

safe spaces in Polish pandemic

We'll be able to hang out when there's no coronavirus. On safe spaces in Polish pandemic playscapes

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Abstract

The outburst of the coronavirus pandemic in Poland has led to specific measures related to covid, which affected unequally different age groups. Children were presented as “spreaders” of the disease, and a threat to the societies’ safety. Such fears led to new disciplining practices, such as prohibiting children from leaving the house without adult’s supervision during the first wave of pandemic in Poland. In the consequence of those special measures, the pandemic crisis challenged and blurred some previously existing boundaries, such as those between home and school, private and public, health and illness, online and offline, etc. In this paper, we examine how Polish children experienced their childhood through playful activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using data from three different research projects conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland, we reflect on the children’s understandings of what is safe. Our focus is on various spaces which either enabled or restrained such activities, and on active work of children in finding and creating a safe space. We argue that, in the circumstances in which known-to-date divisions blurred, children’s seeking of safe spaces, in literal and metaphoric sense, were the means to deal with the new realities. These were primarily negotiable spaces, created through various social practices such as play.

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