CHILD IN THE CITY –

CONFERENCE Zagreb 2012

**conclusions**

1. Concluding Observations Working Group „Intergenerational Interaction“

It´s important for us to note that it has been the first time Intergenerational Interaction has been treated in the conference. We appreciate a lot and we would like to go on with this theme in future opportunities because there must be best practices and more research on this issue to discuss about.

It´s still hard for us to work out one valued definition but we do agree that Intergeneration Interaction does not mean only relationship child – adult but also e.g. child – young people, …

**We tried to sum up the most important headlines:**

* **Range of diversity**

We realised that there is a big variety on different social backgrounds in the World. So we should be conscious that the Western Europe concept of “Intergenerational Interaction” does not fit to those of e.g. African or South American countries … Still within one country there may be different approaches (e.g. Canada). We are sure it is a chance and an opportunity to work on …

* **Dilemma “child participation” vs. “child protection”**

Discussing “Intergenerational Interaction” we realised that there is a rather challenging dilemma between the protection and the participation of children: In more and more countries (e.g. England) a natural coming together of children and adults is not possible due to restrictions and political and social behaviour because there has been (single?) cases of child abuse recently.

* **Common challenge** for children and elderly people: they are both marginalised in society. Could be an “advantage” in order to create synergies for a social and political going forward, in the interest of the child.
* **Common base: respect**. It is very important for us to point out that there should be respect as a base for coming together of different generations.
* **Intergenerational Education**

In order to raise awareness for Intergenerational Interaction in society we can focus on the education system implementing a competence based education for all age groups. It will favour skills, attitudes and values like empathy.

* **Media do have a crucial role**

It could be interesting to work more on media and their representatives with the aim to raise awareness for the Intergenerational Interaction. Nowadays especially young people but also elderly people are shown as “bad news” in newspapers, on radio and TV. One possibility could be to give them best practices and role models, of all generations, so they can use their powerful position for supporting “Intergenerational Interaction” in society.

* **Design of Environment creates possibilities**

Last but not least we are sure that the design of the living environment for both groups, children and adults, can take influence on the dialogue. They can support spending time and meeting each other on very local level. At the same time we realise that there is a growing interest of the private sector to build in public space: In more and more European communities the public space is reduced due to financial challenges. We have to convince them that maybe an investment in creating public space for all age groups on a long term at the end is – also financially – more successful.

Summarized: Bernhard Seidler

1. Concluding Observations Working Group „Health“

1) We need to be clear that we have a broad, holistic, positive understanding of health: one that embraces mental and emotional as well as physical health. Healthy means having good well-being, not just the absence of illness.

2) We need to allow children to have experiences and stimuli that build up their immunity and resilience in many different ways. We need to take a balanced approach to risk, rather than trying to eliminate all risk.

3) The early years are particularly important in shaping children's health and life prospects. However, we must not neglect their later years, nor the time before birth; these periods are important too.

4) We need a clearer, more easily understood vision of what a child-friendly neighbourhood, community or city looks like - of their objective, measurable qualities.

5) Our work needs to have an impact at the local level, for it is here that children's lives are lived. This means ensuring that investment reaches the local level.

Summarized by Tim Gill

1. Concluding Observations Working Group Children’s Rights

**1. The Scale of the Challenge**

The group felt that the conference had confirmed the scale of the challenge in developing genuinely Child Friendly Cities. Full recognition of this challenge is important if initiatives are to be meaningful and effective.

a. Diversity

Cities are, by their nature, very diverse in their communities. Their children have many differing needs, circumstances and contexts. Policies and interventions need to be fully cognizant of this diversity and to respond appropriately.

b. Complexity

The group recognised the complex nature of city institutions and of the structures and systems that need to be engaged in a children’s rights agenda. Lateral and holistic communications, matrix management, cohesive strategic planning and joint or cooperative projects and services are all therefore vital to the success of Child Friendly policies.

**2. Policies Needed at Different Levels**

Policies are needed at each of three levels: he city (or community), the family and the individual child. These need to be integrated and complementary. Working with the child alone can alienate the rest of the family or exacerbate tensions.

**3. Children’s rights are human rights**

The group felt it was important to remind audiences (and ourselves, sometimes!) that Children’s Rights are not an alternative but an addendum to their human rights. We noticed that the right to participate sometimes dominates the agenda, with disproportionate time and effort expended on developing representative structures and bodies for children’s ‘voices’ to be heard. We had two observations about this: -

a. That working with relatively well off children in forums of young democracy should not take priority over working for all children’s most basic rights to safety, shelter, food, love and the freedom to play.

b. Participation work should avoid aping adult institutions. Children should rather be enabled to participate fully in their lives as children, communicating and exercising their own agency through their own mediums of play and movement as much as being listened to when they speak.

**4. Children’s Rights need to be embedded within institutions and professions**

We felt that a robust policy framework for a child friendly city needs appropriate legislation and for institutions to embed city level policy commitments within their own policies, plans and processes. This should be underpinned by appropriate training and professional development programmes that include children’s rights and advocacy so that more adults in the workforce might be effective ‘bridges’ for children.

**5. A Call for Standards, evidence and accountability**

We were very interested in how the Child Friendly City network might establish some recognised criteria, standards or benchmarks against which municipalities can be evaluated and for this to be based on evidence. We would welcome research that identifies how the concept of the Child Friendly City is interpreted and implemented in different parts of the world and for any conclusions about of what works. Evaluation should be done of policies, programmes and outcomes so that Child Friendly Cities are accountable for their performance against transparent criteria.

Summarized by Adrian Voce

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1. Concluding Observations Working Group „CHILDREN’S RIGHT TO PLAY and how to implement the theme at the local level?”

For the local level to attract attention from planners, politicians and others as that physical area of greatest importance to children outdoors, the support of the CRC and especially the CRC §31 is essential. To be able to refer to the CRC is crucial as an instrument to gather support for action. It is also important that results of research on children’s local activities and experiences are communicated and disseminated nationally and internationally and are compared and discussed both at local as well as at national and international political levels.

A broad spectrum of different groups working with children at the local level in the cities should be involved and have the opportunity to meet and be able to assess the child-friendliness of the city in its different parts and to compare the different qualities in these parts.

There should be cooperation with and for children and youth at the local level, supporting children’s access to safe areas outdoors and encouraging children’s independent mobility (CIM). City planning to be child-friendly in this respect means connecting places so that children’s and young people’s independent mobility in the city is encouraged and made possible in a safe way.

Play should be thought of as children’s natural behavior, important for their physical, mental and social development, their mastery and competence as well as their emotional well-being and trust in themselves, important under any circumstances but especially when children are exposed and struck by catastrophes like earthquakes. It is the responsibility of adults to recognize children’s right to play and to make play possible in all situations and environments where children are present.

Summarized by Maria Nordström.