

Roads of small pedestrians

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Abstract

Ing. Arch. Zora Pauliniova has studied architecture on the Faculty of Architecture, Slovak Technical University in Bratislava and later postgraduate studies on London Metropolitan University and Thames Valley University, UK. Currently she studies PhD studies on the Faculty of Architecture, STU („**Participatory planning of public spaces**“).

For more than 15 years she works as a trainer, facilitator and consultant in the area of public spaces, strategic planning, heritage conservation and interpretation and organizational development. Since 2005 she is involved in participatory planning of public spaces all over Slovakia and assists local communities in creating spaces which are environmentally and socially sustainable. She also facilitated the processes of strategic planning for historical towns Modra and Devin and represented Union of Mother Centres in preparation of a strategic plan of Bratislava, capital of Slovakia.

She is the author and editor of several books: Bratislava / nahlas, How to save the Earth, Reader for NGOs, Where we are: mental maps of Slovakia and Public spaces. She is also a blogger of Slovak daily newspaper Sme (www.pauliniova.blog.sme.sk).

Ways of small pedestrians

Zora Pauliniová

How to make the routes for children part of their stories

Introduction

I am the mother, who raised three children and daily met with barriers. **I am the consultant**, who works with mother centers as well as with local NGOs and community initiatives, which are planning and creating their public spaces, where there is pleasant to meet and to live. **I am the architect** who works on preparation of strategic plans and tries to include walking and cycling in to the planning documents...

As a mother, walker, architect and facilitator I think daily how to enable various groups (mainly old people and children) to walk in a safe, barrier-free and interesting way. In my presentation I will focus on presence of children in public spaces and ways, how to reflect their needs and wants through their involvement.

The world of small pedestrians

What do children meet daily with?

With physical barriers – high stairs, iron items, wider bars, uneven and destroyed pavement, illogical functional solutions. Children are forgotten in the planning. Few planners take into account the principles of universal design and the very fact, that children are smaller and many obstacles are more difficult for them.





Children are often faced with the fact that where there is a narrow path, they are unable to walk next to a parent, and they start to be one who is pulled after. Where there are barriers directly on the pavement and prevent movement, parents as well as children are at risk of automobile traffic - the more children, because it is easier to overlook them.



Visual and other cues that children receive during movement are rather negative than positive, because they are more directly, from a lower horizon confronted with inadequate maintenance, dirt and clutter - but even closer to them accumulating exhaust fumes and whirling dust.

In contrast stimuli, which could encourage a dialogue with the environment (information and interpretive panels, artworks, interesting architectural details) are often too high, parents may miss them, none of them comes close ...



Several organizations have already responded to these facts. Project "Paths of small pedestrian" accomplished in 2004 - 2005 "by mother center Radost from Tabor aimed to attract the attention of politicians, planners and decision-makers to children and their movement on the streets. Mapping of barriers in a public space with the involvement of mothers realized the association Slatinka in Zvolen, Slovakia. The project called "What city do we want to have?" took place in 2008 - 2009 and its aim was to test some tools for public participation (especially for groups with specific demands on the quality of public spaces) in the development of planning at the local level.

The world of small pedestrians

☒ As a photographer and pedestrian I daily move through the streets and see what happens. I see children who are climbing to higher levels, running through the sloping ramps, playing with the ball, catching their reflection in the large display windows, sitting on the curbs, climbing any obstacles. Sometimes just skipping from tile to tile, not to touch the lines, sometimes running. Give children a small stone, gravel or splashing fountain, stairs they can jump from and you can watch them for a long time. While adults in public places want to see and to be seen, children want to discover, experience, play and move. But the fact that the children run out with little incentive doesn't mean that we have to forget them ..



Children want miracles and adventures

If young children like to go somewhere , it's not so much about whether they perceive functionality and barrier-free environment, but with which incentives they connect the environment. Where they find the opportunity to discover , explore and adventure, there is the space for them attractive.



What everything can we offer? Space for freedom of movement and rest, sculptures and artworks, reliefs and paintings, natural elements, trees to climb, mazes in parks, mysterious hideouts and surprises ...



Program Spaces

Opportunity to respond to the needs of children and co-create pleasant spaces to live and move I found in the program Spaces as a consultant - facilitator. Ekopolis Foundation together with the bank CSOB supports participatory planning and public spaces since 2005 – uptill now nearly 30 projects were realized. We helped to co –

create village squares, town parks and playgrounds, historic gardens, literary parks and artistic gardens and other public spaces.

When designing the spaces we take into account several **dimensions - physical, functional, environmental, but also transport and historical dimension**. We want that project organizers are aware of all these dimensions and consider them along with the broader context of the site to promote sustainable solution.

In various locations we have tried to structure planning to take into account the needs of key target groups. For mapping we were looking for "ways of children" and "ways of old and experienced".

Kde sú v plánovaní deti?

Our planning is participatory from the very beginning - we see the creation of space (placemaking) as a tool for community development and strengthening the potential of communities, but in the beginning we were not able to use the potential of the children. We said: "Bring your children for a planning weekend, our people will look after them. Especially let us not disturb". The role of children in planning, however, gradually changed and we went through several levels of involvement of children:

1. children "put away" and prepare them a nice program, just let the parents focus on planning
2. use **children to promote the project**, let them draw and compete - children are those that attract attention, to include parents
3. together with the **children map area**, they bring interesting expertise and experience, often an area they know best.
4. together with **children plan space**, either in separate groups or in groups with adults.



Although there are many examples abroad, we can find only few publications, which describe the methodology of working with children.

“There is growing recognition of the value of enabling children to participate in society and especially in “all matters affecting the child” (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990). This has important implications for all of those who research, plan and design environments for children. It is no longer sufficient to observe children in order to understand their needs; one must listen to them, write Selim Iltus and Roger Hart in „Participatory planning and design of Recreational spaces with children“ (Selim Iltus and Roger Hart ARCH. & COMPORT. / ARCH. & BEHAV., VOL. 10, NO 4, P. 361 - 370). *„For those who do involve children there is often a tendency to romanticize their creative abilities and to keep children’s designs separate from those of adults.“.*

As Selim and Hart say, there are many different methodologies that can be adopted effectively during design and planning with children. These include **collective drawings** (Espinosa, 1994), **photo-based collage making** (Childhood City Quarterly, 1982), **design games** (Sanoff, 1979), **full-size simulations** (Moore, 1979) and **modeling** (Hart, Iltus & Mora, 1991, Nelson 1983).



Our experience is that children can get excited for something, if they are motivated by adults and supporters. They have the best knowledge of space, show the hidden pitfalls and can work with adults as with partners. Children have written books about places, studied sources, mapped the site, created a vision of a space, prepared proposals - and persuaded adults about what is important to change.

Banská Štiavnica – Lower Rose Street

In 2009, we first headed the project, in which the local group wanted to address the linear space - Lower Rose street. Aim of the project was ambitious, moreover limited

(or stimulated) by historic environment. Organizers did not want just to wake potential of space and make it more attractive, but wanted to systemically address the static traffic (parked cars blocking the space), respond to the historic environment and become an inspiration to other streets in the city.

Challenges that stood before the local community were as follows:

- How to map the street, what to work with, when everything is "finished"? What design prepare for the street?
- How to solve the traffic when it concerns things that must be addressed systemically by the municipality?
- It is a linear space / balcony of the city. From the street you can see the magic clusters of sites, monuments are so close – how to make history visible?
- How to attract children and how to plan with them?

Children and lizzards

During 2009 we have realized the whole process of participatory planning - local team took part in initial training, set up a process with a consultant, ran activities with stakeholders, particularly local government, and conservationist, mapped the history of the street and prepared the first planning meeting.

A planning meeting was held in April 2009 – it consisted of children art competition, space mapping and designing the space. Interesting were interactive mapping activities for children when they perceived the street using all senses.

Over the next month the architect prepared several proposals and at the next public meeting people had the opportunity to comment on them and to choose the one that mostly appealed to them.

Continuously people followed with workshops and street animation cup of coffee or creative and artistic activities (theater for children).

However, it remained open, what will the street offer to children. The history of the city is associated with mining and legend says that gold and silver were discovered by lizard. Local artist prepared ceramic plaques and placing them became part of the voluntary work.



The day before the end of 2009, we had official opening of the area with a hot toddy and cakes.



Today, there are even more roses planted in the street; there are new stairs and benches and visitors come here to enjoy the sightseeing views of the landscape and monuments. The traffic system was changed (one way road, less parking). People who participated in the project continued with their work - they have coorganized

picnic at Trinity Square and fought for the creation of pedestrian zones in Trinity Square in Štiavnica - Štiavnica main square.



Banská Štiavnica town is particularly suitable for the mysterious city games through which children and adults start getting to know its history ... In October 2010, interesting game "Spirit of the city) the game spirit of the town, prepared by the organization Empiria Magica.

Tresures of other cities

Approach, which makes visible cultural and historical values we call the interpretation of local heritage. We have to ask:

- What is the strongest dimension of our space, which is unique and distinctive?
- Which tells the stories of our area?
- How and which way we want people to keep space, what we want to convey?
- What we want people to know, feel and do after a stay in this space?



We shouldn't leave the monument without the answer why it is important to us and what we can learn from it. If the space is bigger, then the well-set interpretation will help the people find their way.



Interpretative system - either of the square, the network of public spaces or historic areas should be closely linked to the information system so that people are able to orient themselves and learn what is important. The city should be user friendly and readable and offer clear information about where they are, where lead different routes or important public institutions and other necessary information.



The most common form of interpretation are interpretive (educational) routes with panels. We know, however, also less traditional ways of interpretation: interpretation objects, sculptures, models of settlements, gateways to the area, scenic views, tiles, prints of famous people, old paintings and photographs in the country ...

During the last year I have visited many cities in Austria, Germany, France, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania and Turkey. Everywhere I have observed the same things: children on the streets, their games and movement, history and treasures. I've shot hundreds of pictures of how to leave space around us to speak, how to start a dialogue with it. There are places where they leave their treasures buried and places where they work with them...



Conclusion

Walking doesn't mean just physical movement. For me, walking around the city and the country is a way to experience the city. I like to walk through the city freely, watch the people, enter the yards and buildings and identify with squares and streets. I would like to offer my way of dialogue with the city because it helps uncover things not only in the city but also in ourselves.