

## SUMMARY

### Child friendly city

Rules and methods of shaping public space  
with consideration of children's needs, perspective and role

**Discipline:** Architecture and Urban Planning

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The purpose of this dissertation is to identify the needs, perspective and role of children in urban spaces, and to indicate the extent to which these aspects should influence the planning and design processes of urban spaces. As part of the overarching goal, the author examined the provisions of directional and strategic documents to include children's needs and perspectives, specified urban spaces used by children and analyzed the ways in which children use them. On the basis of a variety of sources and her own research, she pointed out the distinctiveness of children's perspective and the different needs that result from it. The further part of the thesis is a detailed characterization of the features and elements of urban space in terms of child friendly criteria. The author defines the areas and scopes of children's participation as a distinct group of users in the processes of urban design and spatial planning, and indicates the tools and methods for including children in shaping urban space.

**The first chapter** provides a background for the choice of the work's topic; the author argues that modern cities should be considerate of the needs of all users, including children, who are living in cities in increasing numbers and whose distinct perspective is so valuable that its consideration contributes to the well-being of all users of urban spaces. The next aspect is an analysis of the state of the knowledge and the constatation that the concept of a child-friendly city is a fairly new phenomenon, but one with a high rate of development. The author points out the necessity of awareness and identification of the needs, perspective and role of the child in urban space, and the consistent inclusion of these aspects in the processes of planning and design of urban spaces. She also defines the substantive scope of the dissertation, and defines the key concepts for the work. She formulates the theses and research questions, and presents a number of methods and her own research which will be used to formulate conclusions.

In **the second chapter** the interdisciplinary connections of the research problem is presented. The historical outline presented aims to trace the evolution of the perception of the needs and role of the child in society, from the perspective of the relationship with urban space. Based on available sources, the author argues that for many centuries childhood was not treated as a period of life with special status or needs, but only as a preparation for adulthood, thus there was little interest in the child. Even scientific reflection on the necessity and usefulness of upbringing did not, in practice, influence a change in the treatment and everyday life of children. A similar mechanism was observed during the author's analysis of individual disciplines. The child's subjectivity is attributed to modernity. The very perception of the child as a physically and mentally separate entity and the definition of its needs in relation to urban space took place not much earlier. It was found that, compared to other fields, urban planning and spatial planning insufficiently consider children as a separate user group.

**The third chapter** presents an interpretation of the needs, perspective and role of the child in urban space in policy and strategic documents of European or global scope. The author focuses her attention on the challenges addressed by the documents and their guidelines, as well as on the degree to which the needs of vulnerable groups, including children, are taken into account in urban space. She shows that the needs of the child in relation to urban space are not prioritized in most documents. The main implication of this is that there is a need to change the way of thinking about cities and its users, and thus more consistently identify and address the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Addressing the needs of children benefits the entire community.

**The fourth chapter** focuses on the analysis of urban concepts and ideas. Their creators are often driven by the desire to create better living conditions for city inhabitants. Each concept has a different perspective and accentuates a different priority in pursuit of this demand, and each contains valuable elements that to some degree may also benefit children. These include equality in access to resources, inclusiveness, optimization of urban spaces, creation of sustainable city structures and participatory mechanisms, safety or community bonding. These assumptions apply to all city users, but only the concept of a child-friendly city puts the child and his needs at the center.

**Chapter five** is a detailed and structured characterization of the needs, perspective and role of the child in urban space. It includes the identification of children's needs in relation to urban space, as well as an analysis of the characteristics of child-friendly space and selected elements of it. The author suggests ways to identify needs and analyzes existing concepts in terms of incorporating children's needs into urban space. She defines the concept of child friendliness and identifies factors affecting the implementation of this criteria in relation to the way urban spaces are planned and designed. She then systematically analyzes elements of urban spaces in terms of features that can be either facilitators or hindrances for the children who use them.

**The sixth chapter** deals with the subject of children's involvement and participation in planning processes and procedures. The author points out the slow yet insufficient growth of awareness regarding the importance of children's participation in the shaping of urban spaces, as well as the need to adapt processes and procedures for children, tailored to their perception, perspective and capabilities. She also identifies differences in the participation of children and adults. She lists the levels of participation and the opportunities and risks of each in terms of children's involvement. She highlights that participatory activities involving children must not be limited to superficial actions, and should in turn translate into real solutions. In addition to the benefit of including children's perspectives, participation builds children's sense of agency and develops pro-social attitudes.

The dissertation is summarized with a series of **conclusions**, resulting from the author's analysis and research, which confirmed the truth of the adopted thesis. It also answers the research questions and indicates possible directions for further research development.

The final part of the dissertation is an appendix, which contains the results of the workshops, surveys and interviews conducted by the author as part of this dissertation. More than 1,000 children were involved in the whole thing. Their opinions, observations and needs were directly taken into account and influenced each part of the dissertation.