Active cities/active children: a planning and pedagogical perspective [1]

Ciudades activas/niños activos: una perspectiva de urbanística y pedagogía [1]

Elena Dorato
Architect / Professor / Researcher

University of Ferrara
Architecture Department Urban Design at the CITER research lab

Via Savonarola, 9, 44121
Ferrara FE, Italy

ORCID: 0000-0002-7981-6760
drtlne@unife.it

Antonio Borgogni
Professor / Researcher

University of Bergamo
Department of Human and Social Sciences
Centre Citer-laboratorio di progettazione urbana e territorial (CITER-town and territorial planning sector)

via Salvecchio 19 24129
Bergamo, Italy

ORCID: 0000-0002-2226-6753
antonio.borgogni@unibg.it

ABSTRACT: This contribution, written by an urban designer and an educationist, aims at (re)focusing the attention of the interdisciplinary debate on the active role of children within the public urban realm or – as we could rephrase it – on the potential influences that the city, its structure, regulations and spaces has on children intended as a vulnerable population group. In order to do so, some reflections on the relationship between "the child and the city" are presented, also supported by an original walk-to-school research conducted in the Italian city of Cassino, investigating children's active and independent mobility, and by a conceptual model based on the classification of children's physical activity as either "independent" or "non-independent". Finally, a discussion on the pivotal role of public spaces is developed, briefly presenting some virtuous project examples.

KEY WORDS: public spaces; urbanism; Active City; children; urban bodies.

RESUMEN: Esta contribución, escrita por una urbanista y un pedagogo, tiene por objeto (re)centrar la atención del debate interdisciplinario sobre el rol activo de los niños en el ámbito urbano público, o sea sobre las posibles influencias que la ciudad, su estructura, sus reglamentos y sus espacios tienen sobre los niños, considerados como un grupo de población vulnerable. En esta perspectiva, se presentan unas reflexiones sobre la relación entre "el niño y la ciudad", apoyadas por una investigación walk-to-school que investiga la movilidad activa e independiente de los niños, llevada a cabo en la ciudad italiana de Cassino, y por un modelo conceptual basado en la clasificación de la actividad física de los niños como "independiente" o "dependiente". Por último, se desarrolla un debate sobre la función fundamental de los espacios públicos urbanos, presentando brevemente algunos ejemplos de proyectos virtuosos.

PALABRAS LLAVE: espacios públicos; urbanística; Ciudad Activa; niños; cuerpos urbanos.

1. Introduction: children, spaces and the right to the city

The challenging times we are going through because of the current Covid-19 pandemic are teaching us to share different proximities and to deeply understand – by subtraction – the essentiality of urban public spaces while experiencing, at the same time, the desperate need of our bodies to freely move around the city. Especially in the Mediterranean urban culture, the public dimension of the city has played a fundamental role in defining people's quality of life, often embodying true "extensions" of the private spaces of our homes: the streets have always been the courtyard of houses, parks and gardens the playrooms, the libraries have been our study rooms, squares the lounges and living-rooms, the terraces of bars and cafes our dining rooms. It is this collective, shared and democratic relevance of the city that – if and when it is lacking – forces us even more to confront the spatial and social inequalities that manifest themselves with increasing intensity, especially among the most vulnerable population.
This contribution, written by an urban designer and an educationist, aims at (re)focusing the attention of the interdisciplinary debate on the active role of children within the public urban realm or – as we could rephrase it – on the potential influences that the city, its structure, regulations and spaces has on children intended as a frailer population group. In order to do so, some reflections on

the relationship between "the child and the city" (see Borgogni, Dorato, in press) are presented, also supported by an original walk-to-school research conducted in the Italian city of Cassino, investigating children's active and independent mobility, and by a conceptual model based on the classification of children's physical activity as either "independent" or "non-independent".
The overall framework for this work is given by the emergent Active Cities approach, firstly promoted by the public health sector (Edwards, Tsouros, 2008), and then investigated through town planning (Dorato, 2020), socio-educational, and physical activity perspectives (Borgogni, 2012; SUSTRANS, 2015; Borgogni, Farinella, 2017). The key goal of an "active city" is to enhance the opportunities for all citizens to be physically active within their daily routines. The original aim of the World Health Organization was to promote active lifestyles in the urban environment to tackle inactivity-related health issues like non-communicable-diseases, thus understanding that such development should encompass infrastructural, social, educational, and mobility policies and actions. Within this process of growing awareness of the health benefits potentially coming from the city context and its characteristics, the involvement and the role of physical activity in the urban planning and public health framework also begins to unfold, becoming more and more relevant (Dorato, 2020). It is fundamental to stress that, when addressing physical activity, this work refers to the definition given by the World Health Organization (2010) as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure; "physical activity includes recreational or leisure-time physical activity, transportation (e.g. walking or cycling), occupational (i.e. work), household chores, play, games, sports or planned exercise, in the context of daily, family, and community activities" (p. 8).
Yet, despite some scattered interventions, in many European cities frailer groups of citizens from the independent mobility viewpoint, such as children, senior or disabled citizens, are still encountering difficulties in moving autonomously through the urban realm. The lack of autonomy affects children's physical and mental health, directly reducing their opportunities to learn, to socialize, to be physically active in both the formal and informal contexts offered by the public spaces (Borgogni et al., 2017). Within such perspective, the decline of children's autonomy is a recognized concern. The comparative research Children's Independent Mobility (Shaw et al., 2015), carried out in sixteen countries involving children aged 7 to 15, ranks Finland first, followed by Germany, Norway, and Sweden, while Italy and Portugal are the two European countries in which children are less autonomous. Overall, Italian children are about three to four years behind the best-ranking countries in their freedom to be independent in several kinds of mobility. More precisely, children's autonomy in walking to school in Italy (7%) is much lower than in England (41%) and Germany (40%) (Renzi, Prisco, Tonucci, 2014). The Italian situation is, somehow, unique: in fact, due to legal restrictions deliberately supporting the logic of not holding responsible schools or other public institutions involved in children's education, it is not permitted to a child under the age 14 to independently walk home from school. These restraining norms have been incorporated within the regulations of all primary schools at national level, leading to an overall prohibition to exit school without being picked up by an adult. Playing (Gray, 2011), walking and cycling (Mackett, 2013) independently seem to be unperceived rights; children's rights that adults are not accustomed to respect (Borgogni, Arduini, 2017). Today, starting from a slightly changed perception of vulnerability and, perhaps, from a deeper awareness also deriving from the emergency situation in which we still find ourselves, cities have the new, historical, opportunity to re-think themselves in terms of quality: many will not take advantage of it, some will take a step backwards; a few virtuous cities will be able to reconfigure themselves looking far away, both temporally and geographically, getting inspired by what happens in other European and world contexts where a broader significance, quality and accessibility of public spaces have already become the back-bone of a design-oriented and human-centered urban agenda.

2. The issue: excluded children in the reconquered city

The fundamental role of children's independent mobility and, more generally, independent activity within the urban context represents not only a right, but also a great opportunity to develop new, more sustainable, livable and healthy urban environments for all. In his famous

book The Child in the City, the English urbanist-architect of anarchist tradition Colin Ward (1977) invokes the urgency of rethinking and updating the city-children dichotomy by placing them at the center of urban policy and design. Children, Ward argues, have the right to wander around the city, yet the inadequacy of the built environments and their hostility and often dangerousness force them to lock themselves in predetermined and specialized spaces such as the home, schoolyard, sports facilities, fenced and enclosed gardens and playgrounds. Recalling his words, when saying "I don't want a Childhood City. I want a city where children live in the same world as I do. Because some bit of the city is designated as a play space on a plan there is no guarantee that it will be used as such, nor that other areas will not be. If the claim of children to the city is to be admitted, the whole environment has to be designed and shaped with their needs in mind" (p. 204), we could assume that accessibility, safety and comfort are key-characteristics that every urban environment should provide, allowing children to live and experience the city alongside other generations. Taking up and updating the predominant nineteenth-century thought (Borgogni, Dorato, in press), Ward considers the city to all intents and purposes as "an educating machine", just as "street work" represents a fundamental part of the process of growth and learning (Fyson, Ward, 1973). Even though in a simplified way, these fundamental features of the urban realm somehow embody what Henri Lefebvre defined as the Right to the City, including the "right to freedom, to individualization, to habitat and to inhabit" (Lefebvre, 1996, p.173), as well as the right to "participation and appropriation" (Franck, Stevens, 2007) of the urban public spaces.

In his book New City Spaces, Danish planner Jan Gehl (2006) suggests a macro-typological subdivision of contemporary Western cities into four categories: the "traditional city," where meeting places, marketplaces and traffic are able to still coexist in a balanced way; the "invaded city," where car traffic has completely usurped the urban space, at the expense of the other uses; the "abandoned city," where public space and public life have disappeared; and finally, the "reconquered city," in which important efforts have been made to establish a new, workable balance between the public uses of the urban realm and traffic space. The latter urban category also represents all those cities that, especially during the past decades, have invested in policies and projects oriented towards a real re-appropriation, both physical and conceptual, of urban space by people – primarily the most vulnerable population, such as children – often involving citizens in the decision-making processes of urban planning and regeneration.

The reconquest of the "public city", as well as the child-city relationship, have represented two topoi within the modern and contemporary Urbanism debate, both grounding on the very concept of public spaces. The emphasis is placed on the plural "s" in a semantic perspective, stressing the multitude of possible typologies of spaces, uses, characteristics, and activities to be performed; but also and most of all, it stands for a conceptual purpose. Embracing the theories of French philosopher and urban sociologist Isaac Joseph, who strongly underlined the intrinsic difference between the two terms if used singular or plural, Henry Paquot stated that "public space is a singular whose plural – public spaces – does not correspond" (Paquot, 2009, p. 3, 93).

The first one resembles the concept expressed by Habermas (1978) as a symbolic place where public opinion is originated, resulting from political debate and the public use of reason. Public space is a "non-territorial space," a geographically undetermined idea. If plural, it designates the physical spaces the whole population can benefit from on a regular basis: moving around, crossing or stopping, playing, chatting, practicing physical activity, and so forth. Contrary to the singular acceptation usage of the word, public spaces are usually geographically limited and associated to specific territorial and/or local contexts; these are streets, squares and plazas, gardens, parks and boulevards, playgrounds, beaches, paths and trails crossing all kinds of natural or artificial environments. They are the urban connective network that, together with all the other spaces linked and related to it, allow everyone to freely and safely move around (Dorato, 2020), and respect the dual and fundamental peculiarities of accessibility and gratuity (Paquot, 2009; Levy, Lussault, 2003).

American urban planner Michael Walzer had already proposed a distinction between two different kinds of public spaces: not arguing about singular or plural, but rather about "single-minded" and "open-minded." The first ones are designed by architects or private entrepre-

neurs with a specific aim, and therefore used by similarly single-minded citizens; these are spaces usually utilized in transit, in a hurry. Instead, the second category of spaces is designed for many different purposes and activities "[…] including unforeseen and unforeseeable uses, and used by citizens who do different things and are prepared to tolerate, even take an interest in, things they don't do" (Walzer, 1986, p. 470).
The creative dimension of play and, more generally, the complex dimension of the "urban child" undoubtedly requires plural, open-minded, "infra-ordinary" (Perec, 1997) and "loose" (Franck, Stevens, 2007) public spaces.
And yet today, to the ongoing process of exclusion of children from both public spaces and public life is also triggering an alarming "sedentary pandemic", with important impacts the health, sociality and development of young people; a global concern that has already been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality after tobacco use, alcohol and drug consumption, and unhealthy diet (WHO, 2010), leading to the manifestation of chronic pathologies.
As increasingly shown by the international scientific literature (see among others, Ikeda, 2019; Mackett, 2013; Mitra, 2013; Grize et al., 2010), active mobility (i.e. home-to-school journeys on foot, by bicycle, using skates, etc.) and the performance of extra-school time activities (playing or practicing any other kind of physical activity within the urban environment) represent the main occasions for children to keep physically active within their daily routines, while acquiring new autonomy skills and enhancing social capabilities and networks. However, the most recent alarming data describing Italian children's conditions in relation to average levels of practiced physical activity (Filippone et al., 2007) and autonomous mobility are stressing the need for new inter-disciplinary efforts tackling such inactivity pandemic. In this perspective, today more than ever there is a need for a closer and more efficient collaboration between the fields of Urbanism, Pedagogy, and Physical Activity sciences (Borgogni, Arduini, Dorato, 2017).

3. Re-creative urban public spaces

Thus today more than ever, we need new interdisciplinary reflections capable of re-establishing that potentially virtuous and educational link between children and the urban context in which they live, play, move, learn and grow. Looking once again at the teachings of our recent past, we could (re)actualize the same question posed in 1977 by French landscape architect Jacques Simon together with Marguerite Rouard: "The most important question is: are parents, teachers, designers, architects, recreational counsellors, and city planners willing to take the real needs of children into consideration in the cities of the future or in urban renewal projects preserving the cities of the past?" (Rouard, Simon, 1977).
As decades went by, unfortunately it seems we are still not able to give an affirmative answer to such complex and yet elementary question, stressing the need for more effective collaborations among different disciplines, while overcoming the many restrictive regulations and normative issues. However, although still lagging behind other European countries, also in Italy – which had experienced a particularly successful era during the 1990s in relation to children's role within the public realm (Borgogni, Arduini, Dorato, 2017) and to their participation's right (Borgogni, Arduini, 2017) – some interesting research have recently been developed.
In 2014, Lipu-BirdLife Italy presented a research conducted across the country on several hundreds of teachers and parents, qualitatively investigating children's habits during recess hours. The emerging data was alarming: only 41,6% of pupils play outside once a week at most, while 20,5% do so three to two days a week; 42,2% of interviewed teachers affirmed that children spend an average of only ten hours a month playing in the schoolyard.
Well interpreting the seriousness of such shares, the municipality of Turin, among others, has been promoting, in the past years, a virtuous cooperation between educational institutions and the city, understanding the over 200 schoolyards of the city also as physical resources able to provide for the lack of children-friendly urban public spaces. After a participatory process involving a number of children, many schoolyards have been transformed into more pleasant and activity-conducive environments and, even most importantly, they have been open to the city also during extra-school hours.

In the summer of 2020, especially due to the current Covid-19 pandemic and the great challenges it raises also in terms of rethinking basic public services (and rights) such as the school, the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR) has drawn up a "Document for the planning of school, educational and training activities" for the peculiar academic year 2020-2021, introducing the so-called "Community Educational Pacts" (Patti Educativi di Comunità): a tool aimed at strengthening territorial alliances, also by involving private stakeholders or associations, to encourage the provision of other structures or spaces, such as parks, theaters, libraries, archives, cinemas, museums, to carry out complementary educational activities, thus physically and metaphorically "expanding" school spaces and supporting the education facilities in this difficult emergency situation. Some virtuous regions have already adopted such new instruments, which are currently being tested.

Also, with the introduction in the so-called "Simplifications Decree" (Law n.120 September 11, 2020) the Italian Government is making an effort to overhaul some of the existing norms for a greater protection of pedestrians and cyclists in urban areas. The Law also introduces the concept of "school zone", i.e. an urban area near school buildings where "special protection of pedestrians and the environment is guaranteed". Without courageous – yet necessary – stances and entrusting their operation to the common sense of municipal ordinances, these areas situated by school premises must be indicated by appropriate signs and there "may be limited or excluded the circulation, parking or stopping of all or some categories of vehicles, at times and in ways to be defined". Assuming, instead, courageous positions, these areas could become proper urban places where there is a real educational intentionality of public spaces: places of participatory planning, educational experimentation, urban comfort, reception, places of permanent urbanity (Borgogni, 2020).

In other European countries some interesting design implementations have already been built, in order to promote physical activity and encourage children and young people to play outside, actively and independently roaming around the city or walk/bike to school. A good example is the project developed between 2015 and 2016 by the design firm Karavan for a new urban park in Uppsala (Sweden). Located in the newly built district of Rosendal, Solvallsparken is a linear, recreational park held together by an "active" multifunctional pathway for pedestrians, joggers, and cyclists; along and connected to this back-bone, there are activity areas for all ages, promoting all sorts of physical activities (e.g. outdoor gym, boot camp trail, spinning discs, trampolines, climbing walls), sports (e.g. tennis wall, beach volleyball court, streetball, table tennis), health, and social gatherings. The simple and intuitive design of both the space and the features and equipment it displays, as well as the use of bright colors, contributes to an overall playful characterization of the area, inviting children to get engaged into a number of different activities.

Another "Northern" renowned intervention is the one developed by the design firm Carve – particularly committed to the innovation of recreational spaces – in Amsterdam, in 2010. Here, they intervened on a nineteenth-century central district of the city with the intent to study a renewal strategy on a human and, above all, child-friendly scale. The project, initially contested by shopkeepers and residents, has decided to close Potgieterstraat to traffic, converting it into a "play street" accessible only to bicycles and pedestrians, transforming the roadway and car parking stalls into a new micro-hill urban landscape characterized by a black rubber surface. To this floor (on which one can draw, jump, run, even fall over) have been integrated unconventional play elements such as poles on which to climb, tubes where to hide, and trampolines. At the end of the process of public consultation, design and implementation of the intervention, after overcoming conflicts, the local community has witnessed a great improvement in the neighborhood living conditions, thanks to the quality of this project. According to Carve themselves, "[...] the success of this public place is a side effect of the space project" (cited in Lambertini, 2013, p. 89).

Much more ephemeral and temporary, but equally provocative and imaginative are the performance projects of Florian Rivière who, in 2011 in Strasbourg (Spielplatz, from the German "playground") and in 2012 in Dublin ("City is a Playground"), proposed an interpretation of the city as a playground. Mixing reinterpretations of traditional games such as the hopscotch or the obstacle course, an imaginative reuse of street furniture and other contemporary flâneur reveries, Rivière proposes an alternative and re-creative look and use of the city and, specifically, the street.

4. The case-study: a walk-to-school research in Italy

As anticipated, so far in Italy a very few interventions have been tested, as well as very few researches have been carried out addressing the complex child-city dichotomy. Between 2015 and 2017, a specific research has been developed in the city of Cassino (Lazio Region), based on a walk-to-school intervention known as Pedibus. This work grounded on the hypothesis that the activation and the implementation of a walk-to-school program, together with training activities for teachers and aware-raising interventions targeting parents, could positively influence children's active mobility and lifestyles (Arduini, 2018).
As already mentioned, Italian children are less autonomous than their European peers. In fact, only 28% aged 8-11 are active (CCM-ISS, 2017), against 40% in France and 52% in Spain on the route to school (WHO, 2018). These data are influencing the low rates of moderate and vigorous physical activity among Italian 11-year-old children (WHO, 2016), and aerobic physical activity among adolescents (Eurostat, 2017). Thus, how could a community-based action promoted by the University and involving children, parents, teachers, local associations, and the municipality influence children behaviors in a setting that, as showed in previous researches (Pompili, Borgogni, 2013; Arduini, Borgogni, Capelli, 2016), is strongly oriented towards inactive lifestyles and children's dependency?
The three-years longitudinal research was based on a mixed-method approach (Creswell, 2014), involving pupils attending the three public primary schools in Cassino, as well as their parents. A questionnaire on children's autonomy (validated by the Italian National Research Center, CNR-Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies) was used as research tool, submitted before and after the intervention to third, fourth, and fifth graders aged 8-11 (average age 9,2). The students also received a questionnaire addressing their parents: in relation to the three years of the study (2015/2016/2017), a number of 693/741/528 questionnaires were returned by children, and 574/597/422 by parents (only two schools in 2017).
The questionnaire was composed by two main sections: socio-demographic data, and children's autonomy and independent mobility. The questionnaire addressing parents was integrated by sections on sport participation and the use of ICT-devices and internet. Focus groups (n=09) have also been carried out with teachers (n=2), parents (n=2) and pupils (n=5). Direct observations (n=8) in the area around the intervention school were carried out during school entrance and exit times. The intervention was firstly centered on a Pedibus in two out of three schools (2015, following previous experiences). During the second year of implementation, the action became more frequent towards the end of the school year. In the third year, since spring 2017, the action was carried out once a week in the intervention school for all participating students (average attendance n=83).
According to the results from the parents pre-intervention questionnaire, 75,3% of children go to school by car, 7,4% by school-bus, and 17,3% in an active way. Only 3,4% go to school independently. The main motivations preventing families to allow children's independent mobility are: distance (55,3%), traffic dangers (17,8%), and "stranger danger" (15,6%). In extra-school hours, 26,6% use the bicycle near the house, and 12,8% go to friends' homes alone.
Focus groups with teachers highlighted the impact of normative restrictions and parents over-control in the decrease of children's autonomy. Focus groups with parents also stressed the influence of dangers overrepresentation especially triggered by media. School settings and the lack of community-based planning seem, ultimately, to influence in a negative way children independent mobility and their overall autonomy.
Post-intervention results showed a slight increase of active mobility (1%/3% to school/return home) in the intervention school, and a decrease (2%/3% to school/return home) in the control school.

TAB. 1
Percentage of children being active: a) going to school; b) going back home; in c) intervention; d) control schools. Data pre-post walk-to-school intervention; parents questionnaire (Arduini, 2018).

Active Mobility	Going to school %		Back home %	
Data	**Pre**	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**
Intervention School	17,07	17,89	19,51	22,76
Control School	23,21	21,43	26,79	23,21

5. Conceptualizing a physical activity model for children

The interpretation and discussion of these results opened the way to the development of a conceptual model aiming to embrace the different typologies of physical activity performed by children, considered from the point of view of their independent mobility and autonomy.
If looking to the health outcomes, walking to school, playing outside, going autonomously to meet friends or running small errands within the urban public realm represent some routine actions greatly contributing to reach physical activity recommendations. Focusing on education, the same activities are crucial to learn competences and the written and unwritten intrinsic rules of the urban environment. Thinking at social aspects, they also allow children to create acquaintanceships and friendships, building relationships without any adult supervision.
Considering the Ecological Model of Health Behaviors (Sallis et al., 2006), it is evident that organized physical activity or sport are merely included in the "Active recreation and Occupational activities" domains and, within them, few are the settings in which educators or coaches lead or train groups or individuals (physical education classes, walk-to-school programs, sport, fitness courses). Therefore, there seem to be plenty of available time – mostly for commuting, leisure or play – and venues (predominantly urban public spaces) in which to deploy non-organized or non-supervised physical activities. Regarding children, such times and spaces are strictly linked together with their autonomy and, in particular, with their independent mobility and roaming possibilities.
When educating to active lifestyles, the subtraction of the physical play-field entails to play an "impossible game" denying the educational significance of the urban public domain, and that of risk-taking as a pedagogic dispositif (Massa, 1989; Farné, Agostini, 2014), eventually leading to the exclusion and disappearance of the child from public spaces.
Originating from the discussion of the results, and from an interdisciplinary review carried out in the fields of physical activity, pedagogy, public health, town and mobility planning, environmental psychology, and urban sociology, a conceptual model [figure 1] was drawn based on the classification of physical activity as independent or non-independent (Borgogni, Arduini, Digennaro, 2018). The first group of physically active behaviors is associated with children's autonomy to roam in the public spaces; the second one assembles activities performed when escorted by adults for mobility or leisure purposes; the third one relates with sport, leisure or educational activities, during and after school time, organized and taught by adults.

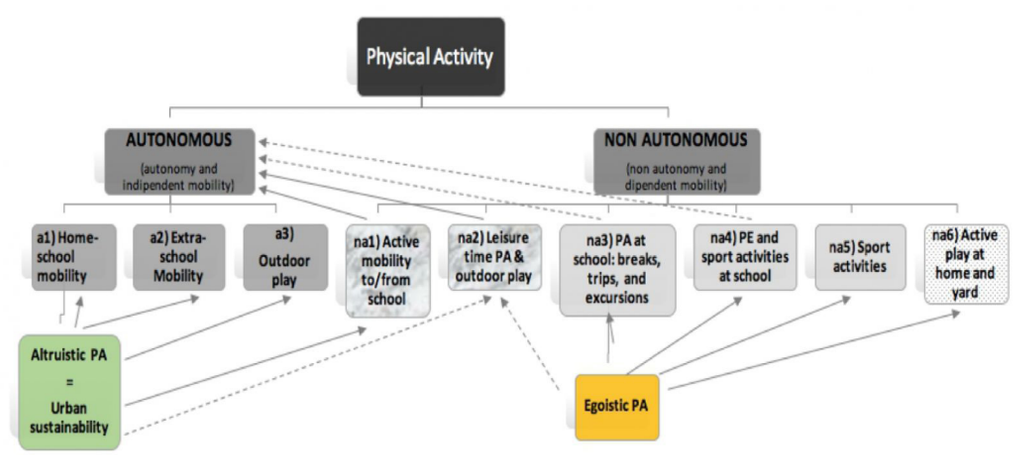

FIG. 1
Conceptual model of children physical activity

Source: Borgogni, Arduini, Digennaro (2018).

According to the model, a large part of physical activity in children should be considered an epiphenomenon of their independent mobility and mobility opportunities in the urban public spaces. Consequently, to enhance overall children's activeness from a decision-making point of view, the focus should be directed towards all the "realms" of experience of the child, also considering the cultural, educational, and legislative determinants of physical activity.

Referring to the conceptual model, the first two groups of "autonomous physical activity" address adults lifestyles and the urban planning and mobility culture, while the others represent a matter of organization – including spatial issues – in which children are confined into specific spaces, more or less attractive and designed for them.
Within such framework, two main questions arise: do we really think that the majority of children could be more active in the settings of the model's third group? And also, is it plausible, from an organizational (e.g. family, school, clubs) and economical point of view that a preponderance of children participates in sport activities to achieve the 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity, as recommended by the WHO (2016) as minimum target to stay healthy? Certainly, it is possible and desirable to participate more in sport, and to increase physical education in schools, together with more active recesses and excursions. Nevertheless, as also suggested by the WHO (2017) itself, it is out of the urban confined spaces and times where we can play a "possible game", or rather in the vast realm of the children conceivable experiences. Therefore, to enhance children physical activity within the urban environment a shift in the prevailing adults mentality is needed. Such change involves many interrelated aspects, but the infrastructural one is the prerequisite having the major influence on behaviors, as also proved by Sallis and colleagues (2016) when comparing data from fourteen cities around the globe. In this perspective, also a radical change in town and mobility planning is required, at the different architectural scales: from healthy and sustainable building design; to the conception of active and easily accessible public spaces, playgrounds and schoolyards; to the realization of more widespread and safe active mobility infrastructures, efficiently connecting the public realm and allowing all citizens – children first – to autonomously move around the city. Rephrasing Colin Ward (1977), while looking at enhancing health through everyday physical activity: we do not need cities, districts, spaces designed for determined categories of people, nor for the practice of specific sport or activities preventing the coexistence of many other uses and users. Today more than ever, we do need cities in which "everyone's body practices" are facilitated by a safe, attractive, connected, and vibrant milieu. Unquestionably, in such an environment, children are those who might get the more important benefits in term of establishing enduring active lifestyles.

6. Conclusions

We believe that, today more than ever, it is a matter of "minimal phenomenologies"; a matter of making converge the idea of the city with the possibilities and experiences of actually walking through through it, experiencing it, interpenetrating the human with the urban bodies. When losing its function, indulging only in traffic and commerce, the street (the square, the interstices, the corners) – that "[...] "river of life for the city, the place where we come together" (Whyte, 2012, p. 7) – impoverishes the entire city, accepting only the bodies of those who transit it functionally. A few decades ago, a child who did not go out in the street was considered strange; nowadays, it is strange to meet one walking alone. The bodies of children are "out of place" if not escorted, like other marginalized bodies (De Martini Ugolotti, 2020).
Of course, it is not like that everywhere. We are not here referring to the "children on the street" (La Cecla, 1996), a concept that introduces us to areas of the world that we are not dealing with here or, in any case, to an idea of children in unattended public spaces (on the street, precisely) exposed to risks that are easily transformed into dangers. We are referring to the right of the children to experience and use the street – the streets as public spaces – that is, to a protected dimension not because it is supervised or confined, but because it is culturally accepted on a social and urban level, and therefore safeguarded and lived.
If urban public spaces tend to exclude children, as a result the "spatial knowledge" (Lynch, 1977) that they have over the city is and will be increasingly limited, triggering a vicious circle difficult to break and reverse. It is paradoxical to think that we as Italians – we could say the "forerunners" of the Mediterranean street culture – are being taught by northern European designers to re-conceive a livable street for all. Yet this is how it is: as we have seen, Italian children are the

least independent in mobility, and receive from their parents the same autonomy permits three years later than a German or Finnish child, and they are also the most sedentary ones.
As we said, it is not like that everywhere. In the wake of the new or rediscovered sensitivities following the approval of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990s saw the flourishing of projects that placed the right of children to play, to mobility, to participation, with full rights in public policy. After that period, the countries that have continued to invest in these aspects today find themselves having a strategic advantage over those, such as Italy, that have abandoned all national planning, leaving to the good will of local authorities every action and, in so doing, increasing inequalities between different areas of the country.
Especially during the difficult times of partial or total lockdown we have been living in the past few months, what we could address as "postmodern categories" like sustainability and digitalization have been brought to the fore, in both the disciplinary debate and our everyday life. However, together with these words we should never forget about an extremely ancient and yet fundamental one – the body – which has somehow found a "re-configuration" especially in its unprecedented movements and behaviors, through illness, cure, quarantine, new proximities, restrictions, and, in the end, a new need and desire for expansion. It is "vital" for these words to become actual meanings; visions and reflections capable to envisage and guide the planning of our cities.

Notes

[1] This article is the result of a shared work among the authors, who wrote together paragraph 6. Elena Dorato authored paragraphs 1, 2 and 3, while Antonio Borgogni authored paragraphs 4 and 5.

References

Arduini M. (2018). Mobilità scolastica attiva e autonomia nella scuola primaria. PhD thesis: University of Cassino and Southern Lazio.
Arduini M., Borgogni A., Capelli G. (2016). The walk to school actions and portable devices as means to promote children's active lifestyle, in Novak D., Antala B., Knjaz D., Physical Education and New Technologies. Zagreb: Croatian Kinesiology Association, 19-25
Borgogni A. (2012). Body, Town Planning, and Participation. The Roles of Young People and Sport. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä University Printing House.
Borgogni A. (2019). Per una pedagogia mite: la progettazione partecipata degli spazi educativi, in Educational reflective practices IX/2, 138-149.
Borgogni A. (2020). L'intenzionalità educativa degli spazi pubblici. Rome: Studium.
Borgogni A., Arduini M. (2017). Le città sostenibili dei bambini: la progettazione partecipata degli spazi urbani. In Birbes C. (Ed), Trame di sostenibilità. Pedagogia dell'ambiente, sviluppo umano, responsabilità sociale. Lecce: Pensa MultiMedia, 183-198.
Borgogni A., Arduini M., Dorato E. (2017). Le città sostenibili dei bambini: sfide e opportunità per un'urbanistica democratica, in AA.VV., Atti della XX Conferenza Nazionale SIU. Urbanistica è/e azione pubblica. La responsabilità della proposta. Roma, 11-13 giugno 2017. Rome-Milan: Planum Publisher, 1604-1608.
Borgogni A., Dorato E. (in press). Ripensare l'urbanità dell'urbano. Dalla strada alle strade, in Ceruti M. (Ed.), Racconti dallo spazio. Per una pedagogia dei luoghi. Lecce: Pensa MultiMedia.
Borgogni A., Farinella R. (2017). Le città attive. Percorsi pubblici nel corpo urbano. Milan: Franco Angeli.
Borgogni A., Dorato E., Arduini M., Ciccarelli M., Digennaro S., Farinella R. (2017). Active and sociable cities: the frailer elderly's perspective. In Caudo G., Hetman J., Metta A. (Eds.), Compresenze. Corpi, azioni e spazi ibridi nella città contemporanea. Rome: RomeTrePress, 45-47.
Borgogni A., Arduini M., Digennaro S. (2018). Mobilità attiva, autonomia e processi educativi

nell'infanzia e nell'adolescenza. Metis [Special Issue December 2018], 33-45.
CCM-ISS Centro Controllo Malattie Istituto Superiore di Sanità (2017). OKkio alla salute. Dati nazionali 2016. Retrieved from http://www.epicentro.iss.it/OKkioallasalute/dati2016.asp (09/28/2020).
Creswell J.W. (2014). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. USA: Sage Publications.
De Martini Ugolotti N. (2019). Corpi e città contese: studi culturali del corpo, in A. Donato, L. Tonelli, E. Galak (Eds.), Le pieghe del corpo, Milan: Mimesis, 73-99.
Dorato E. (2020). Preventive Urbanism. The role of health in designing active cities. Macerata: Quodlibet.
Edwards P., Tsouros A.D. (2008). A healthy city is an active city, a physical activity planning guide. Copenhagen: WHO Europe.
Eurostat (2017). Time spent on health-enhancing (non-work-related) aerobic physical activity by sex, age and income quintile. Eurostat dataset. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/hlth_ehis_pe2i (09/20/2020).
Farné R., Agostini F. (2014). Outdoor education. L'educazione si-cura all'aperto. Parma: Edizioni Junior.
Filippone B., Vantini C., Bellucci, M., Faigenbaum A.D., Casella R., Pesce C. (2007). Trend secolari di involuzione delle capacità motorie in età scolare. Studio longitudinale su un campione regionale italiano, in SdS Rivista di Cultura Sportiva, n.72, 31-41.
Franck K.A., Stevens Q. (2007). Loose Space. Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life. Abingdon: Routledge.
Fyson A., Ward C. (1973). Streetwork: the exploding school. London: Routledge and Kegan.
Gehl J., Gemzoe L. (2006). New City Spaces. Copenhagen: The Danish Architectural Press.
Gray P. (2011). The decline of play and the rise of psychopathology in children and adolescents, in American Journal of Play, vol. 3(4), 443-463.
Grize L., Bringolf-Isler B., Martin E., Braun-Fahrländer C. (2010). Research Trend in active transportation to school among Swiss school children and its associated factors: three cross--sectional surveys 1994, 2000 and 2005, in International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, vol. 28(7), 1-8.
Habermas J. (1978). Raison et Légitimité. Paris: Payot.
Ikeda, E. (2019). Associations Between Environmental Attributes and Children's Active Travel to School. PhD thesis: Auckland University of Technology.
La Cecla F. (Ed.) (1996). Bambini per strada. Milan: Franco Angeli.
Lambertini A. (2013). Urban Beauty! Luoghi prossimi e pratiche di resistenza estetica. Bologna: Editrice Compositori.
Levy J., Lussault M. (Eds.) (2003). Dictionnaire de la Géographie et de l'Espace des Sociétés. Paris: Belin.
Lynch K. (Ed.) (1977). Growing up in Cities: Studies of the Spatial Environment of Adolescence in Crakow, Melbourne, Mexico City, Salta, Toluca and Warsaw. Cambridge: MIT Press.
Mackett, R. L. (2013). Children's travel behaviour and its health implications, in Transport Policy, vol.26, 66-72.
Massa R. (1989). Linee di fuga. L'avventura nella formazione umana. Florence: La Nuova Italia.
Mitra, R. (2013). Independent Mobility and Mode Choice for School Transportation: A Review and Framework for Future Research, in Transport Reviews, vol. 33:1, 21-43
Paquot T. (2009). L'Espace Publique. Paris: La Découverte.
Perec G. (1997). Species of Spaces and Other Pieces. Londra: Penguin Books.
Pompili L., Borgogni A. (2013). The influence of the playgrounds georeferencing, layout, and equipment in the development of active life styles in children, in Sport Sciences for Health, vol. 9(1), p. addenda.x
Renzi D., Prisco A., Tonucci F. (2014). L'autonomia di movimento dei bambini: una necessità per loro, una risorsa per la scuola e per la città, in Studium Educationis, vol.15(3), 105-119.
Rouard M., Simon J. (1977). Children's play spaces: from sandbox to adventure playground. New York: Viking Press.

Sallis J. F., Cerin E., Conway T. L., Adams M. A., Frank L. D., Pratt M., … Davey, R. (2016). Physical activity in relation to urban environments in 14 cities worldwide: a cross-sectional study, in The Lancet, vol. 387(10034), 2207-2217.
Sallis J.F., Cervero R.B., Ascher W., Henderson K.A., Kraft M.K., Kerr J. (2006). An ecological approach to creating more physically active communities, in Annual Review of Public Health, vol. 27, 297–322.
Shaw B., Bicket M., Elliott B., Fagan-Watson B., Mocca E., Hillman M. (2015). Children's Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action. London: Policy Studies Institute.
SUSTRANS (2015). Designed to Move – Active Cities. Retrieved from http://e13c7a-4144957cea5013-f2f5ab26d5e83af3ea377013dd602911.r77.cf5.rackcdn.com/resources/pdf/en/active-cities-full-report.pdf (09/20/2020)
Walzer M. (1986). Public Space. Pleasures and Costs of Urbanity, in Dissent vol. 33(4), 470-475.
Ward C. (1977). The Child in the City. London: The Architectural Press Ltd.
World Health Organization (2010). Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health. Geneva: WHO Europe.
World Health Organization (2016). Growing up unequal: Gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. HBSC study: International Report from the 2013-14 survey. Copenhagen: WHO Europe.
World Health Organization (2017). Towards more Physical Activity in Cities. Copenhagen: WHO Europe.

Reference According to APA Style, 6th edition:
Dorato, E., & Borgogni, A. (2020). Active cities/active children: a planning and pedagogical perspective [1]. Convergências - Revista de Investigação e Ensino das Artes, 13 (26), 91-101. https://doi.org/10.53681/c1514225187514391s.26.38