Affective geographies of adolescent young people's wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic

Leyla SAFTA-ZECHERIA[•], **Mihaela MITESCU MANEA**[••],

Francisca-Hortensia VIRAG[•••], **Andra-Maria JURCA**[••••], **Ioana-Alexandra NEGRU**[•••••]

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic and measures put in place to contain the spread of Sars-Cov-2 virus have limited and changed the ways in which people around the world use space. In this paper, we look at how young people's affective geographies of wellbeing have been reconfigured by the Covid-19 pandemic. Building on visual and textual data from a photovoice workshop with fourteen adolescent young people (aged 15-18) from a high-school in North-West Romania held in the fall of 2021, we show how both domestic and public outdoor spaces were reshaped by the public health crisis and by measures put in place to control it. Our findings point to the fact that the relationship between digital and domestic spaces has become even more blurred through the incorporation of educational and socializing activities within digital-domestic spaces. Furthermore, we point to the reconfiguration of relationships between young people and non-human others, especially animals that they share domestic spaces with, as well as other household and family members. Finally, we show that adolescent young people came to claim the use of outdoor public spaces as a prosaic form of everyday resistance in their quest for wellbeing. Spaces such as hypermarket and gas station parking lots, (unused) school courtyards and deserted stadiums came to be used by young people as clandestine spaces in which to socialize and to do sports.

Keywords: young people, wellbeing, photovoice, affective geographies, Covid-19 pandemic

---

[•] Lecturer, PhD, Department of Educational Sciences, West University of Timişoara / *External Research Affiliate at the* Democracy Institute Central European University Budapest, leyla.safta@e-uvt.ro

[••] Lecturer, PhD, Department of Educational Sciences, West University of Timişoara, Mihaela.mitescu@e-uvt.ro

[•••] MA Graduate, Department of Educational Sciences, West University of Timişoara, francisca.virag76@e-uvt.ro

[••••] Assistant Professor and PhD student, Department of Educational Sciences, West University of Timişoara, andra.jurca@e-uvt.ro

[•••••] Ph.D. Student, Department of Educational Sciences, West University of Timişoara, ioana.negru@pufantm.ro

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated measures to control the spread of Sars-Cov-2 have affected the ways in which people across the world use space. Especially young people have come to be affected by these measures, with a direct impact on their mental health and wellbeing (McMellon & Maclachlan 2021; Sonuga-Barke & Fearon 2021), as well as on educational inequalities (Darmody et al. 2021; Donosso & Rothman 2020; Mitescu Manea et al. 2021), among many other relevant impacts. Lockdowns and other restrictions put in place to ensure physical distancing have likely changed how we use and how we relate to public space everywhere in the world (Honey-Roses 2020). Yet, these restrictions, albeit affecting large portions of the world's population, do not affect their wellbeing equally. Restrictions on which spaces can be used and what spaces are accessible to people during lockdown have been shown to have a clear impact on people's wellbeing, especially regarding access to green spaces (Poortigna et al. 2021). The use of public spaces, such as parks and open spaces, during the Covid-19 pandemic, has tended to reproduce the power configurations prevalent in society, furthering marginalization of the disempowered (Hoover & Lim 2021).

Adolescence has been described as a life stage in which young people are involved in practices of appropriating public spaces (Andersson et al. 2019), while being disempowered in fully taking ownership of and crafting their domestic spaces by their legal status as minors (Childress 2004). Therefore, we ask ourselves: What do the changes in how space could be used during the Covid-19 pandemic look like from the perspective of adolescent young people?

In this article, we focus on the reconfiguration of how adolescent young people used space during the Covid-19 pandemic, drawing out the significance of these processes for the reconfiguration of their social relationships and their sense of wellbeing. We approach this question from a perspective influenced by recent works on affective geographies of wellbeing (Schwanen & Atkinson 2015; Atkinson 2013; Andrews et al. 2014). We look at wellbeing not as a process located within the individual mind (Schwanen and Atkinson 2015, 99) or as an a priori defined normative desirable state of affairs (Andrews et al., 2014), nor as a discursive object with fixed boundaries (Scott 2015). Rather than this, we embrace the potential multiplicity of wellbeing and its collective potentialities towards a relational and situated account that views it as an 'effect of mutually constitutive interactions amongst the material, organic and emotional dynamics of places' (Atkinson 2013, 138), as they are experienced by young people in their everyday lives. In this we focus on how wellbeing might arise through affect in everyday life (Andrews et al. 2014). Thus we look at how young people photographically capture and discuss their affects in relation to wellbeing and to the situatedness and relationality of their contexts that involve both human, non-human and material others. Our effort is aimed at exploring new affective geographies of young people's wellbeing

that emerged in everyday life through the reconfigurations of spaces that adolescent young people experienced during the pandemic and how these are intertwined with affective ways of relating to wellbeing.

Our endeavour is also motivated by the fact that the affective geographies described in relation to Covid-19 have thus far focused primarily on grief and consolation related to the inequalities along which the unequal impact of the pandemic has been felt (Maddrell 2020; Ho & Maddrell 2021; Maddrell et al. 2021), while a more recent approach centers the intersectional differences in how the pandemic has shaped the relationship between wellbeing, space and women's experiences (Thorpe et al, 2023). Inspired by this approach, we ask how were other new affective geographies configured in the pandemic context? And how were these affective geographies related to wellbeing?

Moreover, our study consciously centers adolescent young people's perspectives, following a children's geographies approach that denies the dualism between nature and culture and gives special attention to the situation of children within relations of power (Holloway, 2013). We understand 'youth' as a liminal and ill-defined period that separates childhood and adulthood that is often represented as a period of 'transition', the apparent recognition of which depends on the ways in which spaces are inhabited and used by young people (Valentine 2003). Through this approach, we emphasize the de-normativization of youth as a period of transition from adult dependent childhood to independent adulthood. We also point to the fact that the pandemic has reshaped the opportunities for young people to become independent economic actors, e.g. by pushing already independent young adults into moving back home because of crisis induced lack of employment opportunities (Vehkalahti et al. 2021) and thus may lead to infantilizing narratives directed at people who were young during the pandemic.

While young people's quest for well-being during the pandemic by engaging in remote gaming activities for the purpose of socializing has received some scholarly attention (Bengtsson et al. 2021), as have the transformations of how forced leisure time – leisure time that has resulted as a consequence of restrictive measures – was being spent (Panarese & Azzarita 2021), the reconfigurations of young people's engagements with domestic and public space in their quest for wellbeing during the pandemic has been less studied. This is why in this paper, based on the results of a photovoice workshop with fourteen adolescent young people from a high school in North-West Romania, we address the question: How have young people engaged with space in their quest for wellbeing during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic?

Methodology

To answer this question, we will draw on the results of a photovoice workshop that was embedded in a wider active-learning (Wright 2015) oriented participatory research project with young people aged 15 to 18 that attend a high-school in North-West Romania.

Prior to data collection the study went through the ethical review of the Scientific Council of University Research and Creation of the West University of Timişoara and received a favourable notice (nr.46791/23.09.2021). Prior to participating in the research, the legal guardians of the participating young people were informed about the research and asked to sign an informed consent form endorsing the participation of the minors in the research. One participant who was of age at the beginning of the research activities signed the consent form himself. All other participants were given assent forms (supplementary to the informed consent forms that their legal guardians received and signed). The information in these forms was discussed with the participants and they formalized the assent procedure through signing the forms additionally to the forms signed by their legal guardians. All participants included in this study have provided assent and their legal guardians provided consent for participation in the research.

An initial compact series of workshops lasted for four days in the fall of 2021 and were conducted face-to-face in the event hall of the high-school. These were conceived as a kick-off event for further blended learning interactions, as well as potentially for future face-to-face workshops. Initially, fifteen young people, the vast majority of which were women, signed up to participate in the kick-off seminar with a view to remaining in the project. One of the attending young people decided to not continue in the project and did not participate in the photovoice project. The kick-off seminar was aimed at establishing a group of young people and inviting them to reflect on the topics of wellbeing and equity and the ways in which they intersect with their everyday lives, especially since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The university based research team that organized the workshops with the endorsement of the school leadership consisted of six members (former) graduate students and faculty from the departments of educational sciences and psychology of the same university.

While the goal of involving and capacitating young people to take part in Youth-led Participatory Action Research (Ozer 2017; Ozer et al. 2013) was one of the drivers of the initial organization of the kick-off seminar, young people were also involved in the project as research participants (Ozer & Piatt 2017), that were encouraged to document, present, discuss and reflect upon their everyday experiences with educational inequity and wellbeing during the time of the pandemic and think about potential ways of transforming these experiences in the future (through peer support networks or other interventions). The rationale for involving them in this project was based on the fact that schools in Romania had been at around the date of the workshop fully closed for 22 weeks and partially closed for another 10 weeks since the initial onset of measures to control the spread of Covid-19 in Romania in mid-March 2020 (UNESCO, 2021), and that as a research team we assumed the impact on the everyday lives of young people in school had been significant, leading to reconfigurations of their human and non-human relations and the materialities of their everyday lives.

The photovoice workshop was divided into two parts. During the first, the young people were invited to reflect on their wellbeing during the pandemic and where and how

this (or the lack thereof) manifested itself visibly in their everyday lives. Visibility of these processes was essential as it allowed the photo documenting of wellbeing. The young people were invited to take photographs during two days and were then invited to upload them to a common closed facebook group. The photographs were taken with their own cell phones, as there were no participants that did not have access to these devices. Some of the participants chose to create collages using photographs that they had previously taken and this was accepted by the organizers, since it provided an opportunity to reflect upon a wider range of experiences. During the second part of the workshop (on the last day of the seminar), young people were encouraged to present their photographs or collages and discuss them with their peers. Fourteen young people took part in the discussions, while eleven people uploaded photographs onto the common group. The discussions were recorded with the permission of the participants and their legal guardians, the recording was transcribed and the anonymized transcription was used together with the photographs in the process of interpreting the data.

In interpreting the data the research team worked collaboratively in a two-cycled coding multitext thematic analysis, one of the research group members transcribed the recording and integrated the images with the transcribed text. The resulting word file was 43 pages long and included both text and images. The compiled file was then read by five coders that worked inductively on the first cycle of coding. The second cycle of coding was structured to identify theoretically salient topics in the inductive codes, that agreed upon in a meeting of the authors of this paper. In a final step, the final coding manual was applied to the entire transcript by members of the research team working on different themes identified collectively. The results were then put together and discussed once more after which this paper's first author produced the initial version of this paper. This approach can be read as a similar one to Kate Gleeson's (2020) polytextual thematic analysis for visual (and multimodal) data that applied inductive thematic analysis principles beyond textual analysis into visual analysis. .

The photovoice methodology developed by Wang and Burris (1997) involves asking people to photograph things that are relevant to their everyday lives and communities and then share and discuss the photographs with people in similar situations. From the very onset, photovoice methodology was designed to help breach knowledge asymmetries between community-outsider researchers and community-insider research subjects, as well as provide a platform for people to discuss their communities in their own terms and not those dictated by researchers' agendas. Similar to photo-elicitation (Cooper 2017), photovoice is responsive to childhood experiences and enhances children's participation in research. The same can be considered true for young people. Moreover, as has been shown for video-based research in health geography (Kaley et al. 2019), visual methods are more suitable for capturing the material, embodied and performed aspects of places.

The photovoice workshop we organized was centered on documenting young people's experiences during the pandemic from the perspective of how they related to

their wellbeing. From the beginning space and place were central concepts in the discussion with young people, photo mapping (Texeira & Gardner 2017) was proposed by the research group as an alternative to more 'traditional' approaches to photovoice but this was rejected by participants, who did not find the idea of generating a common map of their experiences related to wellbeing during the pandemic appealing. In retrospect, this was probably connected to the fact that many of the young people produced collages in which they explored their domestic settings, which they likely did not desire to include in a map.

The research team's motivation in including a photovoice workshop as part of the kick-off seminar for our YPAR project with young people attending high-school was that it would allow immersion into the everyday lives of participants, even in the effect that we would not be allowed to carry out the research face-to-face. Caragata and Liegghio (2020) propose using photovoice as a methodology for hybrid research in periods of physical distancing that allows for marginalized perspectives to be included in research during this time. This kept the possibility open to switch to an online research design if the face to face option became unattainable because of the evolution of Covid-19 case numbers and restrictive measures.

Moreover, as Lydia Plowman (2016) has shown, boundaries between 'home' and 'technology' are often blurred in research with children (and by extension young people) about their use of digital technologies. Technological use in domestic settings for leisure is a mobile, ubiquitous and invisible process which can more productively be investigated by including digital technologies in the research process and seeing them conceptually as part of the research process as they are an omnipresent part of young people's lives. If Plowman's observation was true before processes of digitalization exacerbated by the pandemic, this is likely even more relevant today. Furthermore, as Plowman (2016) convincingly shows, incorporating digital technologies into the research process allows a window into participating in the domestic everyday environments of young people from afar. As young people's wellbeing was likely to be strongly connected to their experiences at home, this methodology allowed us a glimpse at otherwise inaccessible domestic settings, as well as other relevant everyday life spaces beyond them.

Discussion

The remaking of relationships within the domestic-digital spaces and wellbeing

One of the advantages of using photovoice methodology affords researchers a window into personal experiences that are rarely accessible to researchers (Ciolan & Manasia 2017, 3). In our research, young people presented photographs of their bedrooms and houses from which they were taking part in online school. When presenting these photographs, young people explained how their relationships to space and to other people and non-human participants that they were sharing the space with had changed.

The remaking of the blurred boundary between the domestic and the digital space in online education

As Lydia Plowman (2016) has convincingly argued even before the pandemic, the boundaries between digital and domestic spaces were blurred from the perspective of how digital technologies were part of the domestic space of children, a conclusion that we found to be true for young people during the Covid-19 pandemic as well. These boundaries were reshaped to include one more relational dimension that already had become incorporated in the domestic-digital space before the pandemic but to a much more modest extent, namely participation in educational activities.

One young woman presented a picture of her in front of her laptop, showing us how she had organized her virtual social life when she could not go out to meet her friends:

The [...] picture is of how I would meet friends during the pandemic, on meet or facebook, facetime and other such things. Although we also spoke through messages, it wasn't like that face-to-face interaction and sometimes, well... the laziness.. to text and it came to be okay to see others like this.

Educational activities were also re-organized to be attended from a distance, generally from the domestic space. One of the young women also shared pictures of her writing desk that included a notebook set in front of her laptop showing the platform access she had to all of the classes that she was participating in. Another participant shared how the sides of her computer screen had been fully decorated with relevant information that she could read off from next to her screen during an oral examination during which she was made to keep her hands below her chin at all times. Another woman shared a photograph of a video conference call which she had to attend blind folded in order to participate in an oral examination so that the teacher would be sure she is not cheating. Other participants mentioned being asked to put their hands in front of their eyes to prove they are not reading off the information being presented.
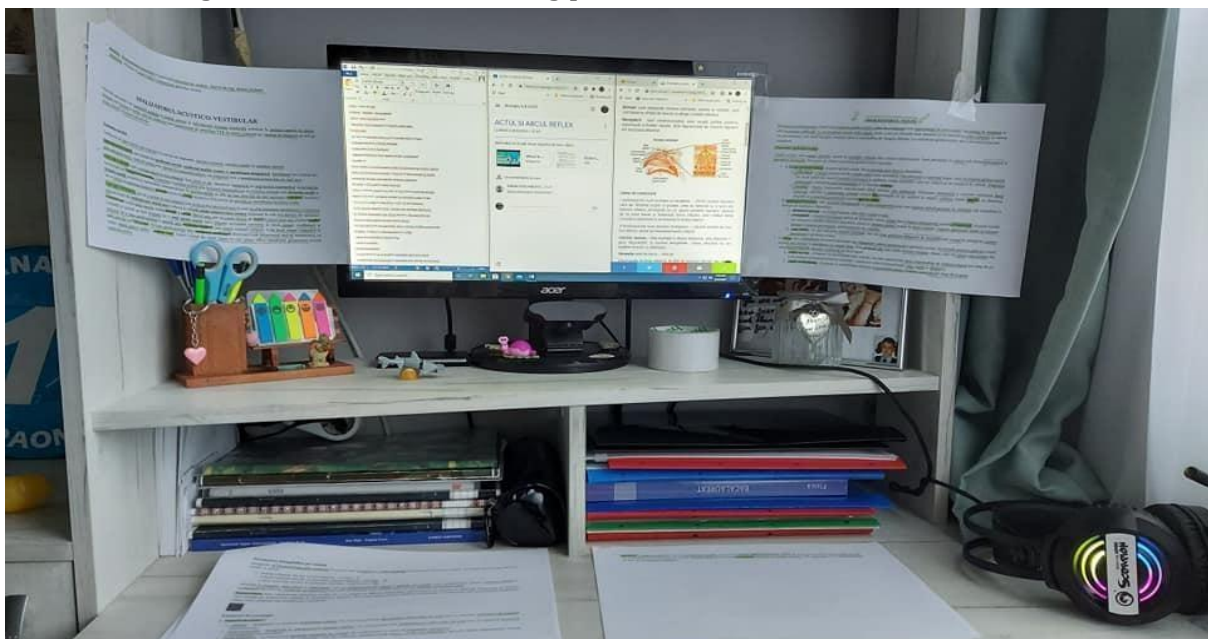

Image 1 Photography by participant

These practices point to how participation in educational activities from home fully transforms the domestic space, as well as partly the bodies of the participants according to the informal norms of educational interactions. High-school students are called to manage and display their bodies to perform honesty and transform the spaces from which they participate in order to fit their needs.

The domestic space is thus re-inscribed with the informal practices of school education – connected to teachers' attempts to control the bodies of students and the spaces inhabited by them from afar, pushing students to performatively display honesty during examinations. Students, aware of the gaze through the computer, reshape the space to enable their own practices, which involved cheating while performing honesty at the same time. As one of the students shared with us, she had learned to set the videoconferencing program on 'freeze' and would then be able to look up information on the internet without appearing to do so. Similarly, other participants shared a picture of how they would participate in exams in online school from the same room, while appearing to be alone in the room in order to not raise suspicions:

[The other picture] is from a test in geography when we were with our laptops back-to-back [...]. This was a subject where you needed to learn by heart and no one would, and even if you would, [the teacher] would ask things that we had not covered and you had no chance [of passing] . So the laptop was open on google to look things up and we would just set the application on freeze from the forehead and would look up the things... and my answer didn't load and so he asked for a picture of the laptop to see the number of points. And I took that picture and the other person's laptop was visible, but [the teacher] did not realize, [...] it was okay.

These sets of practices allow us to see how the relationship between domestic and digital spaces is reconfigured thus enabling differentiated forms of participation in the informal practices of online education.

The reconfiguration of relationships within family households

The reconfiguration of the relationship with domestic space and remote localities

A house in the countryside was presented by one of the participants as being 'the place where she could distance herself from all her problems and find herself again'. She described living in a house in the countryside as a 'privilege' and contrasted this to the experience of the nearby larger city that was much more affected by the pandemic which she perceived as an altogether 'different world'. She also added a photograph of a green space to the collage that included the photo pointing to the importance of accessing private green spaces during restrictive measures as a factor of wellbeing also confirmed by other research during this time (Poortigna et al., 2021). In this account, a rural country house becomes a desirable place to spend large periods of time, the quality of the domestic environment and the access to green spaces become important avenues in the

quest for wellbeing. Moreover, the larger city is inscribed as a perceived primary site of the public health crisis from which remote localities appear to be more protected.

In the same vein, choosing places of escape to spend time with other young people was also part of the reconfiguration of the use of domestic space, especially in remote localities. Several participants from the group had in the past been together at an outdoor barbeque in the garden of the countryside house of one of the participants. When discussing why she had chosen to share this particular image of three people attending an outdoor barbeque in the context of the workshop, one of the participants agreed that it was safer to meet people outside to socialize, but also the place where people could be met mattered favoring remote localities:

It's not in town, because in town someone can see us and we end up with the police there.

Thus relationships with domestic spaces were reconfigured in the quest for wellbeing centering remote domestic spaces with green areas that would allow for personal comfort, but also for safer interactions both in medical terms and in terms of escaping police surveillance during restrictive measures.

The reconfiguration of family relationships within the household

Family relations came to be reconfigured during this period of time with family members spending more time together during the periods of harsh restrictions on movement. One of the participants pointed out that during the period of meals being shared in the family, which she originally disliked but then came to appreciate:

I wasn't at all happy when my mother introduced this rule that we should all come to the table and I disliked it a lot and said 'why do I have to come to dine with you?', but afterwards it all came to be very nice.

As Becky Tipper (2011) has convincingly shown, children regard animals as part of their families when they live together with them. This significance has likely increased during the pandemic, since domestic relationships became more dominant in young people's everyday lives through the large amounts of time spent at home, while being deprived of other activities and relationships. Relationships with animals thus become important relationships for individual wellbeing, almost a proxy for relationships with peers and an opportunity to break very monotonous and disengaged routines:

Maybe because my parents are more strict... all that I did was sleep, spend time in my bed and in the second picture there is the laptop and then in the third picture that is the most representative one [for the topic of wellbeing], in that time I was feeling more anxious and I got a cat. And I look at my colleagues, how they spent the time and I feel like the time has passed me by...

Relationships with animals also were shaped by the possibility of taking animals outside as a legally legitimate reason to leave the house during lockdown, relationships with animals thus became crucial for finding the motivation to leave the house and for legitimately accessing public space:

[In the picture there is] the reason why I would come to leave the house with the dog … and I had to take him out, I had no other excuse [to leave the house] and to explain my general daily state during the pandemic: [it was about] sleeping all the time or being lazy and spending the entire day in bed.

Thus relationships with pets became qualitatively different and were understood as crucial for the wellbeing of the young people through allowing them to escape the drudgery of domestic life from which they felt disengaged. Similarly, the reconfiguration of human social relationships within the family unit came to be reconfigured in this way due to facing common challenges of finding a way to leave the house:

The photo with the declarations for the pharmacy has an interesting story because I wasn't going out with a friend or a colleague, but with my dad, because he also couldn't take it anymore [being stuck at home] […] and the funniest part is that it was not my idea, it was my father's idea to write the declarations with pharmacy and then go out on the street and ride around [outside the small town where we lived].

The reconfiguration of relationships between human and non-human household members was intertwined with the differentiated ways in which each member could use both the domestic space and could gain access to outdoor public spaces. Space was more than a mediating force, but rather an agent in the reconfiguration of social relationships within households that sought to contribute to the household's members and specifically to the young people's sense of wellbeing in the present context.
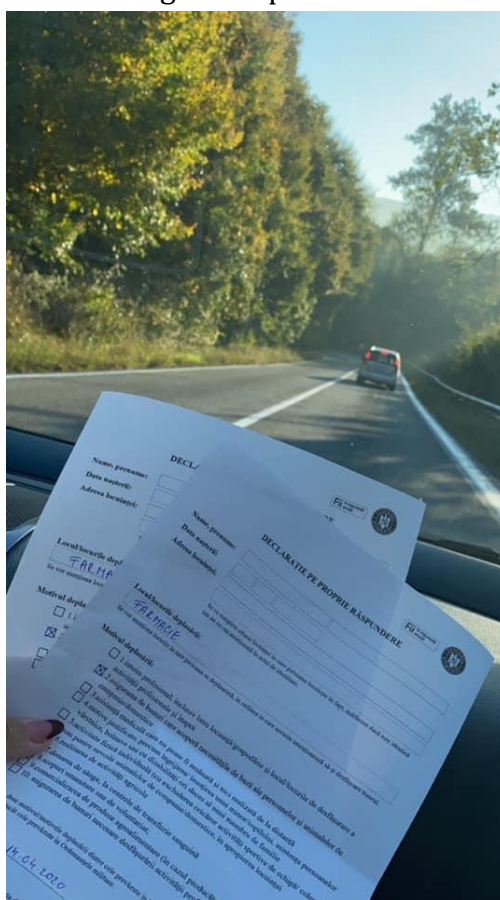

Image 2 photo by participant

Clandestine use of outdoor social space as a 'weapon of the week'

As the measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 involved restrictions related to the ways in which people could use public spaces, discouraging meeting people outside of one's own household, young people found subversive strategies to continue their social lives despite these restrictions. In this process, young people turned to certain outdoor spaces as they enabled social gatherings, while minimizing both the risks of being reprimanded by the police enforcing restrictions and that of Sars-Cov-2 infection.

Their use of outdoor spaces for social gatherings as opposed to more strict respect for restrictions can be read as a form of everyday forms of resistance, as a 'weapon of the weak' in James Scott's (1985, especially Chapter 2) terms. Young people engaged in these prosaic yet constant struggles with parents, the police and other forms of authority such as security guards and school principals. The goals for which they engaged in these struggles related to their right to use outdoor spaces and were immediate: they sought places where they could spend uninterrupted time together with their peers, an activity that increased their sense of wellbeing by helping them avoid the drudgery of domestic life.

The parking lot of a local hypermarket found its way into several of the young people's submitted photographs. One of the young women captioned the picture: "the escape from 'prison' ". Another participant described her use of outdoor spaces to meet her friends as follows:

Me, like other people as well, I kept staying hidden behind [the name of the hypermarket], behind tall buildings , in the [name of the pub terrace], that's about it.

The participants described the parking lot as a space in which they spent a considerable amount of time, also because there were not a lot of people there and the police would not enter that space, allowing them to escape the boredom felt in domestic spaces without the anxiety of negative consequences. Most mentioned meeting just their close friends in this space, one of the young people explained that this was a space where large groups could also gather without being noticed. The space of the parking lot thus came to be used by the young people to re-create a space for social gatherings as an alternative to the usual spaces that they would use.

An outdoor stadium was used by two of the participants to go running during the first months of restrictions. One of them saw this as a significant way of escaping the drudgery of domestic life that she felt was not specific to her age or interests. The stadium thus became a space that made the boredom in domestic spaces bearable during the initial toughest restrictions, but since the use was only possible in a clandestine manner, it was discontinued when limited, yet official sporting activities resumed:

Yes, I have a [picture of a] stadium. I really had nothing else to do, but sit on a balcony and watch people, like an old lady. The stadium [was the place connected to wellbeing for me] but then it was closed. [Other participant who had accompanied her]: And the guard picked on us, said it was only open to athletes now. [first participant:] So it was only open for athletics and there was nothing we could do.

197

Image 3 Photo by participant

Similarly, school courtyards were also entered through holes in the fencing and used as meeting places. This was not only true of the courtyard of the high-school where our research was conducted, but also of another high school in a nearby town, where one of the participants lived. Thus the ordinary social activities of everyday school life were carried out in a clandestine manner during the times of social distancing and ordinary spaces were accessed because of the imperfections of infrastructure allowing access where this was not normally allowed:

Yes, there at the high school from [name of town]. I was lucky since I live quite close to it and I could go out. I know that the schools were closed… but I think there was something broken at the door of the sports field and they didn't have a chance to fix it [before restrictions started] and we had the privilege of going out on the sports field and we would hide. Now we can no longer get in because they fixed the door. [Before] we used to be able to go in the back on the sports field and stay there. It was more difficult to leave without being caught, but we wrote our declarations and all [paperwork attesting the right to leave the house].

The use of outdoor spaces for informal social interactions with other students from the school also happened in spaces that had been used for skipping school during face to face education. A pub with a terrace was then used to attend online school or to again skip school during the rare periods in which face-to-face education was briefly resumed:

This is a picture from when we used to go there [to the pub with the terrace] during school. [Facilitator: Online school or face to face?] Both, I think the entire school was there.

Thus, the blurry boundaries between skipping school and online school are visible in the informal encounters of students in commercial outdoor spaces in which school-related informal social interactions such as those characteristic of skipping school are recreated irrespective of whether or not face-to-face or online education was taking place at the moment of the interaction.

Traveling as a disruptive practice supporting wellbeing

Participants also submitted photographs of their travels during the pandemic months. A photo showing two young men bathing in a lake a couple of tens of kilometers away from the city where the high-school was located was captioned: 'Two walking corpses that got bored of restrictions and went to take a bath'. The photograph and the caption pointed to the fact that the young people attributed a great deal of importance to these outings when thinking about their wellbeing. Unsurprisingly, escaping the drudgery of an everyday life governed by restrictions was seen as making a huge difference to one's well-being. Interestingly, this points to a wider question of how boredom, recently documented as the affect of social exclusion (O'neill, 2017), became one of the dominant affects of the pandemic, especially for adolescent young people.

Those who travelled to the seaside during summer or to the mountains during winter submitted pictures of this time, giving details of how they had been able to enjoy these types of travels, stressing the fact that the activities took place in outdoor spaces. But even small events like going to a parking lot and setting up a hammock were seen as very significant since they were spaces where young people went to socialize.

Image 4 Photo by participant

During the photovoice workshop, while listening to the other people's accounts of their experiences during lockdown, one of the participants concluded that her impossibility to partake in these type of activities greatly affected her sense of wellbeing:

In these two years I don't know what I did, I have not made a single memory, I mean it's very sad […] [Facilitator 2: And if now there would be again a lockdown would you act in the same way? Or differently?] No, no, I would join in somehow… I would not want it to be again in the same way for anything in the world…it was so bad.

Subversive practices involving social gatherings in outdoor spaces were key to young people's sense of wellbeing during periods of restrictions. The use of space made the recreation of informal school connected social networks possible. Wellbeing for young people was not connected primarily to accessing education, but to accessing the informal structures that attending school in a face-to-face format makes possible.

Conclusions

Adolescent young people's geographies of wellbeing were reconfigured during the pandemic in several significant ways. On the one hand, relationships with domestic spaces, as well as within domestic spaces were reconfigured significantly. Most importantly, the blurry boundary between domestic and digital environments in young people's everyday lives described by Lydia Plowman (2016) has now become even more blurry, since a large part of both educational and socializing activities of young people have moved into the digital space, while being attended from the domestic space. These blurry boundaries were visible in the reconfiguration of digital space for education, but also in that of the domestic space that was re-arranged to fit both the formal and informal practices and needs associated with school education. This points us to an opportunity to rethink the blurry boundaries between digital, domestic and educational spaces and further reflection on these issues from the perspective of how education plays into affective geographies of wellbeing is necessary to fully grasp this transformation.

From a different perspective, remote domestic spaces have become more desirable to young people, especially when they allow access to green areas that can be used for relaxation, as well as for outdoor socializing activities. Social relations within domestic space have increased in intensity and significance, with both human and non-human household members. Animals in particular were seen as particularly relevant partners in the young people's quest for wellbeing. This points to the opportunity of thinking further through how human – animal relationships are being transformed during the pandemic and how this relates to affective geographies of wellbeing.

Finally, the appropriation of outdoor public spaces by adolescent young people was a significant pathway to wellbeing for the young people involving an everyday struggle – akin to those described by James Scott (1985) in *Weapons of the Weak*. Young people engaged in these struggles for space not in a reckless manner, since often they were mindful of risks to themselves but also primarily to the health of their family members, but in a reflected and responsible manner. They met in often deserted outdoor spaces

that had previously belonged to their everyday lives: school courtyards, hypermarket parking lots and backstreets – places where they could be safe from prying eyes, while still retaining contact with their peers. This points to an affective geography of clandestine spaces as sites of young people's wellbeing that is not new, but that has taken on an increased importance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Acknowledgements

References

Andersson, B., Y. Mengilli, A. Pohl, and C. Reutlinger. 2019. "You can't be up there"–youth cultural participation and appropriation of space. *Diskurs Kindheits-und Jugendforschung/Discourse. Journal of Childhood and Adolescence Research*, *14*(1), 5-6. doi: 10.3224/diskurs.v14i1.01

Andrews, G. J., S. Chen, and S. Myers. 2014. The 'taking place' of health and wellbeing: Towards non-representational theory. *Social Science & Medicine*, *108*, 210-222. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.02.037

Atkinson, S. (2013). Beyond components of wellbeing: The effects of relational and situated assemblage. *Topoi*, *32*(2), 137-144. doi: 10.1007/s11245-013-9164-0

Bengtsson, T. T., L.H. Bom, and L. Fynbo. 2021. Playing apart together: Young people's online gaming during the COVID-19 lockdown. *YOUNG*, *29*(4_suppl), S65-S80. doi: 10.1177/11033088211032018

Childress, H. 2004. Teenagers, territory and the appropriation of space. *Childhood*, *11*(2), 195-205. doi: 10.1177/0907568204043056

Ciolan, L., and L. Manasia. 2017. Reframing photovoice to boost its potential for learning research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1). doi: 1609406917702909

Cooper, V. L. 2017. Lost in translation: Exploring childhood identity using photo-elicitation. *Children's Geographies*, *15*(6), 625-637. doi: 10.1080/14733285.2017.1284306

Darmody, M., E. Smyth, and H. Russell. 2021. Impacts of the COVID-19 Control Measures on Widening Educational Inequalities. *YOUNG*, *29*(4), 366-380. doi: 10.1177/11033088211027412

Donoso, V. and N. Rethmann. 2020. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis: Is online teaching increasing inequality and decreasing well being for children? London School of Economics blog. Available https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/medialse/2021/01/20/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-crisis-is-online-teaching-increasing-inequality-and-decreasing-well-being-for-children/

Gleeson, K. (2020). Polytextual thematic analysis for visual data: Analysing visual images. In *A handbook of visual methods in psychology* (pp. 536-554). Routledge.

Ho, E. L. E., and A. Maddrell. 2021. Intolerable intersectional burdens: a COVID-19 research agenda for social and cultural geographies. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 22(1), 1-10. doi: 10.1080/14649365.2020.1837215

Holloway, S. L. 2014. Changing children's geographies. *Children's Geographies*, *12*(4), 377-392. doi: 10.1080/14733285.2014.930414

Honey-Rosés, J., I. Anguelovski, V.K. Chireh, C. Daher, C. Konijnendijk van den Bosch, J.S. Litt, ... and M.J. Nieuwenhuijsen 2020. The impact of COVID-19 on public space: an early review of the emerging questions–design, perceptions and inequities. *Cities & Health*, 1-17. doi: 10.1080/23748834.2020.1780074

Hoover, F. A., and T.C. Lim. 2021. Examining privilege and power in US urban parks and open space during the double crises of antiblack racism and COVID-19. *Socio-Ecological Practice Research*, *3*(1), 55-70. doi: 10.1007/s42532-020-00070-3

Maddrell, A. 2020. Bereavement, grief, and consolation: Emotional-affective geographies of loss during COVID-19. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, *10*(2), 107-111. Doi: 10.1177/2043820620934947

Maddrell, A., D. McNally, Y. Beebeejaun, K. McClymont, and B. Mathijssen. 2021. Intersections of (infra) structural violence and cultural inclusion: the geopolitics of minority cemeteries and crematoria provision. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 46:675-688. doi: 10.1111/tran.12437

McMellon, C., and A. MacLachlan. 2021. Young People's Rights and Mental Health During a Pandemic: An Analysis of the Impact of Emergency Legislation in Scotland. *YOUNG*, *29*(4_suppl), S11-S34. doi: 10.1177/11033088211032783

Mitescu-Manea, M., L. Safta-Zecheria, E. Neumann, V. Bodrug-Lungu, V. Milenkova, and V. Lendzhova. 2021. Inequities in first education policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis: A comparative analysis in four Central and East European countries. *European Educational Research Journal*, *20*(5), 543-563. doi: 10.1177/14749041211030077

O'Neill, B. 2017. *The space of boredom*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ozer, E.J. 2017. Youth-led participatory action research: Overview and potential for enhancing adolescent development. *Child Development Perspectives*, *11*(3), 173-177. doi: 10.1111/cdep.12228

Ozer, E.J., and A.A. Piatt, A. A. 2017. Adolescent Participation in Research: Innovation, rationale and next steps. *Florence, Italy: UNICEF Innocenti Office of Research*.

Ozer, E.J., S. Newlan, L. Douglas, and E. Hubbard. 2013. "Bounded" empowerment: Analyzing tensions in the practice of youth-led participatory research in urban public schools. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *52*(1-2), 13-26. doi: 10.1007/s10464-013-9573-7

Panarese, P., and V. Azzarita. 2021. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Lifestyle: How Young people have Adapted Their Leisure and Routine during Lockdown in Italy. *YOUNG*, *29*(4_suppl), S35-S64. doi: 10.1177/1103308821103389

Plowman, L. 2016. Rethinking context: Digital technologies and children's everyday lives. *Children's Geographies*, *14*(2), 190-202. doi: 10.1080/14733285.2015.1127326

Poortinga, W., N. Bird, V. Hallingberg, R. Phillips, and D. Williams, 2021. The role of perceived public and private green space in subjective health and wellbeing during and after the first peak of the COVID-19 outbreak. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 211, 104092. doi: 10.1016/j.landurbplan.2021.104092

Schwanen, T., and S. Atkinson, S. 2015. Geographies of wellbeing: An introduction. *The Geographical Journal*, *181*(2), 98-101. doi: 10.1111/geoj.12132

Scott, J.C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak*. New Haven: Yale university Press.

Scott, K. 2015. Happiness on your doorstep: disputing the boundaries of wellbeing and localism. *The Geographical Journal*, *181*(2), 129-137. doi: 10.1111/geoj.12076

Sonuga-Barke, E., and P. Fearon. 2021. Do lockdowns scar? Three putative mechanisms through which COVID-19 mitigation policies could cause long-term harm to young people's mental health. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 62(12), 1375-1378. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.13537

Teixeira, S., and R. Gardner. 2017. Youth-led participatory photo mapping to understand urban environments. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *82*, 246-253. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.09.033

Thorpe, H., Brice, J., O'Leary, G., Soltani, A., Nemani, M., & Barrett, N. (2023). Affective geographies in pandemic times: An intersectional analysis of women's wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *48*, 100964. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2023.100964

Tipper, B. 2011. 'A dog who I know quite well': Everyday relationships between children and animals. *Children's Geographies*, *9*(2), 145-165. doi: 10.1080/14733285.2011.562378

UNESCO. 2021. Covid-19 Education Response: Country Dashboard Romania, available http://covid19.uis.unesco.org/global-monitoring-school-closures-covid19/country-dashboard/

Valentine, G. 2003. Boundary crossings: transitions from childhood to adulthood. *Children's Geographies*, *1*(1), 37-52. doi: 10.1080/14733280302186

Vehkalahti, K., P. Armila, and A. Sivenius. 2021. Emerging Adulthood in the Time of Pandemic: The COVID-19 Crisis in the Lives of Rural Young Adults in Finland. *YOUNG*, *29*(4), 399-416. doi: 10.1177/11033088211026502

Wright, D. E. 2015. *Active learning: Social justice education and participatory action research*. London: Routledge.