Hearing the Voices of Children and Elders

Planning Across Generations

Common Vision
Inclusive Design · Shared Services

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City planners often prioritize the needs of working age adults over those of children and elders. What makes a neighborhood **child and age friendly?** To explore this question, we used **intercept surveys** with elders and **photovoice** with children in Pineta Sacchetti, an unplanned, peripheral neighborhood of Rome. To our surprise, we found children and elders liked their neighborhood despite its unplanned character. Strong institutions and sense of place made the difference. **Community engagement techniques, such as photovoice and intercept surveys, help reveal that social layer.**
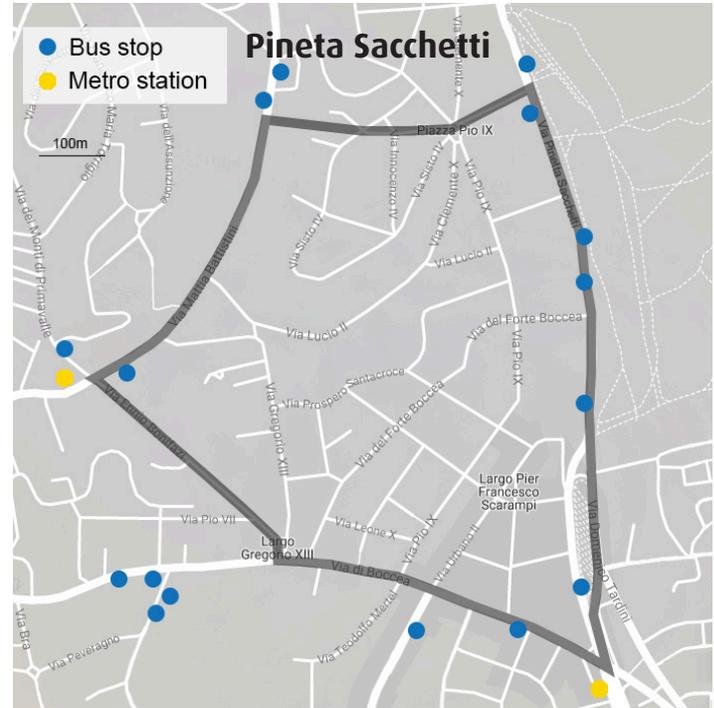
Keys to Successful Engagement

· **Collaborate** with local institutions—schools, libraries, and senior centers

· **Use interactive activities**—interviews, photovoice, workshops

· **Be open** to alternative visions—elders and children may see assets invisible to planners

● Bus stop
● Metro station

Pineta Sacchetti

100m

Access to Public transit is restricted to the periphery

Methodology

First, our team conducted an assessment of the infrastructure and physical condition of Pineta Sacchetti. Sidewalk quality, maintenance, street patterns, topography, etc., informed our initial impression that Pineta Sacchetti was not a neighborhood well suited for children and the elderly. The neighborhood is characterized by winding, unplanned streets with sparse sidewalks and almost no public open space. Services have been retrofitted around the perimeter of the neighborhood, so very few shops and no public transit permeate the dense residential core.

Our initial interviews with residents, however, contradicted these assumptions and suggested the neighborhood's child and age friendliness may come from strong social structures.

To better understand this social layer, we employed interviews and participatory photography. Photovoice is a participatory photography technique used to understand the challenges and assets that community members perceive in their neighborhood and to engage them in dialogue about these issues. Photovoice that has been used in neighborhoods from Turkey to New York City (Severcan, Turnbull, Wang), because it captures a social element is ignored by traditional research methods.

Vital to our success in community engagement and participatory research was the support of local institutions.

The library, senior center and the neighborhood primary/ middle school helped facilitate our interviews, workshop, and photovoice exercise. In fact, many of these institutions went above and beyond the help requested of them.

Typical pedestrian experience of an interior Pineta Sacchetti Street

Photovoice

- Twenty disposable cameras were distributed to children in two classes who lived within the study area.

- Worksheets with prompts for 10 photo subjects asked students to describe where they took photos and why. Positive features included places where children felt community or connected to nature, and negative features included places children disliked or thought were ugly.

- Photos and worksheets were categorized by content to identify nodes of activity, such as the local piazza, regional park, and church.

- These findings were later compared with the results of questionnaires distributed at the senior center.

- The photos were returned to students and discussed at an engagement event.

Questionnaires

To elicit the perspectives of elders in the neighborhood, we created a questionnaire that addressed issues similar to those we addressed in the photovoice exercise. These responses helped us compare the perceived assets and challenges reported by children and the elderly.

Seeing Invisible Assets

The literature suggests that child and age friendly cities are places where transit, housing, work, and play are all located within close proximity and with physical accessibility. Pineta Sacchetti does not fit these physical standards. Our institutional engagement with photovoice presented alternative visions. The people of Pineta Sacchetti reveal assets invisible to planners:

- **Slow Flow** reduces conflict between uses

- **Strong Local Control** creates robust sense of place

- **Deeply Rooted Institutions** reinforce neighborhood norms

Photovoice study images of over a dozen murals that celebrate the neighborhood

References

Sancar, F.H. and Y.C. Severcan. "Children's places: rural–urban comparisons using participatory photography in the Bodrum peninsula, Turkey." Journal of Urban Design 15(3) (2010): 293–324.

Turnbull, G.R.. Participatory Project in New York City Public Housing."2015, www.asocialpractice.com.

Wang, C. C. Photovoice: A Participatory Action Research Strategy Applied to Women's Health. Journal of Women's Health 8(2)(1999): 185–92.

A detailed case study report of Pineta Sacchetti is accessible online at goo.gl/Yu5Nvq