Innocenti Insight
CITIES WITH CHILDREN
CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES IN ITALY

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Acknowledgements

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, was established in 1988 to strengthen the research capability of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to support its advocacy for children worldwide. The Centre (formally known as the International Child Development Centre) helps to identify and research current and future areas of UNICEF's work. Its prime objectives are to improve international understanding of issues relating to children's rights and to help facilitate the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in both developing and industrialized countries.

The Centre's publications are contributions to a global debate on child rights issues and include a wide range of opinions. For that reason, the Centre may produce publications that do not necessarily reflect UNICEF policies or approaches on some topics. The views expressed are those of the authors and are published by the Centre in order to stimulate further dialogue on child rights.

The Centre collaborates with its host institution in Florence, the Istituto degli Innocenti, in selected areas of work. Core funding for the Centre is provided by the Government of Italy, while financial support for specific projects is also provided by other governments, international institutions and private sources, including UNICEF National Committees.

FOREWORD

Over the past decade, Italy has witnessed the growth of a movement of Child Friendly Cities (CFC). With the support of the national government, the academic world, the mass media, the private social sector, non-governmental and civic organisations, children and adolescents, local authorities have been the main actors in a process leading to "child friendly" institutional reforms, regulations, plans, policies and funds. The Italian experience represents an innovative example in the context of the global Child Friendly Cities Initiative promoted by UNICEF and its Research Centre both in the 'South' and 'North' of the world. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (IRC) hosts the international secretariat of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative and, in this context, documents innovative experiences of local governance systems engaged in realising children's rights. IRC acts as a hub for analysing successful methods and good practices, disseminating innovations and supporting national, regional and global networks that promote local experimentation in the area of child rights. The Centre has thus contributed to define the framework and the necessary steps for developing a Child Friendly City.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) provided the framework for developing Child Friendly Cities and, later, the UN Special Session on Children (2002) highlighted the role of mayors and the local governments in achieving children's rights and goals at the local level. National and local Plans of Action for Children were drafted to translate into practice the commitments made at international level. In particular, Law 285/97, "Provisions to promote rights and opportunities for children and adolescents," has supplied the legal framework for implementing the Convention in Italy and creating a national fund for children. Article 7 of Law 295/97 provides financial and legal support to the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys Project launched by the Ministry of the Environment following the commitment made at the Istanbul City Summit (1996) to establish a national CFC programme. It set the stage for the Italian Mayors who created the Mayors as Defenders of Children Initiative, with the active involvement of the Italian Committee for UNICEF, to join hands and establish a network of cities and communities committed to giving space to children – in roads, schools and town-halls.

Since the early 1990s, Italy experimented on the CFC approach, starting with the network of 'Cities for Children' created by the National Research Council and further institutionalising a national programme with the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys Project. Innovations were developed on three main fronts: participatory planning involving children in planning the physical space as well as social and cultural interventions, children's municipal councils giving children an institutional forum for formulating collective decisions, and initiatives to encourage independent mobility by children enabling them to explore their environment without being accompanied by an adult.

The study, developed in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Italy, the Italian Committee for UNICEF and the Istituto degli Innocenti, an Italian NGO, and carried out by the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and Carlo Bo University, Urbino, documents how Child Friendly Cities have grown in Italy into a national network favouring the implementation of the Convention at the local, sub-national level.

The research project has focused on 12 cities selected on the basis of their performance as participants in the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys Project, geographical location and population size. Interviews with local authorities, planners and technical staff elicited information and analysis from the prime movers of the initiative. Focus group interviews with children and adolescents, and video recordings made in a variety of child participation sessions revealed the perceptions of young people involved in participatory processes aimed to making their living environment more appropriate.

The CFC movement has developed at the crossroad of a new vision of childhood, which recognises the child as an active subject from his/her own younger age, and a new culture of the city, which encourages citizens to participate in processes aimed to make the physical and social environment more sustainable and equitable. The synthesis of the two notions stands as the core of the Italian CFC model.

Experimentation to encourage participation by young citizens is therefore central to the approach. Children and adolescents have an opportunity to come into contact with the adult world on a more equal footing, learn about their own rights and appreciate the effect of people's participation in making collective decisions. Adults have started changing their views of childhood and appreciate the possibilities open to young people when they become engaged.

The principles affirmed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning citizenship, rights and participation by children have helped redefine the meaning of childhood and young people's place in the city. A growing number of local authorities, planners, practitioners and families regard children as active citizens capable of contributing to social life. It is being recognised that young citizens suffer the greatest disadvantages from degrading urban life, being deprived of possibilities for meeting and socialising. Increasingly threatened by violence, pollution and traffic, children can no longer go out on their own. They live segregated from adults in specialised places built with the primary aim of protecting them. Very little time and space are left for activities decided by children independently. They are deprived of opportunities to leave the security of the home, experience independence, and learn how to face and overcome conflicts.

Local innovators challenge the overprotective attitude in the family, the total management of children's social life and an education system that request children to change without sufficiently taking their views into consideration. Opportunities are created for empowering the child to act as a person, a citizen and a social actor especially encouraging young citizens to contribute to participatory planning exercises and influencing decision-making processes. In a CFC, gaining personal independence and participating are interdependent variables in a process leading to the harmonious physical, psychological, emotional and social development of the child. Young people's participation in both planning and implementing activities has become the hallmark of the Italian CFC experience, as an institutional principle and as a practice to change the city, the community and the overall environment where children grow up.

Children's and young people's municipal councils are the most common channel for promoting children's participation in decisions. Since 1991, they have given children a mouthpiece within the local government for voicing their aspirations and requests as citizens, in a relationship of collaboration and shared responsibility with the institutions. The primary objective of the councils is to involve children in managing the city from their own unique perspective, with adequate recognition of their evolving capacities. Secondly, they aim to an educational objective, offered by the opportunity to interact with the local institutions, thus developing a civic sense of belonging to the community, as well as a respect for common values. At both levels, children gain access to a real mechanism for exercising their rights.

The study pays particular attention to the role played by schools in promoting children's participation. The education sector is the primary channel for extending participation to larger numbers of young people. The traditional cognitive and normative goals of the education system, however, may risk creating ambivalence with the goal of free self-expression set in participatory processes. Defining the role of the teacher becomes essential in this context to ensure that her or his function as a guidance provider be complemented with that of a facilitator.

In the Italian context, Child Friendly Cities have favoured the achievement of critical goals set for children locally, such as creating a system of safeguards to enable children and adolescents to exercise their rights, promoting action aimed to oppose poverty and exclusion, overcoming social and cultural inequalities, contrasting child exploitation, preventing juvenile delinquency, integrating foreign and children with disabilities, supporting families, encouraging development cooperation activities in favour of the rights of the child, and last but not the least, mobilising action to favour opportunities for recreation and play. Where the CFC experimentation has been successful, the world of children has been turned upside down to allow adults and young people alike to assess the surrounding environment from the bottom up, from the point of view of those who had not been thus far listened to, because, to put it in one of the children's words, "When you do an ordinary lesson, the teachers decide everything, what you do, what you don't do. Instead when we do the children's project they listen to your opinions and you decide too what you want to do".

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The last decade in Italy has seen a growing and general interest in initiatives in favour of Child Friendly Cities (CFCs), and this now widespread socio-political and institutional phenomenon was given systematic form in the second half of the decade by an overall government plan and policies. In connection with broad, new attention to the rights of the child, the Italian Government and the regional and local administrations developed policies, approved regulations and allocated funds specifically aimed at improving living conditions for children in cities. There has also been growing interest in these topics shown by local authorities, the academic world, the mass media, the private social sector, and from society in general, including children.

The roots of this interest and of the actions undertaken are varied, some even preceding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989), which however supplied the fundamental impetus for these developments. The UN Special Session on Children, held in New York in May 2002, highlighted the role of mayors and local governments in achieving children's rights and goals at the local level.

The three pillars in the development of a movement for child-friendly cities in Italy have been:
- Affirmation of a new culture of childhood that recognises the child as an active subject from his/her own young age and promotes innovative policies which encourage empowering education and participation processes
- Emergence of a new sustainable and participatory culture of the city
- Emphasis on a new relationship between the child and the city, constituting the synthesis of the first two and standing at the core of the Italian CFCs

The purpose of this study is to document how CFCs have been established in Italy, both at the national and the local levels, by analysing the trends, methodologies and strategies. From this emerge the lessons to be learned and the policies to be followed on the path towards success. It is aimed at a readership consisting of policy-makers, municipal staff, educators, NGOs, research institutions, international agencies and other actors involved in developing child-friendly processes in local governance settings.

The Italian cities considered here represent an acceptable sample of those that took part in the *Città sostenibili delle bambine e dei bambini* (CSDBB), (Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys) Project and utilized funds granted under Law 285/97. The results obtained are still limited, though certainly not irrelevant in terms of environmental, institutional and cultural changes. In these cities there is still a fairly widespread degree of inefficiency in organising the programme and an excessive dependency on the views of individual administrators, technicians and other staff. Nonetheless, interesting and novel forms of intergenerational communication between these categories and children have been achieved, even if they have not yet become general. In particular, significant difficulties persist in interfacing with the prevailing school system and its culture, leading to a shortfall in generalising innovative practices which have not been applied everywhere with the same level or quality.

One important fact is that there has been a significant effect on the views of many of the children. They have been able to come into contact with new forms of communication with the adult world, to get to

know their own rights and to taste the possibilities arising from their own participation in decision-making processes.

In Italy, as local authorities themselves admit, the CFC programme has not fully achieved the objective of radically transforming the institutional, environmental and cultural framework of cities from a child's perspective. It has however influenced policies and practices, especially those concerning children's participation, taking on a particular cultural and technical prominence in local governance systems, perhaps even a significant one at an international level. These are grounds for great interest in the future, and ought also to motivate national and local governments to continue along the same road.

The sections that follow cover the main aspects of Italy's experience with CFCs. The first looks at the evolution of the culture of childhood in Italy and the development of CFCs in the context of a new culture of the city. The next section illustrates the main initiatives undertaken to build Child Friendly Cities and considered innovative in cultural, institutional or environmental terms. The final section analyses the significant and novel aspects of the processes and practices under way in creating CFCs.

The Study

The research for this study has been carried out by the Universities of Urbino, Modena and Reggio Emilia. In addition to a systematic analysis of the scientific literature and of documentation relating to Law 285/97 (the principal legal instrument relating to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Italy as well as the establishing of Child Friendly Cities) and the Ministry of the Environment's project *Città sostenibili delle bambine e dei bambini* or CSDBB (Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys), a close look was given to the projects of 400 Italian cities.

The research focussed on 12 cities selected on the basis of their performance as participants in the CSDBB project, their geographical location and the size of their populations (50,000 inhabitants being the threshold established by the Ministry of the Environment for recognition as a Sustainable City for Girls and Boys).

Cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants
Fano, in the Province of Pesaro in the Marche
Ferrara, a provincial capital in Emilia Romagna
Modena, a provincial capital in Emilia Romagna
Pesaro, a provincial capital in the Marche
Turin, the regional capital of Piedmont

Cities with less than 50,000 inhabitants
Belluno, a provincial capital in the Veneto
Carpi, in the Province of Modena in Emilia Romagna
Corigliano Calabro, in the Province of Cosenza in Calabria
Molfetta, in the Province of Bari in Apulia
Novellara, in the Province of Reggio Emilia in Emilia Romagna
Ostuni, in the Province of Brindisi in Apulia
Rozzano Milanese, in the Province of Milan in Lombardy

160 interviews were carried out with administrators, planners and technical staff; furthermore, 68 focus group interviews were held with children and adolescents engaged in these activities, and video recordings were made on 50 occasions when children and adolescents interacted with facilitators and other adults.

1

CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES IN ITALY

1.1 Children and cities in Italy

In Italy, policies concerning children have had a long gestation period (Saraceno, 1990). From the end of the war until the early 1990s, the child as a citizen entitled to rights did not appear on the national political agenda, which continued to consider children only as future adult citizens.

In this period, however, the approach to policies in favour of children underwent a slow but significant transformation. As from the 1950s, some educational and cultural experiments had been associated with special attention to the needs and rights of children. These innovations gave birth to an active pedagogy centred on the 'child as subject'. They influenced the gradual reform of the education system and a more general adoption of the education process as the main instrument for changing cultural patterns. The objective of these experiments was not only to reform the science of education (and hence the school), but also to renew the relationship between the child and the overall social context, including the urban environment.

As well as the intense and productive experimentation in schools, as in the famous case of Reggio Emilia pre-school innovative project (Edwards, Gandini, Forman, 1993), a variety of experiments with youth associations were also embarked on. In the first half of the 1970s, moreover, in various Italian cities associations were formed that turned their priorities towards the most neglected urban areas to offer forms of social leadership there. This movement first arose in connection with the experience of de-institutionalising the mental hospitals, moving then into the area of social exclusion, with the aim of encouraging the expressivity of children and adolescents coming from impoverished backgrounds. In parallel, there was an affirmation of the driving role of the environmentalist associations, in particular in spreading a new ecological culture.

The Italian economic boom in the 1970s coincided with economic and planning policies that did not take proper account of the urban and extra-urban areas, with negative effects in both town-planning and social terms. Starting in the 1960s, the 'ecological question' began to pervade debates on economic and urban growth, and in Italy too critical thoughts about the dominant planning policies began to arise.

In this period the first national associations and local committees for the defence of the environment and the landscape grew in importance (Italia Nostra, WWF, Legambiente), organisations which would have influenced the development of Child Friendly Cities (CFC) strategies later in Italy. As from the 1970s, too, professional exchanges between European and American scholars and planners steadily increased, introducing in Italy new concepts and strategies to urban planning with a participatory approach.

This was a first stage in promoting participation by children, during which the first actions were embarked on leading to their genuine empowerment. In out-of-school environments, the world of the associations, the local authorities and professionals involved children and adolescents in new education projects to improve their conditions in the cities.

1.2 The Italian Government's National Plan of Action for Children

The content of the Italian Government's National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (1997) was developed in close collaboration with local authorities, institutions and the private social sector through meetings, seminars and parliamentary sessions over the period from 1994 to 1997. Particular importance was attached to the joint action of the various ministries concerned (Environment, Education, Social Solidarity, Equal Opportunities and Foreign Affairs) and Regional governments. The third sector was identified as a key partner, particularly at the local level.

Based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Plan or Action marked the passage of the child from being an object of protection to being a citizen, with the recognised right to express needs, potentials and expectations that should be taken into account in decision-making processes affecting local communities and the country as a whole.

The Plan of Action has the objective of furthering the participatory pathways that link social intervention with environmental compatibility. It allots to the

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Policies for a New Culture of Childhood

New policies and initiatives emerged from and favoured a new culture of childhood.

1975 - *Riforma del diritto di famiglia* (Law on the Rights of the Family) was adopted.

1983 - *Disciplina dell'adozione e dell'affidamento dei minori* (Law on child adoption and fostering) was adopted.

1983 - The *Comitato Interministeriale per i problemi dell'infanzia* (Inter-ministerial Committee on the Problems of Childhood) was established.

1986 - This Committee was formalised and made permanent as the *Consiglio Nazionale dei Minori* or CNM (National Council on Juveniles).

1988 - Law 312 stipulated an agreement between the Italian government and UNICEF which led to the setting up of the International Child Development Centre (ICDC), now called the Innocenti Research Centre (IRC), located in the Istituto degli Innocenti in Florence.

1990 - The UNICEF research project called "The Urban Child in Difficult Circumstances" marked a turning point in the development of the culture of childhood in Italy. This project aimed both to carry out research on the living conditions of urban children and to analyse critically policies and programmes for children.

1990 - World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, agreed to at the World Summit for Children, 30 September 1990.

After 1990 - The UNICEF international project *Sindaci Difensori Ideali dell'Infanzia* (Mayors Defenders of Children) assigned a central role to mayors. This started a dialogue among the institutions, citizens and the children themselves on the real conditions of children at the local level. The Italian Committee for UNICEF played a key role in fostering this initiative both in Italy and internationally.

1991 - The ratification of the CRC, made operative through Law 176, marked the development of new policies in favour of children.

1992 - International Colloquium of Mayors, held in Dakar, Senegal.

1996 - The *European Strategy for Children* by the Council of Europe adopted the principles laid down by the CRC, recommending member states always to 'bear the interests and needs of children in mind in all policy decisions".

1995 - A few months later, the Italian Government set up a parliamentary and inter-ministerial commission with the task of analysing the government's actions and readying a national action plan for children as soon as possible.

1996 - As part of administrative decentralisation, the *Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani* (National Association of Italian Municipalities) created a Committee on Children to coordinate the increasingly widespread initiatives of municipalities in favour of children and adolescents.

1996 - Later in the year, the Committee organised a conference, held in Venice, on the theme of child-friendly cities and stressed the role of local authorities in the development of the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents and the laws connected with it.

1997 - Law 451 established the *Osservatorio nazionale per l'infanzia* (National Monitoring Centre for Children) under the Welfare Minister's Office.

1997 - The Italian Government's first *Piano Nazionale per l'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza* (National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents), based on the CRC, was adopted.

1997 - Law 285, *Disposizioni per la promozione di diritti ed opportunità per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza* (Provisions to Promote Rights and Opportunities for Children and Adolescents), was passed by the Italian Parliament as the principal legal instrument to implement the National Plan of Action for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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younger generation a leading role in the process of the social and cultural integration of society. In it, the Italian Government has taken over the principles and objectives of the CRC, on the basis also of a UNICEF document *Children's Rights and Habitat - Working Towards Child Friendly Cities*, developed with UNCHS / Habitat and other partners in the context of Habitat II, the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements, held in Istanbul in 1996 (UNICEF 1996, Bartlett et al., 1999). It constitutes the most important and complete international reference framework for CFCs adopted to date in Italy, based on the commitments deriving from the CRC.

1.3 A law on children's rights and Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys

The Italian Government's Plan of Action was principally implemented through Law 285/97, entitled *Provisions to Promote Rights and Opportunities for Children and Adolescents* (Parlamento Italiano, 1997a). This law provides for a national fund for childhood

with the aim of financing local projects. It also encourages inter-ministerial initiatives and the updating of laws in the areas, for instance, of prevention of juvenile crime, adoptions, or services for early childhood. A *Centro Nazionale di Documentazione e Analisi sull'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza* (National Documentation and Research Centre on Childhood and Adolescence) was set up at the Istituto degli Innocenti, Florence to monitor activities and train staff involved in the implementation of the law.

In parallel with this law, child-related themes were also set at the centre of attention by the Ministry of the Environment, which in 1996 promoted the project called *Città sostenibili delle bambine e dei bambini* (CSDBB) (Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys). This project was not confined to encouraging new initiatives, opportunities and structures for children, but aimed also to give an impetus to a new culture of governance of the city, to town planning based on an important assumption: a city fit for children is fitter for everyone. This new form of area planning requires practical participation by children as citizens and thus as important members of the local community, and is oriented towards environmental sustainability.

The Principal Legal Instrument for CFCs in Italy: Law 285/97

From the organisational viewpoint, Law 285/97 led to the identification of municipal and supra-municipal districts (covering large urban areas and several smaller municipalities respectively), in which, through a process of participation and consultation between institutions and their social partners, local plans of action for children were drawn up. In this way, two important innovations were brought about:
● Programming at district level, encouraging work in municipal and supra-municipal networks;
● Collaboration between the government and non-government sectors.

The law had a decisive role in achieving the objectives laid down in the Italian Government's Plan of Action for Children, by translating its guidelines into articles identifying and funding areas for action:
● Creation of services in support of the parent-child relationship and able to tackle poverty and violence, as well as measures offering an alternative to placing children in educational welfare institutions (*Article 4*).
● Innovation and experimentation with regard to socio-educational services and facilities for early childhood (*Article 5*).
● Establishment of recreational and educational leisure-time facilities (*Article 6*).
● Action to further the rights of children, such as the 'measures to promote awareness of the rights of children and adolescents', and especially the 'operations to facilitate the use of urban time and space' and the 'measures to promote participation by children and adolescents in the life of the local community, including its administrative aspects' (*Article 7*).

Law 285/97 thus proposes to initiate in Italian cities:
● Actions to combat poverty, hardship, violence and institutionalisation of children.
● Socio-educational efforts in favour of very young children and in support of the relationship between parents and children.
● Action in the area of recreation and leisure time.
● Action to further the children's rights to accessing urban spaces and participating.

On the one hand, this law lays special emphasis on protection, to be found in the measures to support parenthood and tackle exclusion and hardship. On the other, it affirms and extends the cultural meaning of promoting child participation. Two articles in particular are important in the CFC context (Mittica, 2001).

Article 6 (*Leisure-time recreational and educational services*) proposes the creation of opportunities for children and adolescents to grow in accordance with their own potential. It supports children in developing personal opinions, the formation and growth of which require them to come together with their peers, under the guidance of adults with specific educational skills. The terrain for such action is chiefly play and socialisation, since it is considered that play-type socialising experience encourages participation and nurtures the capability to propose, decide and manage (Elbers, 1996). Article 6 thus seeks to encourage play among children and adolescents embodied in Article 31 of the CRC, by creating a recreational context rich in stimuli for meeting and socialising.

Guidelines published in 1998 (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1998) propose the establishment of centres for play and socialising and street initiatives. Through Article 6, Law 285/97 thus deals chiefly with encouraging the use of meeting places for intragenerational and intergenerational encounters, play and socialising. This is a programme area already partly developed in Italy in the course of the 1980s and 1990s.

Article 7 (Positive actions to promote the rights of children and adolescents) contains themes that represent the most innovative aspects of the law. It provides for:
● Actions to facilitate the use by children of their own time and of urban and natural spaces, to remove barriers to mobility, and to enhance the enjoyment of environmental, cultural, social and sporting facilities and services.
● Measures aimed at furthering knowledge of children's and adolescents' rights among adults, and in particular among those working in the public services.
● Measures aimed at encouraging participation by children and adolescents in the life of the local community, including the local government.

For a relatively limited investment (Parlamento Italiano, Law 8 October 1997, no. 344), this project managed to initiate a broad range of activities, in collaboration with the Istituto degli Innocenti (IDI) (for technical coordination), the Italian Committee for UNICEF (for holding a yearly international forum to favour exchange of good practices among Child Friendly Cities), the third sector (by setting up a standing committee of associations to develop new educative and participatory strategies), academic and professional institutions and associations (to define training activities).

A critical feature of the project is granting recognition as a Sustainable City for Girls and Boys, started in 1998 by the Ministry of the Environment and awarded to Italian municipalities committed to improving activities and opportunities for children, the urban ecology, area planning and transport, with the involvement of the local community and, especially, of children. An intersectorial awarding commission has been established to rank the best performing Child Friendly Cities. The commission includes representatives from the Environment Ministry, the Social Affairs Department, the body representing municipal governments to the national government, the Italian Committee for UNICEF, the National Council of Architects, and several third sector organisations engaged on issues relat-

Guidelines Concerning Sustainable Cities

In 1998, the Ministry of the Environment published *La Guida alle città sostenibili delle bambine e dei bambini* (Guide to Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys), with the twofold aim of capitalising on and disseminating the experience of cities engaging children in achieving urban sustainability and providing guidance to local authorities.

The guidance given by the experts, which became the cultural policy for the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys, can be summarised under three headings:

1. Italian CFCs at the centre of attention for local governments
● Rethinking the city as a whole through an intersectoral approach, not just through the work of the offices traditionally dealing with child-related issues.
● Adopting mechanisms to make inter-municipal networking and the government – non government relationship functional and effective; in this context, the mayor becomes the defender of children's rights, furthering the implementation of a child-focussed municipal programme, which transcends the themes and contingencies of his institutional mandate.
● Creating a municipal office assigned to addressing the theme of children and the city.

2. Retraining of municipal staff
● Training and linkage with other experiences to enhance the capacity to work with an integrated, intersectoral and participatory approach, combining town-planning and social development.
● Documentation of regional, national and international experiences focussing on methodologies, processes and planning models emerging from various projects.
● Activating a standing intersectoral panel with the objective of distilling general principles from good practices and applying them to specific local problems.

3. Starting the process of participatory urban planning
● Starting pilot initiatives based on child participation, in order to improve quality, respond to local needs and employ traditionally untapped local resources.
● Pursuing child participation as learning by doing method combining cognitive, manual and emotional aspects, to guarantee the success of initiatives aimed at urban sustainability.
● Establishing relationships with key partners involved in participatory planning, such as schools and associations involved in national campaigns (WWF, Arciragazzi, UISP, Legambiente, Democrazia in erba and so on) as well as colleges of architecture and planners' associations specialised in participatory urban planning.

ing to children and the environment. Recognition involves giving children priority in local policies, which should be coordinated and participatory, with particular attention to upgrading spaces and resources.

Recognition – which entails an award of maximum Euro 360,000 - has become a significant factor in creating Italian CFCs, in combination with funds generated under Article 7 of Law 285/97. The Italian CFCs have, then, developed out of the incentives brought by the convergence between children's rights (Law 285/97) and the a CFC approach (the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys Project.) Since the complementarity between the two programmes was clear, it seemed natural to local administrators to use funds earmarked under Article 7 to finance CSDBB Project initiatives.

Nonetheless, Law 285/97 and the CSDBB programmes also display significant differences concerning the policies directed at children and adolescents. While the former sees the priority for the CFC idea in the cultural area, in both changing and consolidating existing services, the latter proposes an idea of the CFC marked primarily by environmental change. The two programmes are thus complementary in placing the emphasis primarily on the cultural area and on the environmental area respectively; together they have defined the activities that promote the rights of children and adolescents in Italy.

Law 285/97 and the CSDBB Project have promoted and strengthened the role of the local authorities and social actors at community level, in the spirit of sub-

sidiarity that has marked the evolution of the CFCs. Indeed, in the years following approval of the Plan of Action, many Italian Regional governments created legislation of their own, drafting regional action plans and setting up monitoring centres on children's rights.

Alongside this political and operational structure, a national network was set up for monitoring and research on the outcome of the local policies. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, the *Osservatorio Nazionale per l'Infanzia* (National Monitoring Centre for Childhood, a creation of the National Council on Juveniles) and the *Centro Nazionale di Documentazione e Analisi sull'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza* (Documentation and Research Centre on Childhood and Adolescence), in collaboration with experts, university and regional and local monitoring centres, have created a network for exchange, study and research on children unprecedented in Italy. The National Centre's website (www.cittasostenibili.minori.it) makes available data on CFC projects and events. Information on the international Child Friendly Cities Initiative is accessible on the website run by the International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities managed by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence (www.childfriendlycities.org).

1.4 The new culture of childhood

This evolutionary process has been sustained by a new culture of childhood, which has evolved also as a result of widespread practices in action.

The Meaning of the Guidelines

These guidelines offer a combination of three factors fundamental to defining a Sustainable City for Girls and Boys:
- Political and management commitment by the local authorities in planning and implementing the programme;
- The method of children's participation in the planning process;
- A focus on the city as an urban environment made of physical (natural and architectural), cultural (social relations and production of cultural initiatives) and institutional (relations with and among authorities) components.

The practical achievements of a Sustainable City for Girls and Boys are certified on the basis of a set of parameters. Recognition is granted by the Ministry of the Environment, supported by a technical committee that has developed a model for monitoring and evaluating projects. These parameters concern three macro-areas – environmental, cultural and institutional -, each of which is further subdivided into:

Environmental
- Reduction of atmospheric pollution
- Reduction of acoustic and electromagnetic pollution
- Eco-management of solid urban waste
- The use and accessibility to spaces
- Overcoming architectural barriers
- Enhancing green spaces
- Changing the relationship between human-beings and the environment
- Encouraging mobility

Cultural
- Encouraging the holding of cultural events, fairs, festivals and so on
- Enhancing the historic and cultural sites and heritage of the city

Institutional
- Commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Commitment to Agenda 21
- Participation
- Training
- Child-friendly services in the areas of education, health and child / social services
- Administrative organisation
- Other cultural and institutional initiatives

Evaluation parameters concern each of these sub-areas. Such indicators provide a common framework, while leaving ample room to accommodate diverse initiatives and strategies at the local level.

Recognition is granted by assessing the integrated plan prepared by the city, which includes the three key areas defining a Sustainable City for Girls and Boys:
- Improvement to urban living conditions
- Direct involvement of children in the initiatives proposed
- Active commitment by the institutions to supporting the actions proposed

Throughout the twentieth century, the culture of childhood prevalent among parents, educators, administrators and disseminated by experts referring to psychological and pedagogical theories focused on the concepts of growth and development. These concepts determined the basic meaning of the culture of childhood and the way the child and children's relations with the social environment were interpreted. Children were analysed on the basis of their capacity. Various degrees of competence were identified to set the bounds on what could be done with and for children and determine how educators and parents could relate to them.

According to this view, there are two fundamental assumptions. On the one hand, since they lack various capabilities, are fragile and exposed to outside dangers and sometimes to hardship, children need education, protection and, in extreme cases, social assistance and psychological help. On the other, their competence, which is expressed particularly in group-play, requires that adults provide structured opportunities for favouring children's expression. Even today, the great bulk of initiatives aimed at children consists of actions and services based on this view of childhood, involving primarily assistance, education and protection for children, and secondarily play and facilities for socialising.

However, in the last ten years an important change in the culture of childhood has started to happen. The principles affirmed in the CRC concerning citizenship, rights, and encouragement of participation by children has been accompanied and supported by new lines of interpretation, redefining the meaning of children and their place in society (Baraldi, 2002; Chisholm et al., 1995; Corsaro, 1997; Driskell, 2002; James et al., 1998; James and Prout, 1998; Jenks, 1996; Maggioni and Baraldi, 2000.)

In this light, children are regarded as social actors capable of supplying their own personal and active contribution to social life and of claiming rights and making decisions of their own. The idea of a child as a developing person in a perspective looking to the future is largely replaced by that of the child as an active person, a protagonist of social life in the pre-

sent. This enhances consideration for the *persona* of the child, regarded as important in itself for its capacity to construct meanings of the world and act autonomously. In Italy, it was the Psychopedagogical Department of the *Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* or CNR (National Research Council) that made the greatest efforts to develop a standard methodology (Tonucci, 1996).

According to this approach, children are worthy of attention because they suffer the greatest disadvantages from a general degradation of urban life, being deprived of possibilities for meeting and socialising. The city, originally designed to promote community life, is no longer full of people but of vehicles, which have changed its structure; the streets belong only to cars, while pedestrian routes have become downright obstacle courses. In this situation children are segregated from adults in closed places for protective purposes, have no spaces for playing, cannot go out alone and are allowed only organised initiatives, leaving them very little time available for themselves. This creates a fundamental lack of experiencing independence, preventing children from benefiting from the risks and pleasures of abandoning the security of the home to overcome obstacles and to tackle and solve conflicts.

The model put forward by the CNR proposes to change the city by adopting the child as a parameter. The thinking is that children are not corruptible; enjoying no advantages from the city, they can make radical and innovative proposals for changing it. This model does not propose the improvement of specific services for children but rather a general change to the city, which should be designed to take account of children's needs. The fundamental idea is to involve children in changing society by encouraging their active participation in the change.

Many ideas expressed in this new culture of childhood have been taken up by local administrators, planners and technical staff who have in these years sought to put CFCs into practice in Italy. In the eyes of these innovators, the present culture of childhood is inadequate, since it underestimates children's capabilities and their participation, instead favouring an overprotective attitude in the family and the total management of their social life. Accusations are levelled against both the emotional shortcomings of parents and the obsession with educating children through a system that asks only them to change. Adults do not listen, and there is no chance for children to express themselves. Consequently, children's social lives are conditioned by an absence of meaningful relations with adults and by the attempt to make them conform to models set by adults.

Local authorities, planners and others involved note that the child is an active person, a citizen and a social actor, endowed with abilities enabling his or her active participation in social life. The child is a citizen on an equal footing with adults and must therefore be allowed the possibility of full, satisfactory self-expression. There is thus a need for initiatives that allow children to be heard and that give support to their capability for expression. Emphasis is placed particularly on encouraging children's independence in relation to moving about the city, to their decisions and choices, and to the possibility of planning and influencing decision-making processes. This vision of active citizenship for children, based on respect for and furtherance of their rights, directly involves them in choices affecting the overall community, nurturing their sense of citizenship, independence and responsibility towards society.

Gaining personal independence and participating are thus two sides of the same coin; children should be directly involved both in planning actions and in carrying them out. Under the impetus of this new culture of childhood, encouraging social participation has become the most common innovative factor at the local level, both as an institutional principle and as a generalised practice to change the city.

1.5 The new culture of the city

Alongside this new culture of childhood, particular importance was also given in the 1990s to a new culture of the city, reflecting the transformation of town-planning practices and the development of the concept of sustainability in the relationship between humans and the environment.

In the 1980s, in contrast to what was happening in the rest of Europe, in Italy the question of citizens' participation in town planning had no great prominence on the political agenda. The participatory approach was accused of inefficiency and of being motivated by ideology, and town planning was given a driving role only for economic development. After the end of the decade, however, there came a sharp reaction, deriving both from the growth of the environmentalist movement, advocating a new vision of the relationship between humans and the environment, and from the influence of the new international interest in urban planning and the environment.

In the international sphere, WHO Healthy Cities Project, launched in 1988 (www.who.org), and stemming from a holistic vision of health, brought in various principles and strategies for a new culture of the city, including attention to urban ecology, prevention of diseases through better environmental quality, the importance of self-help, intersectoral collaboration and community participation in planning and programme implementation. Shortly after, the *Green paper on the Urban Environment* (European Commission, 1990) brought an integrated view of planning for urban and surrounding areas, with an eye to sustainable, democratic development.

In Barcelona in 1990, many of the world's cities adopted the Educative Cities Charter, putting together the basic principles underlying another important function of the 'new city': education. In Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Earth Summit, the UN Conference on Environment and Development, launched Agenda 21, a strategic instrument for drafting national and local plans for sustainable urban development. In Aalborg, Denmark, in 1994, the European Charter on Local Agenda 21 (European Commission,

1994) began a process that in the ensuing years radically changed the approach to urban planning in Europe and particularly in Italy. With an eye to the 'new city', strategic and management innovations were brought about in harmony with those contained in the new policies for childhood: intersectoral and inter-institutional collaboration; integration of local and national level plans; and attention to the principle of participation. The link between the new culture of the city and the new culture of childhood was strengthened, since children were recognised as both beneficiaries and actors in the urban transformation processes started by Local Agenda 21.

In the context of the European economic programmes, the Italian government, with the collaboration of the professional associations, business sectors and social partners, approved a series of urban renewal programmes imbued with the new culture of the city. In particular, a law on Neighbourhood Contracts (*Contratti di quartiere, "Misure di razionalizzazione della finanza pubblica"*, Parlamento Italiano, Law no. 662, 23 December 1996) and Policies for Urban Sustainability and Employment ("*Disposizioni per lo sviluppo e la qualificazione degli interventi e dell'occupazione in campo ambientale*", Parlamento Italiano, Law 344, 8 October 1997) contain references and recommendations concerning not only the two pivots of the 'new city', citizen participation and ecological and economic sustainability, but also the rights of children and adolescents and, in the second, the Child Friendly Cities themselves.

In the course of the 1990s, the interest of the Italian government (supported by in particular the Ministries of the Environment and of Education) in the theme of the environment also favoured the spread of initiatives *with* children, aimed at bringing about the 'new city'; especially in collaboration with the third sector and schools, through incentives for training, special programmes like the project Ragazzi 2000 (Youth 2000), health education, the setting up of study commissions and the funding of a network of regional centres for environmental education.

These initiatives made use of new educational methodologies to convey knowledge, values and capacities, typified by an approach that is:
● active and participatory (learning by doing, caring, planning, transforming);
● connected to the neighbourhood (field trips, observations, mapping);
● social (at the service of the community and coordinated with local bodies).

An extensive strategy to train workers and schoolteachers and to link many school classes in networks was also embarked on and has spread knowledge, skills and interest at the national level.

The idea of the city developed in this process is marked by an emphasis on the sustainability of urban transformations and on changing relationships between individuals and the urban environment, with a view to creating greater respect for it and an awareness of interdependence, making not just the children but also administrators and experts beneficiaries of the educative process.

1.6 The relationship between the child and the urban environment

The new vision of childhood and the new vision of the city come to a synthesis in the objective to promote improved relations between children and the urban environment by building Child Friendly Cities. An institutional mechanism is provided by the convergence of the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys Project and in Article 7 of Law 285/97.

It is considered essential, to this end, to transform the city's physical spaces to fit children's special needs and rights. The vision of 'new cities' implies not just physical improvements but, first and foremost, different and better relations between people and the environment. In particular, relations between children and adults are important not just at the conceptualising and planning stages but in making the city's spaces live. Children have in fact been actively involved in drawing up projects, and often in running and looking after the spaces created. Attention to the relationship between the child and urban space is an important special feature of the Italian situation.

In Italy, the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of the 1950s and 1960s had major repercussions for children, because of the ecological unsustainability of the city and its incompatibility with the fundamental needs of childhood, such as safe mobility, independence, exploration of their surroundings, or active participation in daily life.

Recognition of this situation was late by comparison with the countries of northern Europe and North America, where even in the 1960s research on the perceptions, needs and behaviour of urban children had expanded, and the first projects in collaboration with architects and town planners had begun (Cobb, 1969; Dubos, 1969; Erikson, 1950; Goodman, 1956; Jacobs, 1961). This trend reached Italy only in the first half of the 1960s, mostly thanks to efforts by educators and architects, whereas interest by social scientists came only after another decade (Axia, 1986).

The first Italian experiments on the theme of relations between the child and the city concerned structured and institutional spaces (playing fields, recreation centres, school buildings and yards etc.), not the city's open spaces. The new vision of children and of the city began to emerge in a few projects carried out in subsequent years (Nicholson and Lorenzo, 1979). Not until 1986, though, did the institutions start to display interest in this theme, when the National Council of Juveniles commissioned an experimental project from the Arciragazzi association (a national youth organisation) to be carried out in eight cities. This national project was the first in the area to obtain public funding, enabling contacts with and exposure to the most advanced thinking and experience of other European countries.

A strong impetus came from the commitment by environmentalist associations in favour of 'urban children', in the 1990s. From 1995 on, the WWF, Legambiente and the Unione Italiana Sport Popolari or UISP (Italian Sports Association) embarked on national initiatives aimed at making citizens and local

administrations aware of issues regarding the usability of streets and public spaces by the smaller citizens and, more generally, by all.

During the 1990s, the new culture of childhood became the background for many practices aimed at children, with positive links being established between ideas promoted by experts, local experiences and the formulation of national cultural policies. The first significant experiments, started without any substantial support from the institutions, sometimes contributed considerably to raising the awareness on the part of local administrations. In time, however, the associations began to form collaborative relationships with local bodies and secure a better hearing from the central institutions. Likewise, some regions introduced similar innovations in their own legislative apparatus or in inter-municipal and zonal coordination strategies.

In particular, in 1991 in Fano, the type of action called Cities for Children was born, combining, in one overall innovative structure, various experiments often already tried in other countries, such as participatory planning (letting children plan urban areas), children's city councils (giving children a voice in collective decisions), and initiatives to encourage independent mobility by children (enabling them to leave the house without being accompanied by an adult). Starting with an initial "Cities for Children" workshop in Fano in 1992, the first network of Cities for Children was created with support from the National Research Council (Tonucci, 1995, 1996, 2003). This network influenced the development of many subsequent local projects and the institutional Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys network of the Ministry of the Environment.

In parallel, other experiments in participation by children and young people in the city's life were started, like the young people's councils (at municipal, ward or district level). In 1995, the association

Mayors Defenders of Children

The Italian Committee for UNICEF involves mayors in promoting children's rights. As city leaders, mayors are ideally placed to ensure that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is implemented in all of the municipal communities. The mayor who becomes "defender of children" commits to implement child rights in his/her city and to hold regular municipal council meetings were children can express their views and bring forward proposals for action.

Local schools participate in the project by assisting children in the preparation of the municipal council meetings and in promoting child participation in the community they serve. Children's proposals developed in school are organised by themes, such as the environment, leisure time, culture, international solidarity.

The decisions made by the municipal councils are shared with schools. Children and teachers monitor the implementation of the activities agreed upon during the school year.

(Source: *Italian Committee for UNICEF*)

Democrazia in Erba (Budding Democracy) was set up with the objective of bringing together and promoting the young people's councils. Between 1995 and 2004, the number of children's and young people's councils rose from 30 to 580.

1.7 Guidelines for changing the city

In 1998, the Ministry of the Environment published specific guidelines concerning sustainable cities for children (Ministero dell'Ambiente, 1998), with the twofold aim of capitalising on and disseminating the experience of cities engaged in urban sustainability and giving guidance to local authorities and planners intending to embark on such action.

These guidelines set out the main steps for municipalities to create a CFC, in accordance with indications from a group of experts and from the government that adopted these experts' suggestions. As happened at the same period with the guidelines for applying Law 285/97, these provided significant guidance to Italian cities that were on the front line of developing policies concerning childhood and the environment.

The greatest effort in the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys Project is directed towards furthering actions to improve urban life, starting from the assumption that the economic and social development of recent decades has led to the degradation of cities, transforming spaces for interaction into crossroads for cars, gardens into abandoned areas and historic sections into empty neighbourhoods. This starting point leads to the idea of re-planning the city with an eye to improving it, thanks in part to the creation of a new consciousness among the citizens.

The Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys programme thus intends to use institutional change and children's participation to bring about significant planning changes in the city. Consequently, within the three areas of action in a Sustainable City for Girls and Boys (environmental, cultural and institutional), it is physical and environmental planning that constitutes the fundamental objective, as evidenced by various types of action on the urban landscape:
● Renewal and regeneration;
● Integration of functions;
● Reducing mobility constraints and decongesting traffic;
● Development and integration of public and private transport policies (car pooling and car sharing) and area policies (environmental capacity of streets, designating spaces as meeting places, parking places);
● Safeguarding, capitalising on and expanding open spaces;
● Safeguarding and creating local ecosystems or green areas by protecting unbuilt areas and creating natural habitats;
● Overcoming the idea that there exists only one type of natural urban space, and favouring the coexistence of nature reserves, community gardens, multifunctional spaces, street trees, green corridors, and the greening of buildings.

1.8 The significance of a CFC in Italy

Several conclusions can be drawn as to the significance that a CFC in Italy has taken on in the last decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

First, the preconditions for arriving at a CFC come from a culture of childhood that stresses children's rights to citizenship, and a culture of the city as 'friendly' and sustainable, as a place where the community recognises itself and participates.

On the basis of these cultural preconditions, a CFC provides for:

- A strategy to promote participation, especially by children, in changing the living conditions of the community of which they are part.
- A flexible approach to services and facilities, stressing their adaptability to citizens' needs.
- An active role on the part of the local government by ensuring the visibility of children on the political agenda and encouraging intersectoral working on child-relevant themes.
- Systematic collaboration among the various organisations active at local level, to achieve an operational network and to provide the driving force to get the initiatives going.

These conditions favour the achievement of several goals set for children locally, such as overcoming social and cultural inequalities, creating a system of safeguards enabling children and adolescents to enjoy their rights, fighting the exploitation of children, acting to support families, preventing hardship and juvenile delinquency, integrating foreign and children with disabilities, and practising development cooperation in favour of the rights of the child.

This means proposing a definition of a CFC that combines:
- Action to oppose poverty and exclusion;
- Socio-educational action in early childhood;
- Action to favour opportunities for recreation, leisure-time and play;
- Action to promote rights to participation in city life, with an eye to managing the urban eco-system.

Special emphasis on children's right to participate constitutes the most innovative component of the Italian CFC Initiative. A precondition for a CFC is the active commitment by the political and administrative institutions to improve urban living conditions and the management of the urban eco-system *through*:
- Furthering children's participation;
- Mobilising resources and fostering networks with local partners, such as schools, professional bodies, third sector organisations;
- Training and capacity building.

2

INNOVATIONS AND EFFORTS IN BUILDING CITIES FRIENDLY TO CHILDREN

2.1 From national policies to local actions

Child Friendly Cities in Italy have been shaped by the interaction between national policies promoted by the Italian Government and local policies promoted by municipal governments. As discussed above, various Italian cities were already active in furthering educational services for children in the 1970s and 1980s in particular. From the early 1990s on, a growing number of these have made efforts to innovate in favour of the new cultures of childhood and the city, moving from a policy of specific services aimed at children to a more all-round vision of the CFC.

The Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys Project and Law 285/97 set the cultural, political and legislative boundaries for this innovation. On the one hand, the funding allocated by Law 285/97 greatly encouraged local planning and boosted the desire of local authorities, flanked by equally motivated and determined technical staff and experts. On the other, the prospect of recognition as a Sustainable City for Girls and Boys, with the associated advantages in reputation and financing, attracted the attention of many cities, both large and small.

These municipal initiatives produced a system of mixed financing, matching the government funds on the basis of Law 285/97 with local resources obtained either from the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys award funding or other public investment. This arrangement opened the way to a huge increase in initiatives and in the resources employed in them.

Law 285/97 adopted a system of co-financing, by which municipal administrations have to invest their own resources in their projects in order to secure government funds. Some local governments have also begun activities with investments of their own in anticipation of government funds, or else supplemented those funds partly for activities not covered by them. This funding system accordingly proved effective in encouraging major new initiatives.

Locally implemented initiatives in connection with the Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys Project and Law 285/97 take the child as the central parameter for a city's liveability. The child's well-being is the prime factor leading to calls for changes in the institutional organisation, environmental conditions and cultural circumstances. Sectoral actions are integrated to meet the central objective of the child's well being. Even where all the areas of intervention are emphasised, the initiatives develop at diverse levels of penetration and importance, according also to the size of the cities.

Over and above these differences, it is possible to grasp the common innovative components of the Italian experience.

In the cultural area:
● Encouraging social participation by children, particularly through planning workshops and Municipal Children's Councils;
● Organising play and socialising centres for children and adolescents;
● Encouraging socialising by children and adolescents at the community level;
● Raising the awareness of citizens, especially children.

In the institutional area:
● The new system of governance for the cities;
● Creation of networks;
● Training of technical staff.

In the environmental area:
- Enhancement of the interaction between children and the environment;
- Furthering urban mobility;
- Plans for traffic regulation and pollution reduction;
- Enhancement of green spaces and the usability of urban spaces;
- Eco-management of refuse;
- To a lesser extent, removal of architectural barriers.

2.2 Encouraging participation by children

The most important and innovative component in Italian CFC initiatives lies in the promotion of participation by children. It marks a change that is both institutional and cultural (Hart, 1992, 1997; Lansdown, 2001; Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio, 2001, 2003). Social participation may be defined as important, prominent action in a public situation, that is, a situation that is meaningful for the whole community (local community, city or society as a whole). Allotting competence and public visibility by children are the two basic features of what is defined *as child participation*.

The results of recent research on cities that received co-financing on the basis of Article 7 of Law 285/97 (Baraldi, 2001) bring out the main features of encouraging participation by children in Italy today. This takes two basic forms. The first, *participation in decisions*, means significant, prominent action through which children and adolescents are listened to and contribute to relevant decision-making processes, in public contexts like children's councils, youth consultations or discussion forums. The second, *participation in planning*, means significant, prominent action through which children and adolescents can develop projects in public forums like planning groups, creative workshops or cultural groups (musical, artistic) with the objective of changing the environment.

Encouraging participation in decisions emphasises the importance of involving children in the social construction of collective norms, that is, policies for the community and the enjoyment of democratic rights. Encouraging participation in planning emphasises the importance of involving children in open and democratic fashion in planning solutions for the community's problems as well as their own. In both senses, encouraging participation also means encouraging children's personal autonomy in developing and implementing projects or making collective choices.

In Italian CFCs, the active and autonomous participation of children in choices (participation in decisions) and in projects (participation in planning) is considered fundamental for institutional, environmental and cultural change. The social participation of children is believed to let planning function more efficiently, so that the city is administered more functionally with respect for all the citizens. Encouraging participation in planning and decisions develops the idea of the city as an open system granting all its citizens, first and foremost children, visibility and legitimacy.

Projects to encourage social participation are generally aimed at the age group from 9 to 14, even though participatory planning sometimes also involves smaller children. The most typical aspect of these projects is the setting up of *workshops*, meaning physical spaces where children come together and create projects and ideas. The workshops chiefly focus on participatory planning and the young people's councils. The workshop also sometimes becomes the basis for overall planning in the CFC, the city itself being interpreted as a huge workshop for ideas and projects.

The workshop is an important organisational driving factor, since it offers visibility and catalyses activities and ideas. Generally, a workshop combines encouraging participation and educating the children, making it a hub for integrating a variety of practices intended together to guarantee learning, interest in community life and active and creative participation.

2.2.1 Children's and young people's councils

Children's and young people's town or city councils are the favoured instruments for promoting children's participation in decisions. In 1991 Belluno became the first provincial capital in Italy to set up a municipal council open to the younger generation. Fano brought in a children's town council in 1992, followed by Pesaro which inaugurated ward councils in 1994. Many other municipalities have created similar structures since 1996.

This method of action gives children and young people a mouthpiece within the local administration for their aspirations and requests as citizens, in a relationship of collaboration and co-responsibility with the institutions. These initiatives therefore meet with great interest from local governments, for which this is a meaningful way to involve children and create a new civic conscience in the city. Children's councils become instigators of child friendly initiatives and are involved in encouraging participatory planning, plans for mobility, civic and environmental education workshops and so on.

The primary objective of the councils is to involve the children in the administration of the city, with adequate recognition of their evolving capacities to suggest solutions to make it more liveable. Secondly, there is an educational objective, offered by the

Fostering Child Participation

At Novellara, a participation scale is used, with at one end a level of non-participation that corresponds to denial of the person of the child (compulsion, suffering, frustration, sense of uselessness), in the middle a level of silence and dependency of the person (lack of justification for the assigning of tasks, accepting direction by others), and at the other end affirmation of the person (importance of the action for the person, assumption of responsibility, resources available, amusement, involvement, happiness, sense of importance). Participation here means affirming the person, just as lack of participation means negation of the person, and forcing participation means reducing the person to silence or dependency.

chance to come closer to the institutions, thus developing a civic sense of belonging to the community, as well as respect for common values and heritage. At both levels, children are given a real channel for exercising their rights.

2.2.2 Participatory planning workshops

The most widespread type of workshop furthering social participation by children is connected with participatory town planning, by far the commonest mode of participatory planning. This type of workshop was opened for the first time in 1993 in Fano, the city that has most pursued this type of initiative.

More recently there have been many other experiences, proliferating in Italy and sometimes becoming a dominant feature of overall CFC activity, partly because of the favourable reception they have had in schools, with the support of the Ministry of Education.

Through these workshops the children, in collaboration with architects, engineers and planners, imagine and restructure areas of the city in accordance with their needs and their aesthetic taste. The children are acknowledged to have the ability to work out their own needs and requirements by making use of their expressive creativity and with an eye to changing their environment. The basic idea is that the freshness of their ideas, for all the difficulties of implementation and feasibility, enables adequate management of the spaces with special attention to their function as

Children's and Young People's Councils

One particularly significant children's town council is in Novellara. Called La Tavola Rotonda (The Round Table), it is the municipality's most important initiative, linking up ninety per cent of the other initiatives. With help from an adult facilitator, it brings together boys and girls from the fourth through the eighth grades, and for some aspects also adolescents from upper-middle schools. It is subdivided into five subgroups dealing with various topics (environment, solidarity, sport, leisure and school); it has organised environmental, cultural and solidarity initiatives and has been involved in town planning. The participation of adolescents has led to creation of the Young People's Forum (14-18 years), with the same objectives as the Round Table.

In Fano, the Children's Council annually submits numerous requests to the city's Municipal Council. The Children's Council meets at the headquarters of the Laboratorio Città dei bambini (Workshop for the Children's City), instigated by the Municipality, to develop proposals and requests for making the city a better place to live. The latter have covered both some environmental areas and recreational activities: closing certain streets to traffic, freer access to sports installations and equipment, use of squares and condominium areas as places to play, creating play areas, possible access to a city newsletter, organising intergenerational workshops, the use to be made of the funds from the CSDBB award obtained by the city, and developing the *Carta del pedone* (Pedestrians' Charter).

places to meet and socialise. In this way, a signal is also sent to the children that the city should respond to their needs and be enjoyable for them, and should be redesigned through listening directly to them.

In the last decade, the activities of the participatory planning workshops have developed particularly in the environmental area through actions on the urban fabric. In part this has been due to use of the Local Agenda 21, which is intended to bring the children closer to environmental themes, familiarise them with the relevant technical terminology and let them experience a didactic and practical approach based on group work and the creative search for shared solutions.

The Fano Workshop

The Fano participatory project workshop is one of the most significant examples of participatory planning. In consultation with outside practitioners (a planner and an architect), it involves a great number of elementary and lower-middle school classes, which are assigned a specific theme each year to do with change in particular areas of the city: squares and monuments, green spaces, traffic, waste management, school, and spaces for safe and free play. The workshop has thus covered the whole spectrum of environmental actions, including the eco-management of urban waste. Among projects carried out or at an implementation stage, one could mention the restructuring of a cottage to convert it for play and educational uses for children, building of a cycle path, designing of a fountain in a courtyard, creation of a sea-view point in a park, and the rehabilitation of an abandoned green area. Further, a group of former child councillors, coordinated by an architect, has met to develop and propose ideas on the new city master plan, analysing the problems and the resources and making suggestions and proposals from a child perspective.

Participatory planning has also been used for encouraging children's mobility, for the upgrading of public spaces (in particular green spaces like parks and school gardens) and, to a lesser extent, for the eco-management of urban waste.

A particularly widespread kind of participatory planning has involved urban micro-spaces (e.g., squares, courtyards, sidewalks, historic centres, residential areas) or natural areas (arranging parks, fitting out municipal green spaces or ones near schools). The participatory planning workshops have chiefly focused on refurbishing green spaces, such as town parks, disused areas and especially school playgrounds, which are the areas most frequently proposed by children for action. By contrast, participatory planning is used more sporadically for reducing different kinds of pollution, recycling consumer goods and eliminating architectural barriers.

2.2.3 Encouraging mobility

Encouraging children's freedom of movement, often combined with participatory planning, is one impor-

In Turin, the participatory planning workshops focus on upgrading public green spaces and on mobility. There are various projects: restructuring school yards; participatory planning to transform the urban situation, by rehabilitating courtyards, disused industrial areas, green spaces of schools and neighbourhoods (transforming a stretch of road; planning a square and restoring it); projects for safe routes in three wards; the national competition *La scuola progetta la città* (The school plans the city).

In Ferrara, in the school year 2000/01 the working group *Spazi Urbani Infanzia* (Cityscapes for Children)' has worked on three main initiatives:

Ferrara: una scuola un giardino (Ferrara: A School, a Garden) is a two-year project with the objective of studying and planning how to rehabilitate, beautify and revitalise the areas around the schools. The method is based on having the children photograph and map the area, followed by an educative, didactic course with teachers, then presentation of the area to experts and practitioners for analysis and evaluation of the proposal in a joint project. Finally, the children present the project to parents and local inhabitants for them to contribute ideas and proposals for collaboration.

Architetti in erba (Budding Architects) aims at rediscovering the value of architecture, involving children through workshops to encourage them to observe architecture and think about its meaning and the influence it has on everyone's life.

Ci giochiamo la città (Let's Play Cities!) is a research campaign aimed at creating safe routes from home to school, as an introduction to the *A scuola ci andiamo da soli* (We can go to school by ourselves) initiative.

In Novellara, children helped with complete mapping of the city using lichens as bio-indicators of air quality, with subsequent development of plans fo0r action to improve the situation. The Ferrara Schools Agenda provided for the collection of information on several fronts (air, noise, mobility), responding to the objective of acknowledging the children's right to 'get to know their own environment and form an opinion of their own, express it freely, and be involved in decisions concerning resources and development'.

In Modena, carrying out the *Conoscere l'Agenda 21* (Getting to know Agenda 21) project furthers, in operational terms, an environmental assessment of the context in which the school functions, the quality of relationships and the educational offerings it presents. There follow a 'school audit' stage, a second stage of discussing problems and possible solutions and a third stage of defining an action plan. In Fano, the members of the Children's Council, along with pupils of an elementary school and the members of the student assembly of a middle school, embarked on drafting a Local Agenda 21.

tant aspect of CFC activity in Italy. The idea underlying this type of initiative is that the street is to be understood as a place for everyone and not just for cars, as is the case today in cities.

One of the aspects considered most negatively in relation to children's condition in contemporary society is the hyper-organisation of children's time as a function of adults' needs. In Italian elementary schools, an remarkably low percentage of children (around 10 per cent) go to school on their own; few leave home without their parents, and practically none use public services independently (Horelli, 2001). Research confirms that children live in isolation, almost exclusively in closed, protected places, without being able to move freely about the city. This situation is based primarily on the fears aroused in parents by traffic conditions and by the potential presence of threatening strangers.

Furthering children's freedom of movement as pedestrians or as users of public services means changing living conditions in the city, starting with road patterns and traffic regulations, but covering also community life and socialising enriched by interactive intergenerational dynamics.

The endeavour to change the city comes about through encouraging a participatory process. The children are invited to be citizens actively moving about the city spaces, occupying them, playing in the squares, walking about the streets, constraining the city to adapt to their being there and moving around. These projects are intended to offer the children a different perception of the city also as a result of the effects of awareness campaigns on adults. Shopkeepers, drivers, police and elderly volunteers are in fact invited to adopt friendly, caring attitudes towards the children through specific campaigns like the *Commercianti amici delle bambine e dei bambini* (Child-friendly Shopkeepers) or *Negozi SOS siamo amici dei bambini* (SOS - Child-friendly Shops).

2.3 Governance of the city

Encouraging child participation is regarded as a decisive instrument for reaching the primary objective of

Experiments in encouraging freedom to move between home and school are generally associated with participatory planning aimed at identifying safe routes. This type of initiative involves the collaboration of both the technical services of the municipality and the schools, associations of voluntary workers or elderly persons, local police, parents, professional associations among others. At Fano and Pesaro, participatory planning activities were carried out to study the most functional routes between home and school and to start projects to restructure road patterns and change traffic regulations (which have since been implemented). At Pesaro, through ward meetings and regularly monitoring, the initiative has had great success, with broad involvement of teachers, parents and children.

the CFCs in Italy: changing the city in the direction of environmental sustainability for all, and children first. At the same time, both national and local policies indicate that this change must necessarily be accompanied by an institutional shift, since only if that is achieved can the necessary administrative support be supplied.

2.3.1 Transforming local administrations

In the context of the Italian CFCs, particular importance is attached to transformations within the municipal administration. A city intending to take on the cultural challenge of rethinking itself from the child's viewpoint must implement institutional changes in its administration.

First, it is important to amend the town charter to incorporate the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires a convergence of views on the municipal council.

The adoption of the Convention on the Right of the Child in the Town Charter acknowledges the importance granted to measures explicitly recognising children's rights. Further, a significant action includes the setting up of coordination and working groups within the administration. In particular, the Italian projects are bringing in a new model of administrative organisation of an interdepartmental and intersectoral nature. In some cases this is a necessity, since the activity sec-

tors that will be interacting in planning the various actions are numerous: social services, school buildings, educational services, culture, youth policies, environment, planning, and solidarity. At times, however, intersectoral working has more to do with bureaucratic necessities than with the pursuit of a genuine common purpose. Initiating effective communication between various offices and individuals can, however, always be considered a significant innovative factor.

> **Coordination**
>
> The *Belluno Città dei Bambini* (Belluno as a Children's City) project group is structured so as to converge all departments of the municipal administration. Periodic meetings are held to plan and monitor activities and work out the best system of coordination among the various line departments to carry out the numerous activities with a holistic approach. Ferrara, as well as having set up the *Ufficio Città Bambina* (Child City Office), makes use of the assistance of three working groups: *Spazi Urbani Infanzia* (Cityscapes for Children), bringing together the municipal offices for planning, the environment and culture, the *Centro Idea* (Ideas Centre), architects and architecture teachers, and other associations; *Cultura ed Infanzia* (Culture and Children), bringing together the *Centro di Didattica Culturale* (Centre for Cultural Education), the *Ufficio Cinema* (Cinema Office) and the *Casa delle Arti* (House of the Arts); *Diritti ed Infanzia* (Rights and Children), bringing together UNICEF, schools, and third sector organisations such as Arciragazzi, Legambiente and Amnesty International.

2.3.2 Networks

Intersectoral working within the local government is accompanied by another important institutional change: the setting up of local organisational and management networks, bringing in schools and third sector organisations with cultural or social objectives.

At local level, instances of collaboration between schools and the third sector are almost universal. Such partners act normally as co-promoters of the activities. These have been highly meaningful relationships, enabling the practical carrying out of projects it would hardly ever have been possible to accomplish exclusively with the staff and organisational resources of the local authority.

The local networks are important where, as in the cases of the participatory projects and children's councils, the willingness of the schools and associations to join the projects is fundamental. Often the activities are run by third sector associations or social cooperatives, which supplement the public authority with technical and organisational resources. Even though there are some important examples of internally well-equipped public bodies, the tendency is towards negotiated decentralisation of the running of the activities.

Inter-institutional networks have been activated not only at the local level but also at the national and international levels, where they have taken the form of conventions among various local authorities, or have joined international charters or programmes,

> **Recognition in the municipal charter**
>
> The Municipality of Novellara has formally recognised the Young People's Town Council as one of its institutional bodies, which 'while maintaining the spirit of play, administers part of the budget, and is consulted in drawing up the Municipal Budget'. This official status has favoured interaction with the adult Municipal Council, which can listen to the children on the council directly. Here is the full text of Article 17 of the Novellara town charter:
>
> *The Municipality hereby adopts Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, worded as follows: 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.' The Municipality recognises the boys and girls of today as the citizens of today and tomorrow, endowed with needs, capacities and resources, and assures them of free expression of their views, giving them due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. The Municipality recognises the rights of children to freedom of peaceable assembly and their entitlement to institute the Young People's Town Council called Tavola Rotonda (round table), as an expression of active civic education and of direct democratic participation.*

like the Aalborg Charter, the Agenda 21 commitments, the networks of Città Educative (Educational Cities) and Healthy Cities, or the European Commission LIFE-Environment programme.

Often the various networks activated at national and international levels support each other in their purposes and share activities, even if each of them focuses on particular priorities and has organisational characteristics of its own.

The network that has had most directly operational effect on developing CFC projects in Italy is *Città dei Bambini* (Cities for Children), promoted and coordinated by the National Research Council, which has on the one hand sought to create training opportunities and to provide practical support, and on the other to coordinate projects and monitor their progress. This network has promoted workshops in many Italian cities, thus guiding activities in a visible and systematic fashion.

2.3.3 Training and capacity building

The broad spectrum of innovative activities, and the participation of a large number of individual figures

and bodies in changing the city, make capacity building a vital aspect for a CFC.

The training and refresher courses on offer derive from an awareness that the preparation and professionalism of the persons instigating, organising and running operations decisively affect the initiatives and make a CFC more effective. It appears particularly important that training should not be directed at a few recipients only, but should involve people at several operational levels and in several sectors, since the high degree of intersectoral collaboration involved in these activities calls for shared objectives and shared working methods. The content of training deemed relevant for a CFC concerns many areas, which creates a complicated structure of requirements. Given its strategic importance, training is one of the practices that have become an assessment parameter for CSDBB recognition.

On the basis of these considerations, the main national bodies that have supported these processes of innovation (for istance, the National Research Council and Democrazia in Erba) leave offered training modules to municipalities and third sector organizations that are interested. In other cases, training has come about locally, either by reactivating existing contacts with trainers and experts, or by relying on the reputation of experts and training institutions.

2.4 Encouraging services and facilities for play and socialising

Encouraging participation by children constitutes the most innovative part of the CFC initiatives in Italy and has been strongly encouraged, thanks to awards from the Ministry of the Environment, local contributions and, above all, funding under Law 285/97.

However, taking as a reference the funding requests presented by local authorities in accordance

with the provisions of Law 285/97, it is clear that, as compared to other programme areas, children's participation has been accorded low priority across the board. A government report published in 2000 on the condition of children and adolescents (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2000) reveals that only 11.4 per cent of the projects for which funding was granted contained measures of this type. Law 285/97 has been used primarily for financing traditional facilities for children, especially for protection against hardship (social and health services) and for education (crèches and nursery schools). To a lesser extent it has been used to promote participation, play facilities and socialising. In the context of CFCs, priority has thus been given to encouraging new services or renewing old ones.

In the new vision, however, of the relationship between the city and the child, the traditional educational, well-being and health services have been heavily criticised. The service or facility is often considered to be a constraint and insufficiently respectful of the children, bringing about a form of protection that creates dependency and is a barrier to independence. In this light, it is considered necessary to review the meaning of the facilities for children in order to enhance their capacity to encourage children's participation. This new conception of facilities requires an equally new conception of the public administration, which is able to promote participatory planning and governance systems open to children. This new "post-institutional vision" leads towards the creation of flexible and independent opportunities for utilising children's time and activities, through community planning coordinated at the municipal level.

Among the most significant innovative services, promoted above all on the basis of Article 6 of Law 285/97, are those dealing with socialising: game libraries, play centres, and youth centres for adolescents (Baraldi, 2001). These spatially delimited facilities monitored by competent adults treat participation by children and adolescents as opportunities to develop their personalities, through play and entertainment, in organised, guided situations. Their meaning is twofold: on the one hand, to widen and differentiate play and socialising facilities in the city supplementing or supporting initiatives already being instigated locally; on the other, to create a cli-

Participation and Protection

In the municipality of Ostuni, it is considered essential to direct attention and action primarily at the places where social exclusion may be greatest, especially in school, where children at risk are present. As a consequence of this approach, the *Laboratorio Città dei Ragazzi* (Young People's City Workshop) also makes it possible to interact daily with young people from families manifestly at risk, allegedly reducing the level of petty crime to the point that complaints against adolescents almost disappear. The theme of protection from hardship is incorporated in the range of policies aimed at preventing exclusion. Starting from the excluded social groups, the whole city has been involved in actions aimed to encourage child participation.

mate of meaningful relations within the urban community by encouraging opportunities for intragenerational and intergenerational contacts.

Children's participation has been encouraged along with their independence in a protected environment. This is in accordance with the culture and logic underlying CFCs, whereby protection is reasonable only where it guarantees the children's independence and ensures their active participation.

2.4.1 Facilities for children's play and socialising

Particular attention has been paid to services and facilities for children that involve adults as well, with an eye especially to greater support in parent-child relations.

The play centres directly involve parents and are designed as alternatives to crèches. The play centres are intended to promote interpersonal communication between parents and children in early childhood, based on the idea that the family ought to encourage children's autonomy. The parents are present during the activities and the educators intervene as little as possible and only to remind the parents about their children's independence, interpreting their role as being to facilitate communication while respecting the expression of family ties.

The game libraries (*ludoteche*) are aimed at much broader age ranges than the play centres. Similarly, play is used as an instrument to encourage socialising among the children and sometimes the parents too. In the game libraries play may serve two purposes: a) to stimulate interpersonal relationships among the children encouraging their right to enjoyment, and b) to support children's development and growth. In general, the encouragement of play activities encounters few problems, partly because play is familiar and compatible with the traditionally held view of childhood.

Alongside the play centres and game libraries, other services are also offered with increasing frequency, like artistic, theatrical and cinematographic events, aimed at encouraging the children's and young people's self-expression (for instance, workshops for videos produced by the children). There are also growing numbers of libraries, audio-visual libraries, magazine rooms, video libraries and multiuse centres. Mention should also be made of the growth of after-school services, intended as one segment in an integrated educative system. Workshops of various types are run on the premises (sport, theatre, music, dance therapy, music therapy, comic strips, computing, play, editing magazines, carpentry, mosaics, ceramics). Many of these services are provided in collaboration with the third sector.

2.4.2 Socialising centres for adolescents

Socialising services constitute the only type of action that massively involves adolescents. The youth centres are in fact the most important type of facility aimed at adolescents in Italy, even if they are not equally widespread everywhere.

Socialising by adolescents is encouraged particu-

larly in organised forms (i.e., led by group leaders or educators), on the principle that it can be productive only under the vigilant eye of competent adults with educational roles. Intra-generational encounters between adolescents are thus regarded as important only if they are subordinated to an intergenerational encounter, following a model that plainly has its origin in the school.

Frequently, the encouragement of socialising is supplemented in these centres by individual services and facilities, such as providing information, courses and workshops, specialist meetings (debates, conferences), making and listening to music or using multimedia equipment. The intention of the planners is that the individual services and facilities should attract the adolescents and motivate them to join in and keep in contact with the staff. Accordingly, the activities on offer are creative (music, video production, visual arts, cinema), multimedia (use of computers, audio-visual material) and also sometimes environment-related. For pre-adolescents, the services available are mainly of the guidance-type (school, work) or educational support.

The combination of encouraging socialising and providing individual services gives rise to two prevalent models of youth centre for adolescents (Baraldi and Ramella, 1999):

1. The *services centre*, where the individual services and facilities constitute an important component, combined with organised socialising

2. The *all-round integrated centre*, which embraces many and varied activities with an aim to organise socialising according to an education pattern.

The objectives of the great majority of the centres for adolescents consist explicitly in encouraging edu-

cation activities that favour cognitive and relational growth, so as to bring out the potential and the critical sense of the adolescents. Play and socialising are turned into an opportunity for growth. This is often the aim towards which activities such as reading, musical, artistic and theatrical workshops, courses favouring expression (guitar, computer, dance), socialising activities (musical shows, competitions, parties) are directed, making adolescents responsible for managing their own programmes and increasing their sense of solidarity. All this is treated as an opportunity to build up a relationship with significant adults, making use of educational methodologies.

In the intention of planners, these centres are also meant to help prevent adolescent troubles, a much-feared phenomenon in Italian society. However, attention generally focuses primarily on promoting rights and hence on creating positive conditions for adolescents to meet each other. Consequently, activities directly related to problems, like counselling stations or psychological treatment, are not particularly frequent. When they are offered, especially for pre-adolescents, the potential users may find it hard to understand what they are about and thus avoid the centres so as not to be labelled as having problems.

Given their prevailing approach, the centres rarely use the methodology of self-management or participation in management choices, which would emphasise the adolescents' participation much more. In the eyes of administrators and planners, self-management seems unlikely to be successful because there is no special confidence in the adolescents' competence and motivation, so that the adults sometimes fear risky and problem-related behaviour. Participation by adolescents is limited compared with that of younger age groups, and is to be found more in cases where they are involved in highly motivated small groups. The upshot is that there is but limited experience of semi-self-management or of participation in administrative choices by adolescents.

The self-run or partly self-run centres depend on facilitators who try not to interfere in interpersonal relations among the adolescents, but offer themselves as promoters available to help them to

socialise. Though this type of experience is infrequent, some cases stand out as particularly interesting for understanding the potential of encouraging socialising. In such cases the facilitators are asked to organise events and sometimes to create services that are useful and interesting for the adolescents, like information offices and multimedia rooms, integrating individual services with encouragement of free socialising by the adolescents.

2.5 Encouraging socialising within the community

Play Initiatives for Children within the Community

The most widespread type of initiative features encouraging play experience outdoors, offering public spaces to children and organising activities and initiatives that bring life to the streets, squares and gardens. 'A town for playing', 'Streets at play', 'Let's go back on the street', 'Open City', 'The City's All Mine' are among slogans used for these events. The common feature is that, for a while, the city streets are closed to traffic so that children can play there. This type of initiative is generally carried out with the collaboration of sports clubs and voluntary organisations, and with the involvement of local groups of activity leaders. They may also be combined with awareness campaigns on reducing pollution levels (ecological Sundays), and generally last no more than a day. Another activity within the community is the setting up of markets run by children in pedestrian areas or in zones temporarily closed to traffic.

Alongside the largely dominant type of services offered in centres or workshops, activities for promoting socialising and encounters in the community are also carried out. In these cases, encouraging play and socialising takes on a deeper meaning in the context of the CFC programme, being more directly connected with the initiatives aimed to improve the

Socialising within the Community

The *Corriera STRAvagante* (EXTRAvagant Coach) in Ferrara is part of the Adolescents and Youth Project and arose out of an agreement between the municipal administration and the local health unit. It seeks to further socialising by young people throughout the municipality and the province, to encourage their participation and independent planning, and to create a relationship between adolescents and the institutions. The coach is aimed particularly at informal groups, encourages specific organised-group initiatives by distributing fliers, organising activities and promoting projects. Some of the most prominent among these have been *Il Cielo in una Stanza* (Heaven in a Room), with an informal group that painted, furnished and ran a room lent by the ward, transforming it into a small socialising centre; the Togetherness project, which organised a cine club, and the Calendar project, with photos of the young people.

quality of life in the city, even though the activities are often short-term.

These initiatives are chiefly facilitated by street artists, actors or activity leaders, with the organisation of contemporary dance or musical theatre shows, literary meetings, or art-and-environment programmes. The city becomes the meeting place for the citizens. Often, especially in recent years, these initiatives have been linked to environmental awareness campaigns, promoting a world different from today's, using slogans that are both evocative and explanatory, like Let's Clean Up the World, Ecological Sundays, Let's Make a Clean Sweep, The Guardians of the Forest, Bimbimbici (Bike Kids) 2000, and the Tree Festival.

These activities within the community may also be associated with other actions in the environmental area, like summer trips, educational workshops, exhibitions and shows concerning the environment, excursions and visits to places of historical and artistic interest.

Another equally important and certainly more continuous activity in the neighbourhood involves the *ludobus* (play bus), a travelling unit specially equipped to encourage children's play. A *ludobus* creates play situations run by facilitators. It is basically an extension of the game library in the neighbourhood, in situations where it is hard to bring the children together in the same place and it is felt useful and appropriate to bring liveliness and play into areas that generally do not present such opportunities. The *ludobus* suspends, even if only momentarily, the rules governing the urban space, encouraging the presence of children within the community. In combination with action aimed at encouraging independent mobility by children, it involves them in play

Integrating Centres and Initiatives within the Community

The workshop in the Ostuni summer centre is intended to let children feel, in an institutional setting, 'the need to be protagonists in the city more and to exercise full citizenship, being listened to and finding consideration and a welcome for their proposals' (a town councillor). The workshop is closely linked with the whole area, which is the real place for the children's work. The summer centre is where all the initiatives start from, in 'an explosion of ideas, experiences, of doing, creating, participating, of affecting the city' (a councillor), from a 'space that catalyses a whole series of possibilities, where new ideas, projects, services are born, a context that promotes participation' (one of the staff).

In the area of Cervignano del Friuli, an attempt is under way to combine actions localised in centres that encourage attendance (with varied features, from music to multimedia) with a travelling unit called *Nautibus*. This effort stands out as particularly interesting in that it favours integration between initiatives in the centres and initiatives in the community, one of the few seeking to employ this methodology which is by now widespread for both children and adolescents.

that allows them to express themselves on the streets and squares, thus regaining the dimension of free enjoyment outdoors.

With regard to promotion of socialising among adolescents in the community, travelling units that work with adolescent groups and ideally continue the *ludobus* operation are employed. These vehicles offer opportunities to encourage fun and interpersonal communication in informal groups of adolescents. In these cases too, as in the youth centres, the staff are communication facilitators, but the orientation towards the autonomy and self-organisation of groups of adolescents is still clearer, since the action takes place where they meet. The use of mobile units is particularly relevant in large cities, or else in projects involving various small urban centres, where it is impossible or very complicated to bring all the adolescents together in the same physical place. They thus provide an alternative to creating a multiplicity of centres, hard and expensive to run.

2.6 Raising awareness in the city

One of the decisive aspects for a CFC is creating public awareness, to reach shared approaches in the initiatives and a shared perception of the most important themes (children's rights, mobility, traffic, public green space, encouraging participation by children and so on). Some initiatives, indeed, like those for child mobility and the spread of child participation practices in the schools, meet with difficulties of acceptance by adults who feel other priorities are more important.

Low public awareness may also lead to failures or the local administrations giving up. One of the greatest risks with CFCs is to fail to make their dominant themes popular and shared. Where the municipal government is worried by the lack of consensus on the initiatives, it may be tempted to abandon them or convert them into something more favourable in terms of image. This also explains why the most widespread activity in the cities is the town *fiesta* for the children, just because it is easy to understand and extremely popular.

To make the public aware, in addition to episodic events like Children's Rights Days and initiatives by municipal councils open to citizens on themes of relevance to CFCs, conferences or national and international forums, exhibitions, and information initiatives (radio or television spots, press releases, web sites, CD-ROMS) have been organised. Less commonly, research on children and related activities has been carried out and published. As regards the environment, mention should be made of the national *Una Giornata Senza Auto* (Car-free Day) programme, promoted since 1998 by the Ministry of the Environment, which has, in its various editions, seen participation by more than a thousand local bodies and many associations.

2.6.1 Making children aware

It is critical to make children aware of the CFC, especially through education in the areas of children's rights and the environment.

The main awareness campaigns aimed at children concern their rights, through discussions on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or drafting of specific charters of rights. However, such initiatives are not very frequent.

In the environmental area, by contrast, workshops on activities relating to environmental sustainability are particularly widespread, in an effort to make new generations aware of the need to respect the ecosystem. They are primarily educational in intent and are regarded as important for preparing individuals capable of looking after the city and assuming responsibility for change in it. They do not, however, provide for direct project participation by children, as do those for participatory planning.

The main objective of environmental awareness courses is to favour change in the interaction between people and environment, and the actions are primarily to promote knowledge of the environment and enjoyment, and management by children of protected green areas and nature parks. They offer children an opportunity to get to know the environment that surrounds them, to move about within it, to test their own abilities, to observe environmental changes and to make the most of the local culture.

Environmental Awareness

In Modena, an environmental education course was promoted to cut wastage of water, electrical energy and gas. Children helped to clean refuse from streams. The network of Educational Farms represents an observatory-cum-workshop in food education to rediscover the local environmental, historical, cultural and gastronomic traditions, and to learn about the production of food using eco-friendly biological or integrated pest control cultivation techniques.

In Novellara, educational and practical programmes have been started with children under three to create vegetable gardens; trips have been organised to rivers and streams to look for rare or endangered species, map them and transfer some specimens to protected reserves.

The primary context for carrying out these activities is the school, through class meetings, organisation of exhibitions and competitions, and running teaching workshops or science groups. These initiatives are clearly distinct from the participatory planning workshops, which do make use of collaboration with schools but seek to introduce more participatory working methodologies there.

Alongside work in the schools, there is increasingly widespread decentralisation of activities to outside spaces, through green routes and itineraries, organised visits, excursions and trips to nature areas, to promote not just knowledge of the surrounding area but also enjoyment, especially of protected areas and nature parks. In this connection, some cities have set up environmental education centres in the neighbourhood to make children and adults aware of various

environmental themes (reduction of pollution, differentiated refuse collection, protecting green space). Also fairly widespread are road education campaigns to communicate the importance of coordinated use of the roads and of road signs and relevant rules, thus improving knowledge of urban mobility problems. In this type of initiative, particular importance is attached to meeting local police, and to the commitment to respect vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Other awareness initiatives concern reduction of atmospheric, acoustic and electromagnetic pollution, and above all the eco-management of solid urban waste, the commonest of this secondary type of action.

In the environmental awareness workshops, learning based on direct experience is considered fundamental; the child is regarded as an individual acquiring experience and thus learning, not as one acting to bring about change. Consequently, these activities, though very interesting with regard to the formative aspect, do not lead to major direct changes relating to children's participation in the life of the city.

Cross-cultural Actions

The Municipality of Ostuni, in collaboration with the schools, annually promotes the Mediterranean Children's Week to build up a culture of welcome, identifying strategies and paths to multiply opportunities for dialogue and exchange through artistic, literary, theatrical and play workshops.

In Pesaro, there have been awareness campaigns on the rights of global citizenship, on human and sustainable development, projects on building bridges among peoples and on food aid, the European Voluntary Service, cross-cultural festivals, a cross-cultural market and summer camps abroad. There have also been initiatives to regain and value the cultural identity of immigrant children (language support and courses in Arabic, multiethnic festivals, school twinning, meetings on the rights of the child) and a twinning with the village of Keita in Niger.

In Belluno, the municipal administration started the *Informa Immigrati* (Inform the Immigrants) service, which encourages initiatives in education on multiculturalism, such as creating a multiethnic calendar, the main theme of which is a traditional Albanian tale drawn by Belluno children. The Education to Diversity project has created a multiethnic workshop with the active involvement of teachers and cultural mediators, which instigates training courses. In school classes and libraries, cross-cultural mediation activities in favour of immigrant children and their families have also been held.

In Turin, a cross-cultural centre and a welcome centre for families and mothers with foreign children have been opened, and a CD-ROM produced on cross-cultural courses as educational material for schools, associations and staff involved. Festivals and events have been organised, cross-cultural mediation services, twinning between schools and projects on bilingualism begun, and school introduction activities organised for Roma and Sinti students.

2.6.2 Fostering coexistence between cultures

In the international and national culture underlying the CFC, a city should be made aware of cross-cultural issues too. The cities should encourage good relations among all their citizens, independently of race, religion or traditions, in the context of knowledge and interchange between cultures and of education about living together. However, though considered important at national and international levels, awareness of coexistence among different cultures in the shape of civic education and furthering of cross-cultural relations is not particularly widespread, being confined to a few sensitive local situations.

There are many kinds of actions: educational (language courses), information (counters), solidarity (collections, signing up for human rights campaigns), public awareness (events, conferences and festivals), cross-cultural mediation and integration (school introductions for foreign, Roma and Sinti children, and places of worship for various religions). These activities are often based in cross-cultural workshops and centres.

2.7 The new environmental policies

In addition to the cultural change brought by increasingly widespread actions aimed at children, based especially on encouraging their participation and the institutional changes to the system of government, a CFC is marked by environmental changes concerning the management of the urban ecosystem, brought about through specific environmental policies. The environmental policies have been implemented most notably in the context of the CSDBB Project, which contributes strongly to the effort under way in Italy to promote environmental and urban sustainability.

Administrative and management actions in favour of change in the city by local authorities are predominantly combined with the method of promoting children's participation and with environmental education programmes. In this context, however, the child represents not just the beneficiary or main actor but also the parameter for the quality-of-life standard for all citizens. The two areas where the most innovative environmental policies are to be seen are *changing the interaction between child and environment* and *encouraging mobility.*

In the first area, what is innovative is above all the involvement of children in initiatives providing for their active participation, and initiatives for environmental education and encouragement of the knowledge, enjoyment and management of green areas. In the area of encouraging mobility, particularly innovative has been the creation of safe routes between home and school, that is, pedestrian routes allowing children to gain more independence in greater safety. There have also been measures, again with children participating, to reduce traffic speeds, to create easily recognisable road signs (sometimes using symbols chosen and designed by the children), to widen and protect sidewalks, and to create pedestrian areas and

residential streets. There has also been considerable expansion of the network of cycle tracks, although this is often limited to the city-centre area.

These initiatives have formed part of broader plans to *regulate traffic* through pedestrian areas, traffic limitation zones, cycle tracks, speed reduction, protected routes, spaces for socialising, child-friendly road signs, widening of sidewalks and creation of wider, raised pedestrian crossings, safe crossings and traffic flow improvement (roundabouts, centralised traffic lights, railway overpasses).

These actions have also resulted in the *reduction of atmospheric pollution*, along with greater use of minimum-impact public vehicles, especially for public transport, school buses and the police. Other initiatives aimed at cutting the use of vehicle pollution have also been introduced for the citizens' convenience and to eliminate waste, like buses on call, and the combination of bicycle and bus whereby those arriving in the centre by bus can have the free use of a bicycle.

Another area where innovative environmental policies have been employed is the *enhancement of green areas*, where again there has been participation in planning. Many schools have been given outside spaces and courtyards with green areas, where play areas and open spaces have been created and play equipment provided. Projects for furnishing squares and parks have been expanded, creating socialising areas designed for play and for encouraging meeting other children. Planning activities, sometimes with children's participation, have been undertaken, such as dismantling disused buildings to make parks, or upgrading gardens or other areas in historical centres to use as public green spaces. Finally, environmental education centres have been set up in nature areas. There have also been relatively frequent examples of reorganisation and maintenance of school buildings in accordance with criteria of eco-compatibility, and of reorganisation and maintenance of condominium areas to create green playgrounds.

All this is connected with policies aimed to make public spaces enjoyable and accessible. The most widespread initiative has been to guarantee access to school areas outside teaching hours, enabling schools to open up more to the surrounding world. At some hospitals, welcome areas have been created to guarantee the right to play for child patients. One particularly innovative measure has been the upgrading of town squares, with a view to sparking off the transformation of the urban fabric and a process of social and cultural revitalisation.

One last innovative area for environmental policies has been in the *eco-management of solid urban waste*, where environmental awareness campaigns have played a considerable part. In this area, the achievement of differentiated town waste collection brings recognition as a 'recycling municipality' by the Legambiente (the *Environmental League*), under the patronage of the Ministry of the Environment. In recent years there have been systematic increases in the differentiated collection of waste, made possible partly through the provision of ecological sites, special containers and composters distributed free to citizens. These initiatives have often been linked with environment centres. Other initiatives have involved the purchase of installations for the eco-management of refuse and for the selection and processing of durable goods (personal computers, refrigerators, white goods and so on).

Finally, in the area of *reduction of architectural barriers*, assistance has been given for restructuring private dwellings and to maintenance work in schools, on means of transport and roads (pedestrian passages, audible traffic lights, and green routes for the visually impaired).

3

ANALYSIS OF GOOD PRACTICES

3.1 Encouraging participation and education

Encouragement of participation by children as practiced in Italian CFCs entails a change of approach by adults, who must learn how to treat children as independent persons, though in development.

In the view of the majority of the local authorities, planners and other staff working in CFCs, adults must also respond to a need for guidance on the part of the children. The idea of encouraging social participation by children thus still has to accommodate the need to educate and to guide them.

In the approach to children of educators, one finds a combination of encouraging independence, educative guidance and protection. Educators, however, generally tend to emphasize the child need for guidance and protection over that for independence.

As educational approaches figure highly, CFC proponents generally take a critical line towards the way children are currently treated at school and other places generally regarded as educational, feeling that in these contexts they are not sufficiently regarded as active citizens or competent individuals. In consequence, many of them hope for a change, based on full recognition of the child's competences, in the approach to education currently prevalent in the Italian school system. Education ought to take on innovative forms and methods, offering room for the child's creativity and participation.

The innovative form of education should be *subordinated* to encouraging participation by the children.

Education in schools has historically had other functions and aims than encouraging child participa-

tion; in fact, it has the function of training the children's personality, guiding their knowledge, their choices and their behaviour. To do this, education is based primarily on expectations of learning (cognitive expectations) and of rule-following (normative expectations). Education thus has primarily cognitive and normative significance, although in recent decades there has been special attention paid by educators to emotional development as well (Baraldi, 2001).

Cognitive and normative education can effectively support the encouragement of children's participation - that is, their involvement as independent social actors who express their own views and propose solutions - by supplying young people with suitable instruments for participating in competent fashion. Learning and the setting of rules can be means *aimed at* supporting children's capacity to actively

Innovative Education

"All the activities carried out have the objective of letting the child grow, developing all his or her potential and capacities. They are activities that train the child too, from the point of view of landscape, environment and so on. They must leave something up to the child, and not just be pure entertainment. At the end of the game, the child knows something more, has more skills, more knowledge than before. The objective is to let the child grow and bring out what he or she wants to do, in the sense of education as drawing out what is already there. There is great value set on ongoing dialogue with the child to create participation. The point is to make use of what the child has got, the problem he or she has, allowing for individualised interventions" (an educational worker in Ostuni).

participate in choices or projects and manage their own lives as citizens.

The two dominant approaches are reflected in the practice of developing Child Friendly Cities. When encouragement of participation by children is reduced to only or mainly cognitive or normative education, an *ambivalence* is created, arising from the fact that the children are treated as independent only according to conditions set from outside. This corresponds to ambivalence in the adult's role in communicating with the children; on the one hand, the adult listens to the children and lets them express themselves; on the other, he or she guides them. The adult is at the same time *facilitator* and *guidance provider*, encouraging independence and directing it from outside.

On the contrary, when child participation is set as a priority goal, the cognitive process becomes a means to full participation, providing children with the knowledge, information and competence necessary to participate effectively.

3.2 Participatory planning with children

In the context of the Italian CFC experience, it has been noted, participation in planning is undoubtedly the most widespread activity in terms of encouraging child participation. It is regarded as the best way to carry out initiatives in favour of urban and environmental sustainability.

3.2.1 Meanings

The most important meaning attaching to participation in planning is that of encouraging children's involvement as active subjects in processes of change, able to redefine the social, institutional and cultural models of the city and to support the municipal government in its urban planning. In particular, participatory planning activities must:

- Be an example for the city as 'bottom-up' action
- Bring to the local authorities attention the collective aspirations, identifying the opinions and needs of the citizens.
- Bring out the role of children as active citizens, aware of the city's need for the well-being of all citizens and sustainable development.
- Bring the children closer to what the local authorities are doing by making the technical and financial implementation of projects transparent and understandable to all.
- Lead to the updating of technical staff skills.

Participatory planning has, however, a second meaning as well: *education for active citizenship*, empowering children with the instruments they need to develop cognitive, cultural, manual and relational capacities. This means that the activities should:
- Accustom children to listening to the different languages used and opinions expressed by the various members of the community.
- Help them to regard themselves as part of a group

with varied and conflicting interests but able to see the common objective of the quality of life as a basis for dialogue.
- Teach children about planning and project implementation by supplying instruments enabling them to move from identifying needs to formulating operational hypotheses.
- Encourage them to respect resources and regard them as collective assets.

The twofold meaning of participatory planning (encouraging participation and education) is expressed in the interaction between the two distinct roles for those leading the workshops: the role of expert (normally a planner or an architect), who introduces the meaning and methodology of participatory planning and provides the technical assistance for carrying out projects; and that of facilitator (normally a teacher) who, starting from the expert's indications, puts the projects into practice together with the children and has the task of listening to them, both letting them express themselves and supporting them. It is often noted that the person working with the children should be a 'cultural mediator', as in Fano, able to translate the children's culture into the adult one and in particular into the culture of the technicians. A facilitator like this does not primarily teach and train but has the role of "quietly accompanying when appropriate, and speaking meaningfully when it is useful" (a councillor in Pesaro). In general, the facilitator is trained by an expert, even if the latter's objectives may be different from the former's. While the expert is chiefly interested in involving the children in changing the city, the facilitator's interest and motivation are not always so obvious. Especially where the facilitator is a teacher, the educational aspect may prevail, thus jeopardising the twofold nature of participatory planning in practice.

3.2.2 Methods

There is an established literature on ways of creating an effective workshop for participatory planning with children (Lorenzo, 2000; Ministero dell'Ambiente, 2001; Tonucci, 1995, 1996, 2003; Lamedica, 1998, 2003). Though various methods are described, it is generally held that participatory planning involves a number of stages:

- Setting an objective, almost always defined by the adult experts on the basis of local priorities and the involvement of the children.
- Having the experts train the facilitators.
- Starting work with the children by gathering shared information, unpublished data and knowledge about the community.
- Working out jointly by the experts, facilitators and children of the meaning of the data and knowledge acquired.
- Stimulating the children's ideas for new projects, using brainstorming or similar techniques.
- Designing new projects with small groups of children.
- Creating a collective project (in the form of a model or drawing) combining the small groups' projects.

- Presenting the overall project to public opinion and the municipal authorities for possible implementation.
- Joint carrying out and running of the project by the children, local authorities and experts, when this is made possible.

Through all these stages, the combination of encouraging the participation and education of children depends in great part on the relationship created between experts and facilitators. This starts with the training of the latter (often teachers) by the former (usually planners, architects, engineers), and is expressed in the joint running of the activities. Since almost all the workshops take place in schools, the problem of combining the encouragement of participation with education is also a question of the relationship between the schools and the outside experts.

The primacy of normative and cognitive education is particularly evident in cases where the activities call for the direct involvement of teachers as facilitators. These often aim at letting the children acquire the skills to put together a good product, above all in terms of the planning logic and the precision of execution. Participatory projects are here primarily translated into cognitive education, aimed at improving performance, creating a civic sense and educating the children in group work.

In cases of predominantly cognitive educational communication, however, the children are frequently rather uncooperative and uninterested, so that the facilitators are forced to become insistent to get them involved in the activities. Observing classroom dynamics, one sees that the possibilities for interpersonal communication among the children are greatly reduced, tending to reappear as chatting and inattention, which makes it harder to carry out the activities and forces the facilitator to make continual reminders. Instead of encouraging the activity, the facilitator frequently has to monitor its accomplishment by laying down rules of conduct. This cognitive and normative educational approach contradicts the very idea of participatory planning, since the facilitator *guides* the children's activities by giving binding instructions for carrying them out, so that the children are not independent but confine themselves to following instructions.

Child participation instead more frequently comes to the fore where the operation is run directly by experts in participatory planning, normally in the Italian experience planners and architects. In these cases, the activity encourages the children's active and independent participation, with the basic aim of carrying out a collective project based on teamwork. Here the facilitator has a role on the same footing as the children's. In this role, the facilitator does not bother to teach how work is to be carried out or evaluate the results of the children's performance, instead creating the conditions for a relaxed, encouraging, interesting and entertaining activity. Consequently, communication is more often successful, motivating the children to participate actively in the project.

To sum up, if the activity is handled with the primary aim of encouraging participation, children are interested, relaxed and active. If instead it takes a primarily educational, cognitive form, children are less interested and involved, so that the work is continually punctuated by the facilitator's reminders, or else done in silence and without active participation.

3.2.3 Implementing projects designed by children

Carrying out projects resulting from a participatory process is usually the responsibility of both municipal authorities and technicians, the former as decision-makers and the latter in an executive role. Sometimes, though, bureaucracy and the provisions in force hamper speedy, effective implementation. Even in cities that stand out for attaching special importance to participatory planning, what is actually achieved is limited, as project leaders and facilitators note with concern and regret.

The reasons given are that procedures of public administrations are lengthy and complicated, and clash with the children's expectations. Sometimes this innovative way of operating creates problems of comprehension and coordination in the administrations that get in the way of action. These difficulties mean that the significance of children's involvement in urban change is drastically cut back in the move from planning to implementation.

This also raises the serious problem of how to present the significance of these activities to the children. Generally, interviews have brought out a tendency to advise against guaranteeing the children that their projects can actually be carried out and lead to real change in the city. Caution like this, however, amplifies the educational and scholastic aspect of the activities at the expense of children's participation, which ends up seeming useless or superfluous. Complete transparency and realism concerning feasibility thus reduce the meaningfulness of participatory projects. A similar result is reached when the children are told to do only what the adults consider to be feasible. In this way the children's own feelings about what matters are not valued whenever they lead to projects that the adults do not believe can be carried out.

An analysis of the initiatives brings out the difficulties in putting into practice various suggestions for adequately encouraging child participation (Lansdown, 2001): creating realistic expectations in the children; determining clear, definite objectives agreed with them; making the experts' and facilitators' approach transparent; and coordinating the work between children and adults.

One way of tackling these difficulties may be to set up a process of *communicative negotiation* on the objectives to be reached, involving both children and adults (experts, facilitators, local authorities, and technicians), by combining two stages:

1. Negotiation between children and experts and facilitators, considered as a team, from the outset in setting goals and selecting projects; and

2. Negotiation between children and local authorities and technical staff, making possible a coordinated approach to tackling the problems faced during implementation.

Negotiation between the children and adults involved seems to be the only way to draw up the criteria and possibilities for planning and implementation, without debasing the children's independence in planning the city. It also permits clarification together with the children of the type of rules within which effective participation can be secured, and the degree of feasibility of their projects. Negotiation seems to be practised and practicable between children and the facilitators who further child participation. The problem is by contrast currently underestimated with regard to the children's relationship with the facilitators who educate them and still more with local authorities and technical staff.

3.3 Participating in decisions

The *Consigli Comunali dei bambini e dei ragazzi* (Children and Young People's Town Councils) constitute the predominant channel for ensuring fulfilment of children's rights and their participation in important decisions affecting the city. In some cases, these councils are also directly involved in participatory planning.

In particular, there are important differences between two dominant methodologies adopted by children's councils that may be defined as 'educating for decisions' and 'encouraging decisions'. These differences concern four basic aspects:
- the selection of children's council members
- the significance of the activities
- the importance of the children's role
- the role of the adults (experts or facilitators)

3.3.1 The meaning of the two models

In the "educating for decisions" model, the objective of cognitive and normative education is more evident, as the young people's town council is primarily conceived of as a way of educating the children in the rules of democracy. Decisions concerning expenditure too have an educative value, often involving the commitment of modest sums, so as to teach children how to handle them carefully. In the "encouraging decisions" model, the objective of promoting child participation stands out more; the aim is in fact to affect the way the city is run directly by 'advising' the adults.

Supporters of the "educating for decisions" model claim a greater impact for the role assigned to the children but can hardly boast any great impact on governance processes. Supporters of the "encouraging decisions" model count on the willingness of the municipal councils to take children's views into consideration, with the awareness that lack of attention to their aspirations may substantially reduce the municipal government effectiveness.

In both cases, however, the decisive factor is the effectiveness of the facilitators. In the "educating for decisions" model, they have to be able to help children handle funds and roles carefully, while in the "encouraging decisions" model they have to ensure that themes of importance to the children are included in the municipal agenda.

3.3.2 Selecting young people's council members

All the children's councils consist of representatives of elementary and middle schools, with variations in number and age. Methods of selecting council members range from election (preferred in the "educating for decisions" model), to drawing lots (preferred in the "encouraging decisions" model), to selection by the teachers on the basis of academic competence (that is, the best students in the class are chosen), an approach not provided for in the two prevailing methodologies but in fact sometimes used.

The method of election simulates the municipal councils in the democratic political system and is chosen for that reason. It tends, however, to favour the boldest, the most eloquent or the most enterprising, - in other words, those who want to stand for election and are more convincing because they are more interested and effective. The method of drawing lots is intended to preserve the council from the influence of the adult world, particularly in relation to the effects of selecting participants, and to encourage the entry of children who have not necessarily assimilated adult forms of participation.

3.3.3 Activities by children's councils

In the "educating for decisions" model, council members work primarily or exclusively on specific, concrete projects on the basis of a budget assigned by the local administration, the size of which allows only small or marginal changes, such as the purchase of material or equipment for the school, or furniture for the playground. The children's council decides how best to use the resources available to it on the basis of the priorities it lays down.

In the "encouraging decisions" model there is no budget available to the children's council, which has to look at topics of importance to the city. The chil-

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The Fano Children's Council

The Fano Children's Council follows a "encouraging decisions" model. During the years of its activity, it has asked the Municipal Council for:
1) Closure of the main city streets to traffic for events one day per year
2) Use of sports installations 'with no trainer' (i.e., without having to register with a sports association)
3) Use of the squares as places to play
4) Creation of a play area near the beach with a terrace and a gazebo
5) Devoting the amount of the CSDBB award to converting a cottage to use for play and educational activities for children

The town administration responded positively to these requests. The Children's Council also developed the *Carta del pedone* (Pedestrians' Charter), arising from discussion of mobility problems in the city, and started intergenerational workshops with an old people's club. The children's council members have available a page in the periodical published by the city, in which they present an account of their activities and express their needs.

dren's council presents its own ideas and its own requests to the municipal council, asking it to make commitments on questions of collective importance. The discussions, decisions and requests to the municipal council thus concern themes of importance to the city, and sometimes, though not always, this means the possibility of deciding directly on the use of the budget or the making of changes.

3.3.4 The children's and the adults' roles

In the "educating for decisions" model, child council members hold offices similar to those that adults hold on the municipal council and are elected in representative roles, starting from the mayor. Taking on these roles enables them to implement decisions on spending the budget available and to represent the children on official occasions. In the "encouraging decisions" model, there are no elective offices, no mayor and no differences in roles among council members. The latter are on an equal footing in collectively developing policies concerning the city and on changes to make in it.

In the "educating for decisions" model, the facilitator is usually a teacher. The council is often organized inside the school, and is aimed mainly at civic education with a normative orientation. In the "encouraging decisions" model, the facilitator is generally an outside expert, not part of the school world. The council meets in public places outside the school, and the facilitator has the task of encouraging intergenerational group discussions, thus putting the children in a position to bring their wishes before the municipal council.

3.3.5 Educational practices

The "educating for decisions" model is currently more widespread. Its central aim is to encourage organizational capabilities (for competitions, festivities and so on), using the children's and young people's normal social contexts, like the school and its playground, gardens and play areas - that is, spaces specially designed and built for almost exclusive use by children and young people.

One notes, however, that the dimension of the city, understood as a place where all can actively participate, with children and young people treated as citizens making use of a shared urban space, tends to disappear in this approach.

The meetings show a predominantly educational, normative approach. Normative expectations are particularly noticeable in:

● Frequent requests to comply with the rules of debating (the agenda, taking turns to speak, writing minutes) which set rather formalized conditions on the children's participation.

● Instructions to pay attention and participate through direct reminders or demonstrations of disapproval.

● The effort to transmit values.

This means that, while on the one hand the council's independence in decision making is upheld, on the other there is an explicit demand to confine to a specific set of values.

Cognitive expectations are also noticeable, since the main point is to learn the meanings of citizenship and representation, with learning ways of discussing and the value of confrontation and of respect particularly to the fore.

Normative and cognitive expectations thus guide the bulk of the communication processes between the children and young people on the one hand, and the facilitators and other adults who sometimes take part in the meetings (councillors, mayors), on the other. Communication between adults and children always seeks to combine learning and practice, and to be guided by the rules of democracy and good citizenship. Nonetheless, there is a range from an openly school approach, present in councils where teachers have a direct role as facilitators, to one which instead seeks to keep the councils removed from the school environment, though stressing the importance of learning the values of society and the principles of citizenship. In the latter case, evidence has shown that cognitive expectations constitute the background for more relaxed, interpersonal communication between the children or young people and the facilitators, encouraging dialogue and exchange of views among the participants.

3.3.6 Promoting decision practices

Encouraging child participation is more explicitly pursued in the councils that follow the "encouraging decisions" model. In this case, the communication between facilitator and children does create learning expectations but at the same time allots primary importance to the children's personal views. The facilitator does not mainly pursue an educational objective but seeks to clarify the goal of transforming the city. Since a child-friendly city is to be created, following the children's personal views is openly recognized as fundamental. The facilitator takes the role of 'defender of the children', underlining the importance of fulfilling children's rights, and seeking to make the children aware of their rights and of failures to implement them.

This method inspires a positive and attentive attitude in the children and gives rise to alternating phases in which both the children's and the facilitators' viewpoints emerge. This brings about a combination of encouraging changes to the city that the children actively and independently want and the normative and cognitive education used to reach socially useful results. The latter enables the objects of discussion to be reached faster without jeopardising participation, since knowledge is the foundation of the participatory process. Rules, too, are laid down without punishment-like interventions, thanks to the interpersonal communication with the children.

3.4 Encouraging children to move freely

Encouraging children to move freely between home and school is often associated with participatory planning by children. However, developing safe routes for children requires much broader involvement by the social actors. Families, schools, technical staff dealing with roads, police, grandparents and

shopkeepers are all regarded as important for the success of these initiatives. Children then face a more complex process of motivating and coordinating the various individuals involved.

Families are often reluctant to let their children go to school on their own. Parents' fears derive from interpreting affection for their child primarily in terms of protection, reducing their room for independent action (Baraldi and Maggioni, 2000). While saying that in principle they favour allowing their children to travel alone to and from school, parents face everyday situations (traffic, dangerous strangers, insufficient policing) that often make them decide to continue to accompany them.

Schools are often invited to support independence of movement by pupils. However, the school norms in force hamper initiatives allowing children to move freely and independently, since under Italian law pupils cannot be left alone or in the company of minors of the same age, on the schools premises. This obliges teachers to maintain continuous surveillance over school exits and, at least theoretically, to report to the authorities parents who fail to pick up their children from school. Moreover, the school is interested in independence mainly in relation to educational tasks and thus tends to concentrate its attention on this aspect, undermining other important forms of child independence.

Municipal police and highway departments are invited to respond to families' demands for safety and for maintaining the condition of the roads in such a way as to favour children's ability to move freely. These actions are regarded as important mainly by the families, but they are also an outcome of the overall initiative because they constitute an important sign of change in the city. However, there is not always sufficient continuity in action by the police or sufficient diligence by highway departments. Often, indeed, parents complain of delays and difficulties, which signal (to children and families) that the public administration has other priorities and end up diminishing support for the initiative.

Encouraging Freedom of Movement

In Pesaro, this methodology proved very effective. First of all, research established the nature of the existing cultural and planning obstacles. Second, a broad process of consultation and involvement of parents, teachers and administrators was embarked on, which laid the cultural foundations for the initiative. Subsequently, with the advice and involvement of an expert (architect) and the workers of the *Laboratorio Città dei Bambini* (Children's City Workshop), a number of actions were undertaken in the classrooms. First, the topic of the children's fear was tackled in group sessions. Then, together with the children, maps of the routes were made, spot checks done, itineraries arranged, and suggestions developed to change road patterns for forwarding to the municipal authorities. The whole route was monitored using an evaluative research methodology. At the end of this process, in the initial experimentation phase very broad success was achieved, with four times as many children going to school unaccompanied.

Finally, in the Italian context the community has also been given a role. Shopkeepers and older people, such as grandparents, for example, are invited to assist the children in case of need by creating a protective community network. The contribution of such citizens, however, has not yet been taken full advantage of. Often they are hardly recognised by the children themselves and seem to be scarcely visible, thus not significantly helping to encourage freedom and independence of movement on the part of children.

Given these difficulties, what is crucial to the success of this initiative is the method adopted, especially with regard to communication with the various social actors involved. Moving freely and independently cannot be encouraged simply by proposing support policies. Above all, it requires working on effective communication between the individuals involved. On the basis of experience, the most effective procedure seems to be:

● To acquire adequate, reliable knowledge on the situation prevailing at the start.
● To meet beforehand both with the children and with the various adults who might become involved (parents, teachers, administrators, police, shopkeepers, the elderly and the local community as a whole), stimulating their motivation to collaborate by using appropriate communication strategies.
● To involve teachers and children more deeply in working out routes from home to school, using participatory planning methods.
● To test out safe routes under the supervision of police and the community, the elderly in particular.
● To mobilise the community to demand increasingly effective measures to change traffic patterns and regulations, building on the success of the experimental stage.
● To consolidate the initiative, continuing both to monitor it and to raise awareness by participants.

The most sensitive aspect of encouraging children's freedom of movement is the relationship between encouraging independence and guaranteeing safety and protection, which largely depends on negotiation between the families and the teachers on the one hand, and the advocates of CFCs on the other. Here, what counts is the ability of the latter to communicate the importance of children's personal independence in the city to families and teachers.

It is worth emphasizing that, despite all these problems, where it has been possible to make an assessment (in particular, in Fano and Pesaro), the children's enthusiasm for the furtherance of their freedom of movement is extremely high and almost universal, both among those allowed to go to school on their own and those unable to do so.

3.5 Innovative services and facilities

Services and facilities too may be particularly useful in encouraging participation by children and adolescents and be regarded as innovative for this reason. A first example comes from the *ludoteche* (the game

libraries mentioned above), where the importance attached to entertainment also facilitates participation and interpersonal communication, even if sometimes the activities emphasise play alone. Interpersonal communication is often encouraged by facilitators, since the game library is regarded as the locus of sociality.

This approach is particularly clear in cases where the facilitators offer support to children who display shyness towards a new game or the other participants. In these cases, it may be observed that emotional support and refraining from being judgmental encourage child participation, which is not dependent on displaying particular skills. The emphasis is on the child as a person, and interpersonal emotional communication is a tool to stimulate children's participation and their involvement in the activity.

In the game libraries, where these forms of communication are practical, children's activities develop in more personalised and creative fashion. Respect and support for independence enable each child to participate at his or her own pace, without standardisation. Communication is only occasionally based on normative or cognitive expectations; much more often encouragement is given to creative and imaginative expression by the children, based on forms of interpersonal emotional communication.

Cognitive educational forms instead come about where workshop activities providing for involvement and learning occur. And where there are problems and conflicts, normative expectations may also be manifested in cases of provocation and challenge, inducing facilitators to insist on the need to respect the rules of behaviour.

In activities connected with the *ludobus* (the play bus mentioned above) the level of cognitive education is even lower, since it is not possible to create workshop situations in the streets as it is in the game libraries. Play situations are freer than those in the game libraries, favouring still more relaxed forms of interpersonal communication and play.

In some centres for adolescents aiming for total or partial self-management, free mingling among adolescents is openly encouraged, based on a combination of interpersonal communication and entertainment. This mingling is often undervalued or discouraged by the adults on the assumption that it is unimportant or even perhaps harmful, as it is sometimes maintained in relation to informal groups of adolescents meeting in squares, on the streets or in café. In these centres, adolescents are encouraged to mingle as a form of participation by them worthy of attention and respect. This encouragement favours interpersonal relations among peers and independent 'hanging out', considered fundamental for adolescents. A participatory approach rather than an organisational or educational one is more successful with adolescents.

The adolescents' expectations of the youth centres are concentrated more on interpersonal relations than on education, and on the importance of independence of expression in activities than on the learning of skills. Consequently, adolescents can easily tire of an educa-

tional centre and seek other, more independent and participatory forms of communication. Their view of the socialising centre is predominantly as a place to mingle, with a discreet, friendly facilitator, where the only fundamental rule is self-determination.

In the same direction, one particularly innovative method for encouraging such socializing is the use of itinerant vehicles, which ideally continue the action of the *ludobus* catering for children. These vehicles offer adolescents the opportunity to get together in informal groups. The encouragement of interpersonal communication arises both in the type of proposals made to the group (going on a trip, taking part in a musical programme, discussing interpersonal themes), and in the way the facilitator addresses the group (talking intimately about personal interests and problems, joking, having fun together), and finally in the ease of communication (familiar and based on mutual trust). The need of adolescent groups for self-determination is still clearer here, since the activity takes place in their everyday surroundings.

3.6 Children's views on their own participation

Taking children's views into consideration is fundamental in a Child Friendly City. Their own perception of how friendly is their city is key in assessing its strengths and weaknesses.

3.6.1 Strengths and weaknesses
The will to encourage participation and to improve living conditions in the city was appreciated and regarded as important by all the interviewed children who had taken part in participatory planning, children's municipal councils and initiatives furthering mobility. The importance of the children's own participation and the relevance of their contribution and relationship with the adults were noted by all. In assessing the activities the children brought out the following strong points:

- The pleasure and enjoyment gained from these activities, especially in relation to participatory planning and furthering mobility.
- The experience of working in groups, especially in participatory planning, as well as in the children's councils, which permitted communication with friends, carrying out projects and making choices together.
- The possibility of effectively influencing change in the city by deciding on and implementing projects.
- The possibility of showing their own level of competence and independence, often underestimated or ignored, to adults.
- The importance of making children's rights visible and known, and of influencing decision-making processes.

In particular, the children noted that the activities had enabled them to express their own ideas and bring them to fruition. They observed one notable difference in these activities compared with work normally done in school: there was greater attention to

their points of view and a more interesting and entertaining way of working, especially in participatory planning.

More generally, the relationship with facilitators from outside the school was defined as less formal and more spontaneous than with the teachers. In particular, the relationship with the experts in participatory planning was appreciated, since the children felt they were more interested in getting things done than in rating their performance, and were thus not obsessed with learning levels or respect for rules.

What stands out in these comments is how the children managed to grasp the intent of adults to give them a fundamental role in decision-making processes. They appreciated the opportunity to take part in them and to contribute to improving the city, displaying enthusiasm and passion. In fact, they asked to continue and increase such activities, inviting the municipal authorities to make greater commitments to improving living conditions in the community.

The weak points noted by the children concern the attitude of those adults, who did not show they believed in the children's ideas and capabilities. In fact, the criticisms from the children have to do with:

● Their relationship with the facilitators, who took on the role of 'teachers', creating mistrust and disappointment.

● Their relationship with the municipal authorities, who did not keep their promises to carry out the projects.

In various circumstances, the children saw the facilitators playing a guiding role which, although it was seen negatively, was often accepted and sometimes even noted as necessary by the more acquiescent children. On some occasions, though, the children clearly called this role into question.

The problem of relating with the adult world is particularly sensitive with regard to implementing the children's projects and ideas, a process which, as the adults themselves admit, is often limited and slow. Many children noted sizable delays in carrying out their projects and ideas and accused the adults, especially the local authorities, of not having listened to their proposals or not allowing them to express themselves.

In various instances the children openly reproached the adults, both facilitators and administrators, with having excluded them from decisions. Sometimes the children also insinuated that these had been in bad faith, in particular for having made use of the initiatives to carry out already existing plans. At times it was also noted that the adults did not regard them as sufficiently competent, considering them to be 'too small' and hence not capable of carrying out their proposals. Nonetheless, there was also widespread trust among the children in the promoters of the projects, whose intentions to implement the proposals they often judged to be genuine.

Alongside scepticism towards the adults, the children also showed self-criticism concerning the feasibility of the decisions and projects proposed by them, recognising that many of their requests were not realistic.

Their realising the weaknesses in the initiatives thus leads to increasing scepticism towards the adults and realism regarding their own proposals. All round, though, the children's assessments most frequently seem benevolent. This means that appreciation for the novelty of being able to participate in a new form of communication with their peers and with adults tends to overcome the children's disappointment at the lack of results or the failure to fulfil the objectives.

3.7 Overall effectiveness of the practices

Endeavouring to implement CFCs in Italy, mainly through the combination of Law 285/97 and the CSDBB Project, has brought innovation on both a small and a large scale to many towns and cities. From this endeavour have emerged both strong points and problematic aspects.

Local CFC promoters have almost always indicated participatory planning, the children's and young

people's town councils and encouraging mobility as the most significant actions. In the eyes of local authorities and planners too the significant initiatives are those combining environmental, cultural and institutional changes in the city, on the basis of encouraging children's participation. It is therefore important to verify the effectiveness of these practices. By 'effectiveness' what is meant is the capacity to attain the objectives with the available means. To identify parameters for evaluating effectiveness, a limited but meaningful number of variables have to be defined, intermediate between the CSDBB Project, which proposes a large number of criteria, and Law 285/97, which does not set any.

The parameters emerging from an analysis of local CFC experiences and thus proposed as relevant for evaluating overall effectiveness are as follows:

- Creation of an effective network, both intersectorally within the local government system and among the various partners in the community, for planning, coordinating and monitoring the activities (effectiveness of organisation).
- Effective promotion of participation by children, creating the conditions for explicit recognition of their rights (effectiveness of the process).
- Visible effects on the city and on the children's lives (effectiveness of results).
- Effective involvement of citizens in the initiatives through social awareness and promotion of methods and results (effectiveness of dissemination).
- Maintenance of coherence between objectives and outcomes (planning effectiveness).

3.7.1 Organisational effectiveness: coordination

In the Italian CFC experience, a number of networks have been developed connecting actors locally, nationally and internationally. Further, there has been a clear tendency towards interdisciplinary approaches. The creation of networks appears to be a significant indicator of adequate CFC planning. The networks have not, however, always been capable of sustaining effective practices, and it should be stressed that their proliferation should have not just had symbolic but also operational significance.

In this context, the role of experts and the third sector has proved highly significant in both planning and implementation phases. Nonetheless, the variety of cultural and professional resources deployed, has not always brought the hoped-for results. Divergent interpretations of aims and methods have sometimes jeopardise the capacity to meet objectives.

The great majority of local authorities, planners and other staff recognize the difficulties of developing an overall concept of a CFC. There have been problems of making citizens aware, as shown by indifference or resistance to the changes proposed, and resistance to networking among the various social actors involved in the planning process. All the same, this explanation is insufficient. The effectiveness of an organization does not simply derive from the creation of coordination and networks but from their actual effectiveness in supporting initiatives. This requires flexibility and rapidity in decision-making, and all features that can be guaranteed only by independence on the part of the networks from the originating bodies in deciding and managing the coordination of activities.

This sort of system should not be too cumbersome to avoid paralysing actions. It must take account of the commitments and timings but above all must be selective, involving only truly motivated participants able to contribute effectively to the goals through efficient communication.

3.7.2 Effectiveness of the process: encouraging participation

The effectiveness of the process is the most important parameter for evaluating the implementation of a CFC. The process derives from the quality of communication between adults and children, and its impact on the practice.

The most innovative method used in developing CFCs has been encouraging participation by children. Participatory initiatives have been generally seen favourably by local authorities because they offer high visibility and are appreciated by public opinion, especially when they lead to improvements in the city's image. The encouragement of participation employs a number of procedures that create the conditions for effectiveness (Lansdown, 2001):
- Dealing with issues of importance to the children;
- Carrying out the activities with an eye to real possibilities of changing the city;
- Creating a consolidated relationship with the children's daily experience;
- Sharing information with the children;
- Making sufficient resources and time available for the activities.

There are, however, specific aspects of child participation that have presented problems, in the implementation phase. Simple and realistic expectations, clarity of objectives, transparency and consistency in the facilitators' views, effectiveness in sharing decision-making processes, involvement of the children right from the initial stages, joint elaboration of methods, and continuity in the initiatives are not always guaranteed.

When initiatives are open to social participation, not just by the children but also parents, teachers or citizens in general, implementation processes become particularly complex. The method of encouraging social participation makes the CFC a complex process to manage.

In some cases, methodological problems have jeopardised implementation. It is therefore important to understand how the ideas of children, facilitated by the adults (experts, facilitators, parents, local authorities and so on), are translated into social practice. It is through the communication between adults and children and among adults working together that ideas are transformed into practice. Considering the quality of communication is thus a key to understand the effectiveness of CFC practices.

Communication is a creative process, through which the children independently convey their

expectations and observe problems. Young people can become sceptical, sometimes hostile if their expectations are betrayed by adults. In order to encourage child participation adults must refrain from imposing norms.

Summarising the results of these observations, one can pick out basic differences between the forms of communication employed in Italian CFCs. The orientation imposed on the activities has ranged from being primarily cognitive education (dominant expectation of learning) or normative (dominant expectation of affirmation of rules or values), or else encouraging participation, with the dominant expectation of self-expression by the children, based on their feelings (confirmation, reassurance and listening). Given this distinction, it was found that the most successful approach was to treat the children as independent persons, instead of bearers of standardised roles, combining education with child participation. When the personal approach dominates, communication is interpersonal; when instead the standardised roles approach dominates, communication becomes impersonal. Basically, three kinds of approach have been identified:

- Impersonal education (fairly infrequent);
- Education centred on the person: normative and cognitive (dominant) or else emotional (infrequent);
- Interpersonal promotion of participation: cognitive or emotional and, more rarely, normative (relatively infrequent, and present where the coordination of activities is entrusted to experts without educational motives.)

Where a promotional form of communication was achieved, children's and adolescents' participation was richer and better stimulated. Attention to the individual and to the emotional dimension of expectations combines to favour social participation, though always in the context of a visible role for the facilitators.

By contrast, educational forms of communication show various limitations, especially where normative expectations are dominant, discouraging independent participation by the children. And primarily cognitive education, aimed at encouraging learning, proves inadequate for encouraging motivated social participation, since it produces a hierarchical approach resembling the one followed at school.

The ambivalence of the relationship between furthering social participation and education is manifested in policy choices that reflect themselves a dichotomy. On the one hand, activities are primarily oriented and managed so as to encourage participation (participatory planning, councils of children and travelling units), and on the other, activities are primarily oriented and managed with an eye to cognitive and normative training (workshops, play and meeting centres, cultural training initiatives).

Sometimes, however, the same policy choice accompanies different technical approaches. To give two examples:
- A children's town council run by planning experts is generally oriented towards encouraging participation, while a young people's town council run in

schools by teachers is generally oriented towards normative education (education in the rules of democracy).
- A meeting centre based on group leaders is generally oriented towards normative education (education in good relations), while a meeting centre that emphasises free socialising is generally oriented towards encouraging participation.

These differences result in differing structures. In particular, there have been attempts to set up Child Friendly Cities:
- That are primarily oriented towards encouraging child participation in crucial areas while not abandoning cognitive and normative education;
- That seek to balance the encouragement of social participation with cognitive and normative education;
- That primarily offer cognitive and normative educational activities, though not completely abandoning activities designed to encourage social participation;
- That reveal difficulties in integrating the activities into an overall plan with a clear meaning.

An awareness of these differences is important for clarifying what cities intend to do and not to do concerning children's involvement in implementing a Child Friendly City.

3.7.3 Effectiveness of results: changing the city and children's lives

The most important result expected of an Italian CFC is to change the city to improve children's lives. Environmental policies and models of good governance are the essential outcomes, considered attainable by encouraging social participation.

The effectiveness of the results can thus be observed in relation to the environmental and institutional changes in the city. In other words, there are results if children's participation produces actual changes in the cities. And there is actual change if the children's plans are implemented and the children's choices become choices of the city. A prerequisite for change is the willingness by local authorities and public opinion to develop child-friendly environmental and institutional policies by taking steps to improve mobility, fight pollution, create coordination and forms of participation that effectively involve the actors concerned (children, municipal authorities, experts, the community). In Italy, new models of governance have been introduced. Coordination has been brought about within municipalities and local networks, bylaws have been changed, institutional bodies made up of children have been recognised, and children's projects have been developed and implemented.

To sum up, the local government has aimed to increasingly guarantee children's rights, officially sanctioned and recognised by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Generally, in the Italian experience there has been an attempt to treat the city as a public asset in its entirety, as a place for living in, for meeting and for moving about. The actions have not just affected the children's quality of life but have also represented a real added value for all citizens and a change to the city's quality in general. The endeavour

of creating a climate of coordination among initiatives, experts and organizations has been pursued keenly nigh universally.

Nonetheless, implementing this undertaking has met with resistance and problems, especially in securing understanding of the legitimacy of giving consideration to children's viewpoints in running and planning the city, and treating the streets and squares as places where children can move freely and independently. The institutional change has met widespread resistance, both from sectors of the municipal government and from the public.

In particular, there have been problems in developing and carrying out the children's projects. First of all, despite the principles affirmed, children have rarely been involved in the preliminary phase of designing the projects. The method of encouraging children's participation has been applied only later on, never prior to the project planning stage. Converting theories of governance into social practice is thus still prevalently a matter of negotiation exclusively among adults, who give little or no consideration to actions by children.

Second, implementation of choices made by children has almost always escaped the control of the children themselves and generally been delegated to adults. Participation by the children thus starts and finishes either at the stage of planning or of making relevant choices to present to the adults during the workshops and councils. Among the children, in some instances, there has been uncertainty, often mingled with hope, sometimes mistrust, regarding implementation. Where the children's councils have even a small budget available, a sense of greater capacity for decision is created, limited even so to a few simple matters. That may be yet more disappointing, however, unless followed by a larger, institutional-type investment in changing the city, and unless the children's potential to intervene is clear from the outset.

Third, one largely unsolved problem is how to deal effectively with adolescents. The difficulties in creating initiatives for and with adolescents are currently considerable. Action aimed at adolescents is based primarily on an educational approach to play and interpersonal aspects, and seeks to prevent asocial behaviour more than to further social participation. This is indicative of how adolescence is perceived and presented nowadays. This is not very promising with regard to the future involvement of adolescents into public social life.

A complementary parameter to assess changes in the city is to measure changes in children's lives. This is an ambivalent parameter, since the same outcome may be assessed differently. For instance, children's scepticism towards adults is a politically negative outcome, but also an interesting one at the socio-psychological level since it reflects a realistic and critical view of the world in the child. Conversely, realism developed by the children towards the feasibility of projects can be positive politically but is much less so at the socio-psychological level, since it leads to acquiescence and hence to less imaginative planning and less original contributions to change.

It would be particularly useful to study further the interaction between realism and independence in social participation by the children. Defining the relationship between utopia and reality is not simple. Sophisticated levels of negotiation have to be found, so as to keep that relationship alive without the traditional hierarchies between adults and children prevailing. Moreover, another question left open is whether it is useful and appropriate to prevent the scepticism towards the adult world developing among children and adolescents. In other words: is it always negative to disappoint expectations? By clarifying the significance given to children's views, one also clarifies the objective that one wishes to pursue in bringing about change.

3.7.4 Effectiveness in dissemination: the cultures of childhood and the city

One still undervalued yet particularly important aspect is that of dissemination: making all citizens aware of the processes and outcomes of the Child Friendly City.

Confining awareness raising to occasional events (city festivals, open town councils, meetings) is not enough to further dissemination of a CFC culture. Communication with the various categories of citizens (parents, teachers, local authorities, experts, the community) concerning CFC processes and results has the potential to produce significant effects on the success of the initiative. In particular, it may turn active minorities favourable to the CFC into majorities capable of initiating action.

Encouraging child participation is still a widely misunderstood practice, which has not been culturally accepted by society, in the same way that, for instance, the education of children has. One important obstacle lies in the fact that the results are often not visible and their interpretation ambivalent.

3.7.5 Effectiveness of planning

There is evidence of a tendency towards moving slowly from the preparation and study stage to concrete project implementation phase. This calls for accurate monitoring in all project cycle phases of the coherence between objectives and results. Monitoring all phases enables corrective measures to be deployed to ensure fulfilment of objectives.

At present in Italy, child-friendly changes in the overall municipal governance system often still take second place to individual interventions on children. The attention of public opinion and the municipal authorities, planners and others involved often centres on services for children as a sector rather than changes on the city as a multisectoral system.

Implementing effective social and environmental policies in Italian cities is made complicated primarily because the municipal administration and public opinion readily accept cultural change that involves children, but not the involvement of children to bring about overall change. In this way, Italian CFCs postpone change, trusting primarily in the moulding of future citizens rather than tapping the child as a

resource today. In this context, while no city has aimed primarily at changes in the environmental area, awareness of the need for cultural and institutional changes has led various cities to prefer cultural interventions. In consequence, sometimes for reasons of strategy and image, sometimes because of the effect of Law 285/97, but in general certainly because of a traditional culture of childhood, priority has gone to educational activities and hence a proliferation of training workshops.

It is therefore necessary to reflect on the similarities and differences among the various areas of change proposed for an Italian Child Friendly City (environmental, cultural and institutional). The linkages between these areas are numerous, and questions about priorities, and especially about the weight to assign to each change, remain open. Clearly it is important to create deeper interactions and more fruitful coordination among institutional, environmental and cultural changes, with an eye to the overall design of Child Friendly Cities, something that in Italy still remains largely implicit for many experts, municipal authorities and local planners. Further effort to define objectives and greater clarity in the relations between the political, scientific and technical spheres are required.

3.8 Guidelines for encouraging child participation

The following guidelines are derived from an analysis of the Italian initiatives to encourage children's participation in the context of Child Friendly Cities.

- Favour consistently the encouragement of participation over the imposition of a normative or cognitive educational approach.
- Clarify the roles of the adults and of the children and adolescents, so as to ensure that all are aware of what they are doing and the reasons why they are doing it.
- Coordinate effectively and efficiently the various adult roles involved: municipal authorities, facilitators, planners and experts, educators, parents.
- Use forms of communication that effectively elicit child participation, encouraging children and adolescents to act as independent individuals.
- Create a balance between idealism and realism, guaranteed by open negotiation among facilitators, experts, municipal authorities, technical staff and, as a priority, children and adolescents.
- Ensure coordinated formulation by the children and adults involved of the criteria for and possibilities of planning and implementation without jeopardising children's independence. This makes it possible to clarify together with the children the rules for effective participation and the degree of feasibility of their projects.

Moreover, with the aim of raising awareness and mobilising the community, the planning and management team has to

- Know the social context, the difficulties and resources it presents accurately, utilising existing information sources or producing original, scientifically based analyses.
- Create awareness by providing information and feedback to all, not just those directly involved.
- Rely on active stakeholders (children, parents, teachers, technical staff, experts) to act as pressure groups, to contribute to general public opinion and indirectly to put pressure on the more recalcitrant sectors of local government.
- Raise the awareness of the whole municipal government, and secure its convinced financial and political support, in particular secure an adequate budget for carrying out the initiatives decided upon.

3.9 Good practices and desirable changes

3.9.1 Good practices

The strong points that create the prerequisites for the future development of Child Friendly Cities in Italy are the following:

- Effective conversion of the concept of girls' and boys' citizenship into visible and widespread social practice.
- Wider spread encouragement of children's participation, with a significant involvement of experts motivated and equipped for cultural change.
- A new, more sophisticated view of protection, understood as support for the encouragement of child participation and hence as action that promotes well-being rather than alleviates suffering.
- A move from the idea of standardized welfare services for the community to that of services oriented towards individuals capable of participating independently.
- A new area planning policy and the trying out of new forms of good local governance, based on systems of local, national and international coordination.
- Environmental transformation begun in many cities, with some examples of successful innovations that point the way to further change.
- Political will on the part of the Italian government and consequent commitment to implementing the national programme.

3.9.2 Desirable changes

Some changes could help in reaching the objectives and avoiding sudden changes of direction and disappointment of the children's expectations, bringing positive effects on their motivation to participate.

- The centrality of the child in the vision of municipal authorities and planners ought to be more systematically and continuously integrated with the concept of the overall quality of life in the city.
- Interventions ought more systematically to adopt methodologies based on child participation to make children's and adolescents' roles more pub-

licly visible, substituting them increasingly for cognitive and normative educational methodologies and thus encouraging young people's motivation and interest. In particular, one should avoid the frustration for children and adolescents of seeing their own independent participation denied *de facto*, because of a lack of due consideration for their proposals.

- The children's and adolescents' views ought always to be taken into account at all stages of the project, not just at the stages of preparation and implementation. It would be desirable for children to be involved in monitoring and evaluating processes. The children ought to be clear as to the agenda in which they are partners with the adults, reaching a consensus on the 'rules of the game' for building a Child Friendly City and the roles associated with them.

- To facilitate these processes, training in methodologies for encouraging child and social participation ought to be more coordinated, widespread and systematic. More adequate training of municipal authorities, technical staff and facilitators might much improve the level of internal coherence between objectives and practices.

- Local authorities ought increasingly to perceive the city as an integrated system to create stable social policies based on a wider social consensus and participation.

- Once such foundations are established, the proportion of children and adolescents involved in the most innovative actions (participatory planning, child councils, encouraging mobility) should be increased; these initiatives should also, at least partly, replace more traditional ones, the relevance of which now seems less in the Child Friendly City context.

- Coordination among local authorities, experts and other stakeholders ought to be improved, so as to use time and resources more efficiently and to overcome cultural resistance in various sectors of the local government.

- Greater commitment ought to go to action in the social and environmental areas, with explicit reference to the CSDBB Project. It should not be forgotten that so far only a minority of Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys initiatives have secured recognition.

- Strategies to inform and motivate public opinion ought to be more incisive to avoid the risk of projects remaining restricted to a cultural and political elite.

- Last but not least, preventing social exclusion ought to be placed centrally in a CFC agenda.

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