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Co-Creating a Teenagers’ Sensitive Public Open Space: A Case Study in Alvalade Neighbourhood in Lisbon (Portugal)

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Abstract

This paper discusses the preliminary findings of a Case Study conducted in Lisbon’s Alvalade neighbourhood within the European Project C3Places – using ICT for Co-Creation of Inclusive Public Places. The Case Study explores the relationship between urban fabric, lifestyles and teenagers’ behaviour in public spaces and aims to better understand the particular conditions under which teenagers’, physically and mentally, ‘construct’ public spaces and how they can participate in the co-creation of more inclusive and responsive public spaces. The paper discusses the different conceptions and spatial needs of teenagers (and adults), the call for inclusive design strategies, and the potential of co-creation and digital methods in boosting teens’ active community participation. It sheds lights on teens’ uses, perceptions, imaginaries and experiences in public spaces.

Keywords: Public Spaces; Teenagers; Co-creation; ICT

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Introduction

This contribution is based on the discussion of emerging results from the European Research Project C3Places - using ICT for Co-Creation of Inclusive Public Places, (Horizon 2020 / JPI UrbanEurope, www.c3places.eu). The Project aims at advancing knowledge on the socio-spatial and technological dynamics of public spaces appropriation, towards enabling the design of strategies, recommendations and lessons learned that support the production of public open spaces that meet the needs of people, while using the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as mediators in this process. Backed by the principles of co-creation and co-research, C3Places seeks to answer the question how digital technologies can actively engage different users to create more attractive public spaces.

The Project follows an inter/multidisciplinary approach, combining expertise and resources of urban planning, social sciences and informatics. Such approach contributes to attain distinct levels of analysis, either on the physical, social, technical and technological characteristics that make public spaces attractive or, on the production of knowledge about the perceptions, uses, representations, and needs of users, as well as on the potential and challenges of digital co-creation in placemaking.

To achieve the Project goals, four different case studies are being conducted in Ghent (Belgium); Lisbon (Portugal); Milan (Italy) and Vilnius (Lithuania). Each one targeting different population segments, as adolescents, physically disabled and older people, all representatives of groups that, for different reasons, due to (more or less) explicit barriers, often suffer limitations to fully experience and enjoy the opportunities provided by public open spaces.

In Lisbon, the Case Study targets teenagers (young people aged 13 to 17 years). The aim of this paper is to describe and discuss the development and implementation of an exploratory phase of a Thematic Workshop on Urban Planning with teenagers of a secondary school in Alvalade neighbourhood. Preliminary results drawn from the workshops are discussed focusing on: 1) analysing the different conceptions and needs of teenagers (and adults) on space and the call to design more inclusive strategies, 2) discussing the potential of co-creation and digital methods in boosting teenagers' active community participation, and 3) exploring teens' uses, perceptions, imaginaries and experiences in public spaces.

Public Open Spaces – (Dis)Connecting People and the City

Public open space is not a consensual concept, not as a compound term and even less when considering the different concepts across the concerned disciplines separately. The definition of “public” varies from place and time, and changes according to the domain it refers to or the area of knowledge that uses it; also the definition of “space” is contextual, and encompasses a multiplicity of levels and dimensions in the different disciplines (Innerarity, 2006; Lefebvre, 1991; Low, 2017; Sennett, 1977). In planning sciences, public space has been regarded as a (physical) site accessible to all, where is possible to meet peers and strangers, encounter difference and engage in (un)mediated interactions (Innerarity, 2006; Thompson 2002; Patrício, 2017). It is the place to see and be seen in an anonymous crowd (Thompson 2002), and where the publicness is exercised. Public space has been conceptualised as inclusive and democratic domain, as it offers the ground for political and social actions and is the site where broader societal conflict gains visibility (Lefebvre, 1991; Malone, 2002; Smaniotto Costa & Schmitz, 2013). However, historically, public space was also the site where power structures manifested themselves and dominant social and moral orders were produced, imposed and perpetuated (Sennett, 1977).

In this paper, public space is understood from the perspective of Charter of Public Space (2013) presented during the Second Biennial of Public Space in Rome. It defines as spaces of public use and publicly owned, constituting a key element for communities’ collective life and well-being. They can be open environments, as squares, gardens, parks or streets; or may be sheltered spaces such as public libraries or museums (INU, 2013), or even the social space created by the digital media, transforming the physical space in a hybrid space (Smaniotto Costa & Menezes, 2016). The focus on this paper will be on **public open spaces**. For simplicity’s sake, the term “public space” is further used instead of public open space.

In a pragmatic view, public space is to be understood as a collective term and, in its broadest sense to define all that unbuild (or predominately free of buildings) urban space, intentionally created and maintained – usually by public authorities, with purposes that can range from providing infrastructure for circulation, creating a place for leisure and recreation, to preserve areas due to their landscape features and ecological-environmental merits. This definition, although comprehensive, encompasses only part of the open spaces in urban settings. Hence, this calls for defining them by what they are not; as qualified spaces they should not be confused

with the "leftovers" by the land take and urbanisation processes. A public space is neither a residual space nor that idle area waiting for a "use". Thus, a public space can take different forms and encompasses both those man-made spaces, such as streets, squares, parks, gardens, and those with (still) natural features or little human interference, such as areas of environmental and landscape protection, greenbelts, forests, agricultural used land, bodies of water, etc.; each one playing a vital role for the liveability and sustainability of urban settings (Smaniotto Costa & Schmitz, 2013).

Therefore, public space as a place of social interaction is not restricted to physical space, capable of being objectively measured and quantified, but it is also that place that embodies the complexity of socio-spatial relations, allowing appropriation, interaction and contact to others and to the environment. Space is not singular but plural, it has to be defined by recurring to a multiplicity of subcategories and genealogies – material, social or relational, geographical, demographic, sociological, political, ecological and economic, relative or absolute, real or virtual, natural or built, perceived, conceived or lived, represented from geography, to architecture, anthropology, environmental psychology or archaeology and so on (Lefebvre, 1991; Low, 2017). This is a reality for public spaces as well – they are always contextual and always emerge from the intersection between different levels, influenced by a variety of external factors as e. g. local conditions, functions, features, form and uses as well as economic and regulatory forces. For sustainable placemaking is important to put people at the centre of the process, recognising the social dimension of space and users' spatial practises and needs – as on the one side people influence and transform their environment, and on the other the environmental factors play a relevant role in shaping people's practices and identity (Carmona, Heath, Tiesdell, & Oc, 2003).

Social relations are spatial relations, abstractions are only materialised "in and through space" (Lefebvre, 1991: 403). Public spaces, as places accessible to all, create opportunities for interactions between people, both known and unknown, from the same social or generational group or from different ones. In this sense, public spaces function as places where citizenship is performed. In public spaces people's differences and similarities interact, allowing distinct groups to claim their right of appropriating particular places and to manifest their sense of belonging to society (Innerarity, 2006; Mitchell, 2008). Public spaces act as places of symbolic identification (Carmona et al., 2003), where social and cultural identities, social practices and place in the community are negotiated. The space negotiation may foster the context for mutual understating

and respect, enabling connections and allowing the development of social bonds. Hence, an in-depth look at socio-spatial practices and enhanced understanding how citizens use and build attachment to specific places is paramount to transform public spaces into more inclusive and responsive places.

In addition to the social and cultural benefits, public spaces, particularly the greenspaces, are also important for cities and their inhabitants due to environmental, ecological and health benefits. Greenspaces improve environmental quality and also contribute to leisure and recreational activities (Smaniotto Costa, Suklje Erjavec & Mathey, 2008). Some links have also been found between access to greenspaces and positive impact in physical and mental health, for example in the reduction of blood pressure and cholesterol levels, by increasing the opportunities for physical activities and a correlation between access to nature and fewer mental health problems (Muñoz, 2009). The opportunities for physical activity are also important in decreasing contemporary health problems as obesity and sedentarism.

Public spaces are central to urban life and well-being, with potential to contribute to citizens quality of life, fostering social, cultural and economic capital. However, public spaces have been, traditionally, a contested domain. Malone (2002) argues that there has been an attempt in the higher-income countries to segregate space by regulating the movement and flows of people and information of certain communities. This creates a split between legitimate and illegitimate users' groups, and between appropriate and inappropriate use of space, perpetuating divisions and conflicts over public goods. To avoid such segregation, professionals have to assure that the physical configuration of public space do not create conflict by implicitly excluding certain users' groups (Malone, 2002).

In the process of placemaking, urban planners, design professionals and local authorities should assure that changes are aimed at providing features that respond to users' characteristics and needs, and that places enable social interaction, create a sense of community and enhance quality of life. Public spaces offer a stage for different experiences and actions, but they face a permanent contradiction and tension between planned function and peoples' chaotic motivations and appropriation forms, which are not always easy to trace and even more difficult to predict. However, the attempt has to be made, on the one hand, to enrich the understanding on the wide scope of uses and actions in a particular public space and, on the other hand, to analyse how specific space characteristics and configurations shape peoples' uses and experience (Alves, 2005;

Stevens, 2007). As mentioned before, public space is contextual and inserted in broader social and spatial logics. Public space planners and professionals should not assume that they can “design” or “plan” a community by designing and planning the spaces in the community (Talen, 2000). A particular physical intervention will always lead to unpredictable results and, although, community participation (e. g. through co-creation) is crucial in the making of more useful, more open and more public “public spaces”, the community building should not be an end goal, but a process to be encouraged through representative citizen participation (Talen, 2000).

Public spaces must be attractive, responsive and inclusive, to increase the benefits and opportunities for people. The needs and values of all users should be therefore considered and negotiated into a programme for people's sensitive public spaces, and towards retaking the symbolic role as space for production and transmission of local identity (Malone, 2002). This makes the call to meet certain features, such that make places safer and more inviting as physical and material components (Gehl, 1987), enabling opportunities for play, contact with nature and physical activities (Godbey, 2009; Stevens, 2007). Moreover, Alves (2005) pointed out that, nowadays, a crucial feature for sustainable public spaces is versatility; i.e. to find a balance between responding to traditional requirements on space and the development and transformation that foster current (even transitory or ephemeral) needs of users. This demands that policymakers and experts acknowledge the importance of participatory processes and invest in, on the one hand, increasing the understanding of socio-spatial practices. On the other hand, actively involving all stakeholders (different users' groups, community facilitators, municipalities and councils, local authorities) in the process of placemaking, to better respond to the needs and preferences of all potentials users (Alves, 2005; Carmona et al., 2003; Thompson, 2002; UN HABITAT, 2015).

Nevertheless, expectations should be kept realistic. The involvement of users' and stakeholders in participative approaches, along with the process of implementing them, are not easy tasks. Some of the main challenges faced in a co-creation process are: the demands in terms of time, resources and monitoring; the need for a structured but flexible process; interest and motivation to participate and level of involvement with the theme, product or context of co-creation. These demands encompass the difficult and sensible identification of who to involve; the time offset between participation and benefitting from the results as well as, due to transitory needs of users' to timely respond to the changes. Furthermore, the issues may be considered too technical or too complex

by non-professionals and experts from different fields of work, but still participation may add legitimacy to the while not truly respecting the opinions and ideas of those involved (Alves, 2005; Jupp, 2007; Talen, 2000; Valentine, 2004). These issues may impose demands that could be too high for planners and authorities to recognise the advantages, yet co-creation and participative methods may be prodigious, but in this paper, we argue that they are essential to develop pathways towards more sustainable and people’s friendly development.

Public spaces have been incremental places in the making of the *urbe*. The alleged fragmentation of the contemporary city may have as a direct consequence transformations of the public spaces functions, disrupting their significance as places of sociability and as the ground for “spatialised” social life and social interactions, they are becoming instead mere places of passage where people *cross* each other but do not *be* with each other (Goitia, 1982; Innerarity, 2006; Low, 2017; Sennett, 1977). As Sennett (1977: 14), put it “the erasure of alive public space contains an even more perverse idea – that of making space contingent upon motion”. To avoid that, more flexible and adaptive public spaces should be put in place to better respond to the malleable needs and practises of their users’.

Flexible and adaptive public spaces can be better achieved by means of participatory strategies, and through co-research and co-creation approaches. Active participation should be sought to make the process more interactive and responsive, and to provide fairer, more attractive, meaningful, inclusive and sustainable results. This would only be achieved if the production of space, instead of being offered as a final product, becomes a process of co-produced ideas and proposals (Alves, 2005). As Lynch (1960) noticed, the city is an object without a final end, a product of different construction phases, architecture(s) and techniques, and where successive users’ shape and reconfigure space permanently. In this way, a sense of shared responsibility and an identification with public spaces is more likely to boost their appropriation, use and maintenance. The C3Places Project backed by such principles and ideas, seeks to advance knowledge and experiences on the achievements and benefits to be brought by public spaces for cities prosperity and sustainability.

Teenagers and the Process of Placemaking

Participatory strategies are important but not easy to implement, and the challenges may be even bigger when it comes to teenagers. In this paper the terms teenagers,

adolescents and youths, the corresponding teenagerhood, adolescence and youth are used as synonyms. Adolescence is a multidimensional phenomenon defined, represented and perceived in different ways. It is simultaneously a biological process and a social category or representation; a product of age and/or a product of class; a phase of transition (between childhood and adulthood, illegitimacy and legitimacy, irresponsibility and citizenship), and a period with a cultural and social significance of its own (cf. Pais, 1993; Pappámikail, 2011). Teenagerhood is a life stage characterised by biological, physical, psychosocial and relational changes and transformations. It is a period in one's life where new challenges arise, also in the context of public spaces. In public spaces, teenagers, as individuals and as part of a community, might find a context to experiment new degrees of freedom, with lesser adult supervision, which is relevant to their identity formation (cf. Pappámikail, 2011; Valentine, 2004). The lack of places free of adult interference is pointed out by teenagers as important, as it makes teens to claim the "space of others", what represents great potential risks on many levels. Therefore, it is necessary to better understand teens' requirements on public space, bearing in mind that public spaces should always be shared sites, simultaneously providing "space" for diverse users, which calls out for negotiation enabling places.

Hence, it is important to explore which factors influence teenager's perceptions, uses and requirements and to compare these with the ones of adults. One of the aims of the Lisbon Case Study is to explore if a teens-oriented public space is different from an adult-oriented one. If so, what different conceptions may emerge and how can they be reconciled so that a broader as possible number of users will benefit from the advantages and opportunities of using public spaces. In this sense, adolescents are taken in consideration as a group of users' (as the elderly and the disabled, groups being engaged in case studies in other cities involved in the C3Places Project).

Even though teenagers are as much regular users of public spaces as any other age group, their presence is not always well accepted by other users or business owners from the neighbouring areas (Laughlin & Johnson, 2011). Teenagers are excluded in multiple ways, a reason may be found in the fact that teenagers are often viewed as a "polluting" presence in the public space (Wyn & White, 1997). Their appropriation of space is often loud and very visible, disrupting the subtle rules of behaviour, delicate boundaries that delimitate spaces configuration and use, and putting them on the front line of conflict over space (Malone, 2002). Adolescents are excluded, not only from a free experience and use of space, but also from the process of placemaking. There is a

hegemony of adults over space, as they are considered qualitatively more important and the actors of reference to speak and act in name of children and teenagers (Qvortrup, 1994; Valentine, 2004).

If teenagers are not involved in the placemaking process, they will continue to suffer implicit restrictions in using or accessing public spaces. These can be expressed in terms of design and planning decisions that do not consider teens’ physical characteristics and do not respond to their needs. The lack of sitting arrangements to allow teens to be in groups and the design of residential areas and schools that attach greater importance to the control of teens practices by adults instead of facilitating the creation of spaces teens’ can use and appreciate (Owens, 2002; Strecht, 2011), are examples of restrictions. A further aspect are hierarchies of authority, or as Malone (2002) put it: “geographies of power”, which imposes issues of establishing and maintaining the social status and order. That foments the imposition of rules and orders the population in terms of age or other differentiation classes, manifested in spatialities to defend and maintain the interests of particular groups (Carmona et al., 2003). In teenagers’ case, this ends up constructing a (negative) perception of ‘youth’ itself.

On the other side, teenagers inhabit a world that is built and conditioned by adults and where they are often banned from public spaces and confined to specific institutions as family and school (Ennew, 1994). Teenagers face, in this sense, explicit restraints through limitations imposed by others – care givers, educators or regulators – as curfews or prohibiting/limiting teenagers time spent in public spaces, penalties for “unconventional” practices (as skateboarding), conflicts with other groups of users, and privatisation and commodification of public space (Malone, 2002; Owens, 2002; Skelton & Valentine, 1998). An extreme example of direct actions aimed at keeping teenagers away from public spaces is the use of the Mosquito, in England, a device that emits radio waves in a frequency to which teenagers are more sensitive than others. Such devices are used in areas as parking lots or in front of shops to maintain teenagers (unconsciously) at a distance (Carmona et al., 2003).

The widespread phenomena of privatisation and the publicness relocated to private spaces, as shopping centres and coffee shops, have also affected teens’ spatial practices. This may be a result of the general increase in the offer (and/or demand?) of private spaces for consumption, in the spread of gentrification (Valentine, 2004) or also of the processes of homogenisation and domestication of places, or even to what Sorkin (1994) called the *disneyfication* of public space. No space is truly public if such

restrictions on use by specific groups persist. Albeit teenagers are perceived as troublemakers, their behaviour doesn't result in any real menace or public disorder. These misinterpretations must be questioned and contested. The Project C3Places' pledge is to create public spaces that respond to teenagers' needs and preferences – teenagers' sensitive public spaces – from which they cannot be excluded on grounds of age. To successfully reach such goal, it is important to understand teenagers' socio-spatial practices and their preferences.

Many of the restrictions are embodied in a duality of danger in the connection public spaces and teenagers, they are excluded both because they are seen by others as a threat in public spaces and because public spaces are perceived as a threat to them. In creating restrictions, opportunities to hang out on streets, to talk to one another, to play and observe people – all fundamental components in the construction of an individual and social identity – will be lost. Responding to teenagers' requirements should not result in exclusive/segregated places, but instead in instigating configurations that can be shared among different users. This implies a particular challenge to recognise that a shared space will not signify a relationship between them, but that at least it will provide ground for (ideally) fruitful and intergenerational socialisation (Owens, 2002; Pais, 1993; Strecht, 2011).

Studies also refer to a positive influence of public spaces use and proximity to nature on physical, cognitive and emotional development of children and teenagers. Strecht (2011) pointed out the importance of architecture and urban planning in the development of healthy children and teenagers, due to the importance in cognitive and emotional development of the interplay between external stimuli (surroundings and social interactions) and internal inputs. Space and environment affect also the process of construction of memory, and as consequence, they have influence on people's cognitive, emotional and psychological development, both at individual and social level. However, most people living in urban settings experience life in small apartments, in blocks of flats, experiencing daily traffic and uninviting pedestrian conditions and facing a sense of insecurity and disconnection with their surroundings. In this context, teenagers in cities suffer from the raising prevalence of passive activities, where the private space of home and bedroom emerge as the sole space for recreation. Furthermore, other studies show the correlation between time spend outdoors and the early creativity development and the development of the immune system (Muñoz, 2009). Characteristics as low-speed streets, wide sidewalks,

existence of spaces between buildings and other amenities as trees, water and light are listed as important for children and teens-oriented cities. Greenspaces, either large or small gardens are also positive factors, providing spaces of discovery, to explore and experiment the world around (Strecht, 2011).

To further explore the features that are valued by teenagers calls for getting them involved through participatory approaches. Involving teenagers, as mentioned above, is not an easy task and faces multiple challenges to foster a proper environment for participation and co-creation. Teenagers may not be able to express their views on space in articulated ways (Jupp, 2007), at least not, as e. g. adults, who have a more direct entitlement to the urban fabric. Young people may not be granted rights based on the assumption that they are not yet capable of taking responsibilities or that involving them would deprive them of a worry-free youth. They are also seen as vulnerable and dependent on adults, who are supposed to act and decide for them (Valentine, 2004) instead of offering them a platform to voice themselves their requirements and needs.

The lack of recognising rights of young people to be engaged and participate in the placemaking process is also present amongst the experts who intervene within public space. These experts are not fully committed in building teenagers' capacity on the participatory processes. Experts, according to Passon, Levi & del Rio (2008) and White (2001) recognise their own lack of knowledge about teenagers' uses and needs on public spaces, and their inability to involve them in placemaking. The used arguments are that teenagers suffer from competences and skills shortages, lack of responsibility, experience and interest, and that they do not have the legitimacy to be involved and to participate (Laughlin & Johnson, 2011). The challenges associated with participatory processes emerge also from teenagers' side. They are well aware of the temporal gap between taking part in participative processes, sharing their ideas and spatial needs and enjoy the results of such efforts. Since teenagers tend to be more focused on the here and now, it is strenuous to communicate the advantages of their engagement (Valentine, 2004). The acknowledgement that public spaces cannot meet the teenagers' needs may cause dissatisfaction and low sense of belonging. This is one of the starting points of the C3Places Project towards rethinking socio-spatial relations and seeking for engaging young citizens in participative strategies and co-creation of public spaces.

Digital Tools for Placemaking

In the Project C3Places the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to engage users on the transformation of public spaces is a central issue. ICT open new and innovative ways of spatial appropriation and provide new tools for engaging users in placemaking. Even though there is a wide penetration of digital and mobile devices in people's life, their spatial dimension has been yet insufficiently researched, the spread impact in public open spaces even more so. Hence, special focus must be set on this subject, studying systematically and in-depth ICT use patterns and their reflection in public open spaces (Smaniotto & Šuklje Erjavec, 2015). New possibilities are emerging, accompanying the new digital technological advancements. Technological innovations are increasing quickly and are object of significant research and investment. They are visible in global internet access, wearable sensors and smart devices, which are becoming increasingly present and pervasive, influencing several daily human interactions, opening new opportunities, but also bringing new challenges.

ICT pervasiveness and ubiquitousness is associated with high risks of exposure, loss of privacy, social isolation or increased sedentarism. Such issues have been addressed in the literature (cf. Greenberg, 2013; cf. Greenwalt, 2014), but on the other side, ICT have facilitated the data/information collection and processing in greater quantity, with more resources and tools available (Duarte & Mateus, 2017); brought monitoring, clustering and access features to social practices (Venturini, 2012); and provided a platform that is easy to access and allows to share self-produced products or content easily, allowing the test, experimentation and collaborative production of social products and knowledge in a new, non-profit logic (Jenkins, 2009). New (or changed) characteristics as persistence, visibility, spreadability and searchability as well as accessibility, have reconfigured the process of access and sharing of information (Boyd, 2014).

Digital technologies have increased what Jenkins, (2009) called 'participatory culture', where information is not unidirectional but moving in a permanent loop movement, being appropriated by consumers that (re)produce new content, blurring the line between producers and consumers. The proliferation of social media platforms and pervasiveness of mobile devices is also important for participatory urban planning, because it makes easier to mobilise people and resources (Wortham-Galvin, 2013). Potentially, it can also be advantageous by making the process less demanding and time

consuming or by allowing a interactivity or playability that will provide an extra return from participation (Stevens, 2007).

Digital platforms and social networks may also be important for teenagers as another domain (as public spaces) where they are able to gather and communicate in a public and informal way, escaping restrictions from adults (Boyd, 2014). For teenagers, the features of anonymity may also be valued as an advantage in participating without fear of making mistakes or of being criticised (Greenwalt, 2014). There is a need to further investigate if the use of digital tools in co-creation may prove efficient to overcome the challenges as time consumption and lack of motivation to participate.

C3Places aims at taking advantage of this collaborative potential, engaging different stakeholders in the process of planning and designing public places, making them more attractive, responsive and sensitive to users' needs. Based upon that premise, C3Places is exploring the potential of ICT tools within co-creation sessions of public spaces, taking in to account several users and their perceptions, spatial representations and spatial preferences and needs. In a later phase of the case study in Lisbon a mobile application will be employed to foster a digital co-creation process.

Case Study in Lisbon: Pilot Workshop to Engage Teenagers in Placemaking

The Lisbon case study aims at exploring the interrelation between people-places and digital technology, and strives for developing recommendations towards the production of more attractive and inclusive public open space, and more responsive to teenagers' needs. To gather information towards improving the responsiveness for the youth calls for an approach with multiple methods, such as:

- collection of demographic data;
- mapping out local socio-environmental, and urban fabric features;
- collection of material related to the local culture of teenagerhood;
- observation of teen's use of and negotiations in places;
- individual interviews with youths and adults;
- guided tours with teens to raise urban awareness and capacities; and
- interviews with parents, teachers and local officials regarding their perceptions of how current technological and environmental conditions and changes affect teens' lives.

The Case Study follows various stages and has at its core a set of thematic workshops on urban planning conducted with secondary school students in Lisbon's Alvalade neighbourhood. The workshops grounded on co-research and collaborative methodologies, and non-formal education principles, were planned with several goals: to empower and increase teenagers' involvement with the urban fabric/environment; to address and explore their spatial perceptions; to create opportunities for their civic participation and to provide a forum for discussion and sharing their ideas and knowledge for public spaces planning and design.

A pilot phase was implemented between February and May 2018 at the Secondary School Padre António Vieira, 49 students of two 10th grade classes (aged between 15 and 18 years) could be actively involved in the workshops. The pilot phase encompassed four themes: 1) A critical look at the city; 2) Building the city; 3) The digital era and the city, and 4) Designing a public space. Each theme comprised of four sessions of 90 minutes, for a total of 24 hours of intervention.

The cooperation with the Padre António Vieira School is facilitated as the school is taking part in the pilot project proposed by the Ministry of Education "Flexible and Autonomous Curricula" (Gabinete do Secretário de Estado da Educação, 2017), which gives the school some degree of flexibility in defining the curricular programmes and contents for a certain number of hours within the classes calendar. This opened to C3Places the opportunity to meet a target group (teenagers) under an official framework. The sessions were, therefore, conducted within the students' schedule, and didn't represent an additional workload for them. This aspect means in the flip side that the students did not voluntarily participate in the co-creation process and were conditioned from the beginning since attendance to these classes is mandatory.

The sessions were organised around interactive activities, with varying degrees of formal and informal exercises, always seeking to use materials that could be attractive for students and to allow them to express as freely as possible their ideas; some suggestions for activities were based on the Manual for Planners and Educators (Canadian Institute of Planners, 2002). The sessions took place both in classroom and in public spaces in Alvalade neighbourhood.

The sessions consisted of outdoor activities to observe and reflect on spatial features; classroom debates; sessions with invited stakeholders (from the parish council, from a grassroots movement and from a crowdsourcing company) to discuss participatory opportunities on urban planning available to citizens and the possibilities for teenagers.

The activities were developed to allow an active participation of the teenagers and to stimulate them to reflect on processes and methods, to gain better conceptual tools to reflect on public space issues and to empower them to express their values and ideas (Almeida et al., 2018). Through activities not only co-creation but also co-research were explored (cf. Brites, 2017), teenagers, for example, interviewed each other or did field observations and analysed spatial use and features, other following the guidelines provided by the project facilitators. The facilitators were also sensitive to teenagers’ preferences and ideas, and some of the sessions and activities were reconfigured *in situ* to respond to their motivation.

Preliminary Results: Teenagers’ Representations and Spatial Needs

In the first session, the teenagers answered a questionnaire on their current experiences. The questionnaire was divided in two parts, the first aimed at capturing trends of public/urban space and ICT use, and the second, with open questions, set to analyse their conceptual/abstract perceptions of the city, public space and their maintenance, urban planning, contributions they could give for placemaking and their thoughts regarding the neighbourhood. The co-produced materials are still being analysed, but some preliminary findings can be explored, based on the questionnaire and from the facilitators’ (part of C3Places research team) observation notes. The preliminary findings must be necessarily seen in context of the classroom, as mentioned before, the thematic workshops were conducted in a formal school frame. This fact brought some organisational advantages but also conditioned the end results. On the one hand, it facilitated the access to teenagers and minimised dropout rates, and as a teacher was always present, working as mediator between the students and the facilitator, made teenagers feel easily comfortable. On the other hand, there is no way to guarantee that these students would voluntarily participate in a co-creation process regarding public space if the classes were not mandatory.

The research in a such context also adds a feature of unpredictability – what was expected and considered normal, when working with teenagers –, also due to the involvement of external elements in the process whose actions could not be controlled, and at times, may cause disruption of the natural flow of participation or modify the way data is collected. This is an issue to be pondered when discussing advantages and challenges of co-creation and co-research. For it to work, researchers and planners must diminish their control and be responsive to a more

flexible environment of knowledge production, where at any moment unexpected events may affect (either in a positive or in a negative way) the results. For research, when participative methodologies are applied, it may be harder to analyse the data and to draw conclusions directly from the findings. A researcher, either rationally puts him/herself in a mere position of observer (this may even not be possible when employing participative methodologies), or he/she is an integral part of the team in the process of knowledge production. In planning processes, this also means to recognise that in co-creation approaches a stringent structure or action plan cannot be imposed, that allowing users to raise ideas, concerns and needs (even when off topic) may require time and that giving people agency is an absolute need.

Despite the non-formal education methods applied are quite different from those the students in a school context are used to, they manifested enthusiasm and participated in the activities eagerly. However, it became clear since the beginning that the prevalence of formal education in their learning process makes it hard for them to fully engage in more informal activities, in which a stronger involvement is required. For this reason, some activities were deeper structured and guiding lines, proceedings and examples were provided to facilitate engagement and understanding.

The time factor is also an issue to be considered; in some exercises, tasks designed to be done by teenagers (e. g. facilitating or moderating the collection of answers) were done by the facilitators to reduce the amount of time necessary for their completion. In other cases, the teenagers took the initiative to be more involved, assuming specific tasks, volunteering or asking to present to the class their results without being asked. These facts add more arguments to what was generally observed in many interactions: teens appreciate the recognition of peers. Even when this may mean disruption in the class caused by discussion and laughter, it also means that teens may step up (where allowed) to voluntarily share their contributions with others.

Another question of interest to further study in the context of education regards teenagers' motivations to learn and to actively participate in light of the curriculum flexibility, as it is becoming a reality in Portuguese schools. Moreover, in the workshops it was possible to observe that teenagers reacted differently to the same stimuli, and there is a distinction between those who responded and participated directly motivated by the contents, and those who engaged more motivated by the

interactivity and informality of the activities. To the first group could be also noted that the teenagers related the new knowledge to the subjects they better know. About motivation for participating, it is also worth mentioning a view expressed by students during the workshops. They feel discouraged to take part in participatory processes as they are aware of the temporal gap between actively participating and sharing ideas, and benefiting from the implemented changes.

The questionnaire handed out to teenagers in the first session had a total of 48 respondents, the majority aged 15 to 17 years (75%) and 56% were male and 44% female.

Overall, only one of the respondents reported to not have a smartphone and 91% is either constantly/always connected or connects several hours a day to the internet. This is an interesting finding towards the goal of exploring digital co-creation possibilities. In the workshops could be also observed that even though students have devices and are connected, they are not willing to use them. In some of the activities they were asked to take photos, but only a few did it, and no one forwarded photos to the research team. The most frequent arguments put forward were related to low battery, limited internet access and storage capacity.

Regarding public space usage, the findings helped to better contextualise some of the observations during the workshops. A greater proportion of respondents (94%) stated to use public spaces, and the majority uses them frequently (6% daily, 10% many times during the week and 65% sometimes during the week). In some activities, the same students however showed some lack of references on public spaces, difficulties in reflecting about their own specific requirements, and in understanding what are the conditions/features for a space to be considered public.

The facilitators noted also an obstacle throughout the sessions related to engaging students in thinking about public spaces in Alvalade, and how these spaces respond or not to their needs. It seems that despite the teenagers attend school in Alvalade, they are not attached to any of the local public spaces. A possible explanation to this, is the fact that only 15% of the students live in Alvalade. The majority live in other parishes in Lisbon, or even in different municipalities in the outskirts of the city (only 60% are from Lisbon municipality). The spaces of reference for the teenagers are more likely located in their own neighbourhoods. It seems also that around the school, located in a residential area, there are few spaces appreciated by teenagers. This is an important finding for the case study, once it poses the challenge

to either develop further methods to explore the places teens really use in Alvalade or to set the focus on places they are more likely to pass through in daily trips, as such located along the main pedestrian lanes or on the way to the public transport stops.

In general, teenagers also revealed a poor literacy levels in terms of city and urban fabric, as well as a lack of knowledge of fundamental urban concepts, and this associated with low spatial representation abilities. However, the school is located at a short distance to one of the two largest greenspaces of Alvalade (Park José Gomes Ferreira), a known space but that they do not seem to use it often. Further subjects repeatedly emerged in the discussions were public transport (issues of accessibility, stops, frequency and quality of service) and maintenance of existing public spaces. Further suggestions and proposals raised in a final activity aimed at the development of ideas for changes in a public open space were more places to sit, more green areas, traffic modifications, more parking lots and better accessibility.

Finally, the most valued places by the teenagers, as pointed out in the questionnaires, in other materials and in class interactions, seem to be private and indoor spaces, mostly of commercial function, such as shopping malls, shops and cafeterias, in detriment of public open spaces. Private spaces and spaces of consumption are in a transversal way the preferred spaces to hang out. Teenagers did not reveal any feeling of exclusion in these spaces but enjoy being in them and meet there with friends. However, adolescents complained about the lack of more of "private" spaces either close to their homes or in the school proximity. Aspects of privatisation are not reflected by teenagers and it was quite challenging for them to distinguish between private and public spaces, and to express few underlying references on use and conceptualisation of public space. This fits into a general trend being observed in teenagers' behaviours of replacing public spaces by private ones (Valentine, 2004), which trend could be confirmed in Alvalade. This raises the question of whether is this a reverse process from the one observed by Pais (1993). This author argued that teenagers build their privacy by conquering bits of public space and turning them into their own private grounds. Are teenagers, nowadays, doing the opposite, and converting private spaces into public ones? If so, this brings a challenge regarding inclusiveness since private spaces have features that likely exclude people.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on exploring the nexus between people, public open spaces and digital tools. It discusses the preliminary findings and the lessons learned from a pilot phase of Workshops of Urban Planning developed as part of a Case Study in Lisbon within the Project C3Places. The aim was:

First, to discuss the different conceptions and needs of teenagers (and adults) on public space, taking the pledge to create more inclusive design and planning strategies, and responsive to the needs of public space users. The leading question was, if teenagers’ spatial needs are different from adults, and if so, how can both be reconciled. It is still too early to provide a conclusive answer but it seems, on the one hand, that not providing attractive public spaces for teenagers, may have a segregating effect (Malone, 2002), preventing them to socialise with the community. On the other hand, the requirements mentioned by teenagers are like those pointed out by other users’ groups, so the question may not be as much about reconciling different needs of users in placemaking, but more about accepting different uses of the same public space by certain groups, recognising difference as what makes space “public” and attractive.

Second, to ponder on the potential of co-creation and digital methods for boosting teens’ active community participation. Can the development of digital co-creation methodologies impact teenagers use of public open space? Can they also stir relations between the actors involved (teenagers, researchers, teachers, planners, local authorities, local businesses, civic society organisations) and foster a shared responsibility and an identity of space? In this topic, it is expected that the following digital co-creation phase in the case study will allow providing recommendations for design strategies, and how ICT may be used to better capture teenagers’ spatial needs while creating more interactive, attractive and less time-consuming modes for engaging teenagers.

Third, to explore teenagers’ uses, perceptions, imaginaries and experiences in public spaces. On this issue a fundamental question emerged: are public spaces still valued place and used by teenagers? If not, what can be done to revert this situation? A large body of studies point to public spaces as fundamental for a healthy physical and mental development. They offer a stage to perform essential practices in the construction of individual and social identity. It is argued that in order to respond to teenagers’ needs, public space should provide opportunities to avoid adults supervision, to sit in groups,

to observe, play, be with peers, to explore creativity and contact nature and experience the world around them (Malone, 2002; Strecht, 2011; Valentine, 2004).

On the flip side, if teenagers prefer private spaces, their qualities, features and attractiveness for uses must be deeper examined to better understand the ways public space have to be produced to better respond to teenagers' requirements. The easiest and most effective way is to actively involve teenagers in placemaking, and to allow different stakeholders to come together and to negotiate requirements and preferences on public spaces. This means to provide to the stakeholders a forum to turn the placemaking process into a participative challenge. The results will surely be more adequate and attractive, building a sense of shared responsibility and developing more inclusive urban environment. Inclusive and responsive placemaking is an asset for sustainable development and a constant ongoing process. The Project C3Places will periodically report on the progress of addressing teenagers as actors of change.

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