

UDC 711

CHILD-FRIENDLY CITIES: THE ESSENCE OF THE CONCEPT AND STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN THEIR PLANNING (BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF LVIV PHYSICS AND MATHEMATICS LYCEUM)

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This article discusses the concept of child-friendly cities and Ukraine's part in the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative. It was launched by UNICEF in 1996 and joined by Ukraine in March 2018. About 170 Ukrainian cities applied to join the initiative; 35 were selected, and 3, Bakhmut, Vinnytsia, and Lviv, received the UNICEF International Child and Youth Friendly Community Honorary Status in December 2021. Unfortunately, the implementation of the plans for the implementation of the initiative approved by the governments of the three cities was interrupted by armed Russian aggression against Ukraine.

One of the signs of a child-friendly city is the involvement of children in the urban planning process, i.e., child participation. An example of ensuring it can be the planning of schools in new neighborhoods and the inclusion of students in this process, which is relevant for Lviv, which is experiencing urban growth and residential construction, as well as for the cities damaged due to Russia's full-scale invasion.

40 students from Lviv Physics and Mathematics Lyceum volunteered to complete a survey on the most general issues of creating child-friendly spaces in the city and near schools. The respondents were asked to evaluate the qualities of their school grounds and the nearby area and state their preferences. Our findings indicate similarities between the common concerns of adult and young Lviv citizens, though a few issues more typical for children are also highlighted. The students' responses are also influenced by the particular characteristics of the school and the neighborhood it is located in. This article recommends conducting similar research in different schools to gather a wide range of opinions. The results can be useful to the school administration and the city authorities and lead to positive outcomes in creating child-friendly urban environments.

Keywords: child-friendly city, children's participation, Lviv, urban spaces, school, students.

Introduction. In 2021 Lviv was recognized by UNICEF as a child-friendly city, after 3 years of implementing an action plan. However, the parts of the city where rapid urban growth is experienced the most usually are not child-friendly. The biggest problem of these neighborhoods is that the school grounds and the nearby area are not always adequate or safe and do not fully meet children's expectations. New neighborhoods provide an opportunity for Lviv to apply child-friendly values and affirm its honorary status as a child-friendly city. It can be done by planning a school and a comfortable, safe area nearby first of all. In order to ensure that this area will be child-friendly, the city can cooperate with current students at schools all over the city. Their suggestions, opinions, and experiences could be useful for the planners and help

create a child-friendly urban space. At the same time, it will be a case of children's participation regarding matters of urban planning, strengthening the child-friendly values of the city.

The significance of the study is also important in the context of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, the emergence of millions of internally displaced people in the country, and the need to rebuild destroyed settlements, including the construction of new schools. In Lviv alone, 107 thousand internally displaced persons were officially registered in 2023, and if we take into account the unregistered, the number is approximately 150 thousand [6]. More than 25% (about 27,500) of all the internally displaced people registered in Lviv were children, therefore the creation of a child-friendly urban environment is especially important for their adaptation in the new region and city. Similarly, the planning and construction of new schools (since February 2022, more than 3,790 educational institutions have been damaged or completely destroyed [19]) in the liberated cities should be carried out by creating child-friendly urban spaces, involving their opinion, based on the principles of new urbanism and human-centered design [15].

Literature review. The concept of child-friendly cities has been researched by Caroline Brown, Ariane de Lannoy [2], and Eliana Riggio [11]. Maria Nordström investigated children's views on child-friendly environments [10].

The concept of child-friendly cities is closely related to the ideas of children's participation. The first one to research children's participation was Roger A. Hart, who adapted S. Arnstein's ladder of participation to the specific aspects of children [5], as shown in Fig. 1.

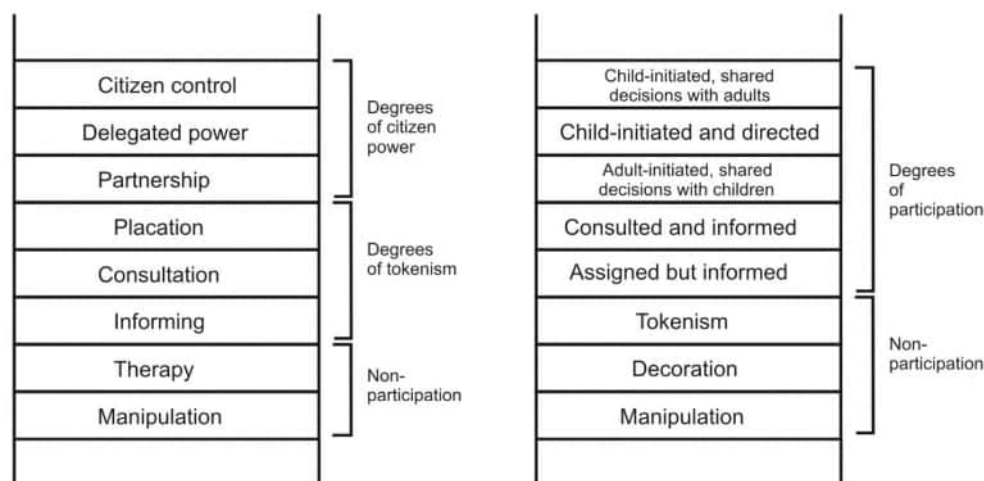


Fig. 1. Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (left) and "The ladder of children's participation" (right) [5].

Рис. 1. "Драбина громадянської участі" Ш. Арнштейна (ліворуч) та "Драбина дитячої участі" (праворуч).

Marit Skivenes and Astrid Strandbu focused on the issues of communication in children's participation [12]; Nigel Patrick Thomas – on its purposes and benefits [13]; Joana Lúcio and John I'Anson – on its dilemmas and impact on children's development [7]. Children's participation in urban planning was discussed in the publications of Özlemnur Ataol, Sukanya Krishnamurthy and Pieter van Wesemael [1], Robyn G. Mansfield, Becky Batagol and Rob

Raven [8], Maria Nordström and Mark Wales [9]. In his book “Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth: A Manual for Participation” David Driskell proposed a number of tools for children’s participation to create “better cities” [4], while Ryan Woolrych and Judith Sixsmith described the impact of participation on a person’s well-being [14]. Vitaliy Gladun researched how youth’s participation in the educational environment contributes to their civic competence [16]. The United Nations Report on Youth in Ukraine for 2015 showed that 19% of the respondents participated in developing infrastructure in their neighborhoods, and 56% were interested in such activities [21]. Ukrainian scientists have not yet researched the concept of child-friendly cities or inclusion of children in issues of urban planning. This is likely because both ideas are relatively new to the country and are not widely practiced or discussed.

The purpose of the study is to research the concept of child-friendly cities and children’s participation in their planning, based on the opinions of the students of Lviv Physics and Mathematics Lyceum on the issues of creating child-friendly spaces in the city and near schools.

Research methods. To write this article, we surveyed students of the Lviv Lyceum of Physics and Mathematics to establish a general picture of their opinions on the most basic issues of creating child-friendly spaces in the city and near schools. A questionnaire consisting of 13 questions was created in Google Forms and distributed to the students through the messaging app Telegram. A total of 40 responses were received. The collected data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and presented in pie and bar charts. In addition, the article uses the cartographic method, the method of analyzing literary sources, and others.

Results. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989, marking the beginning of international discourse of children’s rights. It gave rise to the Child-Friendly City Initiative, which was launched in 1996. According to UNICEF, “a child-friendly city is a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to improving the lives of children within their jurisdiction by realizing their rights as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child” [3]. The guiding principles of building a child-friendly city are non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the inherent right to life, survival, and development; and respect for the views of the child. The five goal areas are the following:

- 1) The right to be valued, respected, and treated fairly;
- 2) The right to be heard;
- 3) The right to social services;
- 4) The right to be safe;
- 5) The right to family life, play, and leisure.

Ukraine joined the Child-Friendly City movement on March 29, 2018 after signing a memorandum with UNICEF [17]. As of August 1, 2021, 35 cities and communities joined in the initiative [3], as shown in Fig. 2.

Lviv City Council approved a strategy and action plan for the initiative on November 29, 2018 [20]. After successfully implementing the plan, in 2021 Lviv was awarded UNICEF’s Honorary International Status of Child and Youth Friendly Community, along with Vinnytsia and Bakhmut [3]. Due to the full-scale invasion of Russia on February 24, 2022 Bakhmut is now completely destroyed. Therefore, Lviv and Vinnytsia are the only ones left to continue to promote child-friendly city values. Since the former is now the safer place of the two, Lviv should put the most effort into upholding the honorary status and being a role model for other Ukrainian cities.

Lviv is currently undergoing rapid urban growth, with entire neighborhoods appearing on the map. The housing stock has been continuously increasing over the past years and reached

19,832.57 m² in 2023 [18]. The main residential construction in the city is multi-storey apartment blocks, which compose 81% of the housing stock (16,076.31 m²). The new neighborhoods, which are composed of multi-storey buildings, often lack necessary educational facilities. This happens because property developers are usually concerned with gaining profit and not with providing the basic infrastructure for future residents. Some evident examples of the neighborhoods that face such issues are “Pid Holoskom” and the neighborhood, which covers Vernadsky, Stryiska, and Miklosz streets in Lviv. However, new neighborhoods are ideal for implementing the ideas of child-friendly cities. One way of achieving this is to plan a school first and then the residential buildings. This way, the school could have an adequate amount of territory nearby and not be crammed into a dense built environment, as is common in Lviv today.

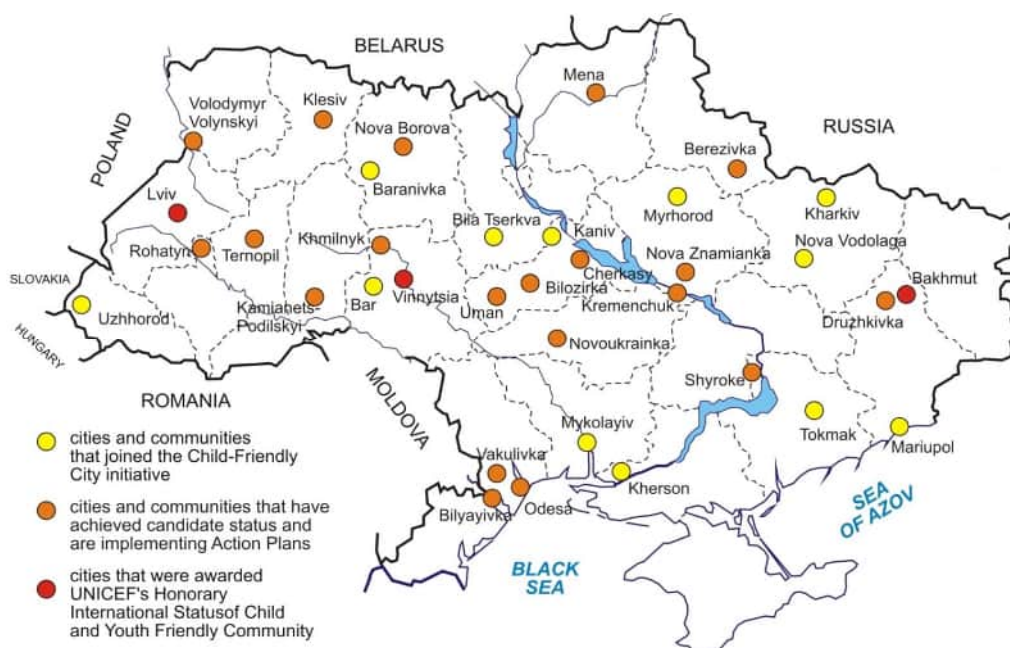


Fig. 2. Child-Friendly Cities Initiative in Ukraine (as of December, 2021).

Figure created by the authors based on [3].

Рис. 2. Ініціатива “Громада, дружня до дітей і молоді” в Україні (станом на грудень 2021 р.). Створено на основі [3].

When a new neighborhood is being planned, there are no residents yet to cooperate with in order to make a decision that benefits all. Still, when planning a school and the territory near it, there is a way to achieve citizen participation. This can be done by including children who are currently studying at schools all over the city. Besides spending time inside the school building, they interact daily with the nearby area. They have certain preferences and opinions about what makes this area comfortable, which are based on their personal experience. Their suggestions will likely align with those of children who will live and study in the neighborhood in the future. Thus, a neighborhood, planned with consideration of children’s advice, will presumably be child-friendly.

Child-friendliness will also be achieved by children's participation, which is stated in goal №2 of the initiative – namely the goal to be heard. It has been shown that participation can improve a person's well-being and increase feelings of making a positive contribution, self-determination, and personal fulfillment [14]. Thus, including children will contribute not only to a high-quality and child-friendly environment but also to children's mental well-being.

In this study, a survey was used to explore how familiar students are with the concept of child-friendly cities and to gather their opinions on what makes school grounds comfortable. Lviv Physics and Mathematics Lyceum, which is one of the best schools in Ukraine and known for its talented students, was chosen for the study. It is located on Karadzhycha Street in the western part of the city. It was founded in 1991 and is a boarding school with a student dormitory. Most buildings in the neighborhood were built in the 1960s–1980s and are five storeys high. There are also three 9-storey buildings from the early 2010s and one or two-storey houses nearby. Two other schools and one kindergarten in the vicinity usually cause car congestion in the morning. Since urban planning in the Soviet Union era encouraged green space, there are a lot of trees around.

The age range of the respondents was from 13 to 17 years old, with 14-year-old students being the most represented group (Fig. 3). 85% of the respondents have lived in Lviv all their lives, 10% for 2 to 10 years, and 5% for less than 2 years. 85% of the respondents have lived in Lviv all their lives, 10% have lived here for 2 to 10 years, and 5% for less than 2 years. When asked whether they had heard of the UNICEF initiative of child-friendly cities, 17.5% responded affirmatively. Surprisingly, more students (20%) responded that they were aware of Lviv's status as a Child-Friendly City. It can be attributed to their unwillingness to admit their ignorance of the matter.

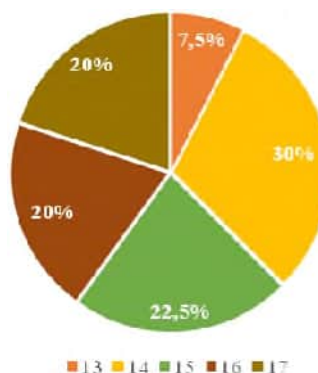


Fig. 3. The age of the respondents, years.

Рис. 3. Вік респондентів, років.

Next, the respondents were asked to provide associated words to the concept of a child-friendly city. The most frequent response was infrastructure to encourage children to spend time outdoors such as playgrounds, parks, and comfortable streets, and was found in 50% of the answers. It was followed by safety – 43.8% of the responses. 37.5% of the respondents mentioned events, and clubs that promote children's development; 31.3% of the answers refer to respectful treatment and nondiscrimination. Other associations worth mentioning are high-quality education (found in 15.6% of the responses) and free benefits for children including free public transport and cultural facilities (9.4%). The answers to the question "Which of the features of a child-friendly city you have mentioned above can be observed in Lviv?" usually included high-quality education, opportunities for development, parks and playgrounds. A few students responded that Lviv had almost all the features they named in the previous question.

The following questions were related to students' opinions about various aspects of the urban environment in the vicinity of the lyceum. To understand the school accessibility by various modes of transport, they were asked to answer how they get to school. The respondents could choose more than one mode of transport. The most preferred travel mode is public transport, used by 56.4%. It is followed by private vehicles at 43.6% in the case when the student is

driven to school by their parents or a classmate's parents. 33.3% of the respondents walk to the lyceum, and 7.7% ride their bicycle (Fig. 4).

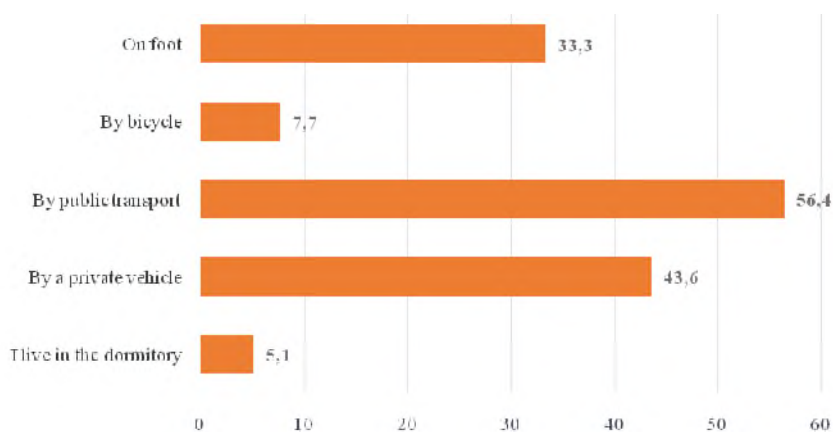


Fig. 4. The answers to the question “How do you get to school?”
Рис. 4. Відповіді на запитання “Як ти добираєшся до школи?”

The next two questions used a 5-point rating scale. Fig. 5 presents the responses to how comfortable the urban street space is. Fig. 6 shows how safe the respondents feel outside the school grounds. In both cases 3 and 4 were the most popular choices. In both questions no one chose 1 as an answer.

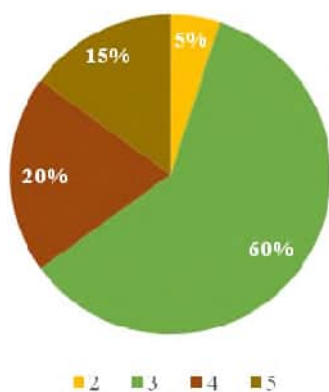


Fig. 5. The answers to the question “How comfortable is the urban street space in the vicinity of your school?” (1 – very uncomfortable, 5 – very comfortable).
Рис. 5. Відповіді на запитання “Наскільки комфортним є міський вуличний простір поблизу вашої школи?” (1 – дуже незручно, 5 – дуже зручно)

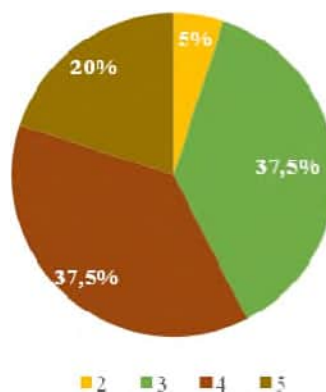


Fig. 6. The answers to the question “How safe do you feel outside the school grounds?” (1 – very unsafe, 5 – very safe).
Рис. 6. Відповіді на запитання “Наскільки безпечно ви почуваетесь поза шкільною територією?” (1 – дуже небезпечно, 5 – дуже безпечно).

The two following questions regarded the school grounds, in particular, whether they are spacious enough and whether there is enough green space. 84.6% responded affirmatively to the first question, and 70% to the second one.

When asked to rate from 1 to 5 how aesthetically pleasing the school grounds are, the most common answer was 3. It was chosen by half of the respondents (Fig. 7).

The chart below (Fig. 8) shows which of the previously mentioned elements of urban space are important to the respondents. Public transport accessibility, green space, and comfortable urban street space are of greatest value to the respondents.

The results of the survey may also be useful to the school administration. They can cooperate with the students to create better school grounds. Sometimes the changes can require little money or effort such as putting a few benches outside or organizing a tree-planting event. It will not

only ensure that the school grounds meet the needs of the students but also foster trust between the students and the school administration and promote feelings of having made a positive contribution.

Conclusion. Since 1996 the discourse of child-friendly cities has been spreading through the world. It reached Ukraine in 2018, and three cities, Lviv being one of them, were recognized as child-friendly by UNICEF in 2021. Nonetheless, new neighborhoods in Lviv do not always follow child-friendly values. Their biggest issue is the lack of educational institutions, caused by the fact that school planning is often an afterthought. Such a school is likely to fail to provide for the needs and wants of its future students. Besides giving priority to an educational institution, it can be useful to collaborate with children during the planning process. Students from various schools in the city have different experiences and opinions about a comfortable school and the area nearby. Child-friendliness of such a neighborhood will be achieved in two ways: by providing a high-quality learning environment that will meet the expectations of the students and by giving children a voice and an opportunity to improve their city.

Students of Lviv Physics and Mathematics Lyceum were asked to participate in a survey of their awareness of the child-friendly city concept and their preferences on school grounds and the nearby area. Only a little more than a quarter of the respondents have heard about the Child-Friendly City Initiative and Lviv's part in it, which suggests there is not enough communication with children about the initiative. The associations that the respondents had with this concept mostly aligned with the goals of the initiative proposed by UNICEF, such as safety, respect, and leisure activities. Public transport accessibility, green space, and comfortable urban street space were of the greatest importance to the respondents. Based on the results of the survey, we can draw a general conclusion that children are concerned about the same problems in Lviv that are mentioned by adult residents of the city: public transport, green infrastructure, and comfortable street spaces. However, the respondents also emphasized some problems that are more typical

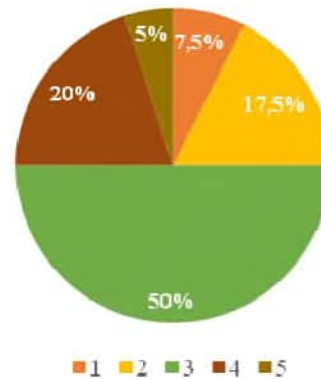


Fig. 7. The answers to the question “How aesthetically pleasing do you find the school grounds?” (1 – very unpleasing, 5 – very pleasing).

Рис. 7. Відповіді на запитання “Наскільки естетично, ви вважаєте територію школи?” (1 – дуже неприємно, 5 – дуже приємно).

for children and youth in Lviv, such as the need for further development of bicycle infrastructure or street furniture to spend time outdoors.

We have analyzed the opinions of the students of only one school. It would be valuable to do so with several different schools and compare the answers since the particular qualities of each school will affect the students' preferences. Including a variety of ideas will lead to a better decision and ensure that a new school will be planned with children's views in mind. As a consequence, each new child-friendly neighborhood will contribute to a more child-friendly city.

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МІСТА, ДРУЖНІ ДЛЯ ДІТЕЙ: СУТНІСТЬ КОНЦЕПЦІЇ І ЗАЛУЧЕННЯ УЧНІВ ШКІЛ ДО ЇХ ПЛАНУВАННЯ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ ЛЬВІВСЬКОГО ФІЗИКО-МАТЕМАТИЧНОГО ЛІЦЕЮ)

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Розглянуто концепцію й Ініціативу “Міста, дружні до дітей” та участь України в Ініціативі. У 1996 р. її започатковано ЮНІСЕФ, а в березні 2018 р. до неї приєдналася Україна. Орієнтовно 170 українських міст зголосилися приєднатися до ініціативи, відбір пройшло 35, з них три – Бахмут, Вінниця і Львів – отримали в грудні 2021 р. від ЮНІСЕФ Почесний міжнародний статус Громади, дружньої до дітей та молоді. На жаль, виконання затверджених урядами трьох міст планів з реалізації ініціативи перервала збройна російська агресія проти України.

Однією з ознак дружнього до дітей міста є залучення їх до процесу міського планування, тобто дитяча партисипація. Її прикладом може бути планування шкіл у нових мікрорайонах та залучення учнів до цього процесу, що є актуальним і для Львова, у якому відбувається активне житлове будівництво, і для міст, які постраждали внаслідок повномасштабного вторгнення росії. 40 учнів Львівського фізико-математичного ліцею зголосилися взяти участь в опитуванні про найзагальніші питання формування дружніх для дітей просторів, загалом у місті й поблизу школи. Учні оцінили характеристики шкільного подвір'я та території навколо, а також висловили свої побажання щодо цієї теми. Отримані результати свідчать про те, що дітей та дорослих мешканців міста турбують подібні проблеми, але діти також акцентують на проблемах, більш характерних для молоді Львова. На відповіді учнів також впливають особливості школи та мікрорайону, в якому вона розташована.

З метою отримання більш детальних та якісних результатів ця стаття рекомендує здійснювати подібні дослідження в різних школах, щоб зібрати широкий спектр думок. Отримані дані можуть бути корисними і для шкільної адміністрації, і для міської влади та сприяти створенню дружнього до дітей міського середовища.

Ключові слова: місто, дружнє до дітей, партисипація дітей, Львів, міські простори, школа, учні.