Public open space placemaking suitable for adolescents

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Abstract. Children and adolescents have always been an important part of the future of society and the country. Often, the urban environment is subordinated and adapted to families with children, with playgrounds and infrastructure. However, the desire of adolescents to be out in society, in public spaces and to participate in social interaction is not sufficiently supported. Public space is a 'stage' for adolescents to test themselves, their limits and learn social skills, as well as to explore the norms of society and community. The aim of this article is to provide an insight into the principles of designing environments that are suitable for adolescents, with recommendations for the design process of such public outdoor spaces. Analysing publicly available information on the needs of adolescents and the suitability of outdoor spaces for their outdoor activities, it emerges that often the adaptation of urban environments for children or adults contributes to the isolation of adolescents from society, which in turn results in gatherings in unsuitable areas, vandalism and substance abuse. Introducing with suitable case studies in the design of outdoor spaces for adolescent children, we conclude that in order to mitigate the above risks, it is necessary to understand the developmental processes, emotional and psychological characteristics of adolescents, as well as to raise awareness of the basic principles of democratic upbringing in society, and to develop guidelines for the involvement of adolescents in urban planning, which would help municipalities to involve this specific target group in urban planning, ensuring that adequate public spaces are created for adolescents.

Keywords: Public open space, placemaking, adolescents, teen girls

Introduction

We used to see the good examples of development of the inspirable places made for the children usually at age 3 to 8 or 9 but there is no much good examples or cases where we can see infrastructure made specially for kids starting from 10 or 11. Although they have their own needs for outdoor places to spend time together meaningfully in such places.

In the context of public open space, these areas can be divided into public or private open space. Public open space includes playgrounds, parks, roads, etc., while private open space includes the public open space of private properties with associated infrastructure [1; 2].

Public space is one of the key factors shaping the urban environment and urban development. It is vital for every user of the urban environment to organise the provision of necessary functions. Globally, open, publicly accessible spaces play a key role in conserving natural resources, reducing rising air pollution and creating green corridors [1; 3; 4].

Public space has different meanings for different social groups, places and time periods, and its meaning is linked to the contrast between public and private space. These areas are characterised by different perspectives and functions. Today, a large part of the areas that make up the urban environment are privatised, e.g. owned by the state, organisations, private individuals or financial institutions. However, these areas can also be used as public outdoor spaces without ownership, for example for relaxing or studying in a café, or for squares as meeting places [1; 5]. Particular attention should also be paid to the development and quality use of heritage sites today, which may also have different ownerships, through a variety of measures to attract people, while at the same time promoting them [6].

Each country sets its own definition of what constitutes urban public open space, but the key features for recognising public open space are the same: it is an area within an urbanised environment that is freely accessible to anyone living in or visiting the city [1; 7].

Public spaces and meeting places suitable for teenagers are those that create the illusion of dangerous challenges. In cities where there are inadequate barriers and play facilities, teenagers gather in playgrounds, but use them in demolishing and dangerous ways, such as climbing on the roofs of play installations and structures that degrade public spaces suitable for children and evoke negative and judgmental emotions among adults. Teenagers are stigmatised and excluded from the overall infrastructure of public space, which is why it is important to create areas where teenagers can feel that they are the main consumers [8].

Methods

Literature review and case study analysis have classified four fields of study: (1) Public open space planning and management, (2) Place making concepts, (3) Adolescents mental and physical health, (4) Teen girls' activities in public space. The analysis of the papers reviewed was categorized into two types: (1) Adolescents behaviour and needs patterns in public space and (2) diversity of public outdoor spaces. A wide range of proceeding papers,

journals articles, theses, reports, book chapters from electronic databases (including Science Direct, SCOPUS and Web of Science) was covered in the review. More than 50 papers about adolescents needs and planning issues of public space were analysed and accepted into the final stage of the review.

Results

Although outdoor public space is accessible to everyone, each social group tends to visit a particular type of outdoor space (see Figure 1):

This division is based on the interests of the community or individual, their financial situation and the characteristics of the outdoor space. Public open space is suitable for everyone, but it is necessary to respect the interests of each social group and to provide suitable recreational spaces for them. This is a factor that is directly linked to the place-making approach, which encourages the development of a range of activities in public gathering places, providing opportunities for people of all ages and social groups to enjoy a fulfilling pastime [9]. Overall, this approach contributes to the success of each place and city, as people socialise better in such places and develop a sense of belonging. The variety of activities offered by the place is highly appreciated by all age groups. In addition, the adolescent age group mainly visits the public outdoor space, where they are encouraged to engage in various activities and feel belonging and unattended [1].

Human behaviour in spatial environments is a process that most people engage in unconsciously and take for granted. The aspects that generally influence human interaction, behaviour, opportunities and constraints in nature are the reflection of physical elements in habits. The interrelationship between the physical environment and human habits is one of the focuses of architecture and urban design [5].

Public realm management is often characterised as activities that both maintain and develop the public realm over time, focusing on the usefulness of the area for its users. Social management is essential to ensure the circulation and attraction of users to an area. The different perspectives, age groups and interests of users should be taken into account [10].

To be suitable for different users and perspectives, and to be inclusive for different age groups, public spaces need to offer a range of features designed with a user-centred management approach [10].

Users of public open space have the right to [11]:
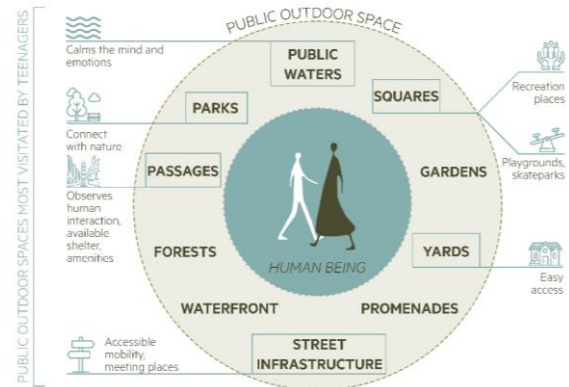- move freely;
- rest undisturbed;

Fig. 1. The most visited types of public outdoor space by teenagers [created by authors]

- use public outdoor space without control (as long as it complies with the conditions of use of public outdoor space);
- take photographs;
- to trade (subject to obtaining the appropriate licence);
- peaceful protests and demonstrations;
- improvising, making art or street music.

Users of public open space are obliged to [11]:
- respect the rights of other users;
- respect the private property of the public open space and other users;
- behave in a civilised manner;
- not engage in vandalism.

The manager and maintainer of the public open space is obliged to [11]:
- respect and protect users' rights and privacy;
- treat all users of the outdoor space equally;
- maintain the outdoor space and ensure safety;
- ensure free and unrestricted access.

All these rights and obligations are essential factors in shaping the urban environment, ensuring public order and creating a respectful environment for civilised coexistence.

Meeting places are created in urban areas with optimal outdoor conditions to meet all the above criteria. The duration of conversations and socialising is influenced not only by the surrounding environment, ease of accessibility, but also by mobility options, the strategic location of the outdoor space in the public outdoor network, and the form of the spatial dimension [12].

The furnishing of an outdoor space and its harmony with the landscape have a significant impact on the willingness of people to stay and socialise there. It is important that the furnishings facilitate eye contact between interlocutors, while respecting the boundaries of private space [9]. Successful urban conversation environments are created by mobile furniture and mobile infrastructure solutions that allow meeting places to be designed and organised as needed [12; 13].

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the outdoor public space

The modern concept of public open space originated in the 19th century, when city dwellers walked the streets. Those who strolled the wide streets were interested in shop windows, and it was the emerging consumer culture that encouraged the development of public space. During this period, vendors became aware of the competition and came outside buildings to see and be seen by potential buyers. These two key aspects, consumer culture and socialisation, have been affected by the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Covid-19 challenges aspects that shaped the early development of public outdoor space [14].

Existing methods for studying public space count the number of people who visit public spaces such as streets, parks and squares in order to understand and assess patterns and habits of use of public space. Often the active and regular presence of people in public spaces is interpreted as an indicator that public spaces are functional and "alive". The pandemic has brought about a change in habits among public space users and in the use of public space, suggesting that the data collected so far on public space may not be relevant to the current situation and use of functions [14].

During a pandemic, changes in the gathering patterns of users can be observed, not only in parks and squares, but also on the streets and on transit routes. However, it is currently not possible to answer the questions of whether the patterns of use of public outdoor spaces during a pandemic will be sustainable, and whether public outdoor spaces need a transformation process [14]. There is a growing urban focus on the creation of high quality green spaces to encourage people to stay outdoors, and new solutions are being sought to make outdoor spaces more crowd-friendly, especially in urban forest areas. An important lesson, not only in the post-pandemic period, is to diversify the functions of outdoor spaces by planning activities that may be seasonal or have a different type of regularity [15].

Data available in the public media space show that during the pandemic, public outdoor spaces continued to be actively used by less economically stable groups with a lower standard of living and quality of life, while workers with higher incomes continued to work from home and used public outdoor spaces much less frequently [14]. New urban districts are dominated by mixed-use areas, which give people the opportunity to live, work and play without having to spend time moving around these different places. It is particularly important to provide a variety of activities for all ages and social groups, while at the same time considering accessibility and connectivity to the surrounding areas [9].

The consolidation of the teleworking model in society will have a significant impact on the consumption behaviour of public outdoor spaces, but children and adolescents will be influenced by the example they learn from their parents. Public space will face the challenge of bringing together the different layers of society to counter the pandemic of the better-off in the park and the less well-off in the streets and sub-public spaces [14; 16].

The trend of declining use of public outdoor space may contribute to the overall decline in public health initiatives. Subjective well-being of children and adolescents, which is strongly associated with exposure to public outdoor spaces, has declined sharply during the pandemic. Research shows that adolescents who were active and social before the pandemic had an easier time in the early stages of the pandemic, both emotionally and in terms of reduced physical activity. Adolescents report that spending time outdoors and in nature has reduced the stress and emotional strain caused by the rapid changes in Covid-19 [14; 16].

Children and adolescents cannot play and develop in isolation, but need a physical, socially active and cultural environment. Children and adolescents have the right to play and rest, which has been stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child for more than 30 years [17]. Children and adolescents' use of public outdoor spaces is directly affected by the opportunity to be with their peers, which was drastically changed by the pandemic [18].

However, the impact of the pandemic has contributed to the transformation and adaptation of indoor activities to public outdoor use. More and more people who did not telecommute started to use bicycles instead of public transport, raising questions about the quality and suitability of cycling infrastructure and public street space, not only for children and adolescents, but for all user groups in the urban environment [19].

Publicly, there is a trend for teenagers and young people to use parks and gardens more than other age groups, while adults use motorised transport to get to more remote locations and to take advantage of recreational and passive leisure opportunities. These trends highlight the characteristics of public outdoor space and make it necessary to assess whether public outdoor space, which has been used by all social groups, is suited to new trends in terms of its suitability for children, adolescents and young people. Teenagers say that they are more active in using public outdoor spaces during this period and want to discover new meeting places, interests and opportunities for diversification [19].

Adolescents, although a minor age group, have rights that are in line with those of the general

Fig. 2. Transformation of interests in the "child - adolescent" transition
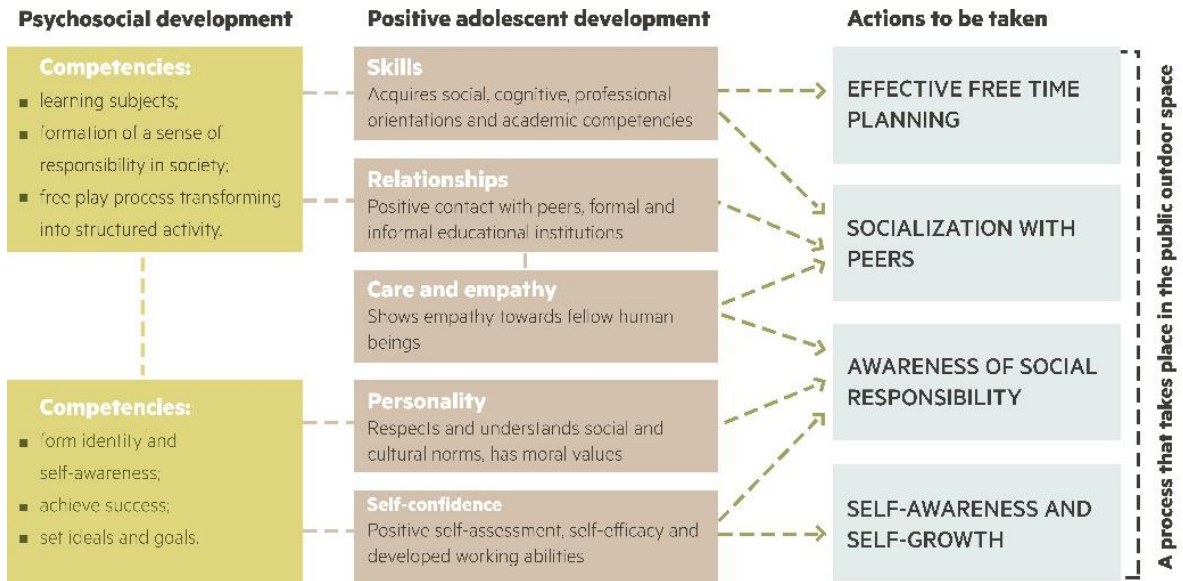

Fig. 3. Development challenges in adolescence [created by authors]

population. Although they are defined and regulated differently in different countries, the premise that young people under the age of majority should be given the same opportunities as senior citizens is defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention establishes civil, social, cultural and other rights for persons under 18. State and local authorities have a duty to act in the best interests of young people. While the Convention clearly defines the responsibility to provide for fundamental basic needs, such as shelter and safety, the responsibility and need for affordable access to public spaces is not clearly defined. Accessible public space is an important component for this social group and therefore local authorities have a duty to act in the interests of young people and to meet the objectives of the UN Convention [17; 20].

The World Health Organisation recommends that adolescents do at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity. This level of physical activity improves adolescents' health, but there is a tendency for more than half of existing adolescents not to follow these guidelines. There is a sharp decline in physical activity levels at a given age. Inadequate levels of physical activity are considered to be one of the leading risk factors for global mortality, affecting public health [8; 21].

The environment in which people live is a place for many different kinds of activities, generally facilitating or hindering participation in different societal processes. The urban environment reflects the needs of the community, such as places for commercial activities, recreational facilities and cycle lanes, but in addition to the needs of the community it is necessary to incorporate specific requirements that are less often reflected in today's urban environment [20]. These needs are linked to the social and psychological aspects that contribute to the development of individual social groups. Adolescents have specific developmental stages and skills to acquire. Playgrounds are provided for the development of children's physical and social skills, but it is important to understand that the developmental stages of adolescents are no less important than those of pre-school children.

The process of transformation of values and activities has led to the conclusion that the development of a quality urban environment requires not only a set of community-specific and necessary infrastructure elements, but also public

outdoor spaces that are suitable for different social groups and age groups. As children develop into adolescents, the desire for challenge and play is not lost. This is transformed into other activities than playground installations. In some cases, the transformed needs are not supported and are questioned or condemned, and defined as vandalism, protest, or seen as the result of bad parenting (see Figure 2) [20].

Teenagers' interests regularly change and transform according to the times, technologies and environments in which the development process takes place, so it is impossible to define clear-cut activities that are needed in an urban environment (see Figure 3).

On the other hand, there are observations of a constant 21st century influence contributing to significant changes in the way a given age group engages with society:

Adolescents have a conscious willingness to take risks without considering responsibility and consequences;

The use of electronic devices significantly influences and transforms children's perceptions.

In the light of the above, it is important to combine this with an understanding of the developmental and learning processes that adolescents experience in order to assess their interaction with their environment. The challenges and tasks associated with the social and psychological development of young people, while providing the appropriate environment for this in publicly accessible infrastructure, also contribute to physical development [20].

From a developmental perspective, the environment plays a key role in adolescents' development and social identity. At this stage, public space functions as a transitional environment, moving adolescents away from playgrounds and closer to the freedom of independent choices and decisions. This tendency is important for the development of personal, social and civic identity. Teens use public outdoor space as a stage to test ideas and to gain knowledge about the community and accepted norms [22].

In their teens, children start to acquire independent spatial mobility, which is an integral part of urban infrastructure. Teenagers regularly move between public outdoor spaces and use shop car parks, stations, environmental sites and parks as meeting points [22].

Adequate physical activity during the day is an important issue especially for the children and adolescents to reach optimal growth and development. Regular physical activity either moderate or vigorous is usually associated with several benefits for health, including reduced risk of obesity, depression, heart disease, stroke, or cancer [23].

Outdoor activities promote academic achievement, as well as improved cognitive performance and higher self-esteem during adolescence. Interaction with outdoor spaces, particularly natural and naturalised landscapes, is associated with positive outcomes in physical, mental, social, emotional and cognitive indicators of health and well-being. Areas with naturally created barriers, such as dynamic playscapes, encourage children and adolescents to engage in active, exciting and risky play. Such activities allow adolescents to independently test their abilities and limits, thus contributing to the development of social resilience [23].

Teenagers are one of the social groups for whom spending time outdoors results in the acquisition of different skills and competences. Studies show that teenagers feel excluded from society because they are considered too old to relax in playgrounds, while they cannot afford to relax in supermarkets or cafés [24].

The public outdoor space needed by teenagers can be divided into three parts:
▪ natural or naturalised urban environment;
▪ public open space for active recreation;
▪ an environment for interaction [24].

Research shows that young people use natural or naturalised landscapes to experience positive emotions and a sense of peace. This type of public outdoor space has several levels of interaction, starting with indirect engagement, such as looking at trees through a window, continuing with unconscious engagement - creating routes that incorporate elements of the landscape environment, and finally with purposeful engagement through visits to this type of public outdoor space.

Physical activity tends to decline during adolescence, but it is still an important, developmental activity. Skate parks, football and basketball pitches and cycle paths are often included in the design of landscapes suitable for children and adolescents. These places are suitable for developing physical fitness, but are mostly used by boys and adolescent boys. Adolescent girls, on the other hand, are not emotionally inclined to compete with each other, so it is important to include elements in public spaces that engage adolescent girls and allow boys to promote emotional and psychological health development [24; 25; 26].

Preferable public outdoor space for teenage girls contain such landscape elements which provide opportunities for creative activities, areas for roller-skating, where there is no fear of mobbing and no fear of making mistakes, or as squares, plazas or installations in which to sit and create dialogues. Installations and landscaping elements with different lights and colours, which are not static but create movement by imitating play elements, such as lounge chairs, hammocks and swings, are recognised as engaging elements [25; 27].
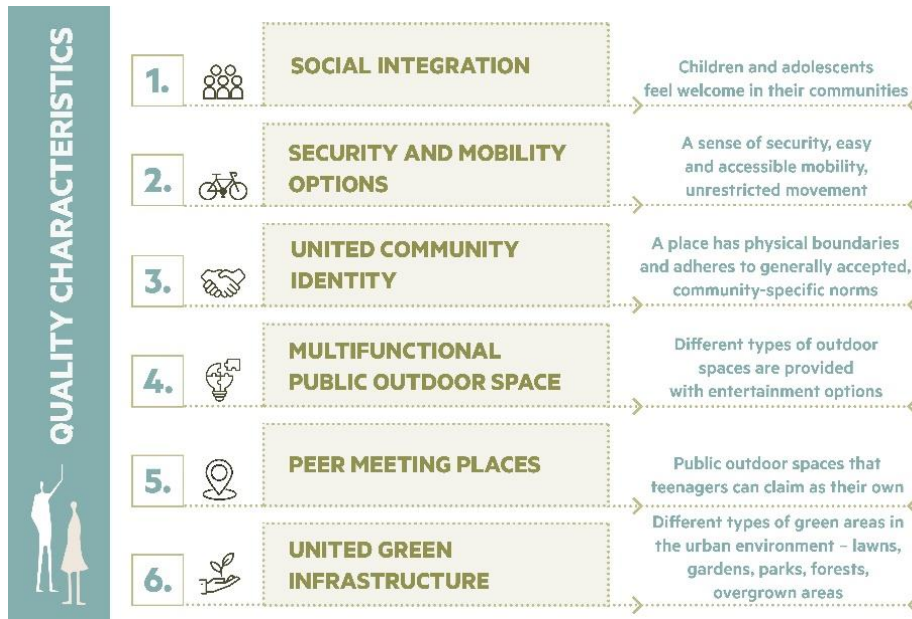
Fig. 4. Features of a public outdoor space suitable for teenagers [created by authors]

The desire of teenagers to develop different kinds of relationships and interactions with other people should be considered in the design of new public spaces. Teenagers are keen to stay in places that are well frequented, but the recreational spaces they create give a sense of semi-public outdoor space, as well as in places that are not closely supervised by parents. The qualitative characteristics of children and adolescents in public outdoor spaces are similar but not identical (see Figure 4) [28].

Integrating new and existing recreation areas into the city's overall infrastructure is important not only for the overall development of the urban environment, but also for mobility. For teenagers to enjoy spending time outdoors, there needs to be adequate mobility infrastructure as well as amenities that allow outdoor leisure time regardless of the weather [28].

The design of meeting places should be flexible, so that both individual visitors and groups of friends feel equally comfortable. Appropriate outdoor space design provides a scale and personal space that is appropriate for groups of users of public outdoor space. Outdoor spaces suitable for teenagers require the use of mobile and multifunctional solutions, so that the design elements are inviting and provide as many activities as possible. Landscaped spaces for teenagers should be easy to reach and accessible. Children and adolescents at this stage of development are resistant to monotonous environments that lead to feelings of boredom. This age group is characterised by the immediate realisation of ideas, so adolescents move from one landscape space to another rapidly, which emphasises the need for public outdoor space. The nature of rapid and impulsive actions raises mobility problems in the urban environment [22].

Teenagers sit on benches differently from adults. Teenagers tend to choose sitting positions with their legs bent and curled up on the bench rather than on the ground, with the back-support part of the bench as a seating surface, and with their legs crossed or bent. This type of seating is due to its protective function and informal socialising habits, and the creation of an open, free atmosphere, and therefore the design, mobility and placement of benches in such areas needs to be given more attention. Appropriate design provides for casual encounters and easy and relaxed departures, which is why adolescents prefer to be in and congregate in public outdoor spaces adjacent to streets. In these outdoor spaces, joining or separating from the group is organic and perceived as a normal socialising process [22].

When designing outdoor spaces suitable for teenagers, it is important to create "support points". These can be benches, tables, environmental objects, corners or poles. Objects that can be held on to create a more comfortable environment and a sense of safety. Teenagers, on their own initiative, will choose public outdoor spaces with more corners and the above-mentioned 'support points', as well as areas with distinct geographical boundaries. Relatively small and enclosed outdoor spaces create a sense of private and intimate space, allowing emotional release.

Overall, looking at the different generations and their needs, it can be concluded that the core values are the same for each generation, but that the needs and wants of age groups change according to the times and trends. It is important to understand the needs of younger generations in the design process, basing design choices on the needs of future users of the area. The tendency of younger generations to spend more leisure time indoors than outdoors is

due to the impact of digitalisation on lifestyles and the passivity of movement. It is therefore essential to integrate the digital aspect into the design and landscaping of areas [29].

Greenery is also important in areas suitable for teenagers. For example, areas of ornamental greenery and shrubbery separating play, gathering and open areas are recognised by children and adolescents as fun and exciting elements. Such areas provide interaction with nature and are inviting for activities such as hiding or creeping. It is important to create backdrops and separation of spaces where the area of public outdoor space is relatively large. Children and adolescents tend to hide and feel hidden. Such an environment distracts them and psychologically protects them from the people and dangers around them [10].

Children and adolescents are exposed to nature in a meaningful way, and observing and interacting with natural processes stimulates curiosity and excitement. Teenagers observe not only the people around them, but also animals, birds and fish if the gathering place is near water. Nature observation is an important process for psychological development and needs to be integrated into spatial planning [10].

It is important for teenagers to have a dedicated space in the public outdoor network that allows them to experience personal freedom. In cases where teenagers are unable to experience freedom in the public outdoor space network, abandoned or under construction houses, parking lots or natural areas become favourite places [28].

An alternative approach in cases where it is not possible to create separate public outdoor spaces for teenagers is to integrate public outdoor design features and Youth Policy into the city's network of public outdoor spaces. This urban solution is also suitable and appropriate for teenagers [22; 28]. Most of the teenage habits do not require special equipment, as engaging activities can be done almost anywhere, but the above-mentioned features of public outdoor space are preferred.

Recommendations

Guidelines for improving urban public spaces (planning principles to guide site selection, research and preparation, as well as the involvement of stakeholders, including adolescents, in the provision of public outdoor space networks and the implementation of projects):

For site investigation and conceptual justification:

- Conduct a study of territorial planning and regulatory documents, as well as identify territories that both the municipality and investors would be interested in developing.
- When choosing to develop public outdoor space solutions suitable for children and teenagers in the

city, it is necessary to carry out a general survey and inventory of public outdoor space in the selected micro-district or in the city as a whole.

- It is necessary to look at the overall network of public outdoor spaces of a city or neighbourhood and the functions it provides, thus identifying the missing skills and connections.
- It is necessary to evaluate the functionality of the planned public outdoor space and its necessity in the city's public outdoor space network.
- Realizing the potential of the territories and the possible network of users, conduct a survey and inventory of the territory.
- It is necessary to draw conclusions about the identity of the territory, the existing amenities and its suitability for teenagers.
- To present the planned target audience with the conceptual idea of the territory.

For involvement of children and adolescents in the planning process:

- Conduct target audience research in the context of the territory or neighbourhood district.
- Carry out a survey of children and teenagers, identifying primary school education and vocational education institutions, as well as the most actively visited recreational places.
- Draw conclusions about the most visited places by children and teenagers and the main factors that make them attractive and engaging for teenagers.
- Identify the wishes and vision of teenagers, about the conceptual and design elements of public outdoor spaces suitable for them.
- It is necessary to carry out the indirect involvement of the target audience in the planning process - behaviour mapping. The application of the method discussed in the paper provides objective data on the habits of children and teenagers, the circle of consumers of activities and playground equipment.
- To create an opinion about the most used grooming elements of teenage girls and teenage boys.
- Create creative workshops, thus encouraging teenagers to participate and strengthening the principles of democratic upbringing and development.
- Create creative workshops in several rounds, providing the opportunity to socialize and cooperate with peers, with the involvement and support of professionals. Organize workshops in an environment where children and teenagers feel safe, free and open, for example in schools, parks, playgrounds and youth homes, in order to reach the widest possible target audience.
- Ensure the inclusion of the most appropriate ideas and solutions in the new territorial planning or project, which will strengthen confidence in the goals and necessity of public participation.
- Ensure a visible and accentuated realization of the idea or its part, thereby creating a sense of

satisfaction and pride in the teenagers for the joint work done. Emotional targeting will ensure active use of public outdoor space.

- It is necessary to supplement the youth policy strategy with instructions and recommendations for the successful involvement of teenagers in the planning process of territories intended for them.
- Supplement the youth policy strategy with the involvement of interest groups in workshops and seminars, where professionals can find out and listen to the opinion of teenagers on the planned projects.
- Territorial plans, for which the creation of public outdoor space is intended as one of the primary types of construction, should be supplemented with instructions on the minimum improvement of outdoor space. Thus, ensuring the inclusion of a well-organized, semi-public outdoor space in the overall city network.
- Develop detailed plans for territories where construction is potentially possible, but the territory functions as one of the points providing regular networks.
- Provide for the construction of squares at street intersections and unused squares, lawn areas.
- Determine the name of the environmental advertisement or the project of the square or other public outdoor space according to the wishes of the investor and the municipality, thus promoting the investor through environmental objects and the improvement of the city.

Conclusions

The development process of children and adolescents is an important stage in which representatives of each age group learn certain skills, which are mainly related to effective planning of free time, independent mobility, social interaction skills, awareness and understanding of social responsibility, as well as self-growth and self-awareness. In this development process, public outdoor space and its accessibility is vital and functions as an environment for learning skills.

Teenagers choose to stay in small, close and semi-enclosed, colourful public outdoor spaces with multifunctional and mobile amenities, as well as in an environment that is appropriate to the scale of the age group and promotes the formation of social interaction. For the age group, the amount of public outdoor space, not its extent, is significant. The age group has significant freedom of movement and action in the areas designated for them.

The involvement of teenagers in creating a public outdoor space suitable for them is essential. Essentially involve children and adolescents in the processes of creating an environment suitable for them, in order to understand and support the needs, wishes and interests of adolescents. An emotional connection is formed with the environment, the creation

of which teenagers are involved in, which motivates children and young people to stay in the public outdoor space, engage in physical activities, interact with natural elements, learn, as well as build a sense of community and feel safe and included in society.

It is necessary to introduce this process during the territory design, as well as to strengthen it in the development strategy of the municipality. The age group is not sure about the process of social involvement, therefore it is necessary to ensure a visually visible result in the projects, as well as to encourage young people to participate.

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Kopsavilkums. Bērni un pusaudži vienmēr ir bijuši nozīmīga daļa no sabiedrības un valsts nākotnes. Nereti pilsētvide tiek pakārtota un pielāgota ģimenēm ar bērniem, ierīkojot rotaļu laukumus un tam piemērotu infrastruktūru. Savukārt pusaudžu vēlme atrasties sabiedrībā, publiskajā ārtelpā un līdzdarbošanās sociālajā mijiedarbībā netiek pietiekami atbalstīta. Publiskā ārtelpa ir pusaudžu vecuma posma pārstāvju "skatuve", kurā pārbaudīt sevi, savas robežas un mācīties sociālās prasmes, kā arī izzināt sabiedrībā un kopienā vispārpieņemtās normas. Raksta mērķis ir sniegt ieskatu pusaudžu vajadzībām piemērotas vides veidošanas principos, sniedzot ieteikumus šādu publisko ārtelpu veidošanas procesam. Analizējot publiski pieejamo informāciju par pusaudžu vajadzībām un ārtelpas piemērotību viņu aktivitātēm ārtelpā, nākas secināt, ka bieži vien pilsētvides pielāgošana bērniem vai pieaugušiem cilvēkiem veicina pusaudžu sociālās grupas izolēšanu no sabiedrības, kas, savukārt, rezultējas ar pulcēšanos tiem nepiemērotās teritorijās, vandālismu un aizraušanos ar apreibinošo vielu lietošanu. Apskatot labās prakses piemērus ārtelpas veidošanai pusaugu bērniem, secinām, ka, lai mazinātu iepriekšminētos riskus, nepieciešams izprast pusaudžu attīstības procesus, emocionālās un psiholoģiskās attīstības īpatnības, kā arī aktualizēt demokrātiskas audzināšanas pamatprincipus sabiedrībā, tostarp publiskās ārtelpas plānošanā un izstrādāt vadlīnijas pusaudžu iesaistei pilsētplānošanā, kas tādējādi pašvaldībām palīdzētu šīs īpašās mērķgrupas iesaistē pilsētplānošanā, nodrošinot adekvātas publiskās ārtelpas izveidi pusaudžiem.