Rethinking spaces through actions for

KIDS

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Functional areas that work, meaning that they are sustainable, inclusive, competitive, and resilient, have integrated urban development strategies that prioritise the needs of the individuals and the environment. Jan Gehl showed us that "cities for people" are a must if we want to improve quality of life and reclaim spaces from cars. Out of all categories of city dwellers, the child is the only one that has needs that answer basic requirements for all. Putting children at the centre of the development agenda of functional areas and each neighbourhood enables the construction of sustainable places for everyone and invites and protects the nature.

To rethink spaces through actions for kids

implies undertaking urban regeneration projects that are in line with the functional area's development strategy and adhere to sustainability principles. The child-friendly concept goes beyond traditional playgrounds and serves as a measure to enhance the quality of life for residents of all ages. This involves transforming underutilised or poorly maintained areas into liveable, sustainable, and economically viable spaces by prioritising upgrades to essential infrastructure, creating attractive buildings, and designing public spaces that are child friendly. Additionally, it also involves transforming children into active citizens through consultations and designing and planning with a child's perspective in mind. The following sections highlight the importance of pilot projects at the neighbourhood level and scaling up successful initiatives at the functional area level. Additionally, this guide covers other essential aspects such as education, the role of the private sector, and addressing the needs of parents. It is divided into six chapters: How (how to enable long-term transformation with kids as a priority), Play (how to plan public spaces by going beyond the existing playgrounds), Move (how to create child-friendly routes and incorporate vertical mobility), Learn (how could the education system become more dynamic and inclusive by using the city as a living laboratory), Grow (how to invest in families for a resilient local economy by fostering the community inside neighbourhoods) and Engage (how to succeed in actively engaging children in planning and designing their urban childhood).

The aim of this guide is to emphasise the importance of prioritising children in the development agenda and how this can lead to the achievement of multiple objectives, while also providing an overview of various projects and approaches from around the world.
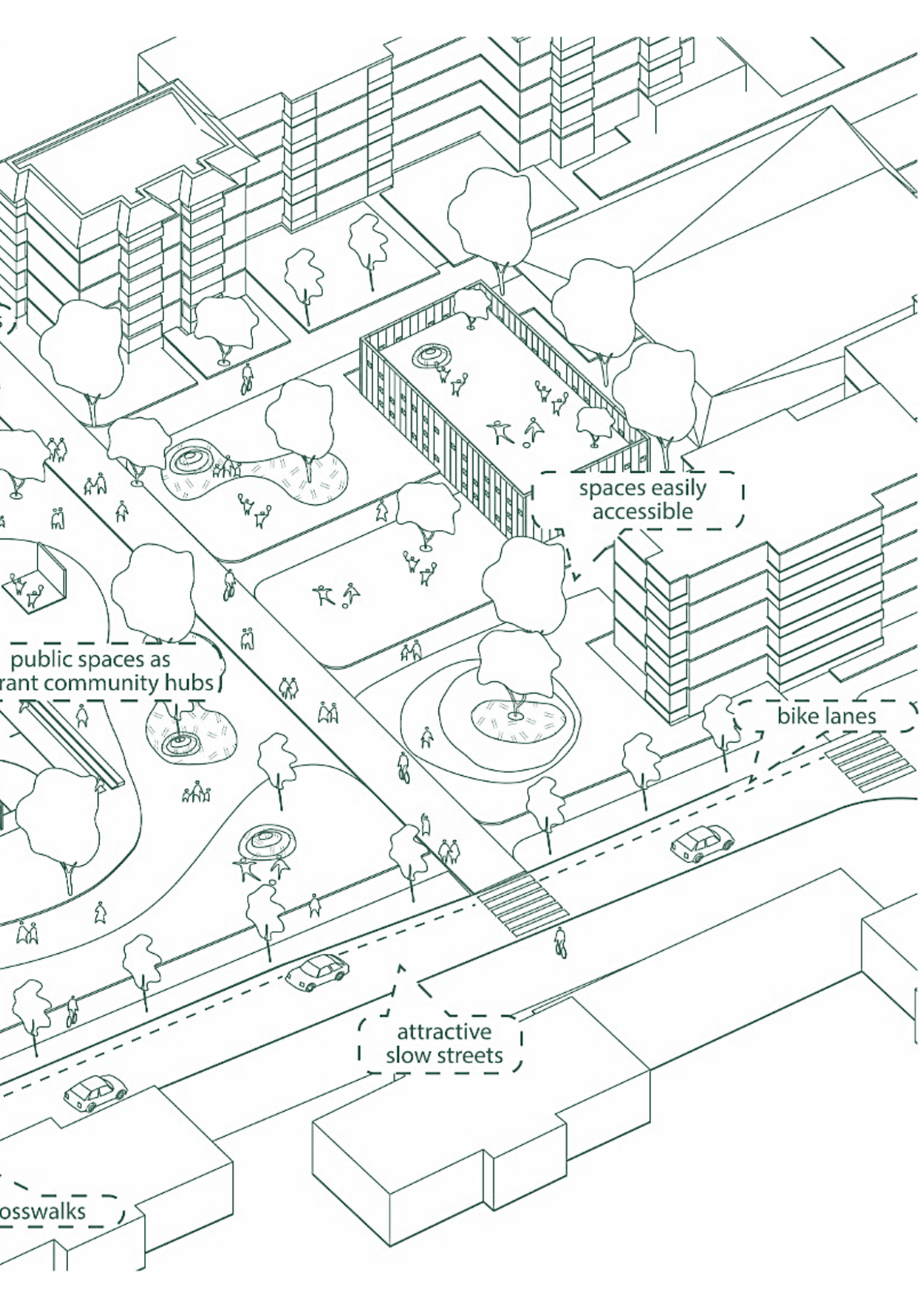
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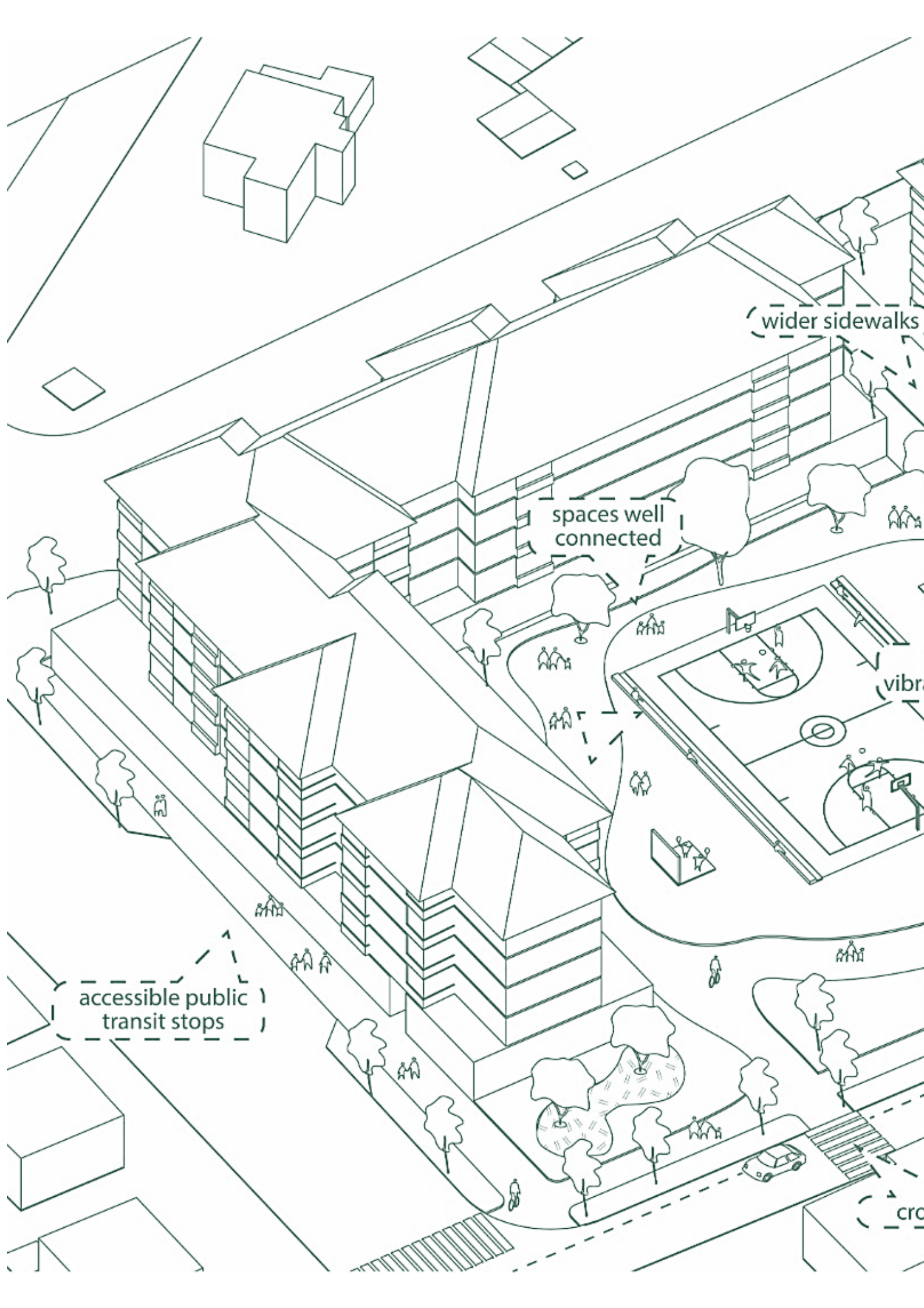
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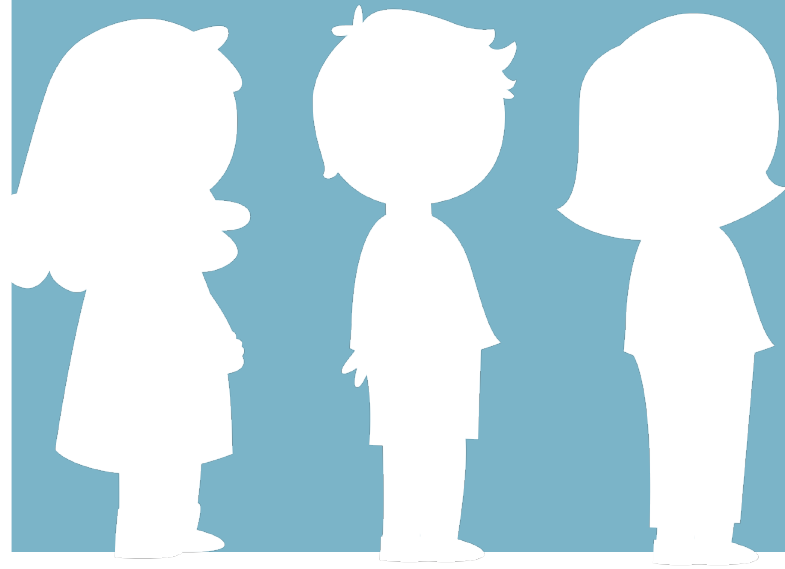transit stops

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HOW

Enabling transformation

Functional areas, cities, and neighbourhoods are constantly undergoing a process of transformation and improvement to prepare for various challenges such as climate change, demographic crisis, or digitalization.

Incorporating a child-friendly approach into the agenda of territorial development can unite many of the goals set for the future of these places, including health and well-being, sustainability, resilience, and safety. This starts by establishing a strategic vision and changing the perspective from "what can we provide for children as they develop" to "**HOW CAN WE EMPOWER CHILDREN AS NEW AGENTS OF CHANGE AND ACTIVE CITIZENS**". The principle of the new agents of change should emphasise the empowerment of children by enabling them to have a voice and educating them on how to identify and understand their needs, thus positioning them as active citizens. Therefore, children, young adults, parents, grandparents, and caregivers must be involved and consulted regarding the future of their neighbourhood, city, or functional area.

Integrated strategies at the functional area level are mandatory because they involve multiple stakeholders and manage to put everything in perspective so every aspect will be covered and carefully planned. Moreover, if talking about urban regeneration initiatives, there is a need to develop place-making (such as developing pedestrian-friendly areas, designing public parks and plazas, and building cultural and recreational facilities that can serve as community hubs) and urban design strategies (designing buildings, streetscapes, and public spaces to improve their visual appeal and practicality), among other elements. All these instruments must be coordinated by the concept of sustainable development, which includes ecological, social, and economic aspects as its three pillars. However, long-term transformation can also be enabled through simple and specific interventions that are supporting the strategic view. For example, the tactical urbanism concept uses small projects that bring rapid change and gain public support. These practices provide a glimpse into the future by making things happen, improving ideas instantly, and promoting long-term solutions to residents.

Seeing children as agents of change and active citizens is the first step in shaping the future of the neighbourhood, city, and functional area. Starting with strategic thinking and a vision and moving forward to reshaping old or building new neighbourhoods is how to effectively bring change to an entire area.

Once a strategic vision is established, the next step is to identify specific neighbourhoods or areas that would benefit from revitalization or redevelopment efforts. This could involve building new infrastructure, improving public transportation options, enhancing public spaces, or investing in new businesses and amenities. By concentrating on the regeneration of neighbourhoods initially and gradually broadening the scope, it is possible to establish a unified network of lively and interlinked neighbourhoods that can prosper together. When developing a pilot project, it is crucial to consider an important indicator - whether it is child-friendly, in addition to incorporating the principles of the 15-minute city and net-zero neighbourhood.

A child's infrastructure implies a safe environment that invites leisure, physical activity, play, and cultural activities in the urban fabric, while encouraging social engagement, love for nature, and active mobility. It enables independent mobility for all (including for children), offers areas for learning, and buildings that incorporate needs such as stroller storage, places around buildings that invite people to stay, play, and talk, as well as economic opportunities and top healthcare facilities and nurseries.

The atmosphere of a neighbourhood is crucial for all its inhabitants. People prefer to live in safe, low-traffic, green, and friendly neighbourhoods with clean and creative public spaces. For example, the design and elements

of public spaces should prioritise accessibility, creativity, interactivity, playfulness, and urban greenery. This is achieved through the inclusion of colourful art, natural wilderness, and adventurous features, creating a stronger connection with nature, and facilitating interactions between people of all ages. Additionally, efforts such as cleaning and improving sidewalk accessibility to accommodate strollers can also benefit older individuals and people with disabilities. Furthermore, residents can be motivated to contribute to the improvement of their community's public areas by providing dedicated funds, such as budgets for procuring urban furniture that fosters community engagement and encourages people to spend time outdoors.

To improv health and well-being, it is crucial that residents have access to green areas within walking distance at the neighbourhood level. This can be accomplished through a collaborative effort between the governing body, citizens, and private businesses. One approach could be to provide support and resources, such as budget allocation or materials, to encourage inhabitants to cultivate private gardens or green roofs. Additionally, public spaces should incorporate elements that promote interaction with nature, such as logs, climbing nets, and willow tunnels, that encourage play, sitting, and socialising.

To preserve the natural environment and coexist with nature, it is imperative to integrate greenery into a variety of spaces, such as cycle paths and buildings, and expand green spaces. Educating people on the importance of environmental preservation is also crucial. Encouraging alternative modes of transportation, promoting an active lifestyle, designing urban forests as destinations, and other similar initiatives can further contribute to achieving these objectives.

To further build on these points, it is vital to recognize streets as public spaces that should be reclaimed by individuals of all ages. The objective should be to fill streets with people and greenery, while minimising the number of cars. In addition to creating open streets for people, another method to accomplish this is to establish slow streets at the neighbourhood level and transform them into a network of routes. Moreover, it is essential to connect pedestrian-friendly areas, cycling infrastructure, and public transportation at the functional area level, constructing a comprehensive network of routes that extends to nearby areas with a diverse range of amenities and services. This network must be developed with the safety of children in mind, ensuring that they can navigate the area without any risks.

Another important action towards creating child-friendly neighbourhoods is to also build affordable housing and require developers to select housing sites near schools, day-care centres, and grocery stores, with safe walking routes and access to public transport. This can aid in building necessary amenities within walking distance. Local authorities should also mandate developers of newly built houses to construct community facilities or designate sites for schools if none exist. Additionally, requiring developers to allocate a minimum amount of space for larger apartments (such as three or two bedrooms) can make them more family-friendly and comparable to houses in terms of quality.

Finally, mixed usage of publicly owned buildings, such as libraries and schools, should be encouraged. Repurposing or making buildings flexible in terms of functionalities ensures that these spaces are vibrant and fully utilised, inviting people to use them according to their needs. For example, the implementation of a 24-hour school policy promotes the repurposing of schools as community centres, enabling community connection and interaction.

PILOT NEIGHBOURHOOD FOR ALL

It is generally accepted that liveable places put people at the centre and create an environment where residents feel safe, have basic services in proximity (food, healthcare, education, and leisure), and can have an active and social life. Children and their parents need accessible housing, healthcare facilities, schools and nurseries, a thriving local economy, safety, living and creative spaces where they can relax and have a good time, and multiple options in terms of mobility, and nature. However, these are basic needs that offer increased quality of life, they represent everyone's needs and they should be available. Planning such neighbourhoods does not imply providing what only a city centre can offer - its history and vitality, but it does mean responding to basic needs to reduce commuting for healthcare services or top education.

The "neighbourhood for all" should be:

Overall, the "neighbourhood for all" is based on the "15-minute city concept" but it is planned by putting children in the centre to respond to human needs and protect the environment. Hence, the framework used here has its roots in the work of specialists such as Jane Jacobs, Jah Gehl, Carlos Moreno, Christopher Alexander and so many others that focus on developing cities for people, and on studies and principles offered by initiatives such as 8 80 cities, Urban 95, Child-friendly initiative, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, NACTO and others that focus on regaining spaces for urban childhoods.

First, to build a neighbourhood for all, the following questions can be used as guiding directions for every activity:

Is it safe for children to walk around independently inside the neighbourhood?

Do the outdoors foster creativity and learning, provide experiences, and encourage play?

Is it offering basic needs such as healthcare, education, a clean and safe environment, and an engaged community?

Are there greenery elements and open spaces close to every building for children to meet, learn, and play?

Are there cultural and creative activities that children and residents could enjoy?

Are there markets residents can easily reach?

Second, residents should be actively involved in the design and implementation processes to reshape their neighbourhood.
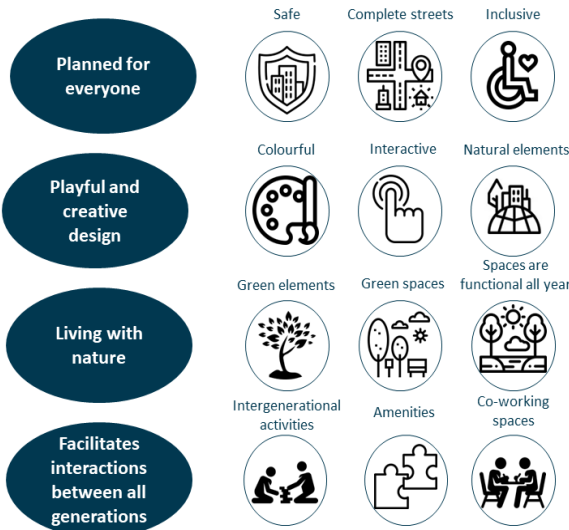
PLAY

Going beyond playgrounds

PUBLIC SPACES: GOING BEYOND PLAYGROUNDS

When thinking about public spaces for children, the first thing that comes to mind is often playgrounds. However, creating public spaces that are truly accessible and inclusive for all residents requires going beyond traditional playgrounds. From streets to parks to squares, every public space must be considered a destination, not just a transit spot. This approach ensures that public spaces are friendly and accessible to all residents, not just those with children.

Some important qualities for public spaces:

To create public spaces that meet the needs of children and adults alike, it is essential to focus on creativity, interactivity, playfulness, and urban greenery. These elements can be incorporated through the use of colour, art, wilderness, and adventure, which increase connections with nature and facilitate interactions between all generations.

Designing and implementing inclusive public spaces can help create healthier and more liveable urban environments for people of all ages. For instance, Singapore has built "Three-Generation" play spaces that provide activities for children, adults, and elders, along with amenities and leisure opportunities.

Public spaces designed with children's needs in mind should be more than just destinations for play or transit areas; they can become central to residents' daily lives. They can promote spontaneous social interaction, community engagement, and a sense of safety. Since these spaces are planned at a human scale, considering the needs of children and families, they can ignite social activities that enable natural surveillance into the community. This concept, known as "eyes on the street," was created by urban planner Jane Jacobs in her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities."

To enhance the liveability of neighbourhoods, it is crucial to incorporate green and leisure elements into public spaces. Ensuring accessibility for strollers and providing storage for them can facilitate the use of these spaces by parents and caregivers. It is also essential to create communal spaces that can be shared by residents. Transforming parking spots into gardens or spaces for intergenerational leisure and play activity can further enhance the appeal and functionality of public spaces.

Traffic interventions can also play a role in improving the usability of public spaces. Prioritizing pedestrians through measures such as slow streets can help create safer and more inclusive environments. Public spaces that serve multiple purposes can also be beneficial. Additionally, they must be accessible to all individuals, no matter the age, physical or physical disability. Thus, accessibility of both public and private places needs to be a top priority for local authorities and private developers.

By taking these actions, public spaces can become more welcoming and inclusive, enhancing the quality of life for urban residents. Therefore, rethinking public spaces for children means creating destinations that are accessible and friendly to all, fostering social interaction and community engagement.

Two neighbourhoods in Copenhagen, Inner City and Vesterbro, focused on improving air for its residents, especially for children, one of the most vulnerable groups to poor air quality. The task of the urban design company Gehl was to improve air quality through urban design. As such, the project analysed how children and caregivers spend their day in the two neighbourhoods and established their experiences. Based on all the data they gathered, the 'The Cleaner Air Network' project was created. The solution behind this is to reduce exposure in spaces with poor air quality and increase presence in those that offer greater air quality and are less frequented by children. The first step was to establish the location that dwellers frequent or not every day and then introduce "reduce and invite urban design interventions". Some of the proposed interventions to reduce exposure are "removal of on-street parking, the introduction of a green buffer, design solutions to intersections, pavement design, public seating, on the street 'children' related facilities (integrated play provisions, additional space, or parking areas for buggies) and traffic calming measures". To invite children to spend more time on areas that offer better air quality, the company recommended "widening sidewalks, ensuring separated bike lanes that enable 'side by side' riding, introducing green buffers, ensuring public seating is available and providing physical signage that indicates the street as a cleaner air route".

The former military hospital in Antwerp was transformed into an inclusive, liveable, and modern residential area for families. Through a public-private partnership, this project was developed by addressing children's needs, hence, making the space a car-free area. Cars can be parked underground or in public parking spaces that are outside the residential area, which leaves room for children to meet, play, and interact. This space also creates opportunities for grown-ups to interact and enjoy each other's company while watching children play. Overall, the project encompasses housing units, a shared rooftop garden, co-working spaces, and a neighbourhood cafe. Its position in the city centre offers access to multiple services and responds to multiple needs, however, basic spaces such as gardens and communal spaces are offered, and people are prioritised.

Tirana's symbol of traditional urban life, the farmers market Pazari i Ri - the New Bazaar, was transformed into a valuable destination for residents and tourists. Cooperation between the public and private sectors turned an unappealing area into a lively place where families, teenagers, and adults from the city and beyond could enjoy themselves during the day and at night. The project foresaw elements such as urban furniture and art to attract people to coffeehouses, restaurants, and stores placed in the respective area.

Besides offering leisure and play activities, the new spaces attracted other businesses into the area and created a new entity - the Tourism Improvement District - formed out of both public and private representatives. All in all, its role is to manage and further attract businesses and people to the bazaar, hence, bringing economic benefits.

TRANSFORMING TRANSIT SPOTS INTO A DESTINATION FOR ALL

It is important to create vibrant and inclusive public spaces that go beyond mere transit spots. While well-planned transportation systems are crucial for improving the quality of

life, transit spots often fall short of providing spaces that are inviting and engaging for residents.

Transit spots are typically associated with the hurried rush of people commuting to work or running errands, leading to a lack of community engagement and social cohesion. To address this issue, these spaces need to transform into destinations that encourage people to linger and interact with their surroundings. This can be achieved by incorporating urban furniture, green spaces, cafes, co-working spaces, and cultural attractions, among other amenities.

The goal is to create neighbourhoods that offer a variety of services and opportunities, meeting the diverse needs and preferences of the residents. By doing so, it can prevent the concentration of traffic and improve overall quality of life. The following examples provide practical guidance for transforming transit spots into vibrant and inclusive destinations for all, highlighting the importance of community involvement and the benefits of creating spaces that promote social cohesion.

Revolutionizing urban living: Barcelona's Poblenou Superblock

The "Poblenou Superblock" is an area in Barcelona of four hundred square metres dedicated to people and promotes leisure, culture, and participation. Cars have access to all the buildings in the zone, but they must transit it at a slow speed.

Two steps were taken to make such an area: tactical urbanism and permanent projects. The provisional solutions offered a more rapid and cheaper project that also included public participation, which created play areas, areas for physical and leisure activities or provisional markets. This trial phase was followed by consolidating actions to make the initiatives permanent.

The superblock idea is based on the need to improve the quality of life and the availability of vibrant public spaces. Hence, the system of superblocks is formed out of the following

elements: only vehicles owned by residents are allowed, infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport is prioritised, access is also offered to vehicles that offer public services and are used for emergencies and the public spaces between building are inviting people to stay, play, interact, and create.

Award-Winning Transformation: Tirana's Skanderbeg Square

In 2018 the Centre of Contemporary Culture was awarded the European Prize for Urban Public Space for the Skanderbeg Square renovation project. The story of this space is the ultimate exercise about how to give back streets to people. After the project was finalised, the area turned from being the largest traffic circle in south-eastern Europe into a green and vivid public space for pedestrians in the centre of the city.

Pedestrianization faced challenges in Tirana as well as it does in all places, however, the local authority relied on their newly acquired power - the children of Tirana.

Through the building excitement and euphoria derived from the projects implemented earlier (such as the new parks, playgrounds, and schools), the city made their youngest dwellers its agents of change. Repeatedly car-free days that invited children to enjoy this new space open for people made adults put aside their resistance to change and accept to turn and remodel it into a public space for people.

The reclaimed space now has an esplanade which is surrounded by multiple gardens (inserted green spaces), playable spaces, water elements, urban furniture and so forth, and it hosts various activities from evening concerts to occasional markets for local farmers.

From transit zone to destination: the transformation of Market Street in San Francisco

"What should a street be used for? For kids or cars?" This is the question that helped redesign

Market Street in San Francisco - a transit zone. The process was realised through Gehl company's collaboration with the City of San Francisco and the answer was found by organising the San Francisco Prototyping Festival in 2015. Hence, the space was not transformed into a transportation corridor, a shopping district, or a business district, but into a destination for multiple generations.

According to Gehl's website, it hosted elements such as a climbing wall, creative twirling seating, an exercise loop, a habitat for wildlife, a mobile selfie booth, a disaster preparedness unit, a ping-pong tournament, interactive fountains, or as they called it 'Living Innovation Zones'.

Better Market Street (the strategy's name) was built around an innovative idea to redesign corridors - zone areas for people the same way it has been zoned for cars, buses, or bicycles to give life to the area. And it did, it turned it into a place for play, relaxation, socialisation, and much more.

Putting children first: Bogotá's innovative approach to urban planning

The Bernard Van Leer Foundation partnered through the Urban95 initiative with Bogotá and Bloomberg Associates to implement a pilot project in Bogotá.

This collaboration created and implemented the 'children's priority zone' concept at the neighbourhood level, which envisaged short-term initiatives that will transform into long-term solutions.

In essence, the children's priority zone concept implies identifying spaces important for children (such as playgrounds) and establishing its surroundings and what are the challenges.

Afterwards, the community was gathered and engaged through events that had as purpose to identify and propose solutions for the respective space, for example, planning safer routes for children or revitalisation of unused and dangerous spaces.

LIVING WITH NATURE: THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEN SPACES

As cities continue to grow, the need for green spaces becomes increasingly crucial. Green spaces provide a range of benefits, from improving air quality to promoting physical and mental health and creating an engaged community. However, despite their benefits, these spaces are often overlooked in urban planning due to the perception that they do not generate profits.

Fortunately, research has shown that green spaces increase property values and enhance the overall quality of life for residents. By integrating green spaces at the neighbourhood, city, and function area levels, we can invite people outside and create opportunities for learning, play, and social interaction. Moreover, when children are outdoors, parents and caregivers are more likely to be with them, leading to a greater appreciation and respect for nature.

Green spaces not only promote healthy and happy children, but they also teach the next generation of adults to be responsible and care about the environment. In this chapter, we will explore the importance of integrating green spaces in the urban fabric, the benefits they bring to children, and actionable steps we can take to create more green spaces in our communities.

Orbital Forest: a sustainable solution for a greener and healthier Tirana

The Orbital Forest is a solution to limit urban sprawl (one of the challenges of urban childhoods), beautify and sync people with nature, improve air quality, and combat heat island effects by creating a greenbelt around the city. Overall, the project proposes a mix of forests, shrubland, agricultural land and recreational areas, which will benefit the next generations.

Tirana's Green City Action Plan, designed with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's help, positions the Orbital Forest as a crucial investment to develop a green and healthy city designed for people because it provides recreational spaces, and restores degraded landscapes and habitats.

Moreover, the design company ARUP, which supported Tirana in building the economic and technical case for the Tirana Orbital Forest, lists the following improvements brought by the forest: "improved resilience to floods, human health benefits from improved air quality to increased local economic activity and tax revenues stimulated by the provision of new recreational facilities."

Transforming Tirana: from neglect to success with Grand Park and Playgrounds

Grand Park, also known as the central park of Tirana, was selected by the local authority to be put under redevelopment due to poor management and deterioration over time. A masterplan was created, which also incorporated the main playground of the city.

Even though it raised concerns and the implementation process moved slowly, after its opening it became instantly popular and a flagship project of the municipality. In addition, cars were banned, a bicycle path around the lake was built and a dog park was constructed.

After the main playground's success, the municipality started to renovate playgrounds and create new ones. The new playgrounds were built in different neighbourhoods on public spaces used informally as parking spots. The programme was titled Play Tirana and was also supported by the private sector.

These spaces are no regular playgrounds, they are part of the urban fabric and have a multigenerational and inclusive design.

Greening Cluj-Napoca: a comprehensive program to transform the city

Prior to the pandemic, the local authorities of Cluj-Napoca initiated a comprehensive green infrastructure development program called "Green Cluj." The project aims to develop 200 hectares of green areas across the city and a part of the metropolitan region, with the aim of improving carbon sequestration, urban renewal, biodiversity conservation, and promoting healthy activities.

The Green Cluj Program not only repurposes public spaces for green areas but also involves the acquisition of private land, made possible by changes in national legislation. For example, this initiative includes the replacement of gas stations to create more green space, a first at the national level. The program also aims to enhance existing parks with smart urban furniture, underground waste platforms, and other technological innovations. Planting over 100,000 mature trees in public areas by 2030 is another component of the program. The initiative has already completed some green areas with EU funding and will continue to do so. Plans involve creating a green belt around the city and ecological corridors to connect the natural protected areas in proximity.

Making a place for people: the Dundonald Park in Ottawa

The project "Make a Place for People: Dundonald Park" was developed in Ottawa by 8 80 Cities, together with the Centertown Community Health Centre. Its focus was the park's development strategy through consultations and engagement of the local community, including children and seniors. Residents were gathered by organising several fun and playful activities such as hula-hooping, yoyoing, and tai chi.

This offered a great opportunity for people of all ages to interact, play, and reflect on how the park could better serve them.

## The impact of the Rachel de Queiroz Park on local businesses in Fortaleza

The Parque Rachel de Queiroz project in Fortaleza will be the city's second-largest park, covering 10 km in length and approximately 203 hectares. Due to its vast size, the park is divided into 19 sections, with six already completed.

The design concept follows that of a linear park, using existing roads to connect the green areas that cut through eight neighbourhoods in the west part of the city.

For example, the first stage of the park involves various physical activities for early morning regulars such as walking, running, outdoor gym, biking, soccer, and volleyball on the shores of nine interconnected lagoons known as the wetlands, while the sixth section has transformed a previously degraded area.

To fully comprehend the project's impact, it's crucial to emphasise that the western part of Fortaleza has seen significant population expansion in recent times, and while it has vast open spaces, it lacked decent public areas until the Parque Rachel de Queiroz was established. These factors led to the swift adoption of the park by the local community, resulting in a surge in both formal and informal businesses in the area.

MOVE
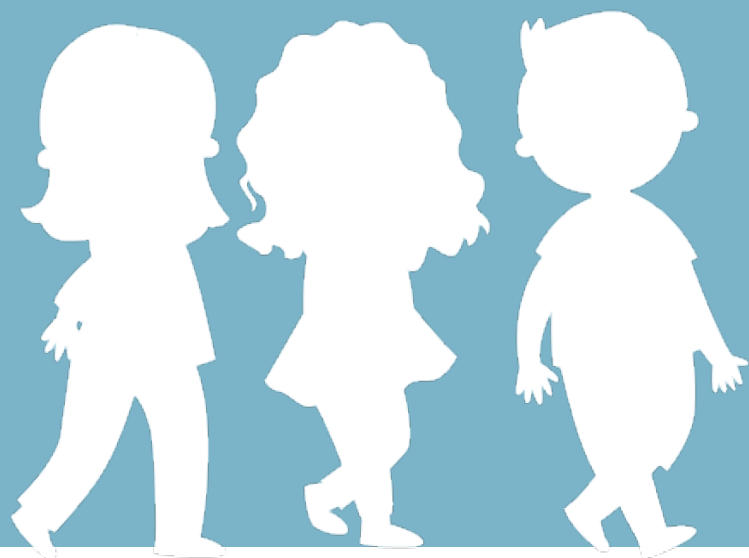
Creating friendly routes

SAFE URBAN ROUTES FRIENDLY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Creating safe urban routes friendly for children is crucial for building healthy, sustainable, and equitable cities. When children feel safe and comfortable walking, cycling, or using public transportation, they are more likely to engage in physical activity, develop independence, and gain a sense of belonging in their communities.

By designing and maintaining urban routes that prioritize the needs of children and their families, cities can create more inclusive and welcoming public spaces that foster social connections and community cohesion. This approach can also help address some of the negative effects of car-centric urban development, such as air pollution, traffic congestion, and physical inactivity.

Creating safe urban routes friendly for children involves designing infrastructure that is appropriate for the needs and abilities of children, such as protected bike lanes, safe crossings, incorporated access ramps, minimal steps, elimination of potentially hazardous surfaces, and low-speed zones around schools and parks. It also involves ensuring that public transportation systems are accessible and easy to use, with features like stroller spaces and child-friendly amenities.

By creating urban routes that are friendly to children and families, it can improve the quality of life for everyone in the community.

These routes not only provide safe transportation options but also offer opportunities for children to explore, learn, and interact with their environment. They can help create a sense of community, making urban spaces more liveable and engaging for everyone.

Healthy streets, healthy people: London's plan to prioritize walking, cycling and public transport

The Healthy Streets for London plan focus on prioritising walking, cycling, and public transport to create a healthy city. Its 10 indicators incorporate spaces for all ages (including children and their caregivers) to walk, bicycle, sit, relax, feel safe, use public transport, and breathe clean air. By acknowledging that these spaces belong to all residents and working to give them back to people, the city aims at improving the experience of growing up, living, and working in London.

An important part in the document is the recognition of the negative impact a city developed for cars has on children (such as obesity or breathing poor air quality) and foresees transforming spaces into destinations suitable for them as well by incorporating physical and leisure activities and ensuring that independent travel by foot, bicycle or public transport is possible.

Pedalling towards a greener London: the city's ambitious plan to make cycling accessible to everyone

According to Transport for London, cycleways in London are well-designed and accessible routes for cyclists of all levels. They connect communities, businesses, and attractions throughout the city and feature clear signage and road markings for safe and confident riding.

The Cycling action plan of London outlines the steps needed to achieve the goals of the Mayor's Transport Strategy, aiming to make cycling in London appealing and accessible to everyone regardless of age, gender, or ability. The plan has three main components to address the barriers that prevent people from cycling in the city: "Streets that enable cycling (focuses on infrastructure), Making it easy to get around by cycle (focuses on accessibility and convenience to use bicycles as means of

transport), and Promoting cycling for all Londoners (focusing on making people use bicycles). Moreover, in terms of infrastructure, London has, among other initiatives, a programme at the neighbourhood level through which it provides funding opportunities for boroughs to develop long-term schemes that promote walking, cycling, and the use of public transport. Its objective is to support the goals of the Mayor's Transport Strategy by financing local projects that decrease car trips and enhance neighbourhoods for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transportation users.

Furthermore, according to the central government, the second national strategy for cycling and walking (Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy) envisions a future where cycling and walking are the preferred options for shorter journeys or as part of longer ones by 2040. To increase walking and double cycling, the revised set of objectives also emphasise boosting the percentage of children between ages 5 to 10 who regularly walk to school, contributing to a healthier lifestyle for future generations.

Pedal to progress: Barcelona's proposed Bus Rapid Transit and Bicipista system for sustainable mobility

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area has proposed in 2016 the implementation of a Bus Rapid Transit system and a rapid bike lane, called Bicipista, on the C31 highway between Montgat, Badalona, and Sant Adrià de Besòs. The aim of the project is to provide a sustainable transportation option and improve the integration of the highway into its urban environment. The proposed system would have nine stops, allowing for both rapid and local service, while the Bicipista would be a two-lane bike path that meets Eurovelo standards for long-distance cycling.

This project could improve mobility for families and residents within the metropolitan area by providing a faster and more sustainable mode of transportation. The system could offer a rapid and reliable transit option, while the Bicipista could encourage cycling as an alternative means of transportation. This could lead to reduced congestion and emissions, and ultimately result in a more efficient and environmentally friendly transportation system for the metropolitan area.

Closing streets: the School Streets project promotes safe and active school travel in Toronto

The School Streets project, piloted in the Greater Toronto Area with the help of 8 80 Cities and Green Communities Canada, aims to promote active school travel by closing streets near schools to ensure safety when children, caregivers, and teachers walk to and from school. This approach has many benefits, such as improved air quality, reduced traffic congestion, and increased safety. The first pilot program in Markham saw very few vehicles dropping off students outside of the barricade, and many parents and residents expressed their happiness seeing the regularly congested road empty and safer for people walking and cycling.

The next project in Mississauga, part of the city's Vision Zero Action Plan, involved closing roads using lightweight plastic barricades and road-closed signs, encouraging active travel for students. The program also included weekly themes on road safety, health and wellness, and the environment, which students enjoyed, and volunteers ensured the safe entry of authorised vehicles and created a fun and secure environment outside the two schools.

The Amsterdam Forest: a green lung and model for sustainable urban living

The Amsterdam Forest is a public space that enhances the liveability of the entire Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. Serving as a "green lung," the park's ample size and diverse ecology provides a valuable location for the city to achieve its goals related to sustainability, arts, culture, and sports. Through collaboration with partners, universities, and scientific institutions, the Amsterdam Forest is actively creating a model for the modern urban forest.

It is essential for the Amsterdam Forest to maintain relationships with other cities due to its increasingly central location in the metropolitan area. For many years, Amsterdam and Amstelveen have been working together to maintain the Forest, which is mostly located within the boundaries of Amstelveen. The park is surrounded by several important areas such as the Schiphol Airport, the Sports Axis, marinas, the Zuidas business district, and new residential areas. Collaboration at the metropolitan level yields significant benefits, and ecological areas were recently established as part of the Green Agenda. These routes help connect green spaces and prevent the fragmentation and isolation of habitats.

The Amsterdam Forest presents opportunities for the city to accomplish various policy objectives concerning green space, water, sustainability, arts and culture, sports, and employment due to its extensive coverage. With approximatively six million visitors each year, the park contributes to the distribution of arts and culture in the city by hosting creative cultural events and festivals. Furthermore, it hosts the largest continuous hockey complex, an Olympic rowing track, and an internationally acclaimed cricket field.

Additionally, the area has seen a significant rise in informal sports activities, with several paths for walking, cycling, horseback riding, canoeing, jogging, and cross-country, encouraging people of all ages to participate in sports and physical fitness.

INCORPORATE VERTICAL MOBILITY INTO URBAN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Vertical mobility is a concept that involves designing urban spaces with the inclusion of elevated walkways, bridges, and green spaces, as well as multi-level buildings that can serve to connect different areas of a city vertically. This approach offers many benefits, especially when incorporated into urban development agendas focused on making cities more child friendly.

One of the most significant advantages of vertical mobility is that it helps to create safe, accessible, and dedicated play spaces for children. As presented below in Singapore's communal garden spaces example, raised play areas are safe from traffic and offer ample space for children to play and explore. Additionally, vertical mobility can reduce congestion in urban areas by providing alternative routes for pedestrians and cyclists, leading to improved air quality and a healthier urban environment for children and adults alike.

Vertical mobility can also enhance urban design by incorporating green spaces, improving the overall aesthetic of a city while promoting biodiversity and reducing urban heat islands. This approach can help to promote urban resilience, reduce energy use, and provide a more sustainable environment for future generations.

Other examples of vertical mobility include elevated pedestrian bridges and walkways, which can be used to connect different parts of a city that are otherwise separated by busy streets, railways, or rivers. The High Line in New York City is a fantastic example of a greenway built on an abandoned elevated railway track that offers visitors a unique and safe experience of the city.

Raising play: how Singapore's communal gardens are revolutionizing outdoor play for kids

One of the most common physical barriers that limit children's outdoor play is the danger posed by vehicle traffic. 80% of residents in Singapore live in government flats master-planned by the Housing Development Board.

In newer flats, communal garden spaces are often lifted off the ground with car parking underneath. These raised gardens create accessible green networks between buildings, neighbourhoods, and public transport nodes, such as in Punggol in northern Singapore.

Separating cars and pedestrian life removes the dangers posed by traffic, allowing children more independence and freedom to roam. These garden networks are often used as "play loops" where children on their scooters and bikes can chase each other in circles.

Lifting these spaces off the street level also provides security for the immediate residents of the flats and creates a layer of safety between them and the everyday public.

The High Line: reimagining public spaces in Manhattan

The High Line was originally built as an elevated freight rail line connecting warehouses and factories in Manhattan. With the rise of more efficient freight delivery methods in the 1950s and 60s, it fell out of use and was abandoned in 1980. In 1999, the Friends of the High Line was formed to push for its preservation as a public space.

The former rail line was repurposed in stages, with the first section of the High Line "Park-in-the-Sky" opening in 2009 and the final section opening in 2014. The park features a meticulously curated collection of trees and perennials that serve as a natural respite amid the urban landscape. It has become a popular tourist attraction and a must-see destination for visitors of New York.

Today, the High Line is a successful 2.3km linear park that winds its way through several neighbourhoods in Manhattan, each with its own distinct character. The park runs through West Chelsea, which is widely known for its hundreds of art galleries.

The High Line provides an accessible, open, public space that helps improve walkability, safety, and physical and mental health. It is a destination for tourists and locals alike, with activities for all ages, including a play area for kids on the original steel beam and girder framework of the rail line.

LEARN

Reinventing education

IDEAS FOR A MORE DYNAMIC AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The major goal in rethinking education is to create an education system that prepares young people not only for the modern world but also equips them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies to adapt to the coming changes and succeed in the future.
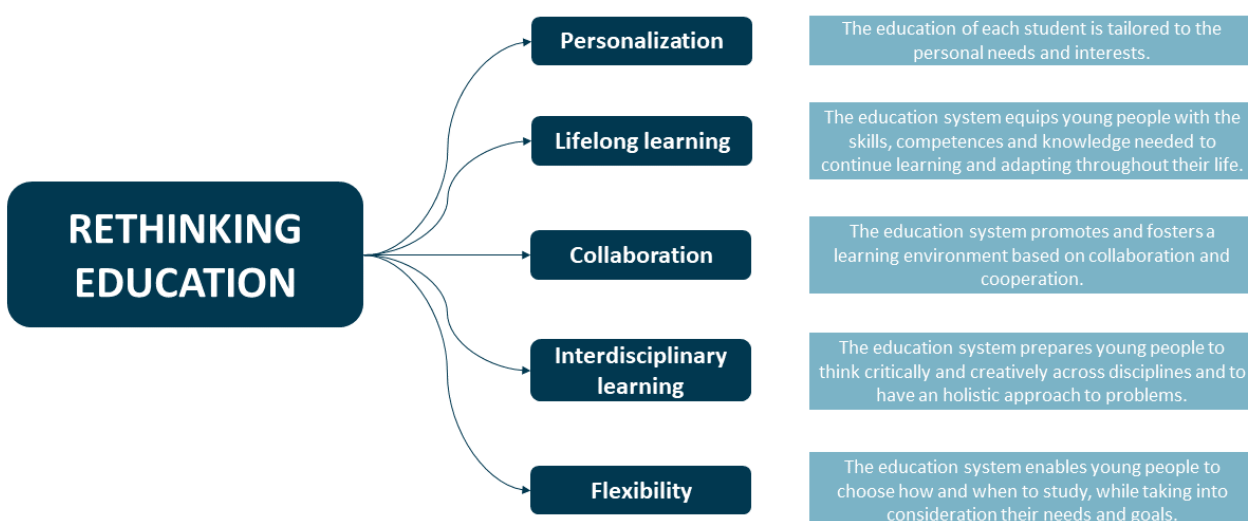
Education should be centred around five key areas: personalization, lifelong learning, collaboration, interdisciplinary learning, and flexibility.

Personalization in the education approach focuses on a teaching and learning process centred around the needs and interests of each student. Through personalization, each student is ensured an engaged, relevant, and effective learning experience.

Personalized teaching and learning recognize that every student has their own unique learning needs and preferences. This approach involves the use of technology, such as online learning resources and adaptive learning software, to provide tools that can adjust to each individual learning process. It also includes the creation of individualized learning plans that highlight each student's learning goals, strengths, and areas for improvement. In addition, differentiated instruction is employed by adjusting the content, process, and learning goals to meet the expectations and needs of each student. Finally, students are given the autonomy to choose their curriculum, meaning that they can opt-in or out of the topics they want to study.

Through this approach, students can become more engaged in their educational path, boost their academic performance, and feel greater ownership of their learning process.

Furthermore, personalization of the teaching process reduces the knowledge gap between students and supports students who may have learning difficulties due to their learning styles, backgrounds, abilities, or skills.

RETHINKING EDUCATION

Personalization — The education of each student is tailored to the personal needs and interests.

Lifelong learning — The education system equips young people with the skills, competences and knowledge needed to continue learning and adapting throughout their life.

Collaboration — The education system promotes and fosters a learning environment based on collaboration and cooperation.

Interdisciplinary learning — The education system prepares young people to think critically and creatively across disciplines and to have an holistic approach to problems.

Flexibility — The education system enables young people to choose how and when to study, while taking into consideration their needs and goals.

The Lifelong learning approach ensures the students develop the competences to become self-directed learners, to continue their learning process and growth beyond the formal education system. The European Commission defines the key competences as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are developed throughout the life through all the three types of education (formal, non-formal, informal).

To foster the development of lifelong learning competences, the education system should adopt several strategies. Firstly, using technology and online resources to make learning more accessible outside the classroom is crucial. Secondly, creating a culture of teaching and learning that encourages curiosity, exploration, and experimentation is necessary. Thirdly, empowering students to take charge of their own learning by setting goals, monitoring their progress, and reflecting on their learning is essential. Fourthly, providing opportunities for students to pursue their interests and passions through extracurricular activities, independent projects, or optional courses is recommended. Lastly, assisting students in developing the necessary skills for self-directed learning should be a priority. By implementing these strategies, the education system can create a culture of lifelong learning that helps students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the future.

The lifelong learning competences can prepare students to adapt to a changing job market and evolving technology, fostering a society that values education to support ongoing individual and collective growth and development.

Collaborative learning is a student-centred approach that encourages students to work together in small groups to achieve common learning goals. By collaborating, students gain diverse perspectives on different matters, develop social skills, and increase engagement, leading to improved academic achievement. This approach also prepares them for real-world situations, where work can require collaboration between individuals.

Interdisciplinary learning integrates at least two academic disciplines to create a more meaningful and comprehensive learning experience for young people. By encouraging students to look for connections and intersections across different areas of study, this approach enhances their problem-solving and critical thinking skills, prepares them for real-life situations, and promotes creativity and innovation.

Flexibility in education involves adjusting to the needs and requirements of students. This includes developing a learning environment that is responsive to students' different interests, levels of development, and backgrounds, enabling them to reach their full educational potential.

Personalized learning for all: the Saunalahti School approach in Espoo

The Saunalahti School approach centres around developing a tailored learning plan in partnership with parents. The plan incorporates a student's strengths, skill level determined by a special needs teacher, and individual interests while also aligning with curriculum objectives.

When students participate in setting their own goals, they become more invested in their education and take ownership of their progress. Special needs teachers regularly monitor their progress and skill level and assess their need for support and flexible learning groups.

The Saunalahti model emphasizes personalized but collaborative learning that prioritizes the overall well-being of the child, with input from parents and a multi-professional team. This creates a pleasing learning experience for both students and adults.

Some of the steps taken by the school to implement a personalized learning approach are:

- A "Mapping System" that helps teachers to track the learning progress and needs of each student and offer instructions based on the tracking results.
- Grouping students based on their development level (skills, abilities, knowledge) and learning style and introducing "pedagogy teams" through which teachers can share their ideas, experiences, and work methods.
- Developing tools for assessing the learning process, including sections for students to self-evaluate their progress and set their learning goals.

Implementing this model requires strong, collaborative leadership and a framework that promotes participation and inclusivity. Collaborative planning and assessment of learning processes are key components. The planning process allows for targeted resource allocation to students in need. The goal is for each student to find their unique approach to learning.

Multifunctional and multilingual: exploring the lifelong learning curriculum of European Schools

The European Schools are educational institutions established by the European Union primarily for the children of EU institutions' staff.

Currently, there are 13 European Schools across six countries: Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Spain. These schools offer multifunctional and multilingual education for nursery, primary, and secondary level children.

The schools follow a common curriculum that emphasizes multilingualism, intercultural education, and the development of key competencies for lifelong learning. One of the primary goals of the schools is to offer a comprehensive education that prioritizes the eight key competences for lifelong learning, adapted to the learning needs of all students.

The schools place the lifelong learning competences at the centre of their curriculum to enable their students to become active citizens in the community and to increase their access to education and eventually employment. Developing these competences is also aimed at enabling students to acquire the European Baccalaureate Diploma. Thus, all the European Schools' syllabuses seek to develop all these key competences.

The teaching and learning process in the European Schools is based on two principles: (1) integration of education - different areas of the curriculum are linked and correlated, resulting in a more comprehensive and meaningful learning experience, and (2) active learning - over time, students become responsible for their learning experience and progress.

PLAYABLE, CREATIVE AND LEARNING CITY

The city can create areas where children can learn important skills for society, such as bike riding or real-life situation simulations. For instance, small gardens or habitats for birds or bees can be set up in schoolyards or in front of homes, with the children taking care of them to instil responsibility. The city can serve as a living laboratory for children's learning and development, with creative spaces in all neighbourhoods for cultural events and activities. This includes activities within museums, theatres, or cinemas, as well as outdoor activities to encourage artistic expression like painting and music lessons in the park or local festivals.

To ensure that children have ample opportunities for play and socialization, it is essential to involve them in the process of planning and improving neighbourhood play areas. Adults can also implement creative solutions such as setting up a neighbourhood "toy box" or a park where kids can experiment with dirt and other materials. Safety is also a crucial factor, and local streets or parking lots can be temporarily transformed into

playgrounds, with physical barriers separating the public space from traffic for added security. Additionally, safe travel routes to schools can be established with pedestrian-friendly and traffic-calming measures.

Ultimately, the possibilities for creating a child-friendly city are endless, limited only by our own creativity as adults.

Unleashing creativity in early education: how the StoryCarnival App transforms make-believe play for 3–4-Year-olds

StoryCarnival, a web application developed by the University of Iowa, aims to enhance self-regulation skills in 3 and 4-year-old children through make-believe play. The researchers collaborated with a local preschool and worked with five children, with informed consent, over a period of time to build a strong relationship with them.

Nine Experience Design Sessions were conducted, which utilized physical props and structured free play to encourage imaginative play while still maintaining some level of structure.

The researchers observed the children's behaviour during these sessions and engaged them through conversation and activities to gain insight into their preferences. For example, the children were introduced to the different roles that characters could play in imaginative play, allowing them to imagine themselves in different scenarios and promoting adaptability and empathy.

The children enjoyed collaborating with others during the free play sessions, using props to create their own stories and themes. The findings from these sessions informed the development of the StoryCarnival app, which includes a play-planner and storytelling component.

URBAN LEARNING: THE CITY AS A LIVING LABORATORY

The City as a Living Laboratory is a concept that places urban spaces at the forefront of learning environments for individuals of all ages, not just limited to children. Topics vary from history and art to culture and social issues. This idea motivates residents to engage with their city and form social connections.

This innovative approach challenges traditional classroom learning by integrating the outside world and virtual experiences into the educational conversation. Education in all its forms could consider visiting museums, botanical gardens, parks, urban forests, and the urban environment of a city to learn about various topics. This type of learning emphasises the importance of observation and experience, instead of relying solely on memorization.

A city has plenty of public spaces that could be better utilised, such as those located near schools or even school courtyards. When setting up these spaces as "classes," it's important to consider their functionality beyond sports or traditional theoretical-based classes. Bringing students and teachers closer to nature can increase their well-being while connecting them with the urban fabric can stimulate their curiosity.

The learning topics vary from culture to technology, and teachers should provide opportunities for students to learn by experiencing the studied concepts. For instance, when studying technology, students should interact with the latest technology used by companies or start-ups through school-based laboratories or private-sector partnerships, enabling children to learn from real-world experiences.

Building better brains: Massachusetts' campaign to promote early childhood education through everyday experiences

The Brain Building in Progress campaign is focused on increasing public awareness in Massachusetts about the significance of investing resources and time in young children.

This campaign targets families and stakeholders outside the early childhood education field. To provide children with learning opportunities in everyday settings, BBIP formed strategic partnerships with local agencies and businesses, creating "Brain Building Zones."

One such partnership involved BBIP collaborating with various businesses and agencies to establish Brain Building Zones within their spaces. For example, in Registry of Motor Vehicles locations, a program called "License to Learn" was created. This program allowed children who accompanied their parents to the registry to learn about road safety, the importance of wearing a helmet while riding a bike, and the significance of wearing a seatbelt in a car.

Another partnership involved Brain Building in Progress teaming up with the local transportation authority to turn subway and bus lines into brain-building opportunities. To achieve this, they placed advertisements in subways and bus stops, prompting parents to create teachable moments during public transit rides.

The Children's Garden in Glasgow Botanic Gardens: learning meets nature.

The Children's Garden is a community garden and educational space located within Glasgow Botanic Gardens. It was opened in 2004 with the objective of promoting healthy eating, outdoor exercise, culture, arts, and music, and supporting schools in teaching in an interactive outdoor environment.
Children, along with their school classes or parents, can plant seeds, water growing plants, harvest and cook produce, and participate in games and other outdoor activities.
The garden is free of charge and relies on volunteers, including committee members, gardeners, and artists.

Shining a light on science: the Royal Observatory Greenwich

The Royal Observatory Greenwich in London provides a range of educational programs, classes, and resources for schools that aim to inspire students and promote a greater understanding of astronomy and space science.

The Royal Observatory Greenwich is a fantastic resource for schools, offering a range of educational opportunities designed to support teachers and engage students with the wonders of astronomy and space science. The online resources available, including interactive games, videos, and lesson plans, are a great way to supplement classroom teaching and help bring abstract concepts to life.

For those looking for a more immersive experience, the Observatory also offers onsite sessions such as workshops led by astronomers or planetarium shows, all tailored to the specific age and size of the group. And for teachers themselves, the Observatory provides free teacher training courses, both offline and online, aimed at developing their knowledge and understanding of astronomy and science.

With all these resources available, the Royal Observatory Greenwich is a must-visit for any school looking to inspire their students and enhance their science education.

GROW

Fostering the communities

INVESTING IN FAMILIES FOR A RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMY

Creating family-friendly neighbourhoods requires functional areas to use an approach that prioritizes retaining and attracting families while also fostering an environment conducive to raising children. This can be achieved by addressing the needs of parents, including affordable housing, economic opportunities, co-working spaces, childcare centres, parks, and recreational facilities within their local communities.

Designing and maintaining family-friendly neighbourhoods involves creating ample green spaces and parks that accommodate adults, children, and elders, establishing high-quality schools with various educational programs, and improving public transport links to enable easier mobility for families.

The sense of community in the neighbourhood can be achieved through two main actions. One is by engaging residents in community events and activities, including in offering feedback on the available leisure facilities and improvements necessary. The other one is by developing community and multi-use centre targeted for all age groups and accessible to anyone.

Investing in families is a key component of building a resilient local economy. When families are supported and thriving, it has a positive ripple effect on the entire community. This is because families are an integral part of the community, and their well-being is closely tied to the well-being of the community as a whole.

One way in which investing in families can lead to a resilient local economy is by promoting stability. Families that are supported with resources like affordable housing, access to quality education, and adequate childcare are

more likely to stay in the community for the long term. This stability creates a more predictable workforce, which can help attract and retain businesses in the area.

Investing in families also helps to create a more vibrant community. When families have access to safe and accessible parks, community centres, and public spaces, they are more likely to engage with their neighbours and build social connections. This social capital can lead to increased civic engagement, volunteerism, and a stronger sense of community pride. These are all factors that can attract businesses and investors to the area.

Fostering communities within family-friendly neighbourhoods is essential for creating an environment that is welcoming and supportive of families. By investing in families, functional areas can attract and retain families in the city, which can contribute to the overall vitality and economic growth of the community.

Creating Inclusive and Vibrant Public Spaces: Lessons from Singapore for 'Three-Generation' play spaces

Singapore is an excellent example of an urban centre that has successfully integrated spaces for three generations, catering to people of all ages. These spaces provide multiple leisure opportunities, such as fitness equipment, playgrounds, and outdoor seating areas, which promote social interaction and community engagement. These projects offer families a place to have fun and relax and provide children with opportunities to interact with seniors. Furthermore, such spaces support local businesses by creating opportunities for them to open cafes or shops that cater for the needs of the community. This approach improves the local economy and creates a more vibrant and inclusive community.

One potential solution, inspired by the example of Singapore, is to design and create public spaces that are multi-functional and accessible to people of all ages. These spaces could include a range of amenities and features to cater to different needs and

preferences, such as playgrounds, sports facilities, green areas, seating areas, cafes, and cultural and educational facilities. The design should also encourage interaction and socialisation between different age groups, for example, through intergenerational activities and events.

Additionally, these spaces should be easily accessible and well-connected to surrounding neighbourhoods to serve as vibrant community hubs. Improving public transportation links, creating safe and enjoyable walking, and cycling paths, and involving local communities in the planning and development processes are important steps to achieve this. It's also crucial to engage with stakeholders, including local businesses and organisations, to ensure ongoing management and maintenance of these spaces. By creating inclusive, vibrant, and well-designed public spaces, the local authorities can foster community connection and well-being for people of all ages.

Family-friendly Vancouver: how innovative policies transformed Downtown living for parents

In the 1990s, Downtown Vancouver implemented policies to improve living conditions for families. These policies required developers to allocate 25% of high-density housing units to families, with at least two bedrooms and play space for toddlers. Family units were grouped closer to street level in multilevel townhouse-type structures, with secure and safe play spaces that maximise sunlight.

Vancouver also encouraged developers to choose sites near schools, day-care centres, and grocery stores, with safe walking routes and access to public transit.

The city even required some developers to build community facilities or designate sites for schools if none existed. As a result, in 2011, downtown Vancouver had five times as many children under 15 as downtown Seattle, which itself was doing better than most American cities in this regard.

ENGAGE

Designing with kids

THE NEW AGENTS OF CHANGE ARE CHILDREN

To foster a diverse and vibrant community, children should be included in discussions and actively engaged in the development process of their neighbourhood, city, and functional areas, alongside adults, youth, and seniors. By seeking their ideas, perspectives, expectations, and solutions, we can create a more integrated and cohesive community that is reflective of the needs and desires of all its members. This collaborative approach not only contributes to the development of the city but also strengthens the bonds within the community.

When engaging with children in the development process, it is important to use materials and formats that are appealing to them, such as easy to answer questionnaires, model-making exercises, storytelling, and role-playing activities. In addition, surveys, mapping activities, interviews, and focus groups can be valuable tools for gathering information. Schools can also play a role in educating children about urban development by organising workshops in partnership with local government and specialists.

Establishing a children or youth municipal council can provide a platform for children to be involved in the city's management processes. It is also beneficial to observe children's experiences of streets and public spaces through visits and VR simulations to gather data and better understand their needs.

To build trust and understanding, it is important to maintain communication with residents throughout all stages of a project and partner with NGOs to engage with all members of the community. Communication campaigns can be launched to encourage parents and caregivers to remove barriers to outdoor play.

Creating channels for constant communication between residents and authorities is crucial, and opportunities to play and safe routes can be mapped through consultations and workshops. By involving children in the development process and providing them with opportunities to contribute their ideas, we can create a more inclusive and thriving community.

Playful Antwerp: empowering children to design their own play spaces

Antwerp sought to create play opportunities near every home by directly consulting with children to understand their needs. Through workshops and consultations, the city studied how children travel to school, where they play, and where they meet their friends. Children were also encouraged to share their experiences on playgrounds and suggest improvements. The data gathered was used to build the Play Space Web, which connects play spaces, schools, and youth centres to create safe and well-connected infrastructure for children.

All suggestions from children were considered to improve the playability of neighbourhoods and travel routes.

The lesson learned from Antwerp's practice is to engage with young people to understand their movements and play patterns, based on which administrations can provide unique services that cater to their needs.

Empowering youth voices: inside Colomiers' Youth Municipal Council

Colomiers, a commune with a population of 40.000 in Southwestern France, has a Youth Municipal Council made up of 32 members, elected by their peers from six electoral districts, and equally divided between boys and girls. All candidates present an electoral program with three or four proposals for initiatives in the city.

The council works on proposals for different initiatives selected from these programs, which typically engage the city's population beyond council members. Adults support the council's work, including a municipal officer and an ethics committee.

The council engages in various activities, such as door-to-door interviews to identify the needs of marginalised children, organising an annual "day without cars," bike and roller hikes, and a video games competition. The CMJ provides children with the opportunity to fully express their citizenship and be political actors.

PLANNING CITIES THROUGH A CHILD'S EYE

Local authorities should prioritise building public spaces that encourage independence throughout childhood. Public spaces play an important role in promoting children's cognitive, physical, and social development through experimentation, as The City at Eye Level for Kids highlights.

To plan for children should go beyond designing and building playgrounds. This approach involves understanding the different ways in which children engage with their environment and the factors that shape their experience. It means recognizing the importance of everyday activities such as walking to school, playing in the park, and socializing with peers in shaping children's development.

In this regard, Arup has identified two essential elements in creating child-friendly physical spaces: building children's infrastructure at multiple scales and planning everyday freedoms in the public realm. As such, urban planning and design specialists must incorporate these elements into the network of streets, spaces, and buildings that make up the universe of urban childhood to truly support families and enable children to thrive.

A child-friendly city must prioritize the needs of children in all aspects of urban planning and design. This means incorporating children's perspectives into the planning process and involving them in the design of public spaces. It means recognizing that children are active agents in their environment and designing spaces that support their development and growth.

Understanding the unique needs of children and incorporating them into the design and planning of urban spaces recognizes the fact that children are not simply passive users of public spaces, but active participants who can benefit from the environment around them.

Urban95 is an initiative created by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in partnership with Jan Gehl Institute, which aims to adapt cities to a human scale, with a particular focus on how public spaces can support young children and their caregivers. By considering the perspective of a 3-year-old, who stands at an average height of 95 cm, urban planners and designers can make changes to better serve this demographic.

First, children's perspective is different, and the first 95 cm of the ground are often neglected in terms of design, resulting in limited visibility, lack of variety in textures and details, and obstacles like exhaust pipes or trash cans.

Exposing young children to various textures, fabrics, patterns, and interactive physical elements can promote their brain development by encouraging play and exploration. This can even make routine activities like waiting in line or at a bus stop more enjoyable for them.

Secondly, this concept further suggests urban planners consider the distance and ease of access to daily activities for families with strollers and keep key destinations within a short distance to enhance the opportunities for children to play and interact. Children's perception of distance is different, and they

require supervision when crossing streets, making the street or open space in front of their home their most used public space. As children grow, their urban universe expands, so planners should conduct demographic surveys to plan accordingly.

Building a resilient and child-friendly city: Stockholm's integrated approach

The city administration of Stockholm has established a working group that brings together representatives from various departments and key stakeholders to ensure that the city planning process aligns with the objectives of building a resilient and child-friendly city. The group employs the Integrated Child Impact Assessment method to involve children in several workshops and ensure that their needs are identified and met.

The method involves four main steps: participation and mapping, development and analysis, evaluation of the final proposal, and feedback. To discuss the needs of children, the group has formed three main categories that include environment and health, housing and everyday life, and safety and accessibility.

Since each project is distinct, specific questions require unique analysis, mapping, and dialogue. The objective is to ensure that the needs of children are considered in all aspects of urban development during the city planning process.

From the eyes of children: how the Spaces to Play study is revolutionizing outdoor spaces

To enhance understanding of how outdoor spaces can be improved, the Spaces to Play study examined the perspectives of 28 three and four-year-old children from a preschool in Kent, UK, who came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

The Mosaic approach was utilized to gather the children's voices and acknowledge them as experts, promoting thoughtful reflection on the meanings attached to their experiences.

The children engaged in activities such as map-making and drawing objects they enjoyed, as well as conversing with researchers about the playground. The researchers then compiled the children's comments and photographs into a storybook format, which was used to create a master plan for the space that considered the children's preferences and identified the areas they deemed most important.

HOW COMPANIES CAN ENGAGE CHILDREN

To engage children, companies can start by designing products, services, and marketing campaigns that cater to their unique needs and interests. This can involve conducting market research to gain insights into children's preferences, behaviours, and consumption habits. For example, a toy company might develop products that promote learning and creativity, while a food company might develop healthy and appealing snack options for children.

Companies can also partner with local schools, community centres, and non-profit organizations to provide resources and support for educational and recreational activities. This could involve sponsoring after-school programs, donating supplies and equipment, or hosting workshops and events that promote skill-building and social engagement.

In addition, companies can engage children and families by providing opportunities for feedback and participation in decision-making processes. This could involve soliciting feedback through surveys or focus groups, or involving children in co-creation activities where they work with company representatives to develop new products or services.

Ultimately, companies that engage with children in meaningful and authentic ways can build strong brand loyalty and establish themselves as positive contributors to their communities.

Building a world of play: the Lego Foundation's global movement for early childhood development

The Lego Foundation places significant emphasis on play-based learning as a valuable educational tool for all children and is dedicated to this cause. The foundation has set an ambitious goal of reaching 75 million children annually by 2032 and works with partners worldwide to achieve this objective. Additionally, the foundation supports the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 and aims to demonstrate the incredible potential of children when given the freedom to learn through play.

To commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Lego brand in 2022, the foundation awarded grants worth 900 million Danish Kroner to organisations that promote the well-being of children, caregivers, and communities. From a pool of 627 eligible applicants, five organisations were selected based on their culturally relevant and sustainable approaches to benefit children aged from birth to six years old.

The foundation's goal is to establish a global movement that prioritises early childhood development. With a focus on innovative ideas that can positively impact children's lives, the Lego Foundation invested millions and encouraged organisations worldwide to join them in "Building a World of Play." Collaboration among organisations and sectors was promoted to ensure more meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

Play for all: the Real Play Coalition's ambitious goal to reach 100 million children by 2030

Formed in 2018, the Real Play Coalition is a global non-profit organisation consisting of members such as the LEGO Foundation, UNICEF, Arup, National Geographic, and IKEA.

The coalition's main goal is to create a movement to ensure that 100 million children have access to inclusive play by 2030.

The coalition views play as a fundamental right that enables children to thrive in the present and future. To achieve its objective, the coalition aims to transform the perception of the value of play, integrate play-based principles into urban planning and design, support the implementation and scaling of safe play activities worldwide, and increase the number of play moments in children's lives worldwide.

The Real Play Coalition's Strengthening Urban Resilience through Play initiative, launched in collaboration with the Resilient Cities Network and seven Play Ambassador Cities, is one of the coalition's initiatives. The initiative's objective is to underscore the importance of play in cities globally and promote ideas that foster children's well-being, development, and resilience. The initiative aims to gather evidence on children's play, identify play-related investments, expedite on-the-ground action, and facilitate knowledge-sharing among cities and experts.

Nature play: transforming school grounds for a climate-ready future

Evergreen is a company that partnered with Arup on the Climate Ready Schools program to transform school grounds into nature-rich areas for outdoor play and learning. The program plays a significant role in helping cities adapt to climate change by promoting sustainable improvements to school grounds, which are central to many communities across Canada.

Through this collaboration, Evergreen and Arup are creating spaces that foster connections between people and nature while increasing climate resilience in urban areas.

TECHNOLOGY HAS A PLACE

Effective planning relies on the availability and analysis of data, which is a crucial component of urban development. Technological advancements have made it possible to collect and analyse data more efficiently and effectively. With tools such as satellite imagery, GIS mapping, and digital sensors, we can track critical factors such as population density, land use, and traffic patterns. This data can then inform planning decisions and resource allocation.

Participatory governance is an essential aspect of urban development, and technology can play a significant role in promoting it. Online forums, social media, and mobile apps can provide citizens with a voice in decision-making and enable collaboration between policymakers, urban planners, and residents. This leads to more inclusive and effective decision-making, as well as greater transparency and accountability.

Smart mobility solutions can also improve urban development by reducing congestion, improving public transport services, and increasing safety for pedestrians and cyclists. They can also provide real-time information to commuters, while sensors and IoT devices can monitor and manage traffic flow, parking, and air quality. Overall, these technologies can help create more sustainable and liveable urban environments.

Although technology is an essential tool, it is not a magic bullet for urban challenges. Sound planning, design, and policy decisions are necessary to achieve optimal results. By leveraging data, promoting participatory governance, and improving mobility, it can create more sustainable, equitable, and resilient cities.

Traffic Agents: Oslo's innovative approach to increasing independent mobility among children

Work has been done in Oslo to increase independent mobility among children. The Norway Agency of Urban Environment developed the Traffic Agent app to track kids' problems and fears when walking or cycling throughout the city. Through this tool, children become agents of change by signalling challenges on their routes from traffic to unsafe pedestrian crossings. Specialists have access to their location, hence, can map the area and implement solutions.

The Traffic Agent Mobile App is connected to schools and provides each student with a unique login. The data is anonymously collected and stored in a central location and can only be accessed by the Norway Agency of Urban Environment and school directors. Overall, this solution is a method through which children experience their environment and play an active role in improving parts of the city.

Seeing the city from a child's perspective: the Urban95 virtual reality (VR) experience

For local authorities and specialists to better understand children's needs, Arup and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation created the Urban95 virtual reality (VR) experience. The tool enables users to explore life in urban areas from the perspective of a 3-year-old child, with a height of 95 cm.

The VR experience is an extension of the Urban95 programme, which allows people to fully explore the question behind the initiative: "If you could experience a city from 95 cm – the height of a 3-year-old – what would you change?". By using this tool, urban planners and policymakers can gain valuable insights into how to improve the built environment for urban childhoods.

Key actions

HOW

Integrate essential services at the neighbourhood level, including healthcare, schools, kindergartens, markets, and shops.

Create ongoing opportunities for community engagement to ensure that the neighbourhood remains responsive to the needs of its residents.

Ensure the neighbourhood is accessible to everybody and prioritize affordable housing within the neighbourhood.

PLAY

Build green areas in the neighbourhood and introduce natural elements as much as possible.

Develop intergenerational play and recreational spaces that focus more on natural and green elements.

Focus on designing public spaces as destinations, not just transit spots, with creativity, interactivity, playfulness, and urban greenery.

MOVE

Incorporate vertical mobility in the urban design by creating elevated safe spaces for children.

Implement infrastructure improvements such as wider sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and accessible public transit stops.

Create car-free zones around parks and school areas to make them safe.

LEARN

Use the city as a living laboratory to make the education system more dynamic and inclusive.

Prioritize child-friendly planning by involving children and considering their needs and perspectives in all urban planning decisions.

Create playable, creative, and learning city spaces by designing areas where children can learn important skills for society and participate in activities.

GROW

Create a sense of community and social connections within the neighbourhood through community centres, public spaces, and events that bring residents together.

Promote local businesses that cater to adults to encourages the growth of local economy.

Create multi-use spaces that cater to different age groups, ensuring accessibility and safety for all, and providing a variety of activities.

ENGAGE

Foster community engagement with children in the development process, seeking their ideas, perspectives, expectations, and solutions.

Leverage technology for effective planning and promoting participatory governance.

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