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**Educational and Intercultural Dialogue among
Younger Generations for the Full Enjoyment of their
Rights as a New Challenge within City Spaces**

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Educational and Intercultural Dialogue among Younger Generations for the Full Enjoyment of their Rights as a New Challenge within City Spaces

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Abstract

The challenge of urban spaces as new places for enhancing the participation of younger generations as active citizens is at the core of the contribution, along the lines of a larger debate promoted at the multilateral level within different intergovernmental systems in a development perspective (i.e. UNESCO, UNICEF, Council of Europe, European Union). Preliminarily an overview about the full enjoyment of rights for children living in an urban context will be explored to measure their involvement as a tool to really make cities child-friendly. The city profile could also be assessed in relation to policies and practices that facilitate intercultural interaction and inclusion, ensuring a concrete participation of young generations to take a diversity advantage in their lives and to contribute for an inclusive, safe and sustainable urban environment. This investigation aims at identifying the best set of analytical and practical tools already provided by the aforementioned systems and is ultimately intended to help sub-state institutional and private stakeholders in improving the protection and promotion of human rights. In this perspective a preliminary model is proposed to bring different local perspectives from young citizens on what are the actual safeguarding gaps, on how to use creatively public spaces and on which vision the young generations could have about their cities as a setting driving an high level of human rights standards within the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development framework.

Key-words: *children rights, urban spaces, education, younger generations, human rights standards*

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Introduction

The challenge of urban spaces as new places for enhancing the participation of younger generations as active citizens is one of the issues at the core of the programmatic approach, related policies and positive actions promoted at the multilateral level by different intergovernmental systems in a development perspective.

Due to the higher percentage of younger generations currently placed in urban areas, this contribution is aimed at exploring the well-being and the education opportunities for children living in an urban context as a precondition to encourage their support to make their living environment more child-friendly. To achieve this goal they should be put in the conditions to enjoy their rights and duties such as the basic rights to education, equality and equal opportunities, the right to be heard and to be actively involved in confrontational intercultural processes for inclusive social relationships, the right to a safe and sustainable environment for a green growth. All these rights should be promoted and safeguarded insisting on the personal accountability of each child and adolescent as a global, national and local citizen, also in the perspective offered by the global citizenship education approach and related programming. Moving from the conceptual idea of a shared responsibility of younger generations as key agents and citizens to look for their rights and freedoms within the social and educational context where they live, economic, environmental and social benefits could be achieved in the medium and long term.

In the first part of the contribution the international debate and the opportunity to provide for local and city targeted programmes and interventions by the concerned intergovernmental governance systems – i.e. UNESCO, UNICEF, Council of Europe, European Union - are investigated. Different but complementary approaches prove the global commitment to identify and implement the best set of analytical and practical tools which are mainly intended to help sub-state institutional and private stakeholders in improving the protection and promotion of children rights within urban contexts. In the second part of the contribution a proper linkage between different local perspectives from young persons is suggested for a common operational model to be developed in order to deal with actual safeguarding gaps, creative use of public spaces and the young generations' vision about their cities as a setting driving an high level of human rights standards as formulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1. The Theoretical Debate over Urban Young Generations: Citizenship Rights as a Driver for the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights

The twofold traditional categories of human rights generations, as preliminarily introduced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights since its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948 and later explicitly defined and completed by further entitlements, whose holders are both individuals and peoples at the same time, have progressively informed the recognition of basic national rules to be legally reinforced and socially endorsed by all communities worldwide.

Notwithstanding the clear commitment and the strong efforts assumed by institutional central and local actors, as well as by private stakeholders, to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights in spite of deep and dynamic economic, political, social, environmental changes recorded in the most part of the UN Member States, the living concept of human rights standards is currently far to be translated into practice (Ishay 2008; Risse et al. 2013; Posner 2014; Hannum 2016).

This challenge is extremely true in relation to the enjoyment of first, second and third generations of human rights by the so called vulnerable categories, i.e. specific right-holders who have suffered and suffer the most from the lack of a full exercise of the basic civil and political rights and of concrete access to economic, social and cultural rights, in countries systematically affected by conflicts or where severe damages have impacted on environmental conditions or on urban and rural settings, out of any kind of open and transparent information and communication system.

Young generations are included among these categories and a weak human rights-based approach has influenced in past decades the definition and application of beneficial policies and measures encountering their need on an equal foot with the interests of other categories of individuals enjoying the same rights and freedoms.

This situation has been very common in some countries and cities where the competent central and local authorities have not adopted a convenient approach to set forth appropriate legislations and to put forward targeted inclusive governance policies combining urban development, social equity and justice in favour of all potential beneficiaries.

Only in recent times a new vision was launched within the UN system, to update the contents of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in view of future challenges for human rights at the global level. This has led to the

introduction of the concept of the right to the city, closely related to the legal and social notion of urban citizenship.

The universality of human rights, their intrinsic interrelation, interdependence and indivisibility is out of question as a pivotal cornerstone informing the gradual compilation of the most relevant legal instruments representing the international human rights law. Meanwhile the duty of States to be in compliance with customary and/or conventional norms, so far granting core rights and freedoms of individuals and groups through the establishment of proper domestic legal frameworks to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, did not always lead to an appreciable balance among the rights and duties of institutional actors, individuals and groups and private entities (Fredman 2008; Carbone and Schiano di Pepe 2009; Odello and Cavandoli 2012).

Individuals and above all specific categories of right-holders, such as the young generations, suffered from this weak approach in an urban setting. Since the end of the '60s an academic debate was promoted to deal with this issue in order to define a 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1968, 1996; Kofman and Lebas 1996; Purcell 2002; Sherrod 2003; Checkoway et al. 2003; Jans 2004; Blitzer Golombek 2006).

The traditional city model was figured out as a setting where individuals and groups could interact to handle the political and social life as well as to ensure and support the access to health and education basic services. At the very beginning this model was very useful to identify, share and accept common rules and procedures for social interrelationships within the urban setting; but on a later stage it was clear that the ultimate aim was to preserve the city as it was, excluding any form of contribution and valorisation of the city value by its inhabitants. So far the academic debate launched the idea to revert this consideration of the city into a new public space model for social interaction and exchange, avoiding any form of prevalence of a dominant idea and respecting the inherent heterogeneity of this setting, as well as encouraging competitiveness to reinforce the urban model through the full enjoyment of citizenship rights.

All citizens, young generations included, are required to exercise these rights that encompass both the right to participation and to appropriation to own city. The first right consists of giving support for the identification, definition, management and production of the urban space (Hart 1997a, 1997b; Driskell et al. 2001; O'Donoghue et al. 2002); the latter is articulated into the right to access, occupy and use urban space or to create new common urban areas where all individuals could afford their basic needs (Nieuwenhuys 1997; Checkoway and Gutierrez 2006). Indeed, in a complementary and complex perspective, the right to the city is based on the development of

social relationships as a key-tool to access the city but also to remake it by urban citizens who are requested to actively participate to this renewing process by identifying and selecting the best public areas to be shared and lived in a safe and inclusive manner (Finn and Checkoway 1998; Gambone et al. 2002; Gallagher 2004; Nygreen et al. 2006). In conclusion, the right to the city is intrinsically related to the creation of the common public space in the interest of its citizens; it also means that a reinforcement of the participatory component is needed, involving in particular the vulnerable categories of right-holders in favour of a human rights based approach for urban change.

So far the urban city and its political, economic, social and environmental value is considered as a key precondition for the enjoyment of citizenship rights. This latter assumption will be used to investigate the programmes and measures promoted by some competent intergovernmental international frameworks, stressing the role and level of involvement of young generations in pursuing the enjoyment of specific rights according to their status of urban citizens.

2. Citizenship Rights and Education of Young Generations in Urban Cities: the UNESCO Vision

The right-holder status introduced within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a fundamental prerequisite for the enjoyment of rights and freedoms by young generations has guided in last decades the full implementation of this legal instrument.

According to the holistic approach enshrined in the UN Convention, which is the most signed and ratified document among the UN core treaties pertaining to the international human rights law in force, the recognition of children's right to express their views, to be heard and properly taken into account and to actively participate in decision-making processes that directly affect them has also impacted on their exercise of citizenship rights. The personal accountability of children, as individuals and groups, to contribute for their economic, social and cultural growth in a safe environment entails the development of their capabilities in order to be factually engaged as independent actors also within an urban context (Ward 1978; Boyden and Holden 1991; Bartlett et al. 1999; Driskell 2002, Freeman and Tranter 2011).

This assumption has promoted the formulation of a proper vision of the UN Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) to involve young generations in the elaboration and implementation of urban strategies, policies and actions to improve their living conditions and to

encourage their learning path towards intercultural dialogue and inclusive social relationships.

On a general note, the Organization has provided for a very interesting urban agenda through the collaboration with UN-HABITAT within the project devoted to *Urban Policies and the Right to the City: Rights, responsibilities and citizenship*, with the ultimate aim to promote inclusive cities and give beneficial opportunities to all citizens, young generations included.

The project was focused on the basic distinction between the formal citizenship, as a complementary set of rights directly interrelated to the nationality status and providing for the enjoyment of the right to the city, and the substantive citizenship that is the proper exercise of the urban citizenship rights through the active and democratic participation to decision-making processes at the city level (Dikeç and Gilbert 2002; Brown et al. 2008, McCann 2002). The full participatory approach deserves both rights and duties on the part of citizens and city governmental administrations, since they are all responsible for sharing the public space, developing urban policies and adopting beneficial measures at the urban scale.

So far the right to the city and the rights in the city were elaborated in a practical perspective throughout the project, firstly by defining the key contents of the city roadmap by urban administrators in a transparent, equal and efficient manner for a reasonable allocation of financial resources and a profitable delivery of services in favour of vulnerable categories. This objective could be pursued only by encouraging a mutual and fruitful dialogue with citizens, facilitating their participation to decision-making processes and calling for their basic needs to release proper assistance and support. Furthermore administrators should be aware about the great potential of economic, social and cultural diversity within their cities to boost for multicultural knowledge and learning and to counter poverty and urban insecurity.

The project has outlined some recommendations to be adopted by city administrators to ensure the enjoyment of the right to the city in applying urban policies. The overview about legislations, local commitments and interventions carried out at the city level is a precondition to work in the same direction by reinforcing the existing framework and its potentialities. This framework should be enhanced through a reinvigorating and inclusive city approach based on the promotion and protection of human rights of citizens as well as on the safeguard of fundamental values such as democracy, rule of law, good governance, equity, equality, social justice, diversity and cultural pluralism. All actions aimed at supporting the inclusive approach should be based on large systematic and possibly institutionalised consultations with individuals and groups within communities, also to overcome possible

obstacles for the implementation of the right to the city, such as the different concept of the city and the urban inhabitant and the need to gradually adapt the city agenda according to local communities' needs.

The creation of ad hoc mechanisms to promote urban inclusion so that the full enjoyment of the right to the city is ensured has been at the core of an initiative related to UNESCO action which focused *inter alia* on young generations: the adoption in 1990 of the Charter of Educating Cities. This Charter is based on three key-themes: the right to an educating city, that means that city administrators and citizens have the duty and the right to access to education and to promote individual and collective cultural growth; the commitment of the city to preserve and to facilitate the full access to its cultural identity for all; the accessibility of cultural services for city inhabitants, in particular for young generations.

The last theme is fully in line with the content of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, referring to the recognition of children and adolescents as right-holders of civil and political rights, including their right of participation to public decision-making and activities according to their level of maturity. Not in all countries youngster have been placed next to adults and the city dimension could be convenient for the creation of urban platforms to experiment the right to the city and participatory opportunities, to enhance civil, ethical and cultural values for and with young generations, to involve them in representative mechanisms and processes (Mohamed and Wheeler 2001; Camino and Shepherd 2002; Michelsen et al. 2002; Youniss et al. 2002).

The most relevant principles of the Charter concerning the role and contribution from young generations are the following:

10. The municipal administration must equip the city with spaces, facilities and public services that are suitable for the personal, social, moral and cultural development of all its inhabitants, paying special attention to children and youth.

13. The municipality will assess the impact of all cultural, recreational, informative, advertising-related and other types of activities offered, and of the realities which make a direct unmediated impression on children and youth. In such cases, the municipality will take non-authoritarian action in an attempt to provide a rational explanation or interpretation. The municipality will ensure that a balance is struck between the need for protection and the need for the autonomy necessary for discovery. The municipality will also provide educational forums and debate, including exchange programs between cities, to enable all inhabitants to fully accept the changes generated by the urban environment.

14. The city will make an effort to provide parents with the education they need to help their children mature and make the city their own in a spirit of mutual respect. In the same vein, projects will be developed for educators in general and people (private individuals, or public service personnel) who undertake educating functions often without being aware they are doing so. The educating city will also assure that the police and civil protection forces that depend directly upon the municipality act in concert with these proposals.

These principles are quite explanatory about potential policies and measures to be promoted in order to grant a comprehensive child-friendly participatory approach in the enjoyment of the right to the city.

In the same view the Organization has tackled the citizenship rights of young generations in the 2002 last edition of the Growing up in Cities Project, based on the great potentiality of children's knowledge for the improvement of urban life, later completed by the release in 2008 of a Manual for Participation Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth. The original idea behind the project was conceived in the '70s with the aim to involve youth in the evaluation of the urban environment where they live and to formulate targeted recommendations for its economic, social, environmental and cultural advancement (Lynch 1977; Chawla 1997, 2002; Chawla and Driskell, 2006).

The participation of children and adolescents aged between 8 and 18 in developing and developed countries all over the world was carried out by a direct involvement to identify the pros and cons and provide for contributions impacting on policies, programmes and urban places accessed by young generations. Some common observations emerged following the implementation of the project such as the scarce attention devoted by adults to young generations' issues and priorities, the evaluation capacities of children and adolescents to suggest factual interventions at the urban level, the best operational methodologies to involve young generations and to listen to their voices in decision-making processes affecting their lives.

The partnership between adults and youth for the urban community development has been conceptualized, structured and operationalised in the projects' Manual. Apart from comprehensible divergences among all the urban settings covered by the project, comments and insights provided by the involved young generations have showed how, through their direct participation, common and shared actions could be implemented, even if customized to meet local and urban needs. Mutual trust and open communication between adults and youth is the key and successful factor of this complex action: moving from the intuitive and experienced knowledge of youth and ensuring the right to be heard by public city administrators

for the adoption of decisions affecting the quality of their lives, young generations have been involved in developing policies and programmes at the urban level. Tested approaches and methods have influenced the adoption of a common model of listening, finding common grounds and languages, calling for critical thinking and evaluation, demanding for more awareness and collective problem-solving, enhancing full engagement in constructive community change. So far, a common framework for building institutional mechanisms and planning participatory projects has also been offered, based on young generations' analysis and prioritization of their needs and related appropriate and effective responses from urban administrators. A successful project demands for adequate staff, trusted mutual relationships among all the actors involved, good project management according to adaptable methodologies to take action in line with youth ideas and inputs, creation of networks to improve young generations' participation.

The UNESCO vision to ensure the enjoyment of citizenship rights and to promote the urban education of young generations has been very much appreciated and the high percentage of positive results gained in the aforementioned project testifies the validity of the working approach of the Organization (UNESCO, Growing up in Cities Project and UNESCO, Urban Policies and the Right to the City: Rights, responsibilities and citizenship).

3. Urban Participation of Young Generations: the UNICEF Child-friendly Cities Initiative

If in relation to the UNESCO action in this field the key-contents of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have been mentioned, they have to be considered as a consolidated legal cornerstone within the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) also in the view to strengthen the right of participation of young generations in local governance settings.

The need for an update to these contents has been promoted in the last years by the UN Committee in charge for monitoring and assessing the full implementation of the Convention in the State Parties. In particular the adoption of the General Comment No. 20 in 2016 by the UN CRC Committee was focused on the relevant reasoning about the participatory rights enshrined in the Convention, well beyond the main reference to the right under exam in Article 24 (UN CRC Committee General Comment No. 20).

If it is true that child participation is not only a right itself but also a means for the enjoyment of other rights, the relevance of the participatory approach is out of doubt. The advocacy for children's right and the full involvement of youth in the development, implementation and monitoring

of legislative measures, policies and programmes, basic and targeted services at the central and – above all – at the local level is an essential precondition for State Parties to be in compliance with UN Convention provisions (Zeldin et al. 2000). On a complementary side the role of young generations and their active participation to decision-making processes affecting directly their lives means also to hold public authorities accountable for responsive local policies, accessible high-quality basic services, efficient use of local budgets to respond to young generations priorities (Burman 1996; Connell et al. 2000; Irby et al. 2001).

Along these lines, among several relevant activities carried out since its establishment, UNICEF has launched in 2004 the Child-friendly Cities Initiative. According to some projections, by 2050 nearly 70% of children globally will live in cities, where they would be highly exposed to suffering from urban economic poverty and social exclusion and would not be in the conditions to meet their survival needs nor to develop their abilities and to improve their life quality (UNICEF, Child-friendly Cities Initiative).

The Initiative refers to the central guiding principles of the UN Convention, even if revisited in a local perspective: the non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the inherent right to life, survival and development, the respect for the views of the child. Moreover other principles have been included due to their relevance mainly in the urban setting: equity and inclusion, in relation to the urban barriers that specific categories of children and adolescents could meet in their daily lives; public participation in an open, shared and common space where also young citizens could be held accountable for the decisions and actions impacting on their lives; accountability and transparency on behalf of public local authorities in the identification of public spaces and the definition of local processes to actively involve young generations; effectiveness and responsiveness in the elaboration and adoption of legislative and administrative measures to ensure the promotion and protection of children's rights and in response to their needs; adaptability and sustainability, to let the decision-making process and related implementing steps enough flexible to anticipate and respond in a sustainable manner to changing circumstances.

The two pillars of the Initiative are the goals and results pursued and different kinds of complementary strategies to achieve them.

The goals and results are the following:

1. Every child and young person is valued, respected and treated fairly within their communities and by local authorities.

Every child and young person has their voice, needs and priorities heard and taken into account in public laws, policies, budgets, programmes and decisions that affect them.

Every child and young person has access to quality essential social services (this includes healthcare, education, nutrition support, early childhood development and education, justice and family support).

Every child and young person lives in a safe, secure and clean environment (this includes protection from exploitation, violence and abuse, access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, safe and child-responsive urban design, mobility and freedom from pollution and waste).

Every child and young person has opportunities to enjoy family life, play and leisure (this includes social and cultural activities, and safe places to meet their friends and play).

At the same time, to achieve sustainable goals and results for children at the urban level a child-friendly city must adopt several strategies.

Firstly, systematic and disaggregated data collection on the state of children is fundamental for the development of urban child-centred policies. This is the precondition to further monitoring, measuring and evaluating the impact results in favour of young generations. Indeed this approach will lead to identify possible knowledge gaps that could hamper evidence-based policy making as well as to correct reasonable inequalities within the urban context. The full involvement of young generations has an added value for an independent and complete assessment, to be translated in easy-to-read reporting.

Secondly, all the concerned public and private stakeholders working at the city level should be aware about children's rights in order to understand young generations and to put their rights in practice. This means promoting a comprehensive advocacy to inform actions impacting at the legislative, political, programming and financial levels. To this scope proper tools have to be adopted to reinforce urban capabilities to deal with and for children, i.e. in the education and information fields.

The commitment of local administrators to enact child-friendly laws and policies is another relevant strategy: so far city authorities are required to protect and promote children's rights according to their capacities and their autonomy level in implementing and properly assessing child policies. To do this the compilation of a city-wide strategic and politically endorsed action plan is the very innovative component of the Initiative: local administrators are called to define objectives, activities, parameters

and assessment indicators, budget allocation for the areas included in it as well as accountability for its implementation. It also demands for coherence at the vertical level – i.e. vis-à-vis central governmental authorities – and horizontally, that is involving all competent offices and departments of the local administration. The budget allocation is essential for a child-friendly city and should be detailed and accurate since the pilot programming phase and during the final evaluation to assess concrete and equal impact on children.

As already mentioned the active participation of young generations to share their views and experiences with child-friendly cities' administrators is a key-point: children and adolescents have to provide, through formal and informal channels, their ideas, suggestions, concerns about the access and effective use of services and facilities at the city level (HoSang 2003; Lewis-Charp et al. 2003).

For the success of the Initiative, a final strategy relates to the opportunity to promote cross-sectoral coordination, leadership and targeted partnerships involving both public and private stakeholders to plan, manage and achieve positive results in terms of child-friendly legislations, policies and programmes at the city level.

Within the Initiative framework the creation of a child-friendly city model has been proposed, to be adapted to the local/urban context according to the political and administrative background, the percentage of children and adolescents living in the area, the availability of budget resources. To guide the potential child-friendly cities, UNICEF has released an *ad hoc* Handbook so that local referees are put in charge for adopting common criteria, identifying goals and results, defining possible strategies as well as the city-wide strategic action plan, implementing them and monitoring and assessing the related impact on young generations (UNICEF, Child-friendly Cities and Communities Handbook).

Apart from the model, the participatory approach should result in age-appropriate and qualitative standards. This encompasses the reliability of basic preconditions that make the urban context a child-friendly city: improved urban infrastructures dealing with the high increase of city populations so that no threats could be met by children in accessing to basic services; better transportation systems to facilitate safe and affordable interconnections among children and with their communities; accessible and adequate health and education basic services, especially for poor and vulnerable children; countering insecurity and unsafety of children caused by multiple social and environmental factors to let them access to urban growth opportunities, facing risks and hazards such as violence, exclusion, exploitation and abuse; enhancing all digital connectivity means to facilitate

exchange of information, participation and inclusion in discussions to impact on the life of children as urban citizens.

All the observations above reported demonstrate the willingness to translate the UN CRC Convention into local governmental processes by applying the cities' proposed model in all kinds of communities, to be properly adapted to urban young generations' needs and to promote their highest quality of life.

4. The City Setting: Role and Contribution of Young Generations. How to Protect and Promote Children's Rights in the Council of Europe Framework

Within the Council of Europe framework, the new challenges of the protection and promotion of children's rights have been clearly outlined in the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), adopted in 2016, which deals with the reinforcement of basic principles through policies, actions and measures in specific working areas (CoE Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021).

The local dimension of the Strategy and the role and contribution of young generations by accessing, participating and fully enjoying their rights and freedoms is reported in the working area concerning the fight against every form of violence against children. To eliminate 'violence against children in all settings and in particular in the fields of education, media, justice, equality, family, migration, alternative care, and children with disabilities' CoE Member States are required to adopt integrated national strategies to prevent, address and respond to this challenge. This goal should be pursued if *inter alia* a comprehensive data collection is put into place at the national, regional and local level, to assess preliminarily the phenomenon and to provide for ad hoc mechanisms and services to properly tackle it.

On its part the Organization has stressed the importance to reinforce its internal framework, including the CoE Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the CoE Conference of INGOs, and the Commissioner for Human Rights, for a targeted delivery of the Strategy.

Along this line the Organization has already dealt with the risks to children's well-being and development at the city level, as explored in the Resolution 258(2008) of the above mentioned Congress of Local and Regional Authorities titled 'Child in the city' (CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Resolution 258(2008)).

It is a matter of fact that the urban setting is partially apt to facilitate the full enjoyment of children's rights in an inclusive manner and this has impacted, in past years, on the family choice to leave cities for alternative and more comfortable settings to raise children. Therefore a shift in the approach in the local management is needed, in order to put at the centre the role and contribution of young generations to encourage their interaction and experience in the public space and to improve facilities' access and make the quality of life really sustainable. This also means to involve youth in urban spatial planning consultations to reinforce their citizenship in designing and planning child-friendly cities.

The basic observation that lies behind the writing of the Resolution 258(2008) is a positive attempt to change the urban vision in support of young generations. This entails the creation of green options for accommodation and transportation and the identification of public and private spaces, schools included, for stepping-up safe children mobility as well as recreational and play activities inspired by civic awareness and environmental education.

On the other side the Council of Europe has supported another complementary vision to protect children's right at the local level, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities being in charge for the adoption of the Pact of Towns and Regions to stop sexual violence against children within the CoE ONE is FIVE campaign (CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Pact of Towns and Regions to stop sexual violence against children).

This Pact is based on a common reflection over feasible strategies, policies and measures to achieve the key-aim of the campaign and it resulted into a proper toolkit addressed to regional and local authorities to be guided in the prevention of abuses, the protection of victims, the prosecution of offenders, always granting the active involvement and participation of children and adolescents. The establishment of targeted child-friendly services, to be released by ad hoc centres, is one of the core actions of the Pact and it has been devoted particularly to categories of children such as refugees and migrants, unaccompanied or separated from their families.

Indeed the importance of diversity as an essential resource in urban contexts to deal with human rights challenges by minimising negative effects and reinforcing economic, social and cultural benefits for all the inhabitants in a community is another goal included in the CoE Intercultural Cities Programme and the related Medium-term strategy (2016-2019). The Programme aims at reinforcing the cities' capacity building and participatory approach to involve citizens in the design, implementation and evaluation

of local policies and measures based on the twofold principles of diversity and inclusion.

As for the young generations the Programme calls families, teachers and educators to work together to encourage sustainable intercultural changes in the diversity management and for the integration among citizens and foreign children at the city level. The Organization has provided interesting tools for applying intercultural integration in practice by local administrators with the ultimate intent to set up a local governance model to empower citizens in expressing their talents and skills within the urban dimension. Again, the sharing of public spaces is the starting point to confront ideas and to promote intercultural interaction, also among young generations. A first assessment has showed positive results in tackling the intercultural cities gap, encompassing divergences in demographic evolution of several concerned cities as well as relevant inputs in terms of policies, institutional frameworks and public-private partnerships, good behavioural attitudes' change in the implementation of the strategy and for the sustainability of the Programme.

5. The EU Urban Agenda: How to Implement it in the View of Countering Children Poverty

The relevance and potentiality of the urban context within the EU system has been strongly recognised through the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam, which was agreed by the EU Member States in May 2016 and has provided for the so called Urban Agenda for the EU.

This Agenda could be considered as a significant opportunity to reinforce the linkage between national and local authorities to cooperate for the development and implementation of EU policies in the multilevel perspective. It is a voluntary strategy addressed to local administrators in order to work for a comprehensive and integrated vision for the 'well-managed, socially inclusive and safe, resilient, resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable as well as economically prosperous cities of all sizes' as suggested by UN-HABITAT (EU Commission, Report from the Commission to the Council on the Urban Agenda for the EU, COM(2017)657 final, 20 November 2017, 2).

Right now all EU cities have to confront with global challenges, such as unemployment, migration, impacts of disasters exacerbated by climate change, water scarcity, sustainable production and consumption or biodiversity loss, grey and black economy, but also with local criticalities depending upon complex urban economic, social and environmental

development processes (Blanc et al 1994; Dowbor 1996). At the same time cities are places where most of the EU population, including young generations, live and get into closer contact with local administrators, demanding for policies and measures that respond to their needs and impact positively on their daily lives.

Therefore the EU Urban Agenda has been compiled to represent the guiding document for urban policy initiatives, as suggested by several ‘partnerships’: they are groups of experts from the EU Commission, the Member States, cities and other concerned stakeholders, involved in designing, monitoring, assessing and cooperating for the achievement of twelve priority themes, as identified in the Pact of Amsterdam. These partnerships have been established between May 2016 and June 2017 and worked on the following areas – as already included in the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: inclusion of migrants and refugees; urban poverty; housing; air quality; circular economy; jobs and skills in the local economy; climate adaptation; energy transition; sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions; urban mobility; digital transition; innovative and responsible public procurement. Their objective was to assess factual gaps and to recommend targeted, concrete and reliable interventions as outlined in an ad hoc action plan to be consensually adopted after two years since the beginning of their work. Some intermediate evaluations steps were held to exchange information and practices on a dedicated website (*Futurium*), completed by the organization of several workshops and an high level biannual conference (Cities’ Forum) by the EU Commission.

Among the partnerships, the Urban Poverty one has pointed out the main objective ‘to reduce poverty and improve the inclusion of people in poverty or at risk of poverty in deprived neighbourhoods’ (Urban Poverty Partnership, Urban Poverty Partnership Final Action Plan 2018, 3). Taking into account complementary factors that negatively impact on urban development, such as unemployment, social exclusion, segregation and poverty, and that seriously affect an high percentage of European population living in urban areas, the partnership has thought over potential actions having a direct or indirect impact on how to deal with urban poverty. In line with the focused target of the Pact of Amsterdam concerning child poverty, the partnership has adopted a double approach: an area-based approach that means to identify and propose actions in predetermined spatial areas (the Urban Deprived Areas and Neighbourhoods – UDAN), and the people-based approach that leads to classify specific categories of individuals affected by urban poverty – children included. Furthermore two cross-cutting priorities were added: data collection to identify, measure, monitor and evaluate the urban poverty, and the access to local quality services and welfare.

So far children poverty was explored in detail: it is a matter of fact that children are one of the most vulnerable groups in EU cities and that a strong and comprehensive action is needed to tackle child poverty at the urban level.

The partnership has proposed the so called ‘Child Guarantee’ – Action 4, that is a set of realistic objectives and measurable targets to be explained in a child rights-based national plan or strategy for the fight against child poverty. The partnership was meant to guarantee demands for both a vertical approach to ensure multilevel policies and governance and an horizontal cooperative approach for cross-sectoral actions in the fields of education, health, housing, child care and nutrition. Due to lacking political and financial investments to counter child poverty in a structural and systematic manner, the first EU instrument addressed to Member States and, indirectly, to local authorities has been the 2013 Commission Recommendation on *Investing in Children, Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*: it asks EU Member States to ‘organise and implement policies to address child poverty and social exclusion, promoting children’s well-being, through multidimensional strategies’ in accordance with horizontal principles for a better governance facilitating policies’ implementation and optimal use of financial resources – i.e. the ESF for social inclusion and poverty, and three-key pillars: ‘Member States should act on namely access to adequate resources (acting on households’ income), access to affordable quality services (acting on the provision of services to children in the areas of ECEC, health, housing, education, care settings) and children’s right to participate (in recreational-sport-cultural activities and in decision making ‘that affects their lives’).

In line with the contents of the Recommendation, the partnership calls the EU Member States to involve all levels of government to tackle child poverty, in particular by mentioning local and urban authorities and related non-institutional stakeholders, as they will have a shared responsibility in applying the ‘Child Guarantee’ and should find corresponding and mutual competence to effectively contribute for its implementation. Meanwhile, as above reported, the commitment should be supported by adequate funding. Moving from the current availability of financial resources, a proposal to pre-assess the access to better and more targeted funding in the next EU Funds programming period 2020-2027 is needed. If the goal is to improve the overall efficiency of the EU public spending, the first elements of knowledge should be focused on how much EU Member States invest on and for children, by using national and European available funding. This could lead later to assess and prioritise children’s actions in the national budget planning moving from the assumption that the return on investment is supposed to be higher if it regards the early young generations and if it

will concretely give equal opportunities to all children in the long term, through the adoption of flexible mechanism to monitor and amend the use of financial budget to this scope.

Very closely to Action 4, the partnership has also proposed another intervention following the contents of the aforementioned 2013 Recommendation, Progress towards a directive on investing in children based on the recommendation investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage. The timeline of this process is fixed to 2022 and encompasses a reinforcement of the contents of the Urban Poverty action plan developed by the partnership for a more comprehensive, integrated, child-rights-based set of policy measures. This reinforcement will be represented by a preliminary detailed monitoring of the national reforms to empower investments' impact countering child poverty, completed through the compilation of a targeted directive under the EU social rights pillar.

In the release of the Urban Poverty partnership final version of the action plan in 2018, the complementary relevance of the above mentioned actions, also in relation to Action 3 (Developing data on urban poverty at the EU level), has been reiterated in order to provide for comprehensive and harmonised data on the situation of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in EU cities, encourage concrete investments that benefit children and young generations in Europe through a more rational use of national and EU funding, promote the legislative process aimed at introducing a directive to break the children cycle of disadvantage in Europe. In this context, technical cooperation has also been mentioned in the definition and adoption of proper indicators at the national, regional and local level to assess general and specific needs of children living in urban areas, stressing the opportunity of their direct involvement and active participation to the development of these indicators.

6. Some Considerations about the Proposed Models to Improve the Protection and Promotion of Children Rights within the Urban Context

Local and city targeted programmes and interventions by the aforementioned intergovernmental governance systems – UNESCO, UNICEF, Council of Europe, European Union – clearly show how different but complementary approaches are crucial to push for a global commitment to identify and implement the best set of analytical and practical tools to help sub-state institutional and private stakeholders in improving the protection and promotion of children's rights within urban contexts.

This emerges through a range of issues which are strongly interrelated: indeed they affect the basic living conditions of youth at the city level as well as the full enjoyment of children's rights and the opportunities to access to essential services to advance in their growing development in an effective and positive manner.

On a more general note, apart from the succession of the analysis offered in the former paragraphs, moving from the contribution and concrete programmes and measures introduced by UNICEF in this field, we could affirm that it could surely reflect the holistic approach of the UN Convention on the rights of the child. Along these lines the Fund has deserved attention to the complexity of the rights and duties enshrined in it to facilitate the implementation of children's rights also within the urban context as such. This vision encompasses the powerfulness of the Convention due to its potential to be applied elsewhere from the place where young people are located.

Meanwhile the recognition of young generations as entitled to exercise their citizenship rights and in taking part to local decision-making processes is a fundamental requirement that remarks the status of children and adolescents as right-holders as well as duty-bearers, as provided by UNESCO. The membership and active participation in a community, from the family to the school setting until the widest social context, has been consolidated after the adoption and entry into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The strong linkage between an early and comprehensive knowledge and the accountability of young generations to effectively practice their citizenship status is a key-precondition for their involvement in the public space well beyond the maturity age.

The CoE and EU approaches suggested a different but complementary perspective in dealing with the promotion and protection of children rights within the urban context. The former devoted its action to prevent and countering situations where the youth might be put at risk, the city setting could result in dangerous circumstances involving young generations and jeopardizing their safety and personal security directly and indirectly. The latter focused on one of the primary root causes negatively impacting on the well-being and development of children and adolescents: urban poverty. This concept has assumed a common significance both in developed and developing countries where lack of economic, social and environmental resources affect immediately young generations and create undeniable under-development effects, also destabilising any hope of youth for their future.

7. Children Urban Inclusiveness: Monitoring and Evaluation Models under Discussion in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an Alternative Approach for the Enjoyment of Children Rights at the City Level

Up until now the overview concerning the contribution from several intergovernmental systems has showed different local and city targeted programmes and interventions to help urban administrators in improving the protection and promotion of children's rights. Within the UN system a further aspect is under exam aimed at suggesting new methodologies to monitor and evaluate current safeguarding gaps, creative use of public spaces and the young generations' vision about their cities as a setting driving an high level of human rights standards in line with the contents of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to the most recent UN estimates more than half of the global population live in cities or urban areas, and by 2030 the percentage will be at least 60%, that is from 2.5 to 3 billion peoples (Steels 2015).

This confirms the trend of urbanization in almost all the geographic areas and countries of the world, therefore, during the drafting of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a specific goal was formulated on this topic: make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The Sustainable Development Goal – SDG – 11 is focused on the role of cities as powerful economic hubs, driving innovation and dealing with inclusive challenges. At the same time cities could suffer from excessive development and consumption to the point of facilitating social inequalities and exclusion, extreme poverty and unemployment, inadequate housing, poor environmental conditions. The Goal demands local authorities to elaborate and adopt integrated policies and programmes for an effective sustainable urban development.

The urban dimension could be interpreted in a twofold manner.

Firstly, it could be combined with other SDGs to grant a complementary and mutually reinforcing nexus along the holistic and integrated vision of the 2030 Agenda. When the urbanization process is not properly managed several direct and indirect effects arise on poverty and security tenure (SDG1), on health conditions of populations (SDG3), on scarce access to education (SDG4) and to water and sanitation (SDG6), on the plans to build resilient infrastructure and push for a sustainable industrialization (SDG9), on the need to grant sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG12), on altering good governance (SDG16).

Secondly, it consists of 10 targets and 15 related indicators, which require for coordinated actions at local, national and global levels, to be monitored and assessed starting from the city level with the multiple purposes to eliminate slums' areas, to provide for accessible and affordable transportation systems, to increase participation in urban governance, to enhance cultural and heritage preservation, to tackle urban resilience depending upon climate change, to better manage urban environments, to facilitate the access to safe and secure public spaces for all, and to improve urban management through the adoption of appropriate urban policies and regulations.

If we compare this new approach with the models examined, in particular as it concerns the suggestion on how to deal with positive and critical challenges to ensure the promotion and protection of children's rights within the urban context, the opportunity emerges to claim for some proposed monitoring and evaluation tools to be adapted to the new UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development framework.

If we consider the UNESCO Charter of Educating Cities principles, making reference to the role and action promoted by municipal administrations in order to encourage an higher child-friendly participatory approach within city spaces, there are many suggestions on the common responsibilities of local bodies, families and children and adolescents in promoting and enjoying the right to the city; at the same time the proposed methodology, as introduced in the Manual for Participation *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth*, is another relevant tool to be endorsed to rebuild institutional local mechanisms and to outline participatory projects involving young generations within the city setting.

In the UNICEF Child-friendly Cities Initiative two issues could suggest a proper implementation of the new international development cooperation goals: the request for a systematic and disaggregated data collection on the state of children at the national, sub-national and local level, i.e. to determine and implement urban-child-centred policies. This issue should be complemented by the adoption of common criteria and targeted city-wide strategic action plans, as suggested in the UNICEF *ad hoc* Handbook guiding the elaboration of a child-friendly city model.

Also the CoE Intercultural Cities Programme might be useful in advising how to deal with the challenges of intercultural integration processes at the city level, as it proposes interesting tools to be adopted by local administrators and involving families, teachers, educators and, of course, children and adolescents to set up a local governance model managing the diversity and encouraging the expression of youth talents and skills.

Finally, the EU best practices could surely be endorsed within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development framework in relation to the 'Child

Guarantee’ – Action 4 as a key-tool of the EU Urban Agenda. Indeed, it provides for a set of realistic objectives and measurable targets to be explained in a child rights-based national plan or strategy for the fight against child poverty. So far the relevant link between SDGs 11 and 1 could ask for the compilation and implementation of multilevel and multi-sectoral policies – i.e. in the fields of education, health, housing, child care and nutrition – also at the local/city level.

The proposed models of intergovernmental governance systems dealing with the promotion and protection of children rights constitute different but complementary ways to monitor and evaluate the participation and inclusiveness of young generations in the urban context. Turning out from the proposed models and seeking for an alternative one, mainly based on the new integrated vision offered by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focusing on the very ground level, that is the access to public spaces, it provides that some additional benefits could descend especially for young generations which are called to contribute through innovation, creativity and exchange of ideas and to be an active part of intercultural processes for inclusive experiences. The recognition of urban public spaces as areas where the accomplishment of the three pillars of the human sustainability – economy, environment and society – has informed and will continue to inform, not only their open accessibility, but also a variety of uses by all right holders, young generations included. This means that they could be redesigned and rebuilt as cultural hubs, fostering diversity and promoting social, health and educational cohesion within the community.

To this scope a mainstreaming monitoring and evaluation approach, which is based mainly on the collection and measurement of disaggregated data encompassing different parameters such as gender, youth, disability, is required; these data could be reported also in relation to national poverty trends.

When we refer to SDG11.7, which introduces the target ‘By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities’, different parameters might be used to this scope, as proposed by UN-HABITAT.

Firstly, a correct definition of the city and its built-up area has been considered as the key priority to collect data. Then, possible options to measure the access to public space have been debated: for example it could be monitored and assessed through the safety, usability, affordability of the area from women, youth and persons with disabilities, but also checking the availability and spending of public funding for maintenance and restoration of public spaces by public and/or private urban stakeholders.

Furthermore the inclusivity indicator could be adopted. A suitable model is also represented by the mainstreaming approach used by UN-HABITAT within the City Prosperity Initiative, which is based on the measurement on the city prosperity level according to six parameters: productivity, infrastructure development, quality of life, equity and social inclusion, environmental sustainability, urban governance and legislation. The social vision of urban spaces as interactive public areas where young generations could be gathered and share their views is the attempt to reclaim and make them more human. The human societal indicator could be another tool to assess if public spaces are dynamic and not anonymous, promoting positive human relationships. It could be linked to the number of urban areas devoted to community cohesion, civic empowerment and contribution for decision-making processes lead by local administrators. On the other side, in order to measure the progressive advancement of urban spaces in an unbalanced manner, also in respect to private areas, is relevant to examine the real impact or urbanization and possible negative and unsustainable expansion also in an environmental perspective. Public child-friendly urban spaces are required to increase social cohesion, to improve human exchange and to create permanent networks with and for young generations.

Further debates under the leadership of the UN High Level Panel Forum – the body in charge for the global implementing commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – will provide for useful and interesting insights on this topic in the months to come.

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