to-door visits.
- Difficulties were encountered with the setting of meetings with the Local Council and the children. The undertaking of the project coincided with the run-up to the Local Council elections. Consequently, the Local Council members were not as available as the researchers anticipated.

5.4.4 Problems encountered due to children's educational system

- Maltese children are not accustomed to taking the initiative or a critical stance in projects. They are more used to being led and directed. Very often the educational system obliges children to follow orders and not challenge concepts and ideas. Therefore, it is important to give the opportunity for children to develop skills which pertain to leadership and active citizenship.

- Parents were also afraid that this project was a waste of time for their children and only accepted their participation on the premise that this was a one-off occasion. Had it involved more time and commitment the parents would not have allowed their children to participate as the educational demands are high and considered more important than such projects. Parents should be aware of the educational benefits for children when participating in such projects.

5.5 Conclusion

Through this project, children and adolescents showed that they can conduct research and express themselves about the things that are important for them. It is the role of the adults to empower the children and adolescents and give them space and opportunities to voice their experiences, concerns and solutions. In turn, it is the adults' responsibility to value the children's perspective and understand their wishes and their daily experiences in the neighbourhood and to feel motivated to explore, understand and interpret children's everyday lives and to negotiate for their benefit.

Fil-Beraħ has contributed by showing how involving children and adolescents in local neighbourhood projects is important for the inhabitants in every neighbourhood context and how the children's and adolescents' views and ideas contribute to the health and wellbeing of all children as well as other groups of people in the community. It is therefore hoped that this project will be the starting point of many other projects across multiple neighbourhood environments where other children and groups in society would make use of this pilot project and apply it to their neighbourhood context. Through such new projects, other children and adolescents would identify their needs in their neighbourhood context and communicate local issues to the various entities. Hopefully, localities across the Maltese Islands take up the challenge to organise similar projects as investing in children's and young people's needs and desires is a long term investment in society.

REFERENCES



REFERENCES

- Adams, E. and Ingham, S. (1998). Changing Places. The Children's Society Agar, M. (2006). An ethnography by any other name..., **Forum: Qualitative Social Research** 7, 4, 36.
- Andersson, B. (2002). Open spaces – about young people, the city and public life. Goteborg: University of Goteborg, Institute of Social Work.
- Aquilina, S., Camilleri, E., Spiteri, K., Busuttill, M., Farrugia Sant-Angelo, V., Calleja, N. and Grech, V. (2019). Regional differences in Childhood BMI data –The Malta Childhood National Body Mass Index Study, **Malta Medical Journal**, 31, 3.
- Attard, M., Von Brockdorff, P. and Bezzina, F. (2015). **The external costs of passenger and commercial vehicle use in Malta**. Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development, University of Malta.
- Aziz, N. F. and Said, I. (2012). The trends and influential factors of children's use of outdoor environments: A review. **Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences**, 38, pp.204-212.
- Aziz, N.F. and Said, I. (2015). Outdoor environments as children's play spaces: Playground affordances. In Evans, B. (eds) Play recreation, Health and Wellbeing, Geographies of children and young people: Springer.
- Badland, H. and Schofield, G. (2005). Transport, urban design, and physical activity: An evidence-based update. **Transportation Research Part D**, 10, pp.177-196.
- Barker, J. and Weller, S. (2003). 'Is it fun?' Developing children Central research methods, **International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy**, 23, pp.33-58.
- Bartlett, S., Hart, R., Satterthwaite, D., De la Barra, X. and Missair, A. (1999). Cities for children. London/New York: Earthscan Publications/UNICEF.
- Berkman, L. F. and Glass, T. (2000). Social integration, social networks, social support, and health. **Social epidemiology**, 1, 6, pp.137-173.
- Blaut, J.M. and Stea, D. (1974). Mapping at the age of three. **Journal of Geography**, 73, pp.5–9.
- Bogardus, E.S. (1926). The group interview. **Journal of Applied Sociology**, 10, pp.372–382.
- Boratav, H. B. (2005). Negotiating youth: Growing up in inner-city Istanbul. **Journal of Youth Studies**, 8,2, pp.203–220.
- Brown, W. H., Pfeiffer, K. A., McIver, K. L., Dowda, M., Addy, C.L. and Pate, R. R. (2009). Social and environmental factors associated with pre-schoolers' non-sedentary physical activity. **Child Development**, 80, 1, pp.45–58.
- Burke, C. (2005). Play in Focus: Children Researching Their Own Spaces and Places for Play. **Children, Youth and Environments**, 15, 1, pp. 27–53.
- Carroll P., Witten K., Kearns R. and Donovan, P. (2015). Kids in the City: Children's use and experiences of urban neighbourhoods in Auckland, New Zealand, **J. Urban Des.**, 20, pp.417-436.
- Carver, A., Timperio, A. and Crawford, D. (2008). Playing it safe: the influence of neighbourhood safety on children's physical activity. A review. **Health and Place**, 14, 2, pp. 217–227.

- Castonguay, G. and Jutras, S. (2009). Children's appreciation of outdoor places in a poor neighborhood. **Journal of Environmental Psychology**, 29, 1, pp. 101–109.
- Castonguay, G. and Jutras, S. (2010). Children's use of the outdoor environment in a low-income Montreal neighborhood. **Children Youth and Environment**, 20, 1, pp. 200–230. University of Colorado.
- Castonguay, G., and Jutras, S. (2009). Children's Appreciation of Outdoor Places in a Poor Neighborhood. **Journal of Environmental Psychology**, 29, 1, pp. 101–109.
- Cattell, V. (2001). Poor people, poor places, and poor health: the mediating role of social networks and social capital. **Social science & medicine**, 52, 10, pp.1501-1516.
- Cattell, V., Dines, N., Gesler, W. and Curtis, S. (2008). Mingling, observing, and lingering: everyday public spaces and their implications for well-being and social relations, **Health & Place**, 14,3, pp. 544–561.
- Cefai, C. (2015). Children's World: The Perspectives of Maltese Children. Conference presentation at the 1 st National Conference on Children's Well-being. The President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society; The Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, Malta
- Cefai, C. (2018). Healthy habits and healthy spaces: Children's views on their use of time and space. In W. S. Toscano & L. Rodriguez de la Vega (Eds.), *Handbook of leisure, physical activity, sports, recreation and quality of life*. Springer Publications
- Cefai, C. and Galea, N. (2016). Children's World. The subjective wellbeing of Maltese children. Third Monograph of the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, University of Malta.
- Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality county: Putting the first last*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Chawla, L. (ed) (2002). *Growing up in an urbanising world*. London: Unesco Publishing & Earthscan Publications.
- Christensen, P. and M. O'Brien (2003). Children in the City: Introducing New Perspectives, in P. Christensen and M. O'Brien (eds) *Children in the City: Home, Neighbourhood, and Community*, pp. 1–12. London and New York: Routledge.
- Christensen, P. and Mikkelsen, M.R. (2008). Jumping Off and Being Careful: Children's Strategies of Risk Management in Everyday Life. **Sociology of Health and Illness**, 30, pp.112-130.
- Clark, A. (2003). The Mosaic approach and research with young children, in V. Lewis, M. Kellet, C. Robinson, S. Fruser and S. Ding (eds) *The reality of research with children and young people*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 157–161.
- Clark, A. (2010). *Transforming children's spaces: children's and adults' participation in designing learning environments*. London : Routledge, 2010, London.
- Clark, A. (2011). Breaking methodological boundaries? Exploring visual, participatory methods with adults and young children. **European Early Childhood Education Research Journal**, 19, 3, pp.321–330.
- Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2001). *Listening to young children: The Mosaic approach*, London: National Children's Bureau for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2005). *Spaces to play: More listening to young children using the Mosaic approach*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Clark, A. and Percy-Smith, B. (2006). Beyond Consultation: Participatory Practices in Everyday Spaces. **Children, Youth and Environments**, 16, pp.1–9.
- Clark, C. and Uzzell, D. (2006). The socio-environmental affordances of adolescents' environments. In: C. Spencer and M. Blades, eds. *Children and their environments: learning, using and designing spaces*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.176–195.
- Clark, M. and Cassar, J. (2013). Leisure trends among young people in Malta. Office of the Commissioner for children and Agenzija Zghazagh, Malta.
- Clements, R. (2004). An Investigation of the Status of Outdoor Play. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 5, pp.68-80.

- Cliff, D.P., Okely, A.D., Burrows, T.L., Jones, R.A., Morgan, P.J., Collins, C.E. and Baur, L.A. (2013). Objectively measured sedentary behavior, physical activity, and plasma lipids in overweight and obese children. **Obesity**, 21, 2, pp.382–385.
- Copperman, R. and Bhat, C. (2009). Children’s Activity-Travel Patterns and Implications for Activity-Based Travel Demand Modeling. Washington, DC: Transportation Research Board.
- Cornell, E., Hadley, D., Sterling, T., Chan, M. and Boechler, P. (2001). Adventure as a stimulus for cognitive development. **Journal of Environmental Psychology**, 21, pp.219–231.
- Cutter-Mackenzie, A., Edwards, S. and Widdop Quinton, H. (2015). Child-framed video research methodologies: issues, possibilities and challenges for researching with children, **Children’s Geographies**, 13, 3, pp.343-356.
- Davis, J., Tisdall, E., Kay, M. and Prout, A. (2006). Children, young people and social inclusion: Participation for what? London: Policy Press.
- Davison, K. and Lawson, C.T. (2006). Do attributes of the physical environment influence children’s physical activity? A review of the literature. **The International Journal for Behavioral Nutrition & Physical Activity**, 3, 19.
- Day, L., Sutton, L. and Sarah, J. (2011). Children and young people’s participation in planning and regeneration: A final report to the Ecorys Research Programme 2010-11.
- Day, R. and Wagner, F. (2010). Parks, streets and ‘just empty space’: The local environmental experiences of children and young people in a Scottish study. **Local Environment**, 15, 6, pp.509-523.
- de Vet, E., De Ridder, D. T. and de Wit, J. B. (2011). Environmental correlates of physical activity and dietary behaviours among young people: A systematic review of reviews. **Obesity Reviews**, 12, 501, pp.130–142.
- Decelis, A., Fox, K. and Jago, R. (2013). Prevalence of obesity among 10–11-year-old Maltese children using four established standards. **Pediatric obesity**, 8, 5, pp.54-58.
- Dencker, M. and Andersen, L.B. (2008). Health related aspects of objectively measured daily physical activity in children. **Clin. Physiol. Funct. Imaging**, 28, 3, pp.133–144.
- Ding, D., Sallis, J.F., Kerr, J., Lee, S. and Rosenberg, D.E. (2011). Neighborhood environment and physical activity among youth a review. **Am J Prev Med.**, 41, pp.442–55.
- Downs, R.M. and Stea, D. (eds) (1973). Cognitive maps and spatial behaviour. Process and products. In: Image and environment: cognitive mapping and spatial behaviour. Chicago, IL: Aldine, pp. 8–26.
- Driskell, D. (2001). Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth: A Manual for Participation. Routledge, London ; Sterling, VA : Paris.
- Ekelund, U., Luan, J., Sherar, L.B., Esliger, D.W., Griew, P. and Cooper, A. (2012). Moderate to vigorous physical activity and sedentary time and cardiometabolic risk factors in children and adolescents. **J. Am. Med. Assoc.**, 307, 7, pp.704–712.
- Elsley, S. (2004). Children’s experience of public space. **Children & Society**, 18, pp. 155-164
- Ennew J. (1994). Time for children or time for adults? In Qvortrup, J, Bardy, M., Sgritta, G., Wintersberger, H. (eds). Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics, Avebury: Aldershot.
- Ergen, B. (2014). Euclidean Distance Mapping and the proposed Greenway Method in Malta. **Journal of Urban Planning and Development**, 140, 1.
- Eurostat database (2017).
- Evans, R. (2006). Negotiating social identities: The influence of gender, age and ethnicity on young people’s ‘street careers’ in Tanzania. **Children’s Geographies**, 4,1, pp.109–128.
- Farrugia Sant’Angelo, V. & Grech, V. (2011). Comparison of body mass index of a national cohort of Maltese children over a 3-year interval. **Malta Medical Journal**, 23, 01, pp.34-39.
- Farrugia, L. and Lauri, M.A. (2018). Maltese Parents’ Awareness and Management of Risks their Children Face Online p. 135-146 in Giovanna Mascheroni, Cristina Ponte & Ana Jorge (eds.) Digital Parenting. The Challenges for Families in the Digital Age. Göteborg: Nordicom.

- Ferreira, I., van der Horst, K., Wendel-Vos, W., Kremers, S., van Lenthe, F.J. and Brug, J. (2007). Environmental correlates of physical activity in youth — a review and update. **Obes. Rev.**, 8, 2, pp.129–154.
- Fjørtoft, I. (2004). Landscape as playscape: The effects of natural environments on children’s play and motor development. **Children, Youth and Environments**, 14, 2, pp.21–44.
- Flewitt, R. (2005). Conducting research with young children: Some ethical considerations. **Early Child Development and Care**, 175, 6, pp.553–565.
- Francis, M. and Lorenzo, R. (2002). Seven realms of children’s participation. **Journal of Environmental Psychology**, 22, pp.157–169.
- Fraser, A. (2013). Street habitus: Gangs, territorialism and social change in Glasgow. **Journal of Youth Studies**, 16, 8, pp.970–985.
- Freeman, C. (2006). Colliding worlds. *Creating Child Friendly Cities: Reinstating Kids in the City*. London: Routledge, pp.69-85.
- Freeman, C. and Tranter, P.J. (2011). *Children and their urban environment: Changing worlds*, London: Earthscan.
- Fyhri, A., Hjorthol, R., Mackett, R., Fotel, T., and Kytta, M. (2011). Children’s active travel and independent mobility in four countries: Development, social contributing trends and measures. **Transport Policy**, 18,5, pp.703–710.
- Ginsburg, K. (2007). The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent–child bonds. **Paediatrics**, 119, 1, pp.182–191.
- Gleeson, B. and Sipe, N. (Eds.) (2006). *Creating child friendly cities: Reinstating kids in the city*. London: Routledge.
- Golomb, C. (1992). *The child’s creation of the pictorial world*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Gordon-Larsen, P., Nelson, M. C., Page, P. and Popkin, B. M. (2006). Inequality in the built environment underlies key health disparities in physical activity and obesity. **Pediatrics**, 117, 2, pp.417–424.
- Gray, P. (2011). The Decline of Play and the Rise of Psychopathology in Children and Adolescents. **American Journal of Play**, 3, pp. 4443–463.
- Grech, V. and Farrugia Sant’Angelo, V. (2009) Body mass index estimation in a school-entry aged cohort in Malta. **International Journal of Pediatric Obesity**, 4, 2, pp.126-128
- Grech, V., Aquilina, S. Camilleri, E. Spiteri, K., Busuttil, M.L., Sant’Angelo, V.F. and Calleja, N. (2017). The Malta Childhood National Body Mass Index Study: A population study. **Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition**, 65, 3, pp. 327-331.
- Greene, S. and Hogan, D. (2011). *Analysing children’s Accounts using Discourse Analysis, Researching children’s experience*, Sage publications Ltd.
- Haider, J. (2007). Inclusive design: Planning public urban spaces for children. In *Proceedings of the institution of civil engineers-municipal engineer* (Vol. 160, No. 2, pp. 83-88). Thomas Telford Ltd.
- Hale, D.E. (2004). Type 2 diabetes and diabetes risk factors in children and adolescents. **Clin. Cornerstone**, 6, 2, pp.17–30.
- Hallal, P.C., Victora, C.G., Azevedo, M.R. and Wells, J.C. (2006). Adolescent physical activity and health: a systematic review. **SportsMed.**, 36, 12, pp.1019–1030.
- Halsey, K., Murfield, J., Harland, J.L. and Lord, P. (2006). *The Voice of Young People: an Engine for Improvement? Scoping the Evidence*.
- Hewes, J. (2014). Seeking balance in motion: The role of spontaneous Free play in Promoting social and emotional health in early childhood care and education. **Children (Basel)**, 1, 3, pp. 280-301.
- Hill, M. Laybourn, A. and Borland, M. (1996). Engaging with primary-aged children about their emotions and well-being: Methodological considerations. **Children and Society**, 10, pp.129–144.

- Hill, M., Davis, J., Prout, A. and Tisdall, K. (2004). Moving the participation agenda forward. **Children and Society**, 18, pp.77–96.
- Hillman, M., Adams, J. and Whitelegg, J. (1990). *One False Move... A Study of Children's Independent Mobility*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Hofferth, S. and Sandberg, J. (2001). Changes in American Children's Time, 1981–1997." **Advances in Life Course Research**, 6, pp.193–229.
- Hooper C.M., Ivory, V.C. and Fougere, G. (2015). Childhood neighbourhoods as third places: developing durable skills and preferences that enhance wellbeing in adulthood. **Health and Place**, 34, pp. 34-45
- Horton, J., Christensen, P., Kraftl, P. and Hadfield-Hill, S. (2014). Walking. . . just walking': How children and young people's everyday pedestrian practices matter. **Social & Cultural Geography**, 15,1, pp.94–115.
- Hoskins, B. and Deakin Crick, R. (2008). Learning to Learn and Civic Competences: different currencies or two sides of the same coin? EUR 23360. Ispra: European Commission.
- Inchley, J., Currie, D., Young, T., Samdal, O., Torbjorn, T., Augustson, L., Mathison, F., Aleman-Diaz, A., Molcho, M., Weber, M. and Barnekow, V. (2016). Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study: International report from the 2013/2014 survey health policy for children and adolescents, no. 7.
- Isenberg, J. and Quisenberry, N. (2002). *Play: essential for all children*. A position paper of the Association for Childhood Education International.
- Jack, G. (2012). The role of place attachments in wellbeing. In S. Atkinson, S. Fuller, & J. Painter (Eds.), *Wellbeing and place* (pp. 89–103). Surrey: Ashgate.
- Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of Great American Cities*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- James, A. (2007). Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials. **American Anthropologist**, 109, 2, pp.261–272.
- Janz, K.F., Letuchy, E.M., Eichenberger Gilmore, J.M., Burns, T.L., Torner, J.C., Willing, M.C. and Levy, S.M. (2010). Early physical activity provides sustained bone health benefits later in childhood. **Med. Sci. Sports Exerc.**, 42, 6, pp.1072–1078.
- Kaplan, M. (2000). *Neighborhoods 2000 – An intergenerational urban studies curriculum: guidebook for teachers*. New York: The Center of Human Environments, Graduate School, CUNY.
- Kaplan, R. and Kaplan, S. (1989). *The experience of nature: A psychological perspective*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaplan, R., Kaplan, S. and Ryan, R. L. (1998). *With people in mind: Design and management of everyday nature*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Karsten L. (2005). It all used to be better? Different generations on continuity and change in urban children's daily use of space. **Children's Geographies**, 3, pp.275-290.
- Karsten, L. (2002). Mapping childhood in Amsterdam: The spatial and social construction of children's domains in the city. **Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie**, 93, 3, pp.231-241.
- Kellert, S. R. (2005). Nature and childhood development. In S. R. Kellert (Ed.), *Building for life: Designing and understanding the human-nature connection* (pp. 63–89). Washington, DC: Island Press.
- King, A.C., Parkinson, K.N., Adamson, A.J., Murray, L., Besson, H., Reilly, J.J. and Basterfield, L. (2011). Correlates of objectively measured physical activity and sedentary behaviour in English children. **Eur.J.PublicHealth**, 21,4, pp.424–431.
- Krahnstoever Davison, K. and Lawson, C.T. (2006). Do attributes in the physical environment influence children's physical activity? A review of the literature. **Int. J. Behav. Nutr. Phys. Act.** 3, 19.

- Krueger, R. (1995). The future of focus groups. **Qualitative Health Research**, 5, 4, pp.524–530.
- Kullman, K. (2012). Experiments with moving children and digital cameras, **Children's Geographies**, 10, 1, pp.1-11.
- Kyttä, M. (2002). Affordances of children's environments in the context of cities, small towns, suburbs and rural villages in Finland and Belarus. **Journal of Environmental Psychology**, 22, 1–2, pp.109–123.
- Kyttä, M. (2003). Children in outdoor contexts. Affordances and Independent Mobility in the Assessment of Environmental Child Friendliness.
- Latham, A. (2004). Researching and writing everyday accounts of the city: An introduction to the diary-photo diary interview method, in Knowles, C. and Sweetman, P. (eds): *Picturing the Social Landscape: Visual Methods and the Sociological Imagination*. Routledge, London, pp. 117
- Levine, I.S. and Zimmerman, J.D. (1996). Using qualitative data to inform public policy: Evaluating 'Choose to defuse'. **American Journal of Orthopsychiatry**, 66. pp.363–377.
- Lewis, A. (1992). Group child interviews as a research tool. **British Educational Research Journal**, 18, pp.413–421.
- Limstrand, T. (2008). Environmental Characteristics Relevant to Young People's Use of Sport Facilities: A Review. **Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports**, 18, pp.275-287.
- Little, H. and David, E. (2010). Risk, Challenge, and Safety: Implications for Play Quality and Playground Design. **European Early Childhood Education Research Journal**, 18, pp.497-513.
- Little, H. and Wyver, S. (2008). Outdoor Play: Does Removing the Risks Reduce the Benefits? **Australian Journal of Early Childhood**, 33, pp.33-40.
- Loebach, J. and Gilliland, J. (2010). Child-led tours to uncover children's perceptions and use of neighbourhood environments. **Children, Youth and Environments**, 20, 1, pp.52-90.
- Loprinzi, P.D., Cardinal, B.J., Loprinzi, K.L. and Lee, H. (2012). Benefits and environmental determinants of physical activity in children and adolescents. **Obesity Facts**, 5, 4, pp.597–610.
- LUCAS (Land Use and Land Cover Survey) (2018). Eurostat.
- Lynch, K. (1977). *Growing up in cities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mackett, R., Brown, B., Gong, Y., Kitazawa, K. and Paskins, J. (2007). Children's independent movement in the local environment. **Built Environment**, 33, pp.454-468.
- Malone, K. (2008). Every experience matters: An evidence based research report on the role of learning outside the classroom for children's whole development from birth to eighteen years. Report commissioned by Farming and Countryside Education for UK Department Children, School and Families, Wollongong.
- Malta Independent (5.2.2018) Commissioner for Children stresses need for more pedestrianised zones in Maltese localities. <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2018-02-05/local-interviews/Commissioner-for-Children-stresses-need-for-more-pedestrianised-zones-in-Maltese-localities-6736184452>
- Mand, K. (2012). Giving children a 'voice': arts-based participatory research activities and representation. **International Journal of Social Research Methodology**, 15,2, pp.149–160.
- Martin, G.M. (2015). Obesity in question understandings of body shape, self and normalcy among children in Malta. **Sociology of health and illness**, 37, 2, pp. 212-226
- Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: Sage.
- Massey, D.B. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Matthews, H. and Limb, M. (1999). Defining an agenda for the geography of children: Review and prospect. **Progress in Human Geography**, 23, 1, pp. 61–90.
- Matthews, H., Limb, M., and Percy-Smith, B. (1998). Changing worlds: the microgeographies of young teenagers. **Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie**, 89, 2, pp.193–202.

- Mauthner, M. (1997). Methodological aspects of collecting data from children: Lessons from three research projects. **Children & Society**, 11, pp.16–28.
- Mayall, B. (2000). Conversations with children: Working with generational issues. In Edited by: P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (pp. 120–135). London: Falmer Press.
- Merton, R.K. and Kendall, P.L. (1955). The focused interview. In Edited by: P.F. Lazarsfeld & M. Rosenberg (Eds.), *The language of social research* (pp. 477–491). New York: The Free Press.
- Min, B., and Lee, J. (2006). Children’s Neighborhood Place as a Psychological and Behavioral Domain. **Journal of Environmental Psychology**, 26,1, pp.51–71.
- Mitchell, H., Kearns, R. A. and Collins, D. C. A. (2007). Nuances of neighbourhood: Children’s perceptions of the space between home and school in Auckland, New Zealand. **Geoforum**, 38, pp.614–627.
- Mizzi, S. O. (1994). Gossip. A means of social control. In: R.G. Sultana and G. Baldacchino, (eds.) *Maltese society. A sociological inquiry*, Malta: Mireva Publications. pp.369-3820.
- Moore, R. and Wong, H. (1997). *Natural learning: The life history of an environmental schoolyard*. Berkeley: MIG Communications.
- Morrow, V. (2001). Using qualitative methods to elicit young people’s perspectives on their environments: some ideas for community health initiatives. **Health Education Research**, 16, 3, pp.255–268.
- Morrow, V. (2003). Improving the Neighbourhood for Children. In *Children in the City, Home, Neighbourhood and Community*. Edited by: Christensen P, O’Brien M. London: Routledge Falmer pp.162-183.
- Mosby I. J. (2013). Administering colonial science: Nutrition research and human biomedical experimentation in aboriginal communities and residential schools, 1942–1952. **Histoire sociale/Social history**, 46, pp.145–172.
- Nairn, K. and Kraftl, P. (2016). Introduction to children and Young people, Space Place and Environment In Skelton, T., Nairn, K. and Kraftl, P. *Space, Place and Environment: Geographies of Children and Young people*, Springer.
- Newman, M., Woodcock, A. and Dunham, P. (2006). “Playtime in the borderlands”: children’s representations of school, gender and bullying through photographs and inter views, **Children’s Geographies**, 4, 3.
- NSO (National Statistics Office), (2010). *Census 2010*. Malta, Valletta
- NSO (National Statistics Office) (2016). *Trends in Malta*, Valletta.
- O’Brien, M. (2000). Children’s independent spatial mobility in the urban public realm. **Childhood**, 7, 3, pp.257–277.
- Oliver, M. Witten, K., Kearns, R.A., Mova, S. Badland, H.M., Carroll, P. Drumheller, C., Tavea, N., Asiasiga, L., Jelley, S, Kaiwai, H., Opit, S., Lin, E.J., Sweetser, P., Barnes Hoewaka, H., Mason, N. and Ergler, C. (2011). Kids in the City study: research design and methodology, *BMC Public health*, 11, pp. 587.
- Patsarika, M. (2011). Student involvement in school design: an exploratory study of young people’s participation. University of Sheffield, Department of Sociological Studies, and The School of Architecture, Sheffield.
- Pellegrini, A. D. (2009). Research and policy on children’s play. **Child Development Perspectives**, 3, 2, pp.131–136.
- Philo, C. (2000). The intimate geographies of childhood. **Childhood: Special Issue: Spaces of Childhood**, 7,3, pp.243–256.
- Philo, C. (2003). To go back up the side hill’: Memories, imaginations and reveries of childhood. **Children’s Geographies**, 1, pp.7–23.
- Piaget, J. (2007). *The child’s conception of the world: A 20th century classic of child psychology*. (2nd ed.). Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Pink, S. (2009). *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. Sage,
- Pont, B., Nusche, D. and Hopkins, D. (2008). *Improving School Leadership: Volume Two – Case Studies on System Leadership*. Paris: OECD Publications

- Pooley, C., Turnbull, J. and Adams, M. (2005). The Journey to School in Britain since the 1940s: Continuity and Change. **Area**, 37,1, pp. 43–53.
- Prezza, M. (2007). Children's independent mobility: A review of recent Italian literature. **Children Youth and Environments**, 17, 4, pp.293-318.
- Prezza, M., Alparone, F. R., Cristallo, C. and Luigi, S. (2005). Parental perception of social risk and of positive potentiality of outdoor autonomy for children: The development of two instruments. **Journal of environmental psychology**, 25, 4, pp.437-453.
- Prezza, M., Pilloni, S., Morabito, C., Sersante, C., Alparone, F. R. and Giuliani, M. V. (2001). The influence of psychosocial and environmental factors on children's independent mobility and relationship to peer frequentation. **Journal of community & applied social psychology**, 11, 6, pp.435-450.
- Prezza, M., Pilloni, S., Morabito, C., Sersante, C., Alparone, F.R. and Giuliani, M.V. (2001). The influence of psychosocial and environmental factors on children's independent mobility and relationship to peer frequentation. **J Comm App Soc Psych.**, 11, pp.435-450.
- Proshansky, H. and Gottlieb, N. (1989). The development of place identity in the child. **Zero to Three**, 10, 2, pp.18–25.
- Punch, S. (2002). Research with Children: The Same or Different from Research with Adults? **Childhood**, 9, 3, pp.321–341.
- Qvortrup, J., Bardy, M., Sgritta, G. and Wintersberger, H. (eds) (1994). *Childhood matters*, Vienna: European Centre.
- Ramezani, S. and Said, I. (2013). Children's nomination of friendly places in an urban neighbourhood in Shiraz, Iran. **Children's Geographies**, 11, 1, pp.7-27.
- Rayner, J.P., Laidlaw, A.C. and Rayner, M.T. (2010). Children's participation in designing landscapes - examples from Melbourne, Australia.
- Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (2008) (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. Sage, CA.
- Rissotto, A. and Tonucci, F. (2002). Freedom of movement and environmental knowledge in elementary school children. **Journal of Environmental Psychology**, 22, pp.65–77.
- Rogers M. (2012). They are there for you": The importance of neighbourhood friends to children's wellbeing, **Child Indic. Res.**, 5, pp.483-502
- Saelens, B.E. and Handy, S.L. (2008). Built environment correlates of walking: a review. **Med. Sci Sports Exerc.**, 40, pp.550.
- Sallis, J. F., Owen, N. and Fisher, E. B. (2008). Ecological models of health behavior. In K. Glanz, B. Rimer, & K. Vismanath (Eds.), *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice* (4th ed., pp. 464–485). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Sanders,
- Sallis, J.F. and Glanz, K. (2006). The role of built environments in physical activity, eating and obesity in childhood. **Future Child**, 16,1, pp.89-108.
- Satariano, B. (2020). Social capital, health and place: the two sides of the same coin. **Symposia Melitensia**, 16, pp.265-274.
- Satariano, B. and Curtis, S.E. (2018). The experience of social determinants of health within a Southern European, **Health and Place**, 51, pp.45-51.
- Schoeppe, S., Duncan, M. J., Badland, H. M., Alley, S., Williams, S., Rebar, A. L., and Vandelanotte, C. (2015). Socio-demographic factors and neighbourhood social cohesion influence adults' willingness to grant children greater independent mobility: A cross-sectional study. **BMC Public Health**, 15, pp.690–698.

- Sebba, R. (1991). The landscape of childhood: The reflection of childhoods's environment in adult memories and in children's attitudes. **Environment and Behavior**, 23, 4, pp.395–422.
- Shaw, B., Watson, B., Frauendienst, B., Redecker, A., Jones, T. and Hillman, M. (2013). Children's independent mobility: A comparative study in England and Germany (1971–2010). London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Short, K.R., Blackett, P.R., Gardner, A.W. and Copeland, K.C. (2009). Vascular health in children and adolescents: effects of obesity and diabetes. **Vasc. Health Risk Manag.** 5, pp.973–990.
- Skelton, T. and Gough, K. V. (2013). Introduction: Young people's im/mobile urban geographies. **Urban Studies**, 50, 3, pp.455–466.
- Sollars, V. (2006). Children's right to Play: A study of Maltese children's perceptions on cultural and recreational activities. A publication of the Office of the Commissioner for children, Malta.
- Sothorn, M.S., Loftin, M., Suskind, R.M., Udall, J.N. and Blecker, U. (1999). The health benefits of physical activity in children and adolescents: Implications for chronic disease prevention. **Eur J Pediatr**, 158, pp. 271-274.
- Spencer, C. and Woolley, H. (2000). Children and the city: A summary of recent environmental psychology research. **Child: Care, Health and Development**, 26, 3, pp.181–197.
- Stagnitti, K. (2004). Understanding play: the implications for play assessment. **Australian Occupational Therapy Journal**, 51, 1, pp.3–12.
- Stamatakis, E., Coombs, N., Jago, R., Gama, A., Mourão, I., Nogueira, H. and Padez, C. (2013). Type-specific screen time associations with cardiovascular risk markers in children. **Am. J. Prev. Med.**, 44, 5, pp.481–488.
- Stephenson, A. (2002). "Opening up the Outdoors: Exploring the Relationship between the Indoor and Outdoor Environments of a Centre." **European Early Childhood Education Research Journal**, 10, pp.29-38.
- Tandy, C. (1999). Children's Diminishing Play Space: A Study of Inter-Generational Change in Children's Use of Their Neighbourhoods. **Australian Geographical Studies**, 37, 2, pp.154–164.
- Tester, J.M. (2009). The built environment: designing communities to promote physical activity in children. **Pediatrics**, 123, 6, pp.1591–1598.
- Tezel, E. (2011). Exploring parental concerns about children's interactions in gated communities: a case study in Istanbul, **Children's Geographies**, 9, 3-4, pp. 425-437,
- Times of Malta (14.05.2006). Siggiewi School's Walking Bus, 14/05/2006 <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/siggiewi-schools-walking-bus.54300>
- Times of Malta (22.05.2017). Supporting healthy eating 22/05/2017 <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/Supporting-healthy-eating.648670>
- Times of Malta (7.3.2016) Children being burdened with useless information. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/children-being-burdened-with-useless-information.6047029>
- Tisdall, K. and Davis, J. (2004). Making a difference? Bringing children's and young people's views into policy-making. **Children and Society**, 18, pp.131–142.
- Titman, W. (1994). Special Places, Special People: The Hidden Curriculum of School Grounds. Surrey, UK: World Wide Fund for Nature/Learning through Landscapes.
- Toga, A., Thompson, P. and Sowell E. (2006). Mapping brain maturation. *Trends in Neurosciences*, 29, pp.148–159.
- Tranter, P. and Pawson, E. (2001). Children's access to local environments: A case study of Christchurch, New Zealand. **Local Environ**, 6, pp.27-48.
- Trawick-Smith, J. (2010). From Playpen to Playground—The Importance of Physical Play for the Motor Development of Young Children. Center for Early Childhood Education Eastern, Connecticut State University, 2010
- Tuan, Y. F. (1974). *Topophilia: A study of environmental perception, attitudes and values*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- UNICEF, (1997). Children's participation: the theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care. London : Earthscan : UNICEF, 1997, London.
- UNICEF. (2014). Child friendly cities. Building child friendly cities a framework for action. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.
- United Nations (1990). UN Convention on the Rights of the child.
- United Nations (2008). Creating an inclusive society: Practical strategies to promote Social Integration, Division for social Policy and Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- United Nations (UN) (2002, November 18). Convention on the rights of the child: General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989.
- Valentine, G. (2004). Public Space and the Culture of Childhood. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Valentine, G. and Mckendrick, J. (1997). Children's outdoor play: exploring parental concerns about children's safety and the changing nature of childhood. **Geoforum**, 28, 2, pp. 219–235.
- Van Andel, J. (1990). Places children like, dislike, and fear. **Children's Environments Quarterly**, 7,4, pp.24–31.
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J.S. and Sinagub, J. (1996). Focus group interviews in education and psychology. London: Sage.
- Veitch, J., Bagley S., Ball, K. and Salmon, J. (2006). Where Do Children Usually Play? A Qualitative Study of Parents' Perceptions of Influences on Children's Active Free-Play. **Health & Place**, 12, 4, pp.383–393.
- Veitch, J., Salmon, J. and Ball, K. (2008). Children's active free play in local neighborhoods: a behavioural mapping study. **Health Educ. Res.** 23,5, pp.870–879.
- Veitch, J., Salmon, J., and Ball, K. (2010). Individual, social and physical environmental correlates of children's active free-play: A cross-sectional study. **International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity**, 7, 11.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978 [1935]). Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes. Edited by: M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Weller, S. and Bruegel, I. (2009). Children's 'place' in the development of neighbourhood social capital. **Urban Stud**, 46, pp.629-643.
- Wells, N. and Lekies, K. (2006). Nature and the life course: Pathways from childhood nature experiences to adult environmentalism. **Children Youth and Environments**, 16,1, pp.1–25.
- Wen, L., Kite, J., Merom, D. and Rissel, C. (2009). Time spent playing outdoors after school and its relationship with independent mobility: A cross-sectional survey of children aged 10–12 years in Sydney, Australia. **International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity**, 6, 15.
- Whitzman, C. and Mizrachi, D. (2009). Vertical Living Kids. Creating Supportive High Rise Environments for Children in Melbourne, Australia. Melbourne, Australia: University of Melbourne.
- WHO (2009). Environment and Health Performance Review, Malta. WHO Regional Office for Europe, Denmark.
- Wilks, J. (2010). Child-friendly cities: A place for active citizenship in geographical and environmental education. **International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education**, 19,1, pp.25–38.
- Winchester, H. P. and White, P. E. (1988). The location of marginalised groups in the inner city. **Environment and Planning D: Society and Space**, 6, 1, pp.37-54.
- Wood, L., Giles-Corti, B. and Bulsara, M. (2012) Streets Apart: Does Social Capital Vary with Neighbourhood Design? **Urban studies research**, pp.1-11.
- Woodhead, M. and Faulkner. D. (2008). "Subjects, Objects or Participants: Dilemmas of Psychological Research with Children." In Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices, edited by P. Christensen and A. James, 10–39. London: Routledge.

- Woolley, H., Dunn, J., Spencer, C., Short, T. and Rowley, G. (1999). Children describe their experience of the city centre: a qualitative study of the fears and concerns which may limit their full participation. **Landscape Research**, 24, 3, pp.287–301.
- Worpole, K. (2005). No particular place to go? Children, young people and public space. London: Groundwork UK.
- Young, L. and Barrett, H. (2001). Adapting Visual Methods: Action Research with Kampala Street Children, **Area**, 33, 2, pp.141-15.
- Zhang, H. and Jin Li, M. (2012). Environmental characteristics for children’s activities in the neighbourhood. **Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences**, 38, pp.23–30.

APPENDIX 1

CONSENT FORM 1

FIL-BERAĦ

“L-Ideat tat-Tfal u ż-Żgħażaġh”



Għeżiež ġenituri /kustodji,

Għandkom tfal/ żgħażaġh ta' bejn it-tmienja u s-sittax-il sena jgħixu fid-dar magħkom? Jekk *Iva* dan il-proġett jista' jinteressahom! F'dan il-fuljett tistgħu taqraw aktar dwar dan il-proġett.

Min aħna? F'isem il-Fondazzjoni tal-President għall-Ġid tas-Socjeta', aħna riċerkaturi li qed immexxu l-proġett 'Fil-Beraħ'. L-għan ta' dan il-proġett huwa li nisimgħu u nsiru nafu l-ħsibijiet tat-tfal u ż-żgħażaġh (ta' bejn it-tmienja u s-sittax-il sena) dwar l-użu tal-postijiet pubbliċi fil-lokalita' fejn tgħixu.

Kif jistgħu jieħdu sehem it-tfal u ż-żgħażaġh? Matul il-ħmistax li ġejjin qed nistiednu lit-tfal/ żgħażaġh biex fuq il-karta mehmuża;

- Ipingu jew jieħdu ritratti **tal-izjed** post pubbliku favorit tagħhom;
- Ipingu jew jieħdu ritratti **tal-inqas** post pubbliku favorit;
- Jispjegaw **għaliex** għażlu dawn il-postijiet kif ukoll;
- Jiktbu dwar **tibdillet** li jixtiequ li jseħħu fil-postijiet pubbliċi.

Dan ix-xogħol jista' jsir fejn, meta u kif jixtiequ huma. Kull min jieħu sehem, ser jagħmel hekk b'mod volontarju. It-tfal tagħkom jistgħu jieqfu meta jridu, jew jekk ibiddu fehmthom dwar il-partecipazzjoni.

Sehem il-ġenituri/kustodji? Nieħdu gost jekk tkeggu lil uliedkom biex jieħdu sehem. Nixtiequ nagħtu spazju lit-tfal u ż-żgħażaġh biex isemmgħu l-ħsibijiet tagħhom. Għalhekk inheggukom biex tħalluhom ipingu/jieħdu ritratti waħidhom. M'hemm ebda kompetizzjoni jew premju u m'għandniex għalfejn inkunu nafu ta' min huma t-tpingijiet jew ir-ritratti. Għalhekk, la intom u lanqas it-tfal m'għandkom tiktbu jew tiffirmaw ix-xogħol li ser isir. Minħabba li t-tfal u ż-żgħażaġh huma taħt l-eta', għandna bżonn il-kunsens tagħkom biex huma jkunu jistgħu jieħdu sehem.

U aħna? Dawn it-tpingijiet se jintużaw għal fini ta' riċerka imma jistgħu jintużaw ukoll waqt esibizzjoni tat-tpingijiet u/jew ritratti meħudin mit-tfal. Aħna se nieħdu ħsieb niġbru r-ritratti jew tpingijiet mid-djar tagħkom. Tistgħu ukoll tħallu x-xogħol ta' uliedkom go kaxxa apposta li ser ikun hemm fil-Kunsill Lokali. Tinsewx timlew u tatuna l-kunsens meta niġu niġbru t-tpingijiet jew ritratti, jew poġġuha ukoll fil-kaxxa.

Għal aktar informazzjoni fuq dan il-proġett tistgħu tibagħtu email lil pfws.opr@gov.mt jew iċċemplu fuq 79249394.

Jekk intom interessati li tkomplu tieħdu sehem f'dan il-proġett, nistgħu nispegawlkom aktar fuq l-attivitajiet l-oħra meta niġu niġbru t-tpingijiet jew ritratti tagħkom mid-dar tagħkom.

FIL-BERAĦ

“Children’s Opinions”



Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Do you have children aged between 8 and 16 living in your household? If **Yes** this project may interest them!

Who are we? We are a group of adults working on a project ‘Fil-Beraĥ’ within the President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society. This project focuses on children’s use of public outdoor spaces. The aim of this project is to give children a voice and be able to express themselves regarding their use of public open spaces of their locality.

How can your child participate? Within the coming two weeks we would like to ask those children who are interested in participating to;

- a) Draw or take photos of their **most favourite** public open space in the neighbourhood;
- b) Draw or take photos of their **least favourite** public open space in the neighbourhood;
- c) Give** reasons for their choices;
- d) State **what changes** can be done to these spaces.

They can do this on the attached paper when and where they like. Your children can decide to stop at any stage.

What role do you have? We are interested in learning and hearing about **children’s** views, therefore we would appreciate if you encourage your sons/daughters to participate, and also giving your permission for them to do so. Since your children are underage they need your signed permission to take part. Please allow your son/daughter to complete their own drawings or take photos on their own. This is not a competition. Kindly do not write your name or your children’s names on the drawings so that what the children express will remain anonymous.

What will happen with your child’s/children’s work? We will make the necessary arrangements to collect the children’s work directly from your homes in the coming days. If you are not at home when we come to collect the drawings kindly leave the drawings or photos together with the consent form at the Local Council. You or your child’s/children’s identity will not be requested or disclosed. The children’s work will be used for research purposes which could include an exhibition and public discussion/presentation.

If you wish to participate further in this project we will give you more details when we collect your child’s drawings or photos.

For further information about this project you can send an email to pfws.opr@gov.mt or call on 79249394.

FIL-BERAĦ

“L-Ideat tat-Tfal u ż-Żgħażaġh”



Għażiż/a tifla/tifel/ żagħżuġha/żagħżuġh,

Inti għandek bejn it-tmienja u sittax-il sena? Jekk *Iva* dan il-proġett jista' jinteressak

Min aħna? F'isem il-Fondazzjoni tal-President għall-Ġid tas-Socjeta', aħna riċerkaturi li qed immexxu l-proġett 'Fil-Beraħ'. L-għan ta' dan il-proġett huwa li nisimgħu u nsiru nafu l-ħsibijiet tagħkom dwar l-użu tal-postijiet pubbliċi fil-lokalita' fejn tgħixu.

Kif tista' tieħdu sehem? Aħna nixtiequ niskopru mingħandek u tfal oħra (billi tpingu jew tieħdu ritratti);

- a) Liema huma l-postijiet pubbliċi fil-beraħ li **jogħġbuk** u li tgħaddi l-ħin fihom,
- b) Liema huma l-postijiet pubbliċi fil-beraħ li **ma jogħġbukx**;
- c) **Ir-raġuni** għal din l-għażla;
- d) **X'tibdili** tixtiequ li jsiru fil-postijiet pubbliċi.

L-esperjenzi u l-opinjoni tagħkom huma importanti għax l-użu tal-postijiet pubbliċi fil-beraħ hu dritt tagħkom.

Kun af li : m'għandekx għalfejn tikteb ismek għax kull ma' tpingi u tgħid ħa jibqa' anonimu. Din mhix kompetizzjoni u tista' tieqaf meta trid. Dawn it-tpingijiet jew ritratti jistgħu jintwerew f'prezentazzjonijiet jew xogħlijiet relatati ma' dan il-proġett.

Iżjed tard : Jekk trid tkompli tieħu sehem f'dan il-proġett nispjegawlek iktar meta niltaqgħu miegħek. Aħna se niġbru t-tpingijiet tiegħek u ta' tfal oħra mid-djar tagħkom. Jekk ma tinzertawx id-dar tistgħu timpustaw din il-karta u l-kunsens tal-genituri tagħkom il-Kunsill Lokali. Jekk tixtiequ tkompli tieħdu sehem imma ma kontux id-dar meta ġejna niġbru l-karti tistgħu jew tħallu d-dettalji tagħkom il-Kunsill Lokali jew tibagħtu email lil pfws.opr@gov.mt jew iċċemplu fuq 79249394.

FIL-BERAĦ

“Children’s and Youths’ Opinions”



Dear child/ youth,

Are you a child or youth aged between 8 and 16? If **Yes** this project may interest you!

Who are we? We are a group of people working on a project ‘Fil-Beraĥ’ within the ‘President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society’. This project focuses on children’s use of public open spaces. The aim of this project is to give you a voice and be able to express yourselves regarding your use of public open spaces of your locality.

How can you participate? Within the coming two weeks you can;

- a) Draw or take photos of your most favourite public open space in the neighbourhood;
- b) Draw or take photos of your least favourite public open space in the neighbourhood;
- c) Give reasons for your choices;
- d) State what changes can be done to these spaces.

You can do this when and where you like. You can decide to stop at any stage. Your opinions and experiences are very important for this project as it is your right to make good and enjoyable use of the public open spaces in your neighbourhood.

Kindly note that you do not need to write your name on the drawings or photos so that whatever you write and draw will remain anonymous. This is not a competition and you can stop at any time. We can make use of these drawings and photos for conferences and for the purpose of this research project.

If you wish to **participate further** in this project we will give you more details when we collect your drawings or photos and the consent forms from your home. If you are not at home kindly leave them at the Local Council and if you would like to participate further you can leave your details at the Local council or send an email to pfws.opr@gov.mt or call on 79249394.

Piŋgi jew ħu rittratt tal-izjed post pubbliku favorit fil-lokalita' tiegħek. *Draw or take a photo of your favourite place in your locality.*

Fejn hu? *Where is this?* _____

Kemm għandek żmien? *How old are you?* _____

Għaliex għażiltu? *Why did you choose it?*

Piŋi jew hu rittratt tal-inqas post pubbliku favorit fil-lokalita' tiegħek *Draw or take a photo of your least favourite place in your locality.*

Fejn hu? *Where is this?* _____

Kemm għandek żmien? *How old are you?* _____

Għaliex għażiltu? *Why did you choose it?*

X'tixtieq li jitjieb fil-lokalita' tiegħek li minnu tista' tgawdi int u sħabek? *What can be improved in your neighbourhood from which you and other children can benefit?*

FIL-BERAĦ

L-Ideat tat-Tfal u ż-Żgħażaġh



Formola ta' kunsens

Għeżież ġenituri/ kustodji

Qrajt u fhimt ix-xogħol marbut ma' dan il-proġett?	Iva	Le
Tkellimt mat-tifel/tifla dwar ix-xogħol marbut ma' dan il-proġett?	Iva	Le
Taqbel li t-tifla/tifel tiegħek t/jieħu sehem	Iva	Le

Jiena _____ (ġenitur/kustodju) m'għandix oġġezzjoni li t-tifel/tifla tiegħi j/tieħu sehem f'dan il-proġett 'Fil-Beraħ'

Data

Firma

Consent form

Dear Parent/s/Guardian/s

Did you understand what this project is about?	Yes	No
Did you explain everything related to this project to your child?	Yes	No
Do you agree that your daughter/ son participates?	Yes	No

I _____ (parent/ guardian) have no objection that my child participates in the project 'Fil-Beraħ'.

Date

Signature

FIL-BERAĦ

L-Ideat tat-Tfal u ż-Żgħażaġh



Formola ta' kunsens

Għażiż/a tifla/tifel/ żaġżuġha/żaġżuġh,

Fhimt fuq xiex inhu dan il-proġett	Iva	Le
Fhimt kif tista tieġu sehem?	Iva	Le
Tixtieq tieġu sehem?	Iva	Le
Il-genituri/kustodji tiegħek tawwq permess tieġu sehem?	Iva	Le

Dear Child/ youth

Did you understand what this project is about ?	Yes	No
Did you understand how you can participate?	Yes	No
Would you like to participate?	Yes	No
Did your parents/guardians give you permission to take part?	Yes	No

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT FORM 2

FIL-BERAĦ

“Kumitat tat-Tfal”

Għezież Ġenituri/Kustodji,

Tixtiequ li t-tfal tagħkom ikomplu jiehdu sehem f’dan il-proġett? Jekk *Iva* hawn taht tista’ ssib iktar informazzjoni.

Kif jistgħu jkomplu jiehdu sehem? It-tfal u l-żgħażaġħ interessati (Kumitat tat-tfal) se jiltaqgħu magħna r-riċerkaturi sabiex infehemuhom kif jistgħu jinnotaw u janalizzaw l-ispazji pubbliċi tal-lokalità tagħkom.

Waqt l-ewwel laqgħa aħna se nipproponulhom attivitajiet bħal;

- **Djarju** ta’ fejn imorru kuljum (jistgħu jiehdu ritratti).
- **Jimmarkaw** il-lokalità tagħkom b’mod sempliċi fuq **mappa** (Il-bini, plajgrawnd, il-kundizzjoni tat-toroq eċċ.).
- Jipparteċipaw fi **grupp ta’ diskussjoni** ma’ tfal oħra u r-riċerkaturi risponsabbli.

It-tfal jistgħu jipproponu eżerċizji oħra li huma possibli li jsiru f’dan il-proġett.

X’jigri waqt il-grupp ta’diskussjoni?

- F’dan il-grupp ser niddiskutu x’osservaw t-tfal u l-żgħażaġħ meta mlew id-djarju u mmarkaw il-mappa.
- Se niddiskutu u nipproponu kif l-ispazji pubbliċi tal-lokalità tagħkom jistgħu jintużaw aħjar.
- Dawn id-diskussjonijiet ser jiġu awdjo-rrekordjati sabiex ma nitilfu l-ebda kumment li t-tfal tagħkom jew tfal oħra jistgħu jgħidu. Pero’ aħna nbiddlu l-ismijiet tagħkom sabiex ħadd ma jkun jaf min qal xiex.
- Fil-bidu tad-diskussjoni ser naqblu flimkien li nirrispettaw l-opinjonijiet u l-privatezza ta’ xulxin.

X’ser jigri wara dawn l-attivitajiet?

Fix-xhur li ġejjin ser ikollna numru ta’ laqgħat mal-Kunsill Lokali u gruppi oħra t’adulti interessati f’dan il-proġett sabiex naraw kif l-ideat li qasnu magħna t-tfal tagħkom jistgħu jitwettqu. Ir-riżultati u l-informazzjoni ser jinkitbu u jintwerew f’okkażjonijiet pubbliċi fejn kulħadd ikun mistieden.

X'ser tagħmlu intom il-kbar?

Jekk taqblu li t-tfal tagħkom jieħdu sehem araw li;

1. Jimlew djarju fuq fejn imorru fil-madwar tal-lokalità. M'għandkomx għalfejn tgħinuhom.
2. Iridu jimmarkaw mappa faċli. Nissuġerulkom li takkompanjaw lit-tfal tagħkom waqt dan l-eżercizju minħabba sigurta'. Jekk tħossu li t-tfal żgħażaġħ tagħkom kapaċi u responsabbli li jagħmlu dan l-eżercizju waħedhom jew ma ħbieb partecipanti oħra, intom responsabbli ta' xi aċċidenti li jistgħu jiġru.
3. Fl-aħħar it-tfal ser jippartecipaw fi grupp ta' diskussjoni fejn ma' tfal oħra u r-ricerkatur ta' dan il-proġett jiddiskutu x'osservaw u jipproponu soluzzjonijiet.

U aħna?

Ser nispjegaw l-eżercizzji kollha lit-tfal. Jekk ikun hemm problema tistgħu tikkuntatjawna fuq it-telefon, b'messaġġi jew fuq social media. Aħna ser nikkuntatjawkom meta nkunu ser niltaqgħu għad-diskussjonijiet. Ser nanalizzaw x'qalulna t-tfal u ser nipublikawh sabiex il-vuci tat-tfal tinstema.

Kif se jibbenefikaw it-tfal tagħkom minn dan il-proġett?

It-tfal ser jibbenefikaw għaliex dan il-proġett ser jagħti importanza lill-vuċi tagħhom u l-adulti ser jitgħallmu minn għandhom. Barra minn hekk meta ser jieħdu sehem ser titgħallmu tosservaw iktar, jitgħallmu l-użu tal-mapep, jitgħallmu kif isir studju u jiżvilluppaw ħiliet varji u kreattivi.

FIL-BERAĦ

“Children’s Committee”



Dear Parents/Guardians

Would you like your children and youths to further take part in this project? If Yes you may find further information here below

What is the next step? We would like to invite your children to take part in a committee. In the committee the children and youths will be able to discuss with others and the researcher, how public places are used by children and what can be done to improve them.

What will the children do?

During our first meeting we will discuss with your children and youths how a number of exercises will help us analyse the public open spaces in your neighbourhood. These may include:

- Daily movement **diary** (your child can take photos of the places that she/he visits);
- **Mapping** exercise (colour code buildings, playgrounds, street conditions etc.);
- Participation in **group discussion** with other children and the researcher (discuss observations and proposals)

Your children can also propose other activities which may be done in this project.

What will happen after?

Over the coming months, we will be holding a number of meetings with the Local Council and interested adults in this project to discuss how your ideas might be put into practice. This information will also be printed and shared with others during public events.

What do you do (parents/guardians)?

If you agree at home your child will;

1. Fill in a diary of the daily movements in the neighbourhood.
2. Easy mapping of the neighbourhood. During the mapping exercise it is suggested that you or another guardian accompanies the child to ensure street safety while annotating the map. It is up to you to give permission to your adolescent child to map the neighbourhood on her/his own or accompanied by participant friends.
3. Your child will participate in a group discussion with other children and the researcher about their observations and solutions.

And we?

We will explain clearly all the exercises given. We will be available by phone, messages or social media if there are any queries. We will organise the group meetings. We will facilitate the process of analysing the children's comments and suggestions. We will give a voice to all children's comments and solutions of their use of public open spaces.

How would your child benefit from this project?

Your child may benefit from taking part because your child's opinions will help adults to learn how to listen carefully to children's suggestions before planning public open spaces. Moreover, when participating and collecting results for this project your children will learn observational, geographical, research and creative skills.

FIL-BERAĦ

“Kumitat tat-tfal u ż-żgħażaġh”



Għażiż/a tifla/tifel/żagħżuġha/żagħżuġh,

Tixtieq tkompli tiehdu sehem f'dan il-proġett? Jekk *Iva* hawn taħt tista ssib iktar informazzjoni

Kif tista' tkompli tiehdu sehem? Jekk inti interessat/a li tingħaqad ma' tfal u żgħażaġh oħra se tiffirma parti minn Kumitat tat-tfal u żgħażaġh. Se tiltaqgħu flimkien miegħi r-riċerkaturi u tfal oħra sabiex niddiskutu kif nistgħu nanalizzaw l-ispazji pubbliċi tal-lokalità tagħkom.

Waqt l-ewwel laqgħa se niddiskutu attivitajiet li bihom nimmarkaw u niktbu noti fuq l-ispazji pubbliċi tal-lokalità tagħkom.

- **Djarju** ta' fejn tmur kuljum. (tista tiehdu ritratti)
- **Timmarkaw** il-lokalità tagħkom b'mod sempliċi fuq **mappa** (Il-bini, plajgrawnd, il-kundizzjoni tat-toroq eċċ.).
- Tipparteċipa fi **grupp ta' diskussjoni** ma' tfal oħra u r-riċerkaturi responsabbli.

Tista' ttipponi attivitajiet oħra apparti dawn t'hawn.

X'jigri waqt il-grupp ta'diskussjoni?

- F'dan il-grupp ser niddiskutu x'osservajt int u oħrajn meta mlejtu d-djarju u mmarkajtu l-mappa.
- Se niddiskutu u nipponu kif l-ispazji pubbliċi tal-lokalità tagħkom jistgħu jintużaw aħjar.
- Dawn id-diskussjonijiet ser jiġu awdjo-rrekordjati sabiex ma nitilfu l-ebda kumment li intom jew tfal oħra tistgħu tgħidu. Pero' aħna nbiddu l-ismijiet tagħkom sabiex ħadd ma jkun jaf min qal xiex.
- Fil-bidu tad-diskussjoni ser naqblu flimkien li nirrispettaw l-opinjonijiet u l-privatezza ta' xulxin.

X'ser jigri wara dawn l-attivitajiet?

Fix-xhur li ġejjin se jkollna numru ta' laqgħat mal-Kunsill Lokali u gruppi oħra t'adulti interessati f'dan il-proġett sabiex naraw kif l-ideat li qsamtu miegħi r-riċerkatur jistgħu jitwettqu. Ir-rizultati u l-informazzjoni ser jinkitbu u jintwerew f'okkażjonijiet pubbliċi fejn kulħadd ikun mistieden.

Biex tagħmlu dan tridu l-permess tal-ġenitur/kustodji tagħkom?

- Araw li l-ġenituri tagħkom itukhom permess tippartecipaw
- Tistgħu tagħmlu l-eżercizzi waħedkom kif tafu, pero itolbu l-akkumpanjament tal-ġenituri tagħkom jew t'adulti responsabbli waqt li timmarkaw il-mappa fit-triq sabiex ma jigħrilkom xejn. Jekk intom kbar biżżejjed li tagħmlu l-eżercizzju tal-mappa waħedkom xorta itolbu l-permess tal-ġenituri/kustodji tagħkom.

U aħna?

Ser nispijegawkom l-eżercizzji kollha. Jekk ikun hemm problema tistgħu tikkuntatjawna fuq it-telefon, b'messagġi jew fuq social media (Facebook page 'Fil-Beraħ'). Aħna ser nikkuntatjawkom meta nkunu ser niltaqgħu għad-diskussjonijiet. Ser nanalizzaw x'għidtulna u ser nippublikawhom sabiex il-vuci tagħkom tinstema.

Kif se tibbenefikaw minn dan il-proġett?

Intom ser tibbenefikaw għaliex dan il-proġett ser jagħti importanza lill-vuci tagħkom u l-adulti ser jitgħallmu minn għandkom. Barra minn hekk meta ser tiegħdu sehem ser titgħallmu tosservaw iktar, titgħallmu l-użu tal-mapep, titgħallmu kif isir studju u tiżvilluppaw ħiliet varji u kreattivi.

FIL-BERAĦ “Children’s Committee”



Dear Children/ Youths,

Would you like to continue taking part in this project? If **Yes** you may find further information here below

What is the next step? We would like to invite you to take part in a committee. In the committee you will be able to discuss with others and the researcher, how public places are used by children and what can be done to improve them.

What will you do?

During our first meeting we will discuss with you how a number of exercises will help us analyse the public open spaces in your neighbourhood.

The exercises may include:

- Daily movement **diary** (you can take photos of the places that you visit)
- **Mapping** exercise (colour code buildings, playgrounds, street conditions etc.)
- Participation in **group discussion** with other children and the researcher (discuss observations and proposals)

You can also propose other activities which may be done in this project.

What will happen after?

Over the coming months, we will be holding a number of meetings with the Local Council and interested adults in this project to discuss how your ideas might be put into practice. This information will also be printed and shared with others during public events.

In order to take part you need permission from your parents/ guardians?

- Make sure that your parents give you permission to take part
- You can do the exercises on your own, however when you conduct the mapping exercise you will need your parent/ guardian to accompany you for safety purposes. If you feel that you are old enough to do this on your own you still need the permission of your parents/guardians.

And we?

We will explain clearly all the exercises given. We will be available by phone, messages or social media (Facebook page Fil-Beraň) if there may be any queries. We will organise the group meetings. We will facilitate the process of analysing the children's comments and suggestions. We will give a voice to all children's comments and solutions of their use of public open spaces.

How would you benefit from this project?

You may benefit from taking part because your opinions will help adults to learn how to listen carefully to children's suggestions before planning public open spaces. Moreover, when participating and collecting results for this project, your children will learn observational, geographical, research and creative skills.

FIL-BERAĦ

Kumitat tat-tfal u ż-għażaġħ



Formola ta' kunsens

Għeżież ġenituri/ kustodji

Qrajt u fhimt ix-xogħol marbut ma' din il-parti tal-proġett?	Iva	Le
Tkellimt mat-tifel/tifla dwar ix-xogħol marbut ma' din il-parti tal-proġett?	Iva	Le
Taqbel li t-tifla/tifel tiegħek t/jieħu sehem	Iva	Le
Taf li l-grupp ta' diskusjoni ser ikunu awdjo-rrekordjati?	Iva	Le

Jiena _____ (genitur/kustodju) m'għandix oġġezzjoni li t-tifel/tifla tiegħi j/tieħu sehem f'dan il-proġett 'Fil-Beraħ'

Date

Firma

Consent form

Dear Parent/s/Guardian/s

Did you understand what this project is about?	Yes	No
Did you explain everything related to this project to your child?	Yes	No
Do you agree that your daughter/ son participates?	Yes	No
Do you know that the group meetings will be audio recorded?	Yes	No

I _____ (parent/ guardian) have no objection that my child participates in the project 'Fil-Beraħ'.

Date

Signature

FIL-BERAĦ

Kumitat tat-tfal u zghazagh



Formola ta' kunsens:

Għażiż/a tifla/tifel/ zaghzugħa/zaghzugħ,

Fhimt fuq xiex inhu dan il-proġett	Iva	Le
Fhimt kif tista tieħu sehem?	Iva	Le
Tixtieq tieħu sehem?	Iva	Le
Il-genituri/kustodji tiegħek taww permess tieħu sehem?	Iva	Le
Taf li tista' tieqaf meta trid?	Iva	Le
Taf li l-grupp ta' diskusjoni ser ikunu awdjo-rrekordjati?	Iva	Le
Taf li ser inbiddlu isimkom meta fir-rapporti tagħna nikkwotaw dak li għedtulna ħalli ħadd ma jaraf min intom?	Iva	Le

Dear Child/ youth

Did you understand what this project is about ?	Yes	No
Did you understand how you can participate?	Yes	No
Would you like to participate?	Yes	No
Did your parents/guardians give you permission to take part?	Yes	No
Do you know that you can stop taking part at any time?	Yes	No
Do you know that the group meetings will be audio recorded?	Yes	No
Do you know that we will be changing your name in our writing so that when people read it no one will know that you took part in the project?	Yes	No

