Friendliness of the City to Children and Young People (Based on Expert Interviews)

A G Filipova¹, A V Vysockaya²,³

¹Laboratory for Integrated Childhood Research, Vladivostok state university of economics and service, Gogol street, 41, Vladivostok, Russian Federation
²Department of Computer Software and Computer Applications, Federal State-Financed Educational Institution of Higher Learning ‘Komsomolsk-na-Amur State University’, Lenin Avenue, 27, AUD.319, building 3, Komsomolsk-on-Amur 681013, Russian Federation
³The study was carried out with the financial support of Russian Foundation for Basic Research, Grants no.19-11-00654.

E-mail: alexgen77@list.ru, al-w-buaa@rambler.ru

Abstract. All Three approaches to understanding the friendliness of the urban environment (urban, socio-psychological and managerial) are illustrated in the article with materials from expert interviews. The experts were specialists involved in the organization of recreation and leisure of children and youth in the city; urban planning, architecture and urban design; maintaining the health of children and young people and ensuring safety in the city, including road safety. Attempts have been made to highlight indicators of urban environment friendliness to citizens from the standpoint of the three aforementioned approaches, as well as possible directions for the transformation of the city towards its friendliness both

1. Introduction
Rapid urban growth, intensification of urban life, disappearance of children from the streets and placing them in protected urban spaces in combination with inclusion of young people in urban processes, eventual filling of urban environment, attention of society and state to low-mobility groups of citizens - it and much more maintains continuing research interest to the city.

The flip side of urbanization in the form of densification of urban development, destruction of green spaces, loss of social connections between residents of the same house or neighborhood, increased motorization, on the one hand, launched the process of people fleeing from a city to suburbs, small towns or rural areas. And, on the other hand, it stimulated the city’s social demand for transformation of its environment, increasing its comfort and safety, availability of social facilities, social communications with citizens, both with adults and with children and youth.

2. Review
It can be stated that there is a formation of at least three approaches to the interpretation of “friendly urban environment” in urban theory and practice, - urban, socio-psychological and managerial, each of which is always updated with new characteristics.
Friendliness is considered from the points of view of physical parameters of urban environment (green spaces, accessible infrastructure, lighting, convenient streets for moving, etc.) in urban studies. A friendly city is a city that includes the principles of comfort (convenience for life, accessibility, safety), ecology (minimizing negative environmental impacts), sustainable mobility (developed public transport system, walking and cycling infrastructure), as well as citizens’ participation in making decisions regarding a transformation of urban territory [1-6].

The socio-psychological approach explores a city, first of all, as an area of socialization. A city for children and youth is a place for assimilation and consolidation of social roles. From the point of view of social formation, an urban environment gives children opportunities for free play, free movement, communication with other citizens, inclusion in different types of urban activity [7-9]. The indicators of accessibility, comfort, safety of the environment for parents with children are studied in Russian works, [10-13].

The managerial approach is occurring on the basis of different international initiatives and programs aimed at transforming urban environment by combining the efforts of city authorities, business and local communities. This approach is rather a list of methodological recommendations for transforming urban environment, as well as tools for empirical evaluation of the results achieved. The example of such recommendations is initiative of UNICEF “A Child-Friendly City”. The position of UNICEF lies in advisory support and professional support of local initiatives in the field of urban environment benevolence [14-21]).

3. Methods and materials
In this article, our goal is to comprehend the concept of a friendly city and identifying indicators to measure this friendliness, based on three above-mentioned approaches - urban, socio-psychological and managerial, based on materials from expert interviews collected in Russian and Belarusian cities (N = 25).

4. Results and their discussion
According to the first approach, such criteria as construction density and numbers of storeys, a combination of natural and social objects, the presence of transport interchanges and convenient city navigation are important to form a friendly urban environment. Concerning urban development, experts point out, “these are buildings with 3-5 floors,” proportionate ”or“ co-scaled ”to a person” (E1), “a person next to such a building or structure does not feel depressed (E2). At the same time, both huge public spaces (for example, Oktyabrskaya Square in Minsk) and deaf well courtyards in St. Petersburg are equally unfriendly in experts’ assessments.

Following the principles formulated in the project “SAGA about the city. Transformation of public areas ”[22] research participants endow urban areas with such characteristics as“ smart”, “attractive”,“ green”,“ accessible”.

Two types of places were identified during the study that are important for citizens: in the first type of places they live - this is their yard / neighborhood, in the second - they spend their free time - these are urban public spaces.

If we speak about the functions of the urban environment, then the function of recreation dominates the places of residence, and in the descriptions of urban public spaces entertaining, communicative and cultural-educational function dominate. That is, indicators of friendliness of different types of urban places should vary, based on the prevailing functions.

For a yard, these may be indicators such as the size of the local area per one resident of the adjacent house (houses); the availability and quality of the playground / playground; lighting; locked or restricted movement and parking of vehicles; the presence of shops and ballot boxes; percentage of landscaping.

For urban public spaces is the transport accessibility, focus on citizens of different ages; the presence of zones for active mobility, for communication and for city events; financial availability; level of gardening; level of improvement, etc.
Review of urban infrastructure, effectiveness of which is based on constant, productive interactions between authorities, city services and the population, is included in the management approach of interpreting the friendliness of the urban environment. It should be noted that this approach was less reflected in the replicas of experts in comparison with the other two - socio-psychological and urban. It can be a signal of the absence of a constant dialogue between the state, society and business; underdeveloped participatory practices in urban planning and landscaping.

An expert from Minsk illustrated an example of the loss of direct consumers of the city from the design processes of urban areas: the Customer is the Minsk City Executive Committee, the Contractor is some state building Trust No. N, the Designer is some kind of N-project. And city dwellers are generally not included in the structure of interaction in any way (E4).

The experts also did not say anything about participatory practices aimed at children and youth. Collaborative designing is "a new model for constructing and building public spaces in an open urban environment" when, to improve a given urban area, "tripartite interaction is established: residents (including children) - business community - representatives of the administration" [23]. There are isolated examples of such interaction in both Russian and Belarusian cities.

When it came to the city’s friendliness to children, experts, moving into the mainstream of the socio-psychological approach, began to speak about the city as a space of socialization / growing up of the younger generation:

A friendly city for children and youth is a city where there is a maximum of options for finding yourself. (E8)

The orientation of a child in this area is important so that he knows where, what, in which case, where one can go (E9)

Our experts spoke about the areas for children’s free play in the city as an important condition for their socialization:

Free contacts cannot be in a flat, so there must be a space where you can come, you can leave. (E2)

Socialization requires these spaces, completely nobody’s and not equipped at all, and it enables them to come up with a way how to use it all (E2)

The positions of the socio-psychological approach to the interpretation of the friendliness of the urban environment can be strengthened due to the special urban “climate” or “mentality”. Experts very often spoke about a subjective feeling of belonging to the city, responsibility of the townspeople, and mutual support.

5. Conclusions

So, the consideration of the concept of urban environment friendliness from the perspective of three approaches - urban, socio-psychological and managerial - based on expert interviews, led to an understanding of their interweaving, complementarity and the importance of a comprehensive analysis. Complexity lies in the multi-level friendship, which takes place at the level of social and physical objects, the community of citizens, the interactions of citizens, business, non-profit organizations and authorities.

The development of urban environment friendliness begins with the city as a territory (geographical landscape, architectural development, accessible infrastructure) and through the city as a space (people and events), one understands the importance of creating a sense of unity with the city, involvement in urban processes, and involvement in city management through different practices, such as participatory urban design practices.

**The list of informants:** E1 female.; architecture, Minsk, Republic of Belarus; E2 male.; architecture, Minsk, Republic of Belarus; E3 female; additional education; Minsk, Republic of Belarus; E4 male; architecture, Minsk, Republic of Belarus; E5 female; education; Minsk, Republic of Belarus; E6 male; education, business; Vladivostok, Russian Federation; E7 female; education; Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Russian Federation; E8 female; education; Vladivostok, Russian Federation; E9 female; education; Minsk, Republic of Belarus.
6. References

[1] Burns A and Homel R 1985 Through a child’s eyes: quality of neighbourhood and quality of life Living in cities: urbanism and society in metropolitan Australia pp 103-115

[2] Jacobs D 2011 The Death and Life of Great American Cities (Moscow: New Publishing) p 460

[3] Lebedeva E V 2013 Children and youth in the modern city: sociological analysis Sociology 2 124-125

[4] Rating and budget: how the list of 12 public territories was formed for improvement in Vladivostok (Electronic Materials) Access mode: https://www.newsvl.ru/vlad/2018/02/13/167625/

[5] Filipova A G 2012 Social space of childhood: principles of marking territories Journal of Social Policy Studies 1 pp 79-94

[6] Ward C 1978 The child in the city (New York: Pantheon Books) p 221

[7] Sanoff G 2015 Collaborative design. The practice of public participation in the formation of the environment of large and small cities p 170

[8] Matthews H 2003 The street as a liminal space: the barbed spaces of childhood Children in the city pp 101–117

[9] Satta C 2010 Simply child’s play? Reconfiguring child-adult relations in a leisure place for children Enfance & Cultures (Electronic Materials) Access mode: http://www.enfanceetcultures.culture.gouv.fr/actes/satta.pdf

[10] Balakireva M 2015 Studying the daily mobility of city dwellers with children: the experience of applying the strategy of mixing methods INTER 10 pp 60-69

[11] Ratti K and Claudel M 2017 City of tomorrow: sensors, networks, hackers and the future of urban life (Moscow: Publishing house of the Gaidar Institute) pp 161-162

[12] Filipova A G and Rakitina N E 2017 Urban “benevolence” towards children: from inequality to participatory design of the urban environment: (based on materials from cities in the south of the Far East) (Vladivostok: FEFU Publishing House) p 188

[13] Francis M and Lorenzo R 2002 Seven realms of children’s participation Journal of Environmental psychology 22 p 158

[14] Chatterjee S 2005 Children’s friendship with Place: A Conceptual Inquiry Children, Youth and Environments 15(1) pp15-16

[15] Driskell D 1998 Creating better cities with children and youth: A Manual for Participation p 208

[16] Limb M, Matthews H and Taylor M 2005 The “Street” as Third space Childhood. Critical concepts in sociology 1 253-269

[17] Lynch K 1977 Growing up in cities (Cambridge: Mass) Access mode: https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/growing-cities

[18] Newman O 1972 Defensible space: crime prevention through urban design (New-York: MacMillan) p 264

[19] Olwig K F and Gullov E 2003 Children’s places. Cross-cultural perspectives (London: Routledge) p 255

[20] Rasmussen K 2004 Places for children Children’s places Childhood 11 (2) 156-173

[21] Valentine G 2004 Public space and the culture of childhood (Hampshire: Ashgate) p 144

[22] Filipova A G 2012 Social space of childhood: principles of marking territories Journal of Social Policy Studies 1 pp 79-94

[23] Radchenko A 2019 School Safety Study. Analysis of accidents with victims near educational institutions in Moscow (Electronic Materials) Access mode: https://medium.com