

Children in the Cities: Uninvited Participants?¹

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ABSTRACT This paper discusses the role of children and youth in the construction of city life. Institutionally, children and youth have been considered minor social actors, those to whom scarce participation is afforded in the planning, discussing and decision-making concerning change and improvements of city life. However, children and youth have invariably affected urban environment, though their contribution is almost always unaccounted for. The purpose here is to examine children's and youth's understandings of the city, the way they make sense and make use of urban environment. What sites, locations, displacements and trajectories children and youth make in the city are analyzed in order to search for the nature and the modes of their social participation and social recognition vis-à-vis other social actors. Special attention is given to the nature of social bonds that children establish in contemporary cities, producing new forms of sociability, thereby contributing to city life beyond radical or simplistic understandings, be them conceived as of a full and straightforward participation or of a straightforward marginalization.