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Challenging Child-Friendly Urban Design: Towards Inclusive Multigenerational Spaces

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Abstract

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has not only presented novel challenges but has also brought to light previously unaddressed issues, such as children's rights, their interdependence on adults, and the vulnerability of children concerning their mental well-being. The pandemic has served to accentuate the distinction between those spaces that have traditionally been designated for children or adults, and the manner in which they coexist. Some researchers posit that this phenomenon can be attributed to the emphasis placed on so-called child-friendly spaces. This article presents a critical examination of and challenge to the concept of child-friendly places, advocating for a shift towards multigenerational places. This critique draws on data from an observational study conducted in a community playground in Brno, Czechia. The concept of territorial production was employed as a tool to unveil the intricate assemblage of ever-changing control over territories and power dynamics within the playground among its visitors. The findings offer valuable insights into the practices through which children assert temporary control over spaces that are considered to be communal. Teenagers employ loud music or personal belongings to mark their territory, while younger children utilise movement to establish control. Territorial production coexists with those of the adults who also frequent the site. This highlights the necessity to create environments that are conducive to the needs of both children and adults, discouraging the design of exclusive spaces for children. The promotion of a multigenerational city can foster inclusivity, whereby the diverse needs and behaviours of different age groups within shared spaces are recognised and accommodated.

Keywords

behaviour mapping; community playground; power dynamics; territorial production; territorial stabilization

1. Introduction

The pandemic has played a significant role in the everyday life of children and adolescents as they have experienced a reduction in their autonomy and leisure time, albeit in the context of limited mobility (Holt & Murray, 2022). Furthermore, research indicates that the risk of developing obesity-related illnesses has increased due to a lack of physical activity (Kourti et al., 2021). Consequently, the pandemic has served to reinforce an unwelcome trend that has been observed over time, namely a lack of exercise and insufficient time spent outdoors. It is thus imperative to encourage children to spend time outdoors, to promote their physical but also their mental health (Bozkurt, 2021). The post-Covid period may therefore be an opportunity to rethink playground design and equipment with a view to promoting physical activity, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging to a place and to a people, which could lead to an improvement in overall well-being.

There is a growing recognition of children and adolescents as active participants in society. This recognition has led to an increased understanding of children's capacity to shape their lives while also being influenced by their surroundings (Elsley, 2004): "Children possess a distinct existence independent of adults, with their own activities, schedules, and spaces" (Qvortrup, 1994, p. 4). As Matthews (1995, p. 457) notes, there is a risk that confining children's play to playgrounds and school grounds may result in the creation of childhood ghettos, where children are excluded from the majority of urban areas. It is therefore imperative to investigate the experiences and perspectives of children and young people regarding public spaces.

Matthews et al. (2000) have already examined the ways in which children may challenge the dominance of adults in public spaces, as this is an important aspect of their socialisation, allowing them to experience independence or freedom. As Pitsikali and Parnell (2020) argue, although these areas are designed with the intention of being child-friendly, they should not be physically or culturally separated from the outside world. In light of the aforementioned arguments, the community playground was selected as the site of investigation, which can be characterised as a multigenerational space (Herrington, 1999). Such spaces may be perceived as an incursion of the adult world into the domain of children, or vice versa, or as a domain offering diverse opportunities for individuals from a range of backgrounds. This distinctive type of playground presents new challenges, such as how to integrate various age groups and activities to create interconnected relationships, thereby fostering inclusion and bringing different generations together in public spaces (Mueller & Dooling, 2011). There is a scarcity of geographical papers that consider children's territorial behaviour in the multigenerational playground. The few that do exist focus on school playgrounds, where territorialisation, utilisation, and control over territory are constrained by formal and informal rules of the institution (Thomson, 2005; Tranter & Malone, 2004).

Territoriality and territories can be assessed in a number of ways by geographers (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2020). The focus of the present research was children's behaviour; therefore, the concept of territorial production proposed by Kärrholm (2007) was employed in order to describe the collective effort of both human and non-human actors to gain control over space. The concept of territorial production can be described as the interaction with materiality and use, which collectively determines how space is controlled. The concept enables an understanding of power dynamics and space negotiations, whether verbal or non-verbal, in both the short and long term.

As this article aims to explore the complex power relationship between adults and children and how it manifests in territoriality, the following research question has been formulated: "What is children's territorial production in the multigenerational space of a community playground?"

2. Territorial Production

Territory is not defined by space; rather, it defines spaces through patterns of relations (Brighenti, 2010, p. 57). In essence, territories are acts, events, and expressive and boundary-producing power relations. They can be stable and enduring, or immediate and ephemeral. Features of public space could be seen as a complex, sensitive, and transformative ecological system of territorial productions. Children can also produce their own territory in the same way as adults, but their territorial production is limited, not allowed, or prohibited by (not only) adult supervision. This represents a further challenge to the representation of children as less competent or uncontrollable creatures.

Kärrholm's (2005, 2007, 2017) four categories of territorial production were utilized in this article (Table 1), i.e., territorial strategy, territorial tactics, territorial association, and territorial appropriation, to describe a way of establishing a connection to a place and control over a place: "Territorial strategies and tactics are intentional attempts to mark or delimit a territory. In other words, territorial control is directed explicitly toward the ordering of a certain area" (Kärrholm, 2007, p. 441). And while strategies are established by the institution before entering the space itself, for example by organizing events or playground closing hours, tactics come into play only in the territory itself; they could be situational and spontaneously produced territories, i.e., unofficial, or informal tactics (Kärrholm, 2017). An almost perfect example could be placing a towel on a sun lounger by the sea to get a better spot: "Territorial associations and appropriations represent productions that are not planned or intentionally established but are consequences of established and regular practices" (Kärrholm, 2007, p. 441). Territorial appropriations occur through direct repeated use of space but are unintentional; for example, a gang that converges on a particular street corner every Friday night. Associations exist without the presence of people in each place, but the place evokes the idea of a particular place or territory, e.g., a skatepark or pétanque field. It could be a symbolic association such as a public gathering place or commercial place. Associations could go hand in hand with strategies, appropriations, or tactics (Kärrholm, 2017). For example, a football pitch is strategically planned for playing football, but it is also associated with other sport games, as visitors can appropriate the pitch that way by playing those games there. While tactics and appropriation are primarily initiated by the individual or group (personal), strategies and associations are influenced by the set of rules and the appearance of the place (impersonal).

These forms of territorial production may occur simultaneously in the same place and with the same object. The different forms of territorial production are not based on who is in charge or who dominates the place.

Table 1. Forms of territorial production.

	Impersonal control	Personal control
Intended production	Territorial strategy	Territorial tactics
Production through use	Territorial association	Territorial appropriation

Source: Kärrholm (2007, p. 441).

Instead, they represent a way of describing the occurrence of different territorial productions operating at the same place, but at different times (or different aspects of that place at the same time; Kärrholm, 2005).

An essential aspect of urban everyday life and power relations is the territorialisation of different time-spaces which is produced. For instance, it could be through parking regulations, opening hours, the schedules of public transport, working hours, and temporary appropriations (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2020). In essence, territorial power is the consequence of intricate interrelations between humans and non-humans. The built environment is a co-producer of the territorial productions of the urban landscape, with walls, lines, markers, and doors playing a pivotal role in shaping and stabilising territorial power. The possession of territorial power is the result of various actors, rather than the end product. Territorial rules and limits, whether formal or informal, are an integral part of everyday life, often without our conscious awareness (Kärrholm, 2007). Children are often presented as agents of disruption to these established norms, challenging the established order.

The concept of territory serves as an abstract yet powerful framework for social relationships, transcending its purely functional role as a background. It plays a pivotal role in the structuring of social relations (Brighenti, 2010). A territorial practice of power can be described in terms of network stabilisations, whereby connections between a set of actors or actants (e.g., rules and regulations, borders, walls, locks, pavements, behaviours) become increasingly stable and predictable. As Kärrholm (2007) suggests, this approach offers a potential avenue for examining the significance of materiality and artefacts within diverse territorial networks, where certain functions may remain consistent while others evolve. Furthermore, the concept of territorial stabilisations may be employed to elucidate the nature of territorial conflicts that emerge across disparate territorial productions. The process of stabilisation may manifest as a network or body, comprising both human and non-human elements, when boundaries, norms, or behaviours are established within a given territory. The processes of stabilisation and destabilisation are similarly ongoing and, according to Kärrholm (2007), cannot be fitted into pre-given scenarios. Conversely, for a location to be considered stable, all actors (human or non-human) must demonstrate a capacity for adaptation or assertion of their interests. Overall, territorial production can facilitate an examination of public space that transcends the limitations of the dichotomy between adults and children, inclusion and exclusion in the urban context.

3. Methods

Both quantitative and qualitative frameworks have been used to describe and analyse the territorialisation of space. The method of behavioural mapping, as described by Cox et al. (2018), lies to some extent on the border of this duality, depending on how the researcher handles the actual mapping process and whether the researcher actually captures all observed phenomena in a map, if that is the aim. Here, behavioural mapping was approached in a more qualitative way, as the researcher could not reliably capture interaction with playground. In addition, the maps were used primarily to capture trends of territorial production.

The method of behavioural mapping was originally developed by environmental psychologists to "relate various aspects of behaviour to the physical spaces in which they are observed" (Ittelson et al., 1970, p. 658). It was developed to study environmental influences on behaviour and to recognise the reciprocity between the environment and in situ behaviour. Behaviour mapping is one of the few tools that allows researchers to examine and document both behaviour and its social and environmental context. It is based on direct observation of behaviour, coupled with a map of geographical space on which the behaviour is recorded,

analysed, and displayed. Data are then collected in relation to the behaviour observed in that location and can include participant demographics, behaviour, social interactions, and environmental conditions. Finally, the data are displayed and analysed in an iterative manner.

When studying territories in this way, the focus is on the traceable behaviours, activities, rhythms, and materialities that brought about territorial effects (Kärrholm, 2017). This method was useful for tracing these ever-changing relationships and interactions in each place. As Ng (2016) states, this method "allows researchers to relate different post-pattern behaviours to specific locations (i.e., where the activity occurs), physical characteristics of the environment (i.e., what features are used), types of users (e.g., children), period of using (e.g., per week)" (p. 30). Behavioural maps can therefore be used to assess whether the space has been designed effectively for the groups in question.

3.1. Study Area

The study site is located on the outskirts of the city of Brno, specifically in a residential area that has undergone turbulent demographic change as young people and families have moved in due to its favourable distance from the city centre and transport hubs. The residential area has a mixed population in terms of class and income. The housing in the area is also diverse, with prefabricated houses, villas, apartment blocks, semi-detached houses, and multigenerational houses. The playground in question is accessible by public transport and blends in with the surrounding area.

Higher quality of public space, where residents and users of the site are already involved in the planning process, is becoming a priority of local administration (Derr & Tarantini, 2016). This could include the addition of amenities such as toilets, refreshments, shaded areas, tables, or spaces for physical activity. One outcome of these efforts is a playground that reflects the needs of at least the majority of all age groups. This is the case of a selected playground in Brno—a community playground. This type of playground does not yet have a clear definition. These playgrounds tend to be larger and functionally separated so that there is no overlap of activities where one group might endanger another. Before the recent revitalisation of the playground, there were elements and spaces that were used by a part of the population, mainly teenagers and active adults (Figure 1).

For further illustration, a quote from the local government's website outlines the expected vision, use, and demographics of the site in addition to the characteristics of the area:

> The ideal location is on a patch of the former football pitch near the clinic. Currently, there are already several opportunities for children and young people to enjoy themselves, but it's not until they are older—a skatepark, a workout area, a climbing wall, and recently, a slide. The project will add play elements for younger children, toilets, and facilities for parents—a café….The café could offer the hire of various outdoor games such as pétanque, etc. The café will be mainly seasonal, and the facilities will be adapted to this; no indoor seating is planned, but outdoor seating (including a covered area) on benches at tables is. (Brno City Council, 2021)

The site is and has been popular and visitors mention the variety of the space and its size as the main advantages of the space. Many lifestyle local blogs and leisure websites recommend this place for families highlighting the

Figure 1. Individual places or features within the community playground.

variety of spaces and activities. These qualities are also why the site is used for various community events such as a children's day, a traditional witch burning (welcoming spring), or a quidditch tournament.

3.2. Data Collection

During data collection, I focused on the territorial production that took place on site and was a direct result of visitors' interactions with the playground. An extension to other actors would also imply an extension of

the methodological framework. The observation focused on the situations in which each form of territorial production occurs, when the use and control of the space changes, and the moments when individual activities collide. These interactions were colour-coded and recorded in a drawing of the whole space. Data were entered into the GIS database (age group, interactions with the environment, interactions with others) to provide results in other dimensions. Vocal notes were recorded to complement the spatial data. Spatial data were collected throughout the day between 8 AM and 10 PM in 30-minute intervals for one year (summer 2022–summer 2023). The study area was visited 28 times, considering public holidays, different weather conditions, and events taking place at the site.

Although this research attempts to adhere to ethical principles based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there were some limitations associated with the chosen research method in this regard. As much as an attempt was made to emphasise the position of children as equal actors in territorial processes, children as participants do not actively participate in the research (Dockett et al., 2013). Only to a certain extent, therefore, was Article 12 (the obligation to take children's perspectives into account) fulfilled, as children and their behaviours were integral part of this research and their interaction was the focal point of the observation. Furthermore, the nature of the research was inspired by Articles 31 (right to rest, leisure, and play) and 27 (right to an adequate standard of living; United Nations, 1989).

In terms of research ethics, images were only taken without directly capturing the visitors or even their faces. To overcome this problem, their faces or bodies were blurred to make them indistinguishable. Visitors were informed about the research through the local administration media. Most of my observations were undercover. As ethically problematic as this research is, mainly because of the target group or segment of the target group (children), it is research in a public space where this type of research is still ethically relevant. Spicker (2011) has addressed these issues associated with covert observation, arguing that with consideration of crucial recommendations such as privacy and autonomy, covert observation can be as valid as any other method. This is because it is likely that visitors would behave differently if they knew they were being observed for research purposes (Clark et al., 2009). As this was a non-invasive research method, no significant interactions with visitors were anticipated. All information was recorded on paper, dictaphone, or tablet and was completely anonymous. The university's ethics committee approved this research project.

3.3. Data Analysis

According to Cox et al. (2018), the behaviour mapping protocol requires the following five core components: (a) a base map of the observation site; (b) selection of data collection tools; (c) establishment of a systematic protocol for collecting data; (d) a set of observable data variables; (e) a strategy for data analysis. The last point suggests establishing a strategy for thematic analysis. The textual data were coded and assigned to different themes using an open and later selective coding technique. There were several rounds of coding that included groups such as activity, number of participants, and estimated age. What mattered was whether the moment was one of the manifestations of territorial appropriation, tactics, strategy, or associations, and the way these final codes of territorial production were applied in the place. From the notes, situations where group or individual human territories collided, and situations where territory was expanded or reduced by external or internal activities, were mainly selected. Inspired by Thomson (2005) or Sack (1986), the playground was divided into territorial subunits that increased the intensity of the playground's territorial production. These subunits were distinguished by their primary function and characteristic surface and later they were used to

structure the results section of this article. Themes were then distributed according to the places where they took place (see Figure 2). For the purposes of this article, the focus was on an outdoor gym, a skatepark, and a refreshment area combining a football pitch and an outdoor lounge. Other areas, such as the climbing wall or the transition area, were not included as they were not heavily used.

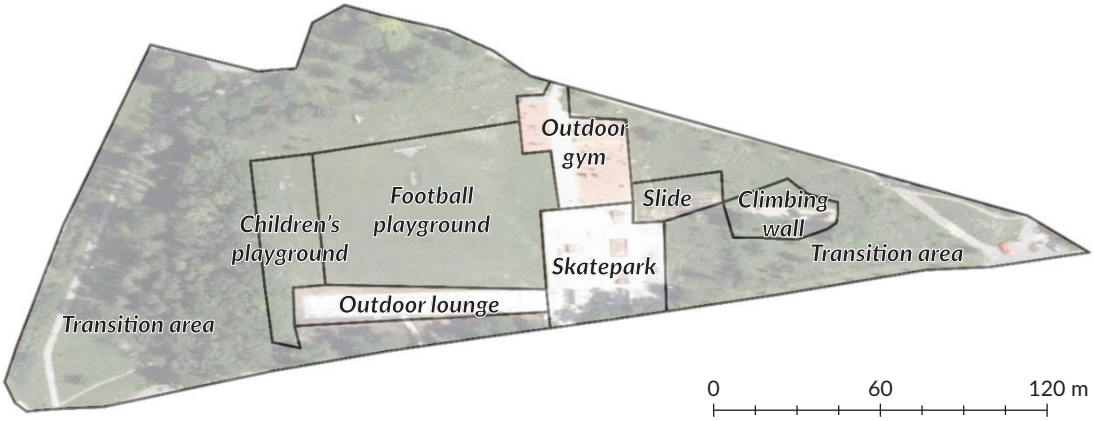

Figure 2. Map of the community playground and its functional division.

Children were still the main focus of this research, but the influence of adults, not just parents, could not be overlooked in the data collection and subsequent analysis. Further categorization of visitors into adults, teenagers, adolescents, and children was done. The physical appearance of each (secondary sexual characteristics), their vocal expression, and other behaviours were used to differentiate between the categories. Based on this division, data points were indicated on a map, where each dot represented a considerable amount of time spent in that place. Notes on the movement and passage of visitors who did not check any place for a long time were also an essential part of the analysis and interpretation.

4. Results

During the entire observation period, the age of the child visitors increased, and therefore the overall age mix changed, with diverse groups of children and adults unintentionally meeting at the site, especially in the afternoon (Figure 3; see also Mu et al., 2021).

The mixture of visitors and the attendance itself varied during the day, which corresponded to the overall rhythm of the outskirts of the city. Similarly, the territorial production of each group varied. There were no places, apart from the playground (number 1 in Figure 3), that were not regularly territorialized by one of the groups. The observation revealed temporal territorial activities, notably the consistent presence of adults, particularly parents, engaging in various activities such as exercising, relaxing, or supervising children. Adults, whether alone or in groups, prominently influenced events in their vicinity. Adolescents and teenagers dominated the skatepark or outdoor gym, leveraging both numbers and dynamic movements to claim significant territory. Occasionally, they extended their presence to the bar or football field for refreshments or ball games. Children, on the other hand, explored various features of the area, disrupting established territories.

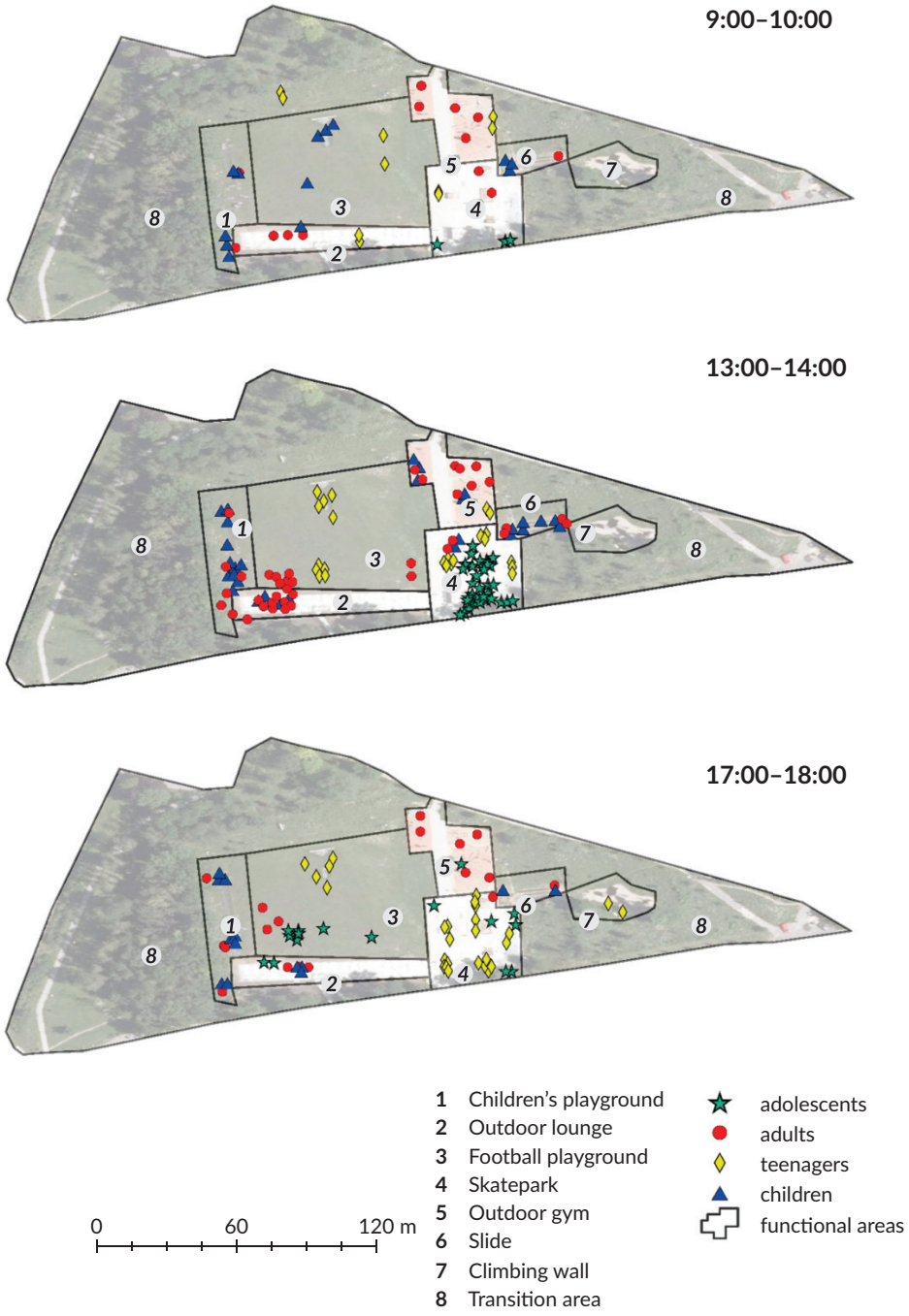

Figure 3. Spatial distribution of the visitors in the community playground on Saturday, 19 August 2023 (9:00–10:00; 13:00–14:00; 17:00–18:00).

Before we get to the results of the territorial production of children and adolescents, there is a need to pause on the interactions between them and adults. When analysing these interactions, it is essential to distinguish whether they are persons in some kind of kinship or friendship relationship or whether they are relative strangers. A specific case may be some institutional relationship (teacher–pupil or manager–subordinate), but such interactions did not occur. Adults had an undeniable influence on modes of territorial production. When playing or performing an activity, they even became a means of extending the territory. Parents undoubtedly acted as a strong factor in negotiating a certain place, for example, by deciding who would ride

the slide or the cable car and when. But at the same time, they also had to subordinate their behaviour to the children, especially if they were complete strangers. Adults often had to give way to a dynamic ball game or other group activity of a larger number. Their bargaining power was often constrained by certain social norms, although on one occasion a verbal warning was recorded about inappropriate movement.

4.1. Outdoor Gym

In the outdoor gym, people were less likely to influence each other with their activities; they did not push each other out. For adults, the purpose and use of the outdoor gym were clear: to exercise. The exception was when they were playing with children or babysitting them:

> There is no one in the outdoor gym—only two kids hiding away from the sun under the concrete walls and a mother playing tag between steel poles for exercising. (4.5.2022, researcher's field notes)

The tactics and appropriations of children or teenagers were more dependent on the individual elements of the gym, which they used as a place to relax or hang out. If there was a group of people—usually an organised leisure activity—who exercise together, then change occurred, and they gradually occupied the individual exercise facilities, pushing solitary individuals out of place to the periphery or out of the outdoor gym space. Similarly, an individual could enlarge his body through the manipulation of various tools.

The outdoor gym area was used for relaxation and doing nothing, with visitors across age groups using the surrounding benches as individual elements to sit or as shelter from the sun. By blocking off the exercise elements, they then restricted other visitors from exercising when they had to regulate their movements. Children, particularly the younger ones, were drawn to the gym due to the numerous opportunities (affordances) for movement and hiding it offered. However, their attention spans were short, and they did not linger for lengthy periods.

The parkour section necessitates space for dynamic movement, and individuals there created territorial borders as they exercised. These territorial boundaries were not fixed but usually followed a rhythmic pattern as they engaged with the space. The way of territorial production by those moving in short and dynamic sequences and using the parkour section unintentionally discourages smaller children and other visitors from crossing through, and so they must move around that place, making the area almost impermeable:

> "No! You cannot go there. People are working out there, can you see?" or "Let's move around so we do not disturb them." (14.4.2022, researcher's field notes)

4.2. Refreshment Area

The area around the small bar was complemented by a small indoor sandpit, close to the toddlers' play equipment, and a large grassy area that served as a playground or resting area, depending on who was using the space. It was a place where several territories could often meet and overlap at the same time. It is the only place that offers a paid service—refreshments—and at the same time provides a place to sit, go to the toilet, look after the children, and ride a bike or another vehicle, especially in the morning when the bar is closed.

Visitors, especially adults, enjoyed sitting on the portable benches, chairs, and tables. With these movable objects, they created their own private territory. Sometimes groups of adults and children would set up several benches and tables and gather around them to enjoy a picnic, play board games, or relax. Similarly, visitors to the site would use portable deck chairs and place them in different locations, far away from others, de facto extending the recreation area into places where dogs are usually let off the leash or football is played (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Benches and decks scattered around the place to territorialise the playground.

The grassy area was a popular place for ball and other team sports such as football, frisbee, and rugby, but also for relaxing when there were no sports activities occurring. Whether it was an individual or a larger group, they constantly changed the order of the place and its territory with their movements and activities. Even though the grassy area was large, there were only two goals, which eventually led to various situations where one group was pushed out by another or joined together to play ball games together, even dividing the space to play only on one goal or creating a goal with sticks and pieces of clothing. The strategy of avoiding the pitch thus became a tactic when negotiating with others.

4.3. Skatepark

Over the course of the day, young children accompanied by adults, teenagers, and adults themselves took turns to use the skatepark. There was no clear chronological order to the visits. These groups gradually intermingled, but each group only occupied a certain part of the skatepark and gradually grew larger or

smaller as the number of members changed. These groups gradually gained control of the place, always on the edges in narrow lines, and gradually the group pushed its way into the centre of the skatepark if it had enough members.

The way in which territorial production took place in the corner of the skatepark (Figure 5) was through the tactical placement of belongings, especially for visitors using the U-ramp. The area was regularly littered with food and drink waste. The appearance of the area did not encourage other visitors to stay because of the litter, although it was not visually cut off from the surrounding area. By temporarily adapting the appearance of the corner, the adolescents stabilised the territory. The latter process of territorial production (strategy) came about when the local authority cleaned the whole playground, which happened on a relatively regular basis, removing the rubbish with which the children had inadvertently demarcated the ground. This allowed the whole process of territorial production (in the place) to start again.

The territorial production in and around the skatepark occurred through the material remains of the visitors' presence, whether they were permanent (bottles, road signs) or temporary (backpacks, equipment, and valuables; Figure 6). These places represented a kind of base for the users of the skatepark, and it meant that others had to choose another place to put their belongings. These benches were left without the presence of a single person, yet they were still occupied, suggesting little fear of things being stolen and relying on the public gaze of other visitors.

Within this ongoing territorialization, children intruded into these processes by creating their own momentary territories as they ran into the skatepark, the football game, or the gym area with almost no caution, and the whole rhythm of the place suddenly changed. Other residents tried to adapt their activities to the movement of these children. They stopped exercising, went for a ride, or left the place for a while. As in previous situations, parents, if present, naturally tried to regulate in some way the movements and behaviour of their own and other children. Through this intervention, these young children did not take control of the territory per se,

Figure 5. Annex in the skatepark littered by visitors, mostly teenagers and adolescents.

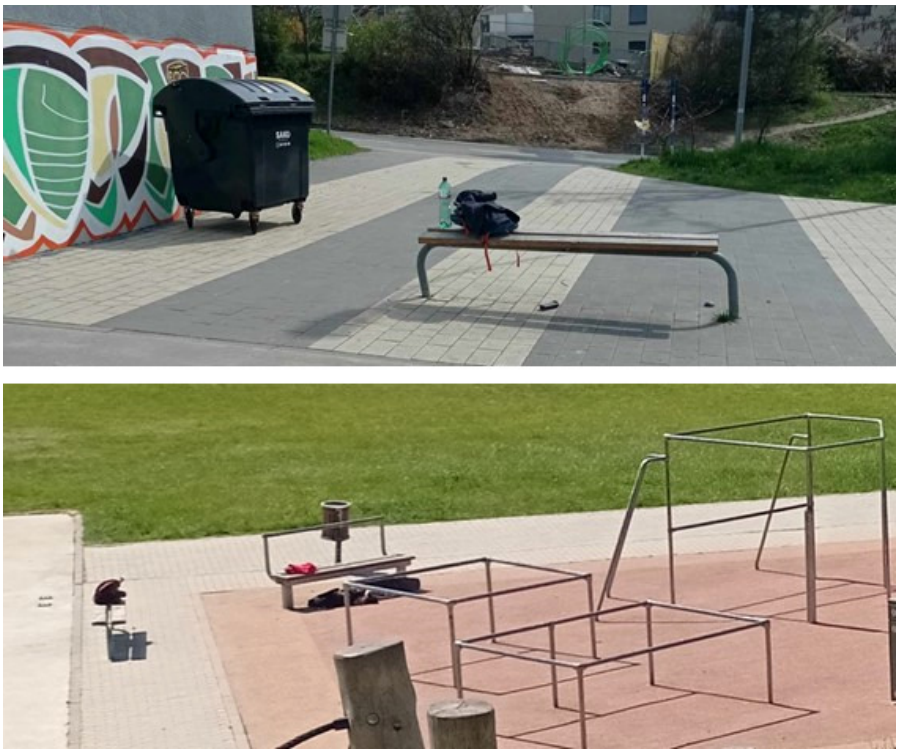

Figure 6. Belongings on the benches demarcating territory of owners.

nor did they create a stabilised territory, but they certainly temporarily altered the balance of control over the particular place—the skate park—when it became more crowded at times. Disruptions could and did occur where an individual or group took advantage of the ensuing chaos to occupy an overcrowded territory at the expense of another person. The same could be said about dogs running free in the playground, which also violates the formal and informal rules of the space.

5. Discussion

Society experienced a major shock during the pandemic. This period revealed several shortcomings in terms of resilience and social well-being, by limiting physical contact with others outdoors or indoors. Public spaces (should) serve to bring different people together and (should) promote broader social connections. The community playground provides such an environment and provides an alternative and blueprint for the creation of public space rather than spaces created for a specific group (Pitsikali et al., 2020). These urban places are designed to accommodate more than one age group, with their ever-changing, coexisting territories. This might suggest that territorial production undermines this ideal of universality. In this process, one group benefits while another is disadvantaged by appropriating part of the space for their exclusive use (Kärrholm, 2017), whether in the short or long term.

Examining children's territoriality in the public realm allows for an investigation of how their interactions with others influence relationships, decisions, and the operation of prevailing social norms and constraints. Furthermore, concerns about children's and young people's agency within the constraints of social structures play an important role in defining their status as a minority group. The lack of recognition of children's autonomy by the adult world not only reinforces their minority status, but also shapes their self-perception

and consequently perpetuates their relative powerlessness (Mayall, 2002). There is constant questioning of children's right to space in the city, creating a narrative that children cannot possess control of any place other than the place made for them—the playground. Outside of the physical demeanour of children or adults, there are other ways to territorialize the places, such as belongings, movement, or noise. This may be due to the social environment, public gaze, or the presence of a larger group of friends who are not concerned about their belongings. By acts like cycling, throwing a ball, exercising, resting, or even placing their belongings, adolescents/children produce their own dynamic territories that change depending on time but also on other visitors or other environmental conditions. Therefore, territories can be formed by passive (non-)presence alone, and, through it, adolescents/children control the place and the immediate environment.

While adults and adolescents tend to stay in one territory, children, especially the younger ones, constantly change their location, thus disrupting the ongoing territorial production. Moreover, young children's nature and sense of adventure may lead them to choose these dangerous routes. Caretakers were wary of these movements and watched their children closely, if not holding them by the hand (Tucker & Matthews, 2001). No physical collisions were recorded, which might suggest that children or adolescents can be respectful of their environment and the people in it (Derr & Tarantini, 2016). The relationship between children, adolescents, and adults here can be described with a word such as "tolerance" (Sack, 1986); at least so it appears from observation, at the same time that there were no significant interactions between strangers. This may be a consequence of the ample space, and it is questionable whether similar positive situations would arise in a small or crowded place. Some caretakers might refer to increasing safety by demarcating areas with physical boundaries, thus separating spaces from other potentially dangerous ones (Valentine, 1996), as it is the boundaries, material or non-material, that provide a kind of security for adults in the perception of the playground (Pitsikali & Parnell, 2019). However, a boundary-less playground could enhance the sense of place as young children in particular explore the playground and its surroundings due to its porous boundaries (Tranter & Malone, 2004). In a similar way that Thomson (2005) found privileged spaces, equivalent places could be found here. There are exclusive places such as the U-ramp and the space on top of it, the long slide, and the mini rope, and there are also objects that make these places privileged, such as portable deckchairs.

Waksler's (1991) argument that children are powerless to make and enforce rules in an adult world does not apply here. Children, like other visitors, have come to the playground with a goal and a strategy (play football, hang out, exercise), but when they arrive the goal has to be tactically changed (or the time of the visit changed). They create their own territories and do not need to be constrained by the status of the child—they control the place they occupy, and they set its rules. The territorial production of (mostly young) children is characterised by the introduction of destabilisation into stable or stabilising territories, and by ephemeral territories. However, this does not necessarily have a negative impact on life in a place; on the contrary, it can contribute to changing the territorial structure of a place (Frazer, 2022).

Although it is difficult to generalise the results of my observations with the work done before the pandemic, I will take the opportunity to outline some phenomena that are slightly different. In any case, it is always necessary to consider the elements of the playground and its possibilities, as well as the socio-cultural context of the neighbourhood. For example, the teenagers were active and used the playground, albeit a limited part of it, quite a lot. This is a solution to bringing into the public space a demographic group that has been rather absent (Hayward et al., 1974). In terms of rules, Borman (2009) found that children were less likely to follow

informal rules set by peers or adults. In this case, however, situations where playground visitors did not follow spoken rules about territory were not recorded, but young children did not follow unspoken norms.

Territorial production and affordances are relatively close in their relationship to interactions with the environment (Heft, 2010). One could even go so far as to call territorial productions "situated affordances," since it was not only through physical affordances, but also through social or sound affordances that adolescents dominated their immediate environment and created their territories. The place provided affordances and the young visitors perceived many of them. The nature of the affordances, like the mode of territorial production, varied significantly with respect to the physical characteristics of the person or if the person was part of a group, i.e., family or friends (Kaplan, 2021). In the case of the territorial appropriation of the outdoor gym, the discrepancy between the users' intentions and actual use is again materialised and can be captured by affordances (Kesner, 2009). Finally, the skatepark offered unique affordances, as there are not many skateparks that are so embedded in other playground elements, the location is close to refreshments, it has the coveted nooks and crannies (Heft, 2010), and it offers the opportunity to play sports as well as chill and hang out (Taylor & Khan, 2011). It is therefore a well-placed element (as is the playground as a whole) in the fabric of the city, where all relationships function without conflict with other areas and activities.

Unlike school playgrounds, this playground is less supervised by the authorities, although this does not mean that it is not supervised at all. It therefore allows for free adventurous movement as the boundaries of rules are less fixed and impenetrable (Thomson, 2005). On the other hand, the adults here acted as the subject of enabling affordances and being affordances at the same time, willingly and unwillingly providing opportunities for the territorialisation of place. The multigenerational playground also had the potential to push the boundaries of fear of interacting with strangers, something that had previously been seen as a scarcity (Stanton-Chapman & Schmidt, 2021), as there were more frequent interactions with strangers, not only adults, which would not have happened much in a playground/place designed primarily for children (child-friendly).

6. Conclusion

This article has highlighted the ways in which children and young people can deliberately produce territories for longer or shorter periods of time, even when they encounter adults in them. The younger visitors established their own temporary rules and norms through their movements and behaviours. Similarly, the youngest children can disrupt stabilisation processes through their dynamic and unpredictable behaviour, which may include rushing headlong into crowded places. In conclusion, the case for multigenerational playgrounds rests on the twin pillars of inclusivity and intergenerational interaction. The former involves fostering environments where children and adults interact on a regular basis, allowing children to practice a range of skills, including negotiation, conflict resolution, and communication with strangers or adults. These skills can then be applied outside the playground. It is therefore important to note that the implementation of such a playground, when located in an appropriate urban context, has the potential to foster a sense of belonging or place attachment as well as a sense of community.

During the pandemic, people were confined to their homes and limited to socialising with their family or small groups of friends. This could have had a significant impact on their socialisation and interaction with

each other. The creation of such spaces allows for healthy, unrestricted interactions between individuals and groups of different ages, sizes, and social statuses. Furthermore, concerns about children's power and rights in the city are still valid in today's world. However, there are also exceptions that create a consensus that children do not have sufficient opportunities to actively participate in the processes that shape the city, whether administratively or informally. It is evident that children, whether intentionally or unintentionally, are able to appropriate and strategically control a space that, by its nature, is intended to serve and does serve all ages. This demonstrates that children are able to engage with and influence the rules and norms of a space in an informal way. However, this article only addresses this from a day-to-day perspective rather than a long-term perspective. The concept of territorial production and its associated forms can provide a useful lens through which to examine the complex relationships between the various groups involved. It is essential that children have access to urban spaces where they can interact with people of other ages; these are intergenerational rather than child-friendly places. This should present a new challenge to urban planners and architects.

Although other actors' territorial productions were present, such as schools, cultural or sporting events, local government territorial strategies, or associations, they were not included in this research. Furthermore, it is important to note that similar research would not be possible in any playground, but only in a playground of this type, where the activities of different age groups converge. Finally, it is important to consider the limitations associated with the methodology used in this study (for more details, see Ng, 2016). Further research is also needed in relation to gender and the intentions of territorial production within a hierarchical structural framework.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author, Daniel Kaplan, d.kaplan@mail.muni.cz, upon reasonable request.

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