EURECA: Exploring Urban touRist Environment Through Child-Based Activities

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Abstract. The touristification is affecting specific urban contexts on an international scale, highlighting how economic interests drive decision-making dynamics regarding public space. Specific stakeholders - such as children - are often excluded from decision-making processes aimed at enhancing public spaces. Starting from previous research, the article presents some results that emerged from the implementation of a replicable hybrid methodology aimed at including child-inhabitants in the analysis of urban contexts under tourist pressure. This is a first step to activate a territorial process capable of placing under-represented stakeholders at the center, reinterpreting the co-city model, to co-evaluate – in an evolutionary approach - shared strategies for mitigating over-tourism, aiming at the transition towards sustainable tourism's development. This was possible by involving the children-inhabitants co-exploring an exemplary place - Capri Island - through the school collaboration - as an institution capable of accelerating urban and social regeneration. Therefore, starting from an action-research participatory approach, the kids' involvement has required an in-depth study of ethical issues that limit their inclusion in the research, orienting for slower research that collects qualitative data, building a process of continuous exchange between adult and child researcher, in a logic of mutual learning. This approach is implemented by recognizing the children's skills, by developing a three-day creative workshop called "EURECA" as an enabling context aimed at stimulating them in co-exploring the socio-urban context, using photography, drawing, collaborative mapping and situational interviews, to intercept issues of children's interest, focusing on the reclaimed public space, to collectively develop a non-touristic children-based imaginary.

Keywords: Children's engagement · Public space values · Tourism co-governance

1 Introduction

The reflection surrounding the sustainable conversion of cities presupposes a specific focus on the necessity that such transformations be measurable [1] and guided by equity and justice [2, 3] promoting new forms of citizen participation in the collaborative and

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horizontal governance of the city [4]. This growing interest can be explained by observing the evident distance that persists between public policies and the concrete needs of the contexts and the communities that inhabit them [5] given that the formulation processes of these policies often do not include ex-ante participatory evaluation methods capable of effectively guiding decisions [6]. In addition, even when experiments are developed including the contribution of communities for the sustainability of inhabited contexts, it is necessary to investigate whether and how these processes may be considered truly inclusive, genuinely fostering a holistic socio-cultural representation.

All of this is interesting when applied to public space, where the development of inclusive decision-making processes, which enable everyone to offer their perspective in the formulation of decisions about public space, fosters the regeneration of neighbourhoods through the aggregation of new communities, centralizing the under-represented in the co-creation of new shared values [7]. Numerous innovative experiments are underway [8], involving the community in decision-making that aim to validate hybrid methodologies as well as new inclusive tools for more sustainable cities.

Even in the field of tourism, the debate on sustainability is particularly lively [9], and some emerging models are developing in this regard [10–12]. In the art cities and coastal areas of Southern Italy, the tourism sector has experienced exponential growth in recent years which, following the partial slowdown during the pandemic, is now undergoing renewed growth [13, 14], generating multidimensional impacts on the communities that inhabit these pressured locations [15]. Today, a deeper reflection urgently emerges, both from politics and research [16], on the opportunities for conversion to more sustainable models, approaches, and practices in tourism promotion and management. It is hoped that in the coming years urban planning, evaluation, and tourism management will activate synergistic collaborations, aimed at building joint reflections on overtourism. This would favour - on the one hand - the promotion and innovation of under-touristed areas such as the Inland Areas or other fragile territorial contexts, which today constitute a cluster with strong tourism potential [17, 18], and - on the other hand - the protection and regeneration of the values of hyper-touristed places such as art cities and coastal areas. Also in the tourism sector, it is urgent to envision greater inclusion of all community segments in the decision-making processes aimed at converting pressured destinations into more balanced places. Indeed, literature shows that among the least represented community segments in this field are children and young people [19]. There is a tendency in the tourism literature to consider the opinions of minors only to the extent that they can influence the choice of family holidays, and therefore from the perspective of the guest rather than the resident. Scientific research in recent years is developing interesting lines of inquiry, such as the role of the "child resident" of places under tourist pressure and the need to integrate tourism management into the general framework of urban planning, in order to equip itself with tools for measuring the impact of tourism on inhabited contexts. Evaluation, particularly when interpreted as co-evaluation [20] through the direct involvement of the various segments of the resident community, can and must assume a significant role, as it can bridge the gap related to a deeper understanding of the territory. Therefore, the key questions emerge that constitute the core of this contribution: 1) what elements, aspects, and challenges contribute to building the ethical framework of reference, with respect to which the children-researchers relationship may

be defined? 2) what models, approaches, and tools can be adopted to promote the fair and ethical participation of child-inhabitants in the decision-making processes aimed at the sustainable urban conversion of hyper-touristed places - and how can they be combined to develop an effective methodology? 3) more specifically, how is it possible to explore and explicate the multiple values of tourist places with children, and therefore, how is it possible to generate new shared values with them?

This contribution develops a methodological process aimed at the construction of a Permanent Urban Laboratory that places child at the centre of shared strategies for the sustainable conversion of contexts with strong tourism pressure. Furthermore, the research aims to develop the "Exploring Urban touRist Environment through Child-based Activities" (EURECA) replicable workshop, as a useful tool to investigate a tourist territory with the contribution of children. The contribution also describes a first test of the workshop in a typical territorial context, presenting the concrete application and the main results. The following paragraphs are structured as follows: Sect. 2 provides an in-depth review of the literature related to the relevant ethical issues in the interaction with children; Sect. 3 describes the methodology and the main materials; Sect. 4 describes the study cluster and the spatial context in which the experimentation was carried out; Sect. 5 describes the results of the test and, Sect. 6 concludes with final reflections and discussions.

2 Ethical Issues for Involving Children into Co-Research

Within the scope of participatory action research (PAR), there has recently been a strong interest in the numerous ethical issues to consider when including specific community segments in research. Certainly, children and their participation in research imply a reflection on the part of researchers regarding the necessity that their engagement be respectful, integrating ethical precepts with participatory methodologies aimed – on a case-by-case basis - at producing shared knowledge with children. In tourism literature, some authors [21] explicitly state the need to delve deeper into the ethical questions pertaining to children's participation, emphasizing that the absence of guidelines represents one of the main difficulties in their inclusion in research concerning tourist destinations. This paragraph summarizes an in-depth analysis of the ethical challenges linked to children's participation. Firstly, the key ethical issues are summarized, among which the topic of informed consent emerges, encompassing various aspects. Then, the link between ethical issues and methodology is explored. Subsequently, the role of the child and the aspect of the adult researcher's reflexivity are examined. Finally, some critical aspects are highlighted as starting points for further investigation.

Many contributions aim to frame the ethical issues related to children's participation in research. According to Lewis & Porter [22], the issues to consider when including minors in research are six: 1) modes of access – by researchers – to interaction with children and their protection; 2) children's consent/assent; 3) confidentiality, privacy, and data processing; 4) feedback/sharing of results with children; 5) respect for data ownership; and 6) social responsibility. A second study [23] adopts these six principles within the context of a workshop conducted with children, during which qualitative data were produced. Starting from the 9 principles of ethical participation of minors

related to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) for the meaningful inclusion of children [24] – which include transparent, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, training-supported, safe and risk-sensitive, and accountable research – Angelow & Psouni [25], instead, propose a 21-point ethical framework. Another contribution highlights how, out of 58 studies conducted with children, 30 explicitly stated the source of ethical approval, while the privacy and consent of guardians were considered in 42 articles. It is emphasized that in 33 research studies, children's consent was explicitly requested. Furthermore, in 5 studies, the request for consent from children was not treated as a single step, but rather as an evolving process. Health et al. [26] – in this sense – speak of "process consent", indicating consent that must be constantly "reaffirmed" [27], in addition, highlight three aspects in the process of requesting consent from minors: the explanation of research objectives (with language and an approach suitable for minors), the explicit statement of the right to withdraw, and the observation of any non-verbal dissent. The study explicates a new perspective on written informed consent. Regarding the latter, some studies propose "child-friendly" informed consent forms. This issue is already highlighted by Flewitt [28], who focuses on the processes of negotiating ongoing consent, problematizing the concept of "informed" consent in research with children, addressing anonymity in data collection and reporting. Dockett et al. [29] explore children's non-verbal interactions and the ways in which they express dissent to participate in research, fostering a growing debate on the techniques for interpreting informed consent/assent, stating that it is necessary to consider the ways in which children might express their desire not to participate. Subsequently, informed consent becomes a prevalent aspect in many contributions. In this regard, Jenkin et al. [30] highlight the need to obtain "double" informed consent, where the child's consent represents an indispensable aspect for the success of the research. Larsson et al. [31], then identify some relevant aspects: 1) offering genuine opportunities to withdraw from the research; 2) recognizing children as participants with valid voices; and 3) acknowledging children's curiosity towards the researcher and the research process. The contribution highlights how the minor's position as a person whose responsibilities are entrusted to others does not legally oblige the researcher to satisfy the minors' desires.

Schweiger [32] frames the ethical challenges of minors' participation in research, highlighting how an interpretation of the child as a co-researcher is now fundamental. Three issues to consider are identified: 1) the minor's autonomy; 2) the child's participation; and 3) the child's best interests. Regarding the first, it is highlighted that the minor's autonomy of thought is a complex aspect that includes potential conflicts with parental consent and the right to withdraw. Secondly, participation is linked to the need not to alter children's "voices". Finally, the theme of the child's best interests prevails over the others, requiring that the research not only does not harm the minor but can bring them benefits. From an ethical point of view, the research included obtaining informed consent from parents and the children's acceptance to participate in the research. The Ethical Research Involving Children project [33], through which an ethical framework is developed that promotes reflexivity, rights, and relationships (the "3 Rs") as essential elements of an ethical research process. Reflexivity is defined as the "ability of researchers to critically reflect on the impact of their research on participants and their communities, on the researchers themselves, and on the body of knowledge under investigation" [34].

3 Method, Approach, and Tools

The methodological framework is constructed within an experimental context strongly influenced by the phenomenon of overtourism. In this context, locals' perception of public space, particularly children, acquires special significance. Furthermore, the framework is defined based on several assumptions.

The first assumption is that the investigation is part of a broader research path that experiments with applying an Evolutionary Evaluation (EE) process [35] within a participatory urban transformation. Specifically, EE is understood as an adaptive and iterative assessment, designed to accompany the evolution of complex interventions. EE does not start with a fixed set of objectives or indicators to be applied in the real context. Instead, it develops in parallel with the process, co-evolving with it [36]. It is based on a non-linear logic, where the evaluation does not follow a predetermined scheme, but constantly adapts to the context, emerging feedback, and changes in program goals and strategies. In particular, EE is characterized by several distinctive dimensions, including: continuous adaptivity of the evaluation process; iteration and cyclicality in data collection and feedback processes, pursuing a fluid temporality; systemic co-learning as an objective, in which reflexivity becomes a methodological practice of mutual learning [37] volving citizens, researchers, and policy-makers; and the co-production of knowledge, through the direct involvement of different actors and stakeholders in the evaluation, enabling not only accountability, but also the generation of new hypotheses, relationships, and design directions. Although the structure may vary depending on the context, it is possible to identify some typical phases that characterize the methodological framework: 1) *shared contextual framing*: this begins with a co-design phase of the evaluation process, in which evaluators and involved actors (policymakers, implementers, beneficiaries) jointly define the mandate, evaluation priorities, and initial boundaries [36]; 2) *flexible definition of the theory of change* continuously reviewed and refined through learning cycles [38]. The program logic is therefore a working hypothesis, not a definitive model; 3) *iterative and multi-level data collection:* evidence gathering is based on rapid, repeated cycles, using qualitative and quantitative tools; 4) *participatory sense-making and continuous feedback* to transform evidence into strategic learning, fostering targeted adaptations and incremental improvements; 5) *adaptation of the program and evaluation*: the cycle ends (and restarts) with integrating evaluation insights into the decision-making process.

The second assumption is that the experience represents the initial phase of a broader process of urban transformation of public space. This part of the research focuses on the first phase of the territory co-exploration. The objective is to determine an exploratory method - the "EURECA" workshop - aimed at collaboratively defining a new, emerging set of criteria to guide policymakers' decisions by reinterpreting the priorities of inhabitants. In this sense, the co-evaluation has the specific goal of providing a mutually agreed-upon assessment [20] with the stakeholders involved in the process, to create a democratic evaluation system - from the construction of indicators to assessment, to discussion of results - that promotes participation and decision-making [39]. From this perspective, the EURECA workshop does not start from a fixed set of objectives or indicators to be applied but follows an adaptive development that evolves with the context and the participants' contributions. Through progressive cycles of exploration, observation, and shared reflection, the workshop becomes a space for mutual learning

and transformation, where tools and actions are defined throughout the experience, in response to emerging needs gathered during the process. The research objectives are not all predefined; some are co-created by the children themselves during the process, and the methodology develops gradually, depending on the outcomes of the activities and the acquisition of the skills needed to achieve the desired goal.

The third assumption is that this part of the research focuses on engaging a specific target group - children aged between 7 and 10. For this reason, the process expands and contracts in its phases to better respond to the cognitive capacities of the age group considered, allowing space for a broad reflection on possible ethical frameworks to consider when involving minors.

By combining the principles of evolutionary evaluation with those of mutual learning in the involvement of children within urban transformation processes - particularly in urban contexts heavily affected by overtourism - the key pillars that guide the research's methodological framework clearly emerge (Fig. 1).

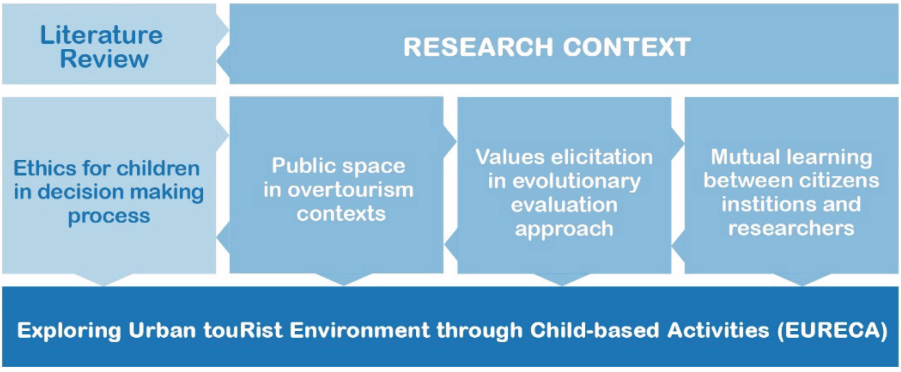

Fig. 1. Main pillars of the theoretical framework

In summary, the operational context in which the research takes place is that of public space transformations in areas affected by overtourism. Within this, mutual learning between citizens, policymakers, cultural institutions, and researchers is a foundational pillar of the collaborative and adaptive nature through which the process of involving children in decision-making is interpreted, with specific attention to ethics. Finally, the entire transformation process - as well as the defined workshop - aims at the elicitation of shared values through evolutionary evaluation approaches.

Building on the described methodological framework, the approaches, methods, and tools used to develop the EURECA workshop (Fig. 2) are analysed.

The workshop is structured into six phases: 1) Objective Sharing; 2) Knowledge Sharing; 3) Individual Values Explicitation; 4) Collective Values Explicitation; 5) Topic Prioritization; 6) Sharing of Results and Reflection.

The first phase, *Objective Sharing*, defines the specific objectives of the territory co-exploration. In this phase, contextual conditions and goals are collaboratively identified in an Action Plan to map and engage the most relevant stakeholders to achieve

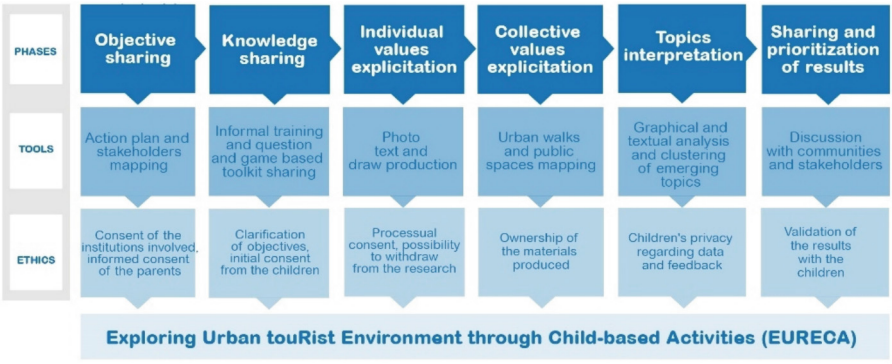

Fig. 2. EURECA Workshop's phases scheme

these objectives, using network maps co-developed with the participants. Following the quintuple helix innovation model [40], in which collective decision-making is developed by at least five distinct actors, the most significant include: private entities, civil society organizations, creative and social innovators, public institutions, and knowledge institutions. To develop the research, engaging in children's environments is strategic. The school is interpreted as a device capable of triggering territorial enhancement through collaboration with local communities and the engine of participatory, evaluative, and cultural processes, with direct impacts on how places are inhabited, perceived, and imagined. Schools involve all new generations that form the community, capturing their expectations for the future [41].

The second phase, *Knowledge Sharing*, exchanges skills and knowledge among those involved in the participatory process, through informal training sessions and question and game-based toolkit sharing with kids. Evaluators share content and educational approaches with teaching staff, parents, and subsequently with students. Based on the analysis of the European Union Recommendations [42], some aspects emerge to structure this knowledge-sharing process. The first is *Lifelong Learning*, which places school learning within the broader framework of lifelong education; the second is *informal learning*, which can occur outside the classroom and may not always be intentional; the third concerns the *cognitive differences* among students, as everyone's cognitive domain shapes their participation in learning processes. Finally, crucial are the *didactic methodologies* that encourage students to take active roles, such as problem solving, to stimulate curiosity and problem-oriented thinking, as well as *inquiry-based learning* and *cooperative learning*, supported by the works of Dewey [43] and Piaget [44] along with all *hands-on* approaches rooted in lab-based education.

The third phase, identified as *Individual Values Explicitation*, involves participants revealing individual values closely tied to their surrounding environment, through photo, text and draw production. In this phase, children bring out material and immaterial elements of the territory to which they attribute specific environmental, historical, cultural, or emotional significance. This is done through various visual and graphic-narrative techniques, customized for the target group. Another tool used is *photography*, which helps identify the key features of the explored spaces. The output of this phase could be a

rich photographic archive made up of individual narratives, making visible the plurality of children's emotional and cognitive connections with their context, and serving as the operational foundation for subsequent collective sharing.

Next, during the *Collective Values Explicitation* phase, individual values are re-contextualized within a collective dimension, mapping out the individual preferences that emerged and identifying new spaces and characteristics of the territory deemed particularly significant by the group, through urban walks and public spaces mapping. Additional tools include the *exploratory walk* and *situated interviews*, along with photography and drawing, to spatialize the emergent values and identify places considered important by the co-researchers and the material and immaterial characteristics of the territory. This enables a deeper investigation of the relationships between communities and their context on a broader territorial scale.

The fifth phase of the workshop, *Topics Interpretation*, responds to the reflective dynamics of a dynamic and iterative approach. The interpretation of results, especially when shared with all co-researching participants, is a sense-making process that offers a deep understanding of what has emerged and leads to prioritising key issues, translating shared values into design criteria, through graphical and textual analysis and clustering of emerging topics.

Finally, the sixth phase *Sharing and Prioritization* aims to return: to the community the exploration process carried out, through events and assemblies; to the children, the visions developed based on their involvement; to educational institutions, the visions that emerged as traces on which to continue working in school and out-of-school contexts; and to policymakers, the most relevant criteria with which children have expressed themselves about public space, as valuable pointers for structuring an inclusive child-based spatial transformation process.

4 Case-Study: Anacapri (Capri Island) as an Example of *Under Pressure* Places

Places subject to strong tourism pressure are a territorial cluster that requires urgent responses from research. In these places, over-tourism triggers closely interconnected phenomena that contribute to generating high impacts on communities. These impacts produce the falsification of identity values and the *disneyfication* of contexts [45].

In some cases, they lead to the disintegration of resident communities and their removal. Over-tourism favours the introduction of multinational corporations into the local market which - while improving the competitiveness of the "destinations" [46] - also alters economic dynamics. The hotel chains undermine the sustainability of family-run businesses [47], as the influx of external economic resources leads to an increase in labour costs, a rise in the quality standards, and the consequent inability of local businesses to be competitive. This causes the failure of family-run structures and their sale or lease to these corporations. This also generates impacts on the spatial context, starting with the alteration of the real estate market, which is further stressed by the increase in second homes [48] and the proliferation of non-hotel accommodation in the short-term market. This undermines the ability of residents to find housing and activates housing resistance practices. Regarding public space, recent studies reveal

how tourist flows are transforming it, for example by domesticating squares, adapting them to the commercial interests related to satisfying tourist demand. In some cases, the public space design is influenced by private tourism interests. This generates spatial injustice - particularly concerning vulnerable community segments - which consists of a progressive erosion or privatization of public space, carried out by the Ho.Re.Ca. sector. These functions not only overflow into public space but also multiply, generating what has been defined as the *foodification* of historic centres [49]. All these aspects contribute to defining a new way of inhabiting touristed areas, temporary and seasonal, and to outlining the ever-increasing urgency of addressing the touristification instrumentally and through the involvement of resident communities.

The experimentation was activated within an illustrative study context. Capri is in the province of Naples and is part of the minor Italian islands. Since 2021, Capri has fallen within the *SNAI* (National Strategy for Inner Areas) demarcation, although it constitutes an anomalous case. Its peculiarity is intricately linked to a temporary habitation that is punctuated by the alternation of "tourist seasons" and "non-tourist seasons". One of the most affected areas is the port district, where a careful evaluation of tourist dynamics would be necessary [50]. Recently, the issue has become particularly urgent as the island has witnessed the growth of its tourist flows and - with the advent of the sharing economy - the proliferation of bed spaces caused by the emergence of B&Bs. This and numerous other causes are strongly undermining the island's identity values, generating significant impacts on the local community. The causes of the island's overtourism can be found in its peculiarities and historical-cultural heritage, which even today generate excessive tourist demand compared to it carrying capacity. In the last thirty years, the interest in these specificities has transformed into an undisciplined *invasion*, encouraged by the development of some private monopolies related to both maritime transport in the Gulf of Naples and island tourist road transport enterprises. The local institutions are adopting new tools. Since 2024, the management of museums and archaeological parks on the Island of Capri has been entrusted to a single body. A procedural process for the island's Marine Protected Area is underway. The City of Capri is proceeding with a new Land Use Plan (PUC) [51], for which the authors themselves emphasize that "territorial planning certainly cannot manage the entire tourism machine". Legambiente's latest Report [52] calculates the Sustainability Index in minor islands and describes Capri as an island with a virtuous trend (62% sustainable). It should be noted that the report refers only to the condition of strict environmental sustainability, not considering other dimensions in the assessment. Other research contributions offer interesting perspectives. Mousavi et al. [53] interpret the regeneration of the "Oro di Capri" trees as a practice aimed at the sustainable conversion of the territory, also from a tourism perspective. A recent contribution has been carried out regarding the reactivation of a cultural heritage in Anacapri in relation to the implementation of a new collaborative idea of sustainable tourism, more related to the necessities of youth community and the opportunities of the underused cultural heritage [54].

5 EURECA Implementation and Main Results

The EURECA workshop was launched in Anacapri during February 2025 (winter season) and involved 22 children (aged 7–10) of an Anacapri Primary School, with the participation of two teachers (Fig. 3). To make the children the protagonists of the research experience, they were given the role of "explorers", and their support was requested in discovering the public space of Anacapri. The documentation of the activities is detailed, as it does not exclusively represent the manifestation of an output, but rather narrates the entire process, witnessing the implementation of the process in all its phases, with drawings, writings, images, interviews, photographs, on which researchers, co-researchers, and all involved parties reflect.



Fig. 3. Workshop EURECA activities implementation in Anacapri

The *Objective Sharing* phase represented the initial moment of the co-exploration process and allowed the emergence of the youngest participants' needs, desires, and visions, which were collected and interpreted during the exploratory journey, paying particular attention to the territorial context in which the experimentation takes place. In this first phase, which also saw the identification of stakeholders to involve, the designed activities enabled their participation in support of the research objectives, building a reciprocal exchange. Among the stakeholders included in the research is the Municipality of Anacapri, which recognized the value of the research activity and is working to support the researchers in the implementation of the Laboratory; equally important is the direct dialogue built with the Anacapri Youth Forum (FGA), which acts as a facilitator thanks to already established relationships of trust in the territory. The main stakeholder is the school, interpreted as the driving force of a transformation process as well as an enabling device, as it can weave relationships and becoming a child-led "construction site". The first contact was initiated by FGA, which connected with the school management, illustrating the proposal and forming the first link with the research team. A key point of this phase was the development of a relationship of trust with the first school that joined the initiative: the "Padre Ludovico da Casoria" Private Primary School. In this regard, teachers and families received in advance the program of the

"Space Adventures" activity, as well as a *vademecum* of the materials needed for the children to participate ("Explorer's Kit"). The main output of this phase consists of an initial map of the actors interested in the research, which visually and collaboratively gathers the relevant stakeholders for understanding and acting in the context. The map is configured as dynamic and open output. Before starting the activities, during the first meeting with the children, they were repeatedly asked if they wanted to take part in the research, using the word "adventure". The children's assent to participate and the explicit expression of their interest and enjoyment were essential elements of the workshop.

The *Knowledge Sharing* phase, therefore, involved the transfer of some key concepts with which to observe the territory. Through the medium of images, a reflection on the concept of space was initiated, during which the children were invited to consider how this abstract concept could instead describe a real and tangible context. To make this element more explicit, supporting illustrative materials were prepared, which helped the children visualize the differences between solids and voids, between closed and open spaces, built and natural spaces, public and private spaces. To the question "What is space for you?" the children replied: "For me it's where we can do many things"; "for me it's something beautiful, you can't feel it or see it"; "for me it's a place where you can plant, run, play, and walk"; "for me it's spending time in an open place"; "for me it's where I can play and read"; "it's a place where we have fun"; "it's everything that surrounds us and occupies a space". The workshop activity focused on public space, also defined as "community space". To stimulate the imagination, some tactical urban planning projects carried out for school communities near some Italian schools were shown. Therefore, starting from the concept of space as "empty", some representative images of urban contexts were distributed, on which the children redesigned the void. The resulting drawings represent a confirmation of the concept learning, as well as their visual interpretation, aimed at illustrating how an "empty" space can be occupied through imagination. Another important activity was the observation of early 20th-century photographs of Capri, depicting moments of children's daily life. One image on which the children particularly focused portrayed some peers playing soccer in the port village of Marina Grande. The image sparked some considerations about how the public space of Marina Grande has transformed and the current impossibility of playing in those places due to the high number of commercial activities and the large number of tourists.

During the *Individual Values Explicitation* phase, the main objective was to foster a subjective exploration of the proposed theme, encouraging children to reflect on their emotional connections in relation to space, with the aim of making explicit and valuing individual perceptions, which risk being marginalized in collective design processes. Stimulating the emergence of personal values allows for the construction of a richer and more articulated repertoire of meanings, going beyond shared stereotypes or iconographic images. To start the activity, the theme of the island was introduced, providing the co-researchers with some information about islands in Italy.

Among the items listed in the *vademecum*, participants were asked to find some postcards of the island. The collective observation of these images highlighted the systematic repetition of certain emblematic places: the Blue Grotto, the Piazzetta of Capri. This allowed the children to recognize how there is a standardized image of the island.

The children were invited to identify an island place to which they felt connected, even if less known or absent from the classic representations of the island. They were asked to describe this place on a prepared sheet and to depict it on a blank postcard. The aim of the activity was to give value to the affective and everyday dimension of the experience of places. At the end, each child shared the description of their place and the postcard they created with the group. In the next phase, these postcards were spatialized: each participant placed their representation on a Anacapri's map, posted in the classroom. From the non-tourist postcards drawn by the children, it emerged that an alternative reading of the island's context is possible, more linked to the intimate dimension, which focuses on the identity values specific to the socio-cultural context of the territory. This activity made it possible to construct a new geography of the island, generated by the children's lived experiences, which contrasts with the stereotypical images that initially emerged.

The *Collective Values Explicitation* phase allowed for the emergence and negotiation of shared values related to public spaces through a dual approach of on-site exploration and participatory mapping. During an exploratory walk, the group of researchers traversed the historic centre of Anacapri, using essential tools such as notebooks to jot down observations and suggestions aimed at improving the quality of the spaces they inhabit: "I would like a playground in an enclosed space because you can't play anywhere"; "they could remove the appliance store that has been closed for a while and turn it into a museum or an association that does charity or a house since they are not easily found on the island"; "the closed store can become a toy library"; "the fountains could be improved and the rule of not blocking them applied"; "add a fountain for animals". During this activity, the children pointed out several characteristic elements of the public space. Among the issues relevant from their point of view, it emerged that in some Anacapri public spaces "ball playing is prohibited". Another prohibition that was pointed out concerns the use of bicycles. Furthermore, the co-researchers noted the presence of many closed commercial activities (also noting that they only open during the summer) and that "a lot of space will be occupied by bar tables". During the walk, the group of explorers, at a square, sat in a circle to have a snack. The circular arrangement in the open air encouraged the sharing of new considerations; the children highlighted the lack of shade, a closed gate concealing an underutilized area, and pointed out the closure of a shop once very popular with locals. Subsequently, as if representing a small symbolic "conquest"; the children spontaneously began to play with pinecones from a pine tree near a sign reminding them of the prohibition against playing ball. At the end of the exploratory walk, back at school, guided by the researchers, they populated the map of Anacapri previously affixed to a classroom wall. Each child indicated their home with a marker, then together they traced the route and stops of the walk, highlighted critical issues such as the lack of sufficiently large play spaces and "of trees and plants" with sticky notes, and reported their final considerations starting from the statement "I liked this experience because"; "we discovered more things about the territory"; "we went out and understood how much space we have on this island"; "because it makes us become explorers"; "we understood how - space - we can occupy it".

The *Prioritization of Topics* phase aimed to transparently synthesize the results that emerged during the workshop, valuing the children's contribution and transforming their

experiences into an operational method of urban analysis and interpretation, reproducible in different contexts. The subsequent experimentation is expected to reveal shared values such as active participation, transparency of choices, and the critical capacity to imagine spaces, in addition to ensuring the reproducibility of the methodological path.

6 Conclusions and Discussion

The process has developed and concretely tested a methodology aimed at eliciting shared values with children in touristic places and identified some relevant issues around which the next phases of the research will allow for inquiry, to co-evaluate transformative shared strategies. This was possible by activating the engagement of a new community, whose contribution will continue to be included in the next phases, involving a quintuple helix including child-inhabitants, the school, the third sector, the local authority, and the university. The test highlighted some aspects of particular importance, as well as the potential and limitations of the implemented methodology.

With regard to the indispensable tools, the following are mentioned: 1) the involvement of the school institution as a necessary bridge between researchers, families, and children; 2) the presence of a local association (and young people) as a facilitator and generator of trust in the other parties involved at the local level; 3) the use of images, drawings, and photographs as a privileged tool for shared reflection on the tourist and non-tourist imaginary of the territory; 4) the spatial element and its direct observation as catalysts for reflections, and in this sense, the exploratory walk as a tool suitable for observation and innovative reinterpretation of the living spaces of the community; 5) the adoption of language appropriate to the age of the co-researchers, which, however, facilitates deep understanding (and acceptance to participate) in the process in which they are involved; 6) the activation of the process within a broader framework of EE, which favoured the initiation of a reflection that will continue with further practical experiments in a logic of reiteration of the different phases, encouraging the improvement of the methodology; 7) the integration of appropriate strategies, techniques, and tools aimed at addressing the ethical difficulty of including children in research and their interpretation as co-researchers in a context of mutual learning as particularly successful in PAR contexts. Furthermore, the implementation of the EURECA workshop made it possible to focus on some aspects that can be further explored in subsequent experiments and that are highlighted below: 1) the need to carry out the activities with a limited number of co-researchers, currently identified as 15, as a higher number risks limiting the capacity for equitable listening on the part of adult researchers; 2) the need for a large environment that encourages children's expression, within which to carry out the activities; 3) the adoption of a longer timeframe to effectively conduct the research and collect systematic results. In this regard, it is important that researchers consider the needs of the various parties involved, agreeing with them on the schedule of activities to be conducted. Regarding the results related to the context of the Island of Capri, EURECA made it possible to map some issues relevant to children in their interaction with living spaces, which can be summarized in three essential clusters: 1) the "play" space denied or absent; 2) "home" as an asset at risk, as it is rare and precious; 3) the right to the sea (perceived as a luxury good) and to nature as essential issues for children's

well-being; 4) the urban public space "eroded" by tourism. The identification of these clusters will allow for the initiation of a deeper shared reflection, calibrated to the needs identified with the co-researchers, aimed at guiding the future choices of policymakers, as well as offering different points of view to be adopted in urban transformations.

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