

LISTENING TO CHILDREN: PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES IN THE DESIGN OF OPEN SPACES FOR PLAY

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Abstract

In the current urban reality, the quality of daily life for children in cities is impacted by increasing traffic, long distances, lack of safety, and poorly designed play areas. These problems are exacerbated when the design of public spaces fails to take into account children's needs and desires. In this context, participatory design emerges as an effective tool, allowing children themselves to express their opinions and actively contribute to the shaping of their spaces.

This paper highlights the importance of participatory design with children both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. It aims to respond to critical questions regarding the ways design can respond to the contemporary challenges of urban childhood and whether child-friendly spaces enhance urban resilience.

The study area is located in the municipality of Kalamaria in the greater urban area of Thessaloniki, Greece and it comprises the planning unit of Byzantio and part of the planning unit of Limenergaton. This area is characterized by a densely populated urban fabric, crossed by two major roads with heavy traffic, lack of green spaces and a few abandoned open spaces, such as Rodon Park. The analysis focused on playgrounds and included data collection through questionnaires for children and parents, using digital media, as well as a participatory workshop for children that focused on mapping their desires for a new design for Rodon Park. The results from all sources led to the formation of a design proposal for upgrading and revitalizing Rodon Square, while at the same time enhancing resilience. The paper focuses on the methodology of the participatory practices that were applied, with the ultimate goal of extracting models of participatory practices for the design of open spaces for play.

Key words: *Participatory design, children, play spaces, urban resilience*

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanization has led to the concentration of a great percentage of people in cities, and therefore a large number of children living in them. Specifically, it is estimated that by the year 2050, 70% of children worldwide will live in urban areas. The relationship between children and cities is beneficial for the development of both (Andrea et al., 2023). Cities are considered cultural and political centers of societies, and the way they treat children is a key factor of how humane and generous they are (Chawla, 2003). However, cities are often

characterized as dangerous and “contagious” places for children. This approach, both on the part of planners and parents, distances them not only from danger but also from life. As mentioned in Jane Jacobs’ book, it is important for children to learn the basic principles of social urban life by being able to live and play in the streets (Noschis, 1992). Nevertheless, urban spaces are being developed in a restricted way and they leave no room for freedom and independence (Θανάση&Φορούλη, 2018).

This evolution in public spaces is also a consequence of the challenges that urban childhoods have to deal with, which include crime and criminality, social anxiety and fear, risk avoidance, inadequate and not equal access to the city and isolation (ARUP, 2017). According to research, there is a tendency for children to spend their free time indoors, while it has been observed that children in cities experience significant isolation, leading them to be unfamiliar with the traffic system, behavior at public events, planning activities and responding to issues and situations (Τσεβρένη, 2008).

Urban design that focuses on children’s needs and resilience can promote social cohesion by transforming the open areas of a neighborhood or city, which leads to the creation of opportunities for playing, learning and healthy development (Andrea et al., 2023). However, proper design is the result of multiple levels of planning (city-neighborhood-home). Therefore, small interventions can improve the child-friendliness of an area. On the other hand, a holistic approach to the design process should be based on specific data, while at the same time putting the user at the center. In this case, it is important to understand the perspective of the children themselves, who can offer solutions and innovative ideas. Equally important in this process is the evaluation of initiatives to provide feedback and reach conclusions (ARUP, 2017).

This paper, based on a diploma thesis project, aims to present a process of children’s participation in the design of public space in a medium-sized Municipality in Greece. In a society where children are considered to be passive and without opinions, this project attempted to bring them at the forefront by listening to their views, suggestions and desires; children are not treated as passive recipients but as active citizens. This participatory approach reinforces democracy by supporting children’s opinions and leads to the creation of inclusive spaces that are not segregated playgrounds but operate as living environments that encourage expression, creativity and social interaction. The area of study, Byzantion in Kalamaria, Greece, is an area that lacks liveliness and safety, so the project focused on it in order to make it more sustainable. The result – the proposal of the project – is not just a technical solution but sets the foundations for a city that is humane, inclusive and more child-friendly.

The paper is structured around three main areas: the theoretical background, the methodology and its results, and the proposal. The theoretical framework will refer to the importance of play in children’s lives, as well as its place in the urban environment and the potential problems that arise. In addition, participatory design and various approaching methods will be discussed. Next, the steps and methods used to conduct the research will be outlined. Also, statistical data from the research, from the two questionnaires and the pilot participatory workshop, are analyzed. Finally, the final proposal is presented, along with key findings and conclusions.

2. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY URBAN DESIGN

It is worth analyzing specifically three paradigms of urban design that lead and contribute to a holistic and child-friendly approach. These are: Human-centered design, Nature-based design and play and Inclusive design.

Human-centered design

The shift in design from aesthetics and functionality to a human-centered approach resulted in the incorporation of the needs and desires of residents themselves into the urban and built environment. The specific period in which this change took place was a period of crisis for the modern movement and modern culture (Τσουκαλά, 2006) . Human-centered design also includes “placemaking” which is the participatory process of imagining and creating with other people. This practice cultivates a sense of hope and possibility, while placemaking with children is important not only because of the insights they can offer, but also because of the positive energy they transmit to adults, serving as source of inspiration for intergenerational action (Derr et al., 2018).

Nature-based play

The natural environment provides many opportunities to engage all the senses in play, while also facilitating social interaction by supporting cooperative play (Little, 2020). Nature-based play can be creative, spontaneous and free and can transform into different types and forms. Nature provides the opportunity for a variety of play experiences (Candiracci et al., 2022).

Therefore, nature-based play can help develop greater empathy and respect for nature, as well as enhance resilience. Promoting nature-based solutions in combination with the addition of play elements can create resilient environments, educate on biodiversity and climate action issues and open up new spaces for different types of play (Arup, 2023) . Creating cities with opportunities for direct contact with nature creates inclusive cities that can better adapt to climate crisis issues (Candiracci et al., 2022).

The solution for creating high-quality and connected play infrastructure in nature is the “ecological greening” of urban communities. Some of the key elements that must be included in the design is the multifunctionality of neighborhoods but also opportunities for nature-based play. The presence of water is also an important aspect as it offers opportunities for play, stimulation and relaxation. However, the most important factor to consider is the quality of the place where the children play (Candiracci et al., 2022).

Inclusive design

Physical and mental accessibility is one of the fundamental principles of sustainable urban design (Krishnamurthy et al., 2018). Inclusive design is mainly based on inclusion but also takes into account the needs of all social groups, ages etc. Such design can be applied to play. Through play, individuals can develop their skills and solve their problems in a creative and enjoyable way. Play is ideal, in order to develop cognitive, emotional, social and creative skills (Candiracci et al., 2022) . Play can have a positive effect on intergenerational connections. More specifically it is important to appreciate the advantages that each generation has to offer. Public parks and urban design can help in this process by providing the right environment for people of different ages to meet and coexist (Washington et al., 2019).

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATORY DESIGN WITH CHILDREN

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of children, their participation is of great importance. A participatory design process in which children take part leads to the broadening of horizons for both children and adults, the development of personal responsibility and also moral and personal growth. Furthermore, it contributes to increased self-motivation and self-esteem, while it can also help with social connection and decision-making (Fernandez et al., 2020). The identity of a space has a particular connection with the identity of the “self” and contributes to the child’s overall development. Therefore, these types of processes are

essential for cognitive and social development, adaptation to the environment and the creation of autonomy, so it is clear that the participation in such design activities takes on both socio-political and psychological dimensions (Τσουκαλά, 2013).

It should be understood that children have more knowledge about the “recipe” for the proper design of play areas, while they have better understanding of the space in which they play and activate (Freeman, 1995). However, they usually treated as innocent beings who are unable to express their opinions and their own ideas without adult guidance - a notion that has become ingrained in the foundations of childhood culture (Baraldi, 2003). The “antidote” to this situation is the participatory design, which can motivate young people to co-create their future. Thus, instead of being objects of research, children take an active role and become co-researchers and co-creators (Kleine et al., 2016).

Therefore, a “proper” participatory process must understand the needs and interests of children and young people, as well as the ability to participate in such processes. These methods are designed in such a way in order to support active participation and generate wealth of information that can serve as a source of insight for local plans, policies and co-design spaces. These actions serve as a lesson in the effective involvement of young children in planning and as a catalyst for creating strong social outcomes (Corkery & Bishop, 2020). Therefore, with the right tools, children can be an important factor in shaping spaces and decision-making.

According to Hart, who based his work on the forms of participation applied by Arnstein, there are eight forms of child participation, which are grouped into two categories: participation and non-participation (Τσουκαλά, 2013). However, proper participatory design with children is important to follow some of the forms of participation in order to have a meaningful participation of children in the process. To achieve this, various tools are used to help children and young people develop their ideas, suggestions and concerns. Some of the tools that are widely used in such processes are the following:

- **Painting:** An important tool for expressing ideas, describing experiences and communicating. However, this method can lead to confusion by misinterpreting meanings. For this reason, it is important to discuss the pictures in order to understand the children’s perspectives.
- **Mapping:** Maps are an important source of information and provide cultural, geographical, environmental and other data. They can contribute to the perception of a space, serve as a topic for discussion and motivate young people to create new maps. At the same time, it gives children the opportunity to identify elements that are important to them. Through maps, children can develop their own perspectives and ideas for change and improvement (Derr et al., 2018).
- **Photography:** This method is particularly useful when the photographers are the children themselves, as it depicts their own field of vision that make others understand the difference of perspective and height. Taking photographs makes children think about the significance of objects, places and people (Clark, 2024). There are many ways in which photography can be used as a tool, such as photo-voice, photo-elicitation, photo-drawing and photo-framing (Derr et al., 2018).
- **Interviews:** This is a difficult but very important tool that contributes to the process. Various factors must be taken into account, such as the children’s age, interests and skills. Interviews can take place individually or in groups, depending on the preference of each child. In any case, flexibility is very important (Clark, 2024).
- **Model making/building:** This method gives the opportunity to children to explore their local environment and suggest new solutions. Additionally, three-dimensional models

help children understand the space better and also serve as a catalyst for discussion about their experiences and knowledge about the area.

- Role-playing: By taking on a role and “hiding behind a puppet” children feel more comfortable, making it easier for them to express their thoughts and feelings (Derr et al., 2018).

Some additional tools are storytelling, creating photo books, observations and collage-making. In general, all the participatory methods mentioned above should have the following characteristics:

- Relevance: Children should find the topic interesting and relevant to their priorities
- Creativity: Creative methods keep children engaged and motivate them to participate and share their ideas.
- Participation: By providing feedback on the approaches used and the opportunity to influence and co-shape the research, children feel that they are participating in the final outcome.
- Flexibility: Processes must remain open and flexible.
- Empowerment: Processes should aim to stimulate children’s thinking, providing new knowledge and boosting self-confidence, increasing their ability to speak freely and act independently (Kleine et al., 2016).

It is important to note that the above methods could be combined to create different approaches. As Hart points out, if we want to build more democratic communities it is important to go beyond the simple listening strategies (Derr et al., 2018). An approach that is used very often at this kind of workshop is the Mosaic Approach. This method provides a set of narrative tools that are properly adapted for implementation with young children (Clark, 2024). The variety of methods helps to highlight the strengths rather than the weaknesses of young children, which boosts self-confidence and motivates them to participate. Additionally, the use of different methods allows them to develop their creativity and imagination (Γκέσιου&Σακελλαρίου, 2018). Some of the tools are observation, the creation of photobooks, guided tours for children, slide show or “Magic Carpet” (with images from various playgrounds abroad), and map making. The Mosaic approach gives children the opportunity to reconsider their answers and change their opinions. This approach is structured in three stages. The first stage includes collecting verbal and visual material. The second stage entails reviewing the material collected, and finally, the third stage is the decision-making stage.

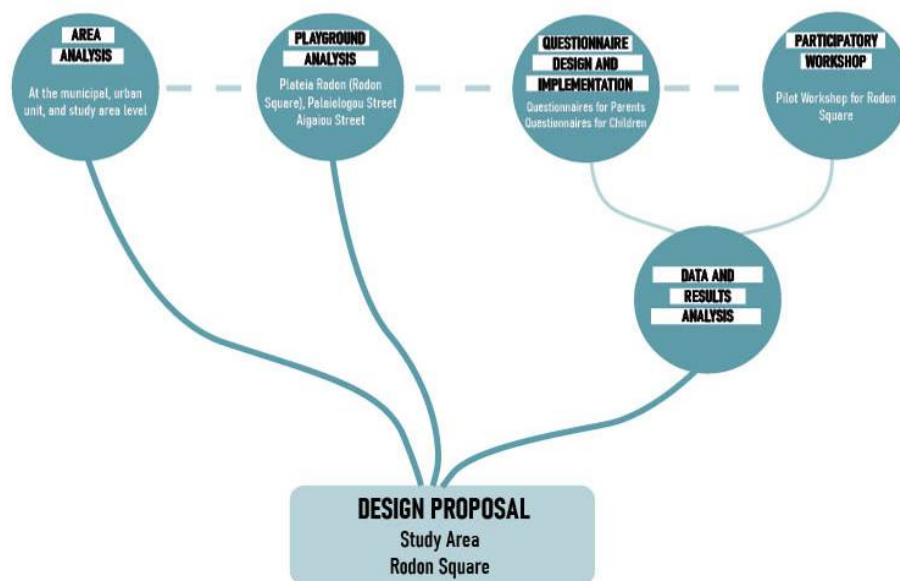
Also, this approach enables both children and researchers to take on multiple roles during the research process (Clark, 2024). At the same time, the children themselves actively participate in the research process as active individuals. Therefore, the approach is characterized as follows:

- Multimethod: It recognizes the different voices of children’s language using multiple tools.
- Participatory: Putting children at the center and considering them experts.
- Adaptable: it can be applied on a wide scale.
- Focused on children’s experiences: taking into account children’s memories and everyday life rather than their knowledge.
- Committed: to practice (Γκλούμπου&Κακανά, 2018).

4. METHODOLOGY

The first part of the methodological process was the analysis of the area, which was carried out through field research and the collection of information after extensive observation of both the problems of the area and the behavior and actions of individuals. Next, a thorough analysis of playgrounds, open play areas and schools in the area –places where children spend time– was also carried out. The next stage of the research was the collection of questionnaires from both children and parents/guardians. Specifically, the parents’ questionnaires were completed on site (at the playgrounds within the study area). The playgrounds where the research took place were the playground on Aigaiou Street, the playground in Rodon Square and the playground on Pasalidi Street. The questionnaire included 16 questions related to safety, freedom, and improvements to playgrounds and open play areas. Data collection took place during the period of December 2024 – January 2025, specifically between December 5th and January 4th. Most of the questions in the questionnaire were closed-ended, with one exception (open-ended). While completing the questionnaire, parents made comments and observations about the current situation, which contributed significantly to the research.

Figure 1: Conceptual diagram of research methodology



As for the children’s questionnaire, according to (Kleine et al., 2016) and the rapid development of technology, it was decided to use digital media (tablets) and the Typeform software, a platform for conducting online forms and surveys. The questionnaire was designed in a child-friendly way, and it consisted of two parts, choosing between photos and rating images using stars. The questionnaire consisted of 19 slides, 14 of which involved choosing a photo and five of which involved rating a photo. More specifically, the selected photographs were categorized appropriately in order to refine the research and draw clearer conclusions. The categories are as follows: Color, Materials, Size of Intervention, Specification of Play, Freedom of Movement, road, schoolyard, DIY, Activities, Nature, Diversity (of games). Consequently, each child’s choice contributed to the mosaic of the playground of their dreams. The sample was collected at the same time as the adults’ sample (between December 5th, 2024 and January 4th, 2025), and the average time taken to complete

the survey was no more than five minutes. The questionnaires were collected in person at the playgrounds in the area after parental consent.

Considering the importance of celebration and reward in such processes with children as mentioned by Derr, Chawla and Mintzer (2018) in the book "Placemaking with children and Youth", after each child completed the questionnaire a hero character appeared on screen (Nature and City) who represents the child's preference. These heroes were created with the help of artificial intelligence, taking into account the preferences data. Depending on the hero that appeared on the screen, the corresponding gift was offered. The reward process helped the children realize the value of their opinions and participation.

To ensure that the results are fully in line with the children's preferences, a small group of children was selected to organize a small pilot workshop in the study area, specifically in the intervention area. The small group of children was selected for safety and supervision reasons. The children's ages ranged from 10 to 14. Initially, the workshop began with a visit to the area where the children identified elements they liked and disliked about the space, while at the same time, they took photographs of elements that caught their attention both positively and negatively. This was followed by discussion about the photos for further research. The next step was to create their own free play area in Rodon Square. The process was carried out on an A1 board and was divided into three parts. The first part of the process was to create a list of their wishes. Then, their wishes were mapped out in the form of numbers, and they had the opportunity to design on top of that, creating paths and additional elements. The last part consisted of designing over photographs of the space and transforming it based on their own thoughts and preferences. At the end of the process, there was a celebration with the distribution of commemorative gifts.

Taking into account the opinions, views and wishes expressed in the questionnaires and the participatory design workshop, a comprehensive understanding was developed of the elements that would constitute an ideal playground, serving both young and adult users. Consequently, the next and final stage of the methodology was the design of the space, including the design of the larger area- all the study area - and on a smaller scale, specifically redesigning Rodon Park. Drafting software applications for two-dimensional and three-dimensional design were used to develop the final drawings.

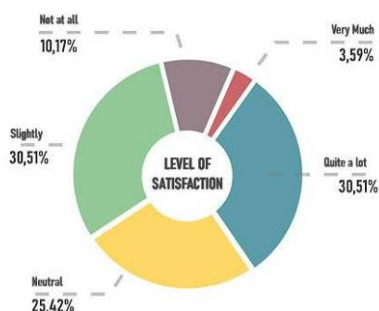
5. RESULTS

Parents' Survey Results

As mentioned in methodology, a survey with parents was conducted in the playgrounds of the area. This process gathered a considerable amount of data on safety and satisfaction issues relating to existing free play areas. This process helped the research a lot. Below are some of the charts and analyses that resulted from the 59 collected questionnaires.

Regarding the level of satisfaction with the condition of playgrounds (Figure 2), 30.51% stated that they were quite satisfied, while another 30.51% appeared to have moderate satisfaction. Fifteen of the 59 respondents were neutral, while a minority of respondents gave one of the extreme responses (very satisfied or not at all satisfied). To summarize the responses, satisfaction tends to lean toward the negative side.

Figure 2: Level of satisfaction from the area’s playgrounds



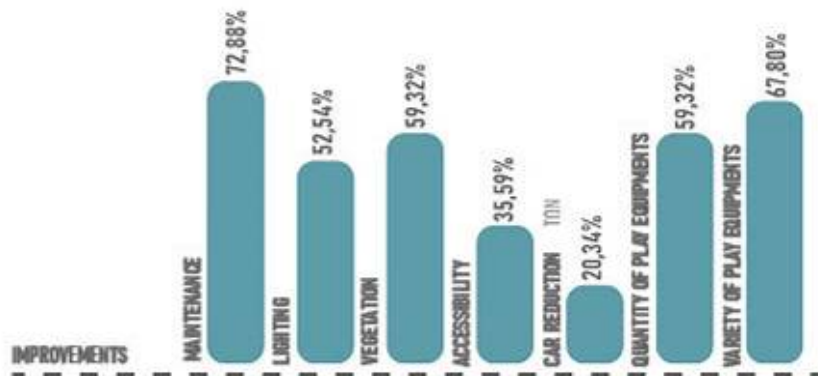
A correlation analysis was performed to investigate the relation between how satisfied parents were from the playgrounds with how often their children visited them. The table below (Figure 3) shows the correlations between the satisfaction of parents and the frequency of visits to the playgrounds of the area. It was observed that those who reported being quite satisfied with the condition of the playgrounds chose to visit the playgrounds on a daily basis ($p=0.047$). Visiting a few times a week was associated with neutral satisfaction ($p=0.013$) and low satisfaction ($p=0.016$). Those who visited the play areas only once a week reported being very satisfied with the current state of the playgrounds ($p=0.001$). Finally, dissatisfaction was associated with daily visits ($p=0.002$) and visits several times a week ($p=0.131$).

Figure 3: Correlations between parents’ satisfaction level and frequency of visits to playgrounds

	DAILY	SEVERAL TIMES/WEEK	ONCE A WEEK	SEVERAL TIMES/MONTH
LEVEL OF SATISFACTION				
Very much	0,360	0,186	0,001*	0,628
Quite a lot	0,047*	0,117	0,842	0,874
Neutral	0,125	0,013*	0,284	0,603
Slightly	0,079	0,016*	0,842	0,274
Not at all	0,002*	0,131	0,273	0,385

Regarding suggestions for improvements, results are presented in Figure 4. Some of these are the ban of smoking in playgrounds (although there are signs, this is not always respected), the addition of more trash cans, more shaded areas and kiosks, clean water and public fountains. There were also several complaints about teenagers (due to broken glasses and cigarettes they may leave behind) and animals that may pose a risk to children (due to their behavior and uncleanliness). The fencing around the swings was also mentioned, while the addition of defibrillators in playgrounds was highlighted as important. Finally, one improvement mentioned by many parents is that playgrounds should become more in scale and number, providing more opportunities for children.

Figure 4: Areas for improvement, according to parents' survey



Regarding the installation of non-strict fencing around playgrounds, a large percentage (89,83%) were reluctant at this kind of practice due to safety issues that could occur. Many believe that the infrastructure to implement such a measure in Greece does not exist, making them feel insecure about possible accidents. However, they are not opposed to natural fencing. As for the participatory workshop, 58 out of 59 respondents said that they would like to participate in such practices with their children, considering the contribution and opinion of the children themselves to be important.

Children's Survey Results

As mentioned in the methodology, the questionnaire was completed by the children in an interactive and entertaining way with the help of technology. This process yielded important results regarding children's preferences from the choice of materials to the overall design of the play space.

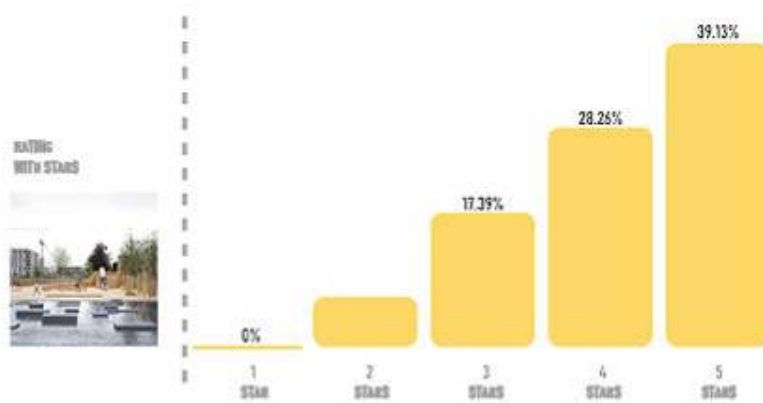
Figure 5: Choice of environment



In the question regarding which category of playgrounds they preferred (with or without natural elements), the majority of children chose the first image, which clearly shows the presence of nature. This choice received 76.09% of the responses (Figure 5). In the category of images related to color, 63.04% of children preferred a play area with color in order to create a more friendly atmosphere. There was also a significant difference in the responses regarding the choice between cognitive games and conventional play equipment. Most

children chose the first answer and the maze with 63.05%. Children showed their need for game and play equipment that will develop all their senses and are different from the usual ones.

Figure 6: Rating a park with stars



In the second part of the questionnaire and on a chart that shows a park with natural elements and unconventional play equipment, the votes increased progressively, with fewer votes concentrated on the 2 stars, while the most were concentrated on the 5 stars with 39,13% (Figure 6).

Participatory workshop analysis

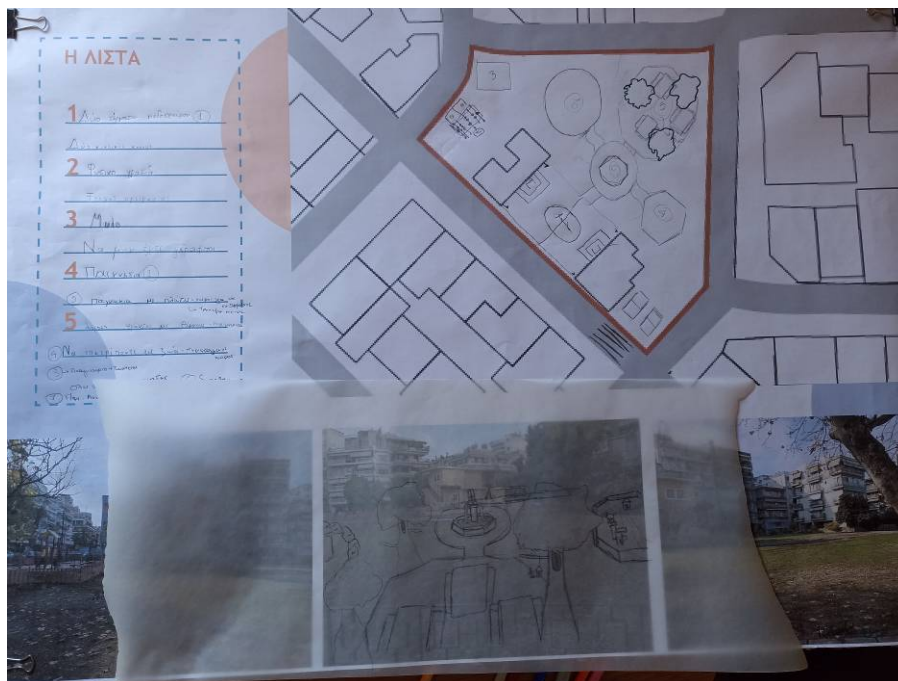
In order to acquire direct input from children regarding the new design, a participatory workshop was held with the involvement of children aged 10-14. This workshop contributed to a deeper understanding of the needs and desires of children. The process included various activities, each of which contributed significantly to the overall design proposal for Rodon Park.

The first stage of the workshop included a visit to the park so that the children could get an overall impression of the space and focus on its most important features. The children took photographs to help them in this process. Specifically, they were divided into two groups and asked to take photographs of three elements they liked and three they did not like in the area. As positive elements they mentioned presence of greenery, safety issues (with the addition of railings in the playground) and cleanliness. Regarding negative aspects, both groups of children focused on graffiti that was present on the playground equipment and on the walls. In addition, the negative aspects included photos of benches without backrests as well as the potholes in the area, which could injure people, while other group listed the cemented area as a negative one, suggested that it would be better to cover it with grass

The second stage was the design process. In the first part, the children were asked to express their wishes for Rodon Park, and from the results it appears that the children had many ideas and wishes. At first, they focused more on specific games and mentioned some that they would like to see in the playground, such as a merry-go-round, circular swings and a climbing wall. In addition, they would like to see a sport court for ball games. Particular emphasis was placed on their desire for natural grass and the avoidance of graffiti. They expressed their need for benches with backrests as well as picnic tables. They also wanted adequate lighting at night and natural fencing to create a sense of security. They also wanted animals to be allowed but in a fenced-in area. They envisioned a park that would be accessible

and inclusive. Last they added a wish for a refreshment area as well as a meeting point. The girls also mentioned public toilets.

Figure 7: Board for the participatory workshop



However, in order to express their wishes at a design level, the children proceeded to the next design phase, where they sketched on a map how they would like the elements mentioned above to be arranged (Figure 7). The elements were also marked with numbers. It appears that they chose a solution that does not restrict the natural grass and movement is via small paths made from stone slabs. Centrally located is the picnic area, where trees have been planted for shade, while the refreshment area is located in the left corner in order to be accessible from all areas. The sport court was placed by the children between the two existing buildings. In addition, there are also ping-pong tables. It is worth noting that the children mentioned the importance of reducing traffic on the surrounding roads for safe play.

In the last activity, the children were asked to draw a picture of the park of their dreams. At this phase, the children were satisfied with the idea they had proposed, so they followed it at this stage as well. For this reason, they assigned this task to a specific person-child because they believed that this person would best capture what they had proposed. During this time, the children supervised the process and made corrections, suggesting green fences and bushes. Unfortunately, due to lack of time, the process was limited to a single image. However, even this managed to capture an overall view of the open space.

6. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the participatory process, the wishes and opinions of parents and children, based on the survey and the participatory workshop, are summarized in a diagram (Fig. 8). Following a three-part structure, the diagram attempts to categorize the wishes and also to identify certain elements that are important to all three sources of information. More specifically they are divided into:

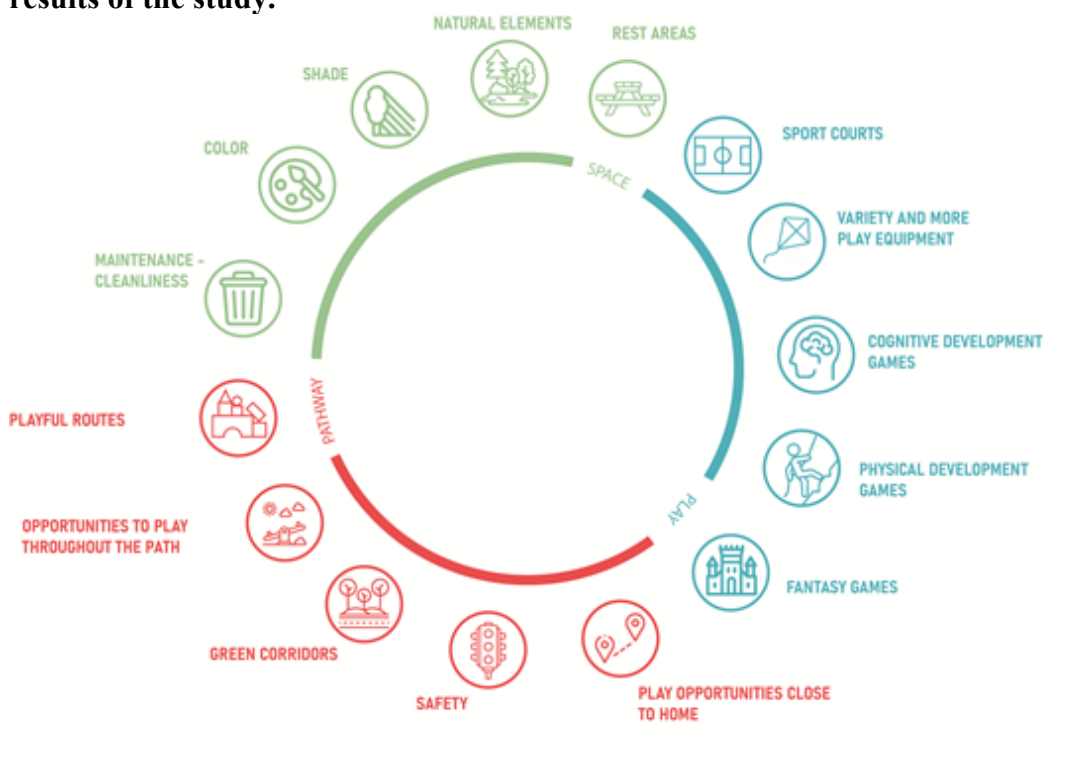
I. *Pathway*: Based on the three sources of information, the main concern was safe routes. Parents and children consider independent mobility an important aspect, with the addition of

crossings and safe roads. Furthermore, particular emphasis was given on the possibility of playing close to home, as well as opportunities to play throughout. The inclusion of natural elements in the pathway is also an important factor.

II. *Space*: Parents mainly focused on the problems that currently exist in play areas, so they are looking for elements such as cleanliness and shading. In addition, parents and children consider rest areas an important element, while children placed particular emphasis on color. Natural environment also played a special role in this category.

III. *Play*: There were several elements that both children and parents considered important for play. Initially, emphasis was placed on the variety and quantity of play elements. Therefore, it is necessary to include games that strengthen mental and physical abilities, games that have a competitive element (such as sports), as well as games that stimulate imagination.

Figure 8: Diagram showing the three pillars of design for the study area, based on the results of the study.



7. DESIGN PROPOSAL

The design proposal at the neighborhood level (Figure 9) included the design of a network of pedestrian streets and sidewalks, while also recommending traffic-calming measures in several locations. A network of green routes is also proposed, mainly on major road axes. The most important part of the proposal is the emphasis on play opportunities, which are not limited to existing playgrounds but also extend to parks and open spaces that do not currently have a specific designated use.

Figure 9: Design intervention for the study area



Specifically for Rodon Park, the design was largely shaped by the proposals generated during the participatory workshop with the children (Figure 10, 11, 12). The park was divided into five main zones: the playground, the resting area, the fountain, the dog park and the sports courts. Special emphasis was placed on preserving natural environment and ensuring minimal intervention. At the images below it is clear the proposed design for the park, featuring the use of permeable materials, added lighting and the thoughtful use of color. Additionally, in the design of the playground, very crucial is the addition of unconventional play equipment that stimulates imagination and encourages spontaneous play. Throughout the entire area, the use of soft protective surfaces is avoided, as these can be toxic to children, especially when heated (Katsavounidou, 2025).

Figure 10: Design Proposal for Rodon Park



Figure 11-12: Visualizations of the new design for Rodon Park



8. CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of the project is significant. Specifically, it can contribute to the literature on participatory design and in particular workshops related to play areas. At the same time, it is an example that can serve as a basis for similar large-scale designs at both the municipal and national levels.

The study shows the importance of child-friendly design for enhancing urban resilience. At the level of social resilience, this was achieved through the contribution of children to the

planning and designing process, where it became apparent that they had the knowledge and experience, as well as the willingness to contribute and express their desires and needs. Consequently, it is worthwhile to give them a voice and treat them as active citizens with views, knowledge and opinions. In addition, the design and proposals that were suggested aim at inclusion and social contact. By creating well-designed spaces for children, they come into contact with many different stimuli and images, contributing to the overall development and growth into well-rounded individuals with sensitivity and empathy. In addition to social resilience, these proposals contribute to climate resilience, promoting nature-based solutions that contribute to children's development while preventing problems caused by potential disasters due to extreme weather events. Therefore, designing for urban childhood is a multi-dimensional solution that must be prioritized.

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