

Communal parking is discouraged, if unavoidable they should be kept of the streets in well lit private, secure areas open to natural surveillance and in small groups, so that occupants can become familiar with the other car owners and notice intruders

#### 4. Conclusion

The manual prepared by the Design Group however promotes very closed types of housing estates, for example *cul de sacs* – groups of buildings with only one entrance or exit, only one of the possible urban layouts, thus unnecessarily intervening in the choice of urban layout as well. Security is an important feature of settlements, but understanding of security is also an element of culture, customs and behaviour patterns, differing from country to country and even between places.

Whether the number of burglaries into flats and houses, muggings or car theft since the beginning of the campaign decreased, we don't know ...

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#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Secured by design is the copyright of the campaign run by the Chief Police Officers Union and Design Group. Granting of a certificate implies concordance given by the Police, that the building is designed according to security standards. The material presented in the article is a selection of measures collected in the „Victim of burglary folder“ prepared by the Thames Valley Police.
- <sup>2</sup> Newman describes the state of environment as defensible, nevertheless the effects of building a housing estate primarily based on individual fears or e.g. collective paranoia can be counterproductive. Defensible certainly doesn't mean the construction of „modern“ fortresses, bunkers etc., but implies surveillance of open spaces, correct design of streets, pedestrian paths and cycling routes, adequate positioning of entrances, simple recognition of spaces and above all, recognising ones neighbours.

#### Illustrations:

**Figure 1:** The logo

**Figure 2:** Prospect issued by the Police Design Group

**Figure 3:** The checklist for secure design

**Figure 4:** The basic security points from the checklist

Mojca GOLOBIČ

## Children in the city

„Ljubljana“

(The answer of an eleven years old schoolchild to an interview question about his favourite playing place).

#### Abstract

*Child's play is a spatial and social activity, its contents and course being closely related to the whole of the child's living environment. Spatial limitation of playing in formal children's playgrounds is in contradiction with what the freedom of choice and a possibility to shape one's own environment mean to children. Children tend to play everywhere and anywhere. In urban areas children like choosing informal semi-public and public areas – such as streets, pavements, driveways or small green patches – for their play. Regardless, the fact that space is used by children differently than by adults, such planning could improve the quality of the environment also for the majority of other users.*

### Children understand and use space differently than adults

The needs of children and their relationship with the environment differ from the needs of adults. Children's functional and contextual knowledge about the environment exceeds the level of their understanding of configuration(1); this means that space and spatial elements are perceived by children primarily through the possibilities they offer, i.e. in the utilitarian context. A certain place is not recognized by children as a park, a playground, a garage, etc. It is rather seen as a place with various playing (climbing, running, hiding, sliding) possibilities. Fences are not perceived as boundaries or obstacles but are used as playing props.

The environs of home are especially important to a small child. Until children are around five years old, their emotional ties, their feeling of belonging to a certain place and their sentiment of local identity are connected with home. When children are growing older, they seek their places further away from home. Diversity and the possibility to choose have an important role in this process. With the child's research, the range of his/her space is increasing in terms of size as well as differentiation. To schoolchildren, playing means primarily research and the expansion of spatial and social environment. The need to deepen understanding of the latter appears approximately at the age of 12. Besides the environs of home, streets have an important role, offering possibilities for the activities that enhance child's flexibility, expand his range and increase the number of his/her experience and contacts with other children. The search for and the creation of places is one of the most important qualities of a child's relationship with the environment, while the freedom of choice and releasing of creative energy of individuals as well as groups are of key importance for child's individualization. Therefore, large importance is attributed to places without a precisely defined use and playing props – these places are considered real „free“ places. Their attractiveness is in their openness and anonymity which stimulates

invention of new games. The precondition for this is the lack of signs that the area belongs to or is controlled by adults. The other condition is flexibility of the environment and accessibility of „construction elements“. Children shape space in a way that they find and create a sequence of spaces interconnected in a network of paths largely independent of paths used by adults. They frequently use narrow passages unknown to adults, leading to hidden, private places, or passages crossing the areas not used by adults. In creating spaces, children develop various relationships with the environment: for example, they avoid certain areas because they frighten them (derelict buildings, forests, attics, basements or garages during the night). At the same time, these areas can be the most attractive since their fearful properties – such as being abandoned or dark – offer countless possibilities to children’s imagination. Children also tend to name their favourite local spaces, rarely using general names of places. These names are usually descriptive or functional, such as a „barking dog house“ or a „sledding hill“ and refer to each child’s own experience.

Some areas, however, remain out of child’s reach. A busy road or a river can act as a physical obstacle which can not be crossed by a child, while other areas are off limits because they have been forbidden by parents. The fear of parents, resulting in limitation of child’s movement, has different reasons depending on the age of a child. It is mostly related to physical elements (i.e. a river or a street) in case of smaller children, while later parents are afraid of „bad influence“ from other children as well as adults. Children’s spatial range mostly depends on their negotiations with parents and not exclusively on their desires or parents’ orders (Golobič 96).

## 2. Open urban space for children

### 2.1 Private gardens

From the perspective of adult users, privacy is one of the most important factors determining satisfaction with one’s living environment: the more privacy, the better. The majority of the people no longer perceive their neighbourhood as a source of social contacts – they focus on work, family and interest activities. This relationship, however, is more complicated in the case of children. Their understanding of and the need for privacy are different since socializing and socialization are necessary components of healthy growing up and the child’s development. Children make a clear distinction between the need for privacy in terms of a lack of parents’ supervision and the need for the public – the company of children of the same age. Therefore, is a „house with a garden in a city’s suburb“ – a firmly established ideal living pattern among the Slovenes – also to the best benefit of children? To small children who are in an initial phase of acquiring cognitions about the world around them and nature, garden space is invaluable in helping them to gain understanding of the environment, not requiring parental attendance. However, when they grow up a little, playing in a home garden where they are alone and where there is not enough place for their favourite, motorically intensive activities, is not sufficient any more and they frequently feel isolated. At the same time, back yards do not provide privacy in a sense children perceive it, i.e. primarily without parental supervision. Outside back yards, alternatives are scarce in such settlements. Besides streets – which are dangerous – and other gardens – which are inaccessible – there are virtually

no common areas, especially not those children could take for their own. An important obstacle for children in the suburban environment is also dependence on parents in everyday transportation to school and to various „free time“ activities, including sports, language and other courses.

### 2.2 Children’s playgrounds

It is a bit different in settlements which are more densely built-up. In the majority of these so called „sleeping settlements“, the areas designed for children are limited to playgrounds which – for certain groups, especially younger children with smaller spatial range – are an entirely satisfactory, however not perfect solution. Such rigid and monofunctionally designed structures, planned for relatively homogenous age groups, can not be adapted to the dynamics of changing people’s needs. Areas which have lost a group of their initial users are deserted with no possibilities for their function to be changed. At the same time, however, there is a lack of space for new activities and needs. The most deprived is the group of younger teenagers who have difficulties in finding space for themselves in the settlements and are therefore frequently in conflict with other groups of users.

### 2.3 Public open areas

Although private gardens and children’s playgrounds equipped for specific activities are an important component of the child’s living environment, they fail to offer him/her several most important qualities of experiencing the environment, such as searching and creating spaces, the freedom of choice and the release of creative energy. This makes public areas an important component of the child’s environment. Areas without precisely defined function and with no playing props are considered real „free“ areas by children. Children are attracted by parking lots, stations, garages, shopping malls etc. These are considered attractive because they are open and anonymous which stimulates children to invent new games. Streets play an important role since they offer the possibilities to carry out some of the most popular activities, such as biking, rolling and skating. However, in such environments there is (at least it is perceived so) a higher degree of hazard in terms of traffic accidents or crime. This can mean that parents do not allow their children to leave their homes or at least not without supervision.

**Table 1:** Residential districts can be divided into four groups according to environmental possibilities for playing (Matthews 1992). Field 1 includes districts with numerous planned playgrounds and many possibilities for discovering individual places. Field 2 represents the lack of formal playgrounds, however, children there still have opportunities to play. Field 3 is characterized by newer residential districts where the environment is – in spite of several playgrounds – too sterile and uniform to attract children. In the last Field 4 there are areas without formal areas designated for children and also with no opportunities to discover places.

	Designated	
	+	-
+ Hidden	Field 1 ++	Field 2 +-
	Field 3 -+	Field 4 --

**Table 2: Places where children aged 9 – 12 play in urban areas**

	% England (according to Moore, 1986)	% Ljubljana (Golobič, 1996) <sup>2</sup>
parks, playgrounds, sports grounds	34	25
home and the environs (friends and relatives)	20	52
informal areas (construction sites, derelict areas)	13	–
streets, avenues, green areas, garages	12	20
covered areas – churches, clubs, stores	18	–
other – anywhere, outside one's place of residence	3	4

### 3. Where do children in Ljubljana play and why

A high percentage of children declaring private gardens to be their most frequent playing place (see Table 2) implies that gardens are obviously the most important place to play. However, if we connect this information with reasons (Table 3), it becomes obvious that children do not play there because gardens would especially attract them, and even less because they would have company there. Gardens are near their homes, parents let them go there and they don't have to cross roads or other obstacles. This is also the reason for large discrepancy among answers to the question where they play the most frequently (and why) and descriptions of their favourite playing places (Golobič, 96). The criteria for the most frequent playing place (close to home, permission from parents, no obstacles) differ substantially from the criteria for the favourite playing place. Regarding the criteria for the selection of a favourite place, there are two clearly distinctive groups of users among children. The first group almost exclusively refers to activities, while natural components of the environment seem important to the second group. The presence of other children, the size and safety are also mentioned frequently. In line with this, only 16 children mentioned home back yard as their favourite place, while the others chose public areas: sports grounds, platforms, school playgrounds, streets or parts of the city such as the platform in Republic square, Šuštarški bridge, places along the Ljubljanica river, etc. The Tivoli park (proximity) has a priority among public areas, followed by school playgrounds and streets. The percentage of children playing in children's playgrounds is almost negligible. They obviously outgrew them at this age since they do not provide possibilities for their favourite playing activities such as ball games, rolling, skating and biking.

Where should children therefore seek for their place? Home gardens are not available to everyone – besides, they are only a partial solution; children's playgrounds are boring and therefore not suitable for favourite games, while streets are off limits since they are dangerous. Due to the lack of other safe and suitable playing areas, children (more or less in line with parents' interests) spend time in back yards. The limi-

ting factor of free movement is also the closest playground, as well as the area where a child can be seen and heard. The presence of a well maintained playground gives parents a feeling that a child is safe; it also offers a child more playing freedom than a back yard. The generation of younger teenagers is the most disadvantaged regarding playing places. Regardless the fact that a large portion of their free time is devoted to various organized activities and additional education, freedom and spontaneous playing are still important components of their life in the open air. They are becoming increasingly mobile and their area is expanding. If the city does not offer them a suitable place, they try to appropriate it. The platform in Republic square, occupied by young „BMXs and SK8s“, is a good example. However, similar cases frequently cause conflicts and represent a hazard for children as well as for other users of space.

Desires expressed by children in the interview (Table 4) clearly reflect the situation in the city center and their playing needs. The most common was the desire for more greenery, followed closely by the desire for less cars. Children also wish to have a place for their favourite activities (rolling, skating, biking, basketball, football).

**Table 3: (Golobič 1996) Why do they play in these places?**

	(%)
because no road or other obstacle needs to be crossed	21
because it is close	20
because parents allow them to go there	19
because they can do different things	11
because there is a basketball/football court	5
because there are trees and bushes	5
because other children are there	4
because they are not supervised	4
because there is water	2
because there are a lot of good playing props	2
because there are also other people besides children	1
because there are no small children or older people	0
other	5

**Table 4: (Golobič 1996): What do children miss/wish the most in their environs?**

	(%)
more greenery (trees, bushes, grass)	22
less cars	21
areas for biking, skating, rolling	17
sports grounds (basketball, football, ...)	18
children's playground	5
they don't miss anything, they like it as it is	11
more and better playing props in their playground	3
other	3

#### 4. How to plan

Planning the environment for children should be carried out with children in mind, meaning that fundamental differences between the needs, affinities and behaviour of children and adults should be taken into consideration. These differences also require criteria and measures unlike these prevailing today in planning and management of public open areas in the city. Planning criteria are currently all too often subordinated to land uses that are expanding today in urban space from various reasons (motorized traffic and parking facilities, restaurant and pub gardens). As a result, other uses are more or less successfully pushed aside. Fundamental concepts of a „children friendly approach“ to urban open areas planning should include multifunctionality, increased possibilities for land use conversion and active participation and involvement of children in shaping the environment.

Some of the concrete suggestions:

- the possibility of changing – from simple moving of chairs to graffiti – adds an identity feeling to places;
- revitalization of nearby available informal areas such as courtyards, natural or close-to-nature areas in the city hinterland and their connection with the city;
- the improvement of connections between individual areas and interconnection of different types of open areas (traffic limitation, improvement of pedestrian zones and biking routes, establishment and expansion of green connections, building of bridges or underpasses for crossing obstacles);
- improved possibility of access where – apart from physical access – visual and symbolic access is also important (presence of signs indicating who is and who is not welcome in certain environment).

The improvement of open urban areas for children in terms of functional adaptations and equipping of new areas would in most cases mean higher quality also for other groups of users (the youth, families and the elderly)(3). Adaptation to changing needs and multifunctionality require extremely careful consideration of the compatibility of various uses. One of the most important criteria that needs to be taken into consideration is the safety criterium having at least two aspects in this context:

- The violence of individuals or groups towards other users is usually a consequence of appropriation of a public area. Sometimes smaller groups appropriate only a part of a territory or a time-based division is agreed on. Problems occur when freedom of one group becomes a threat to another due to the conflict of interest between groups and when violence is used to limit the access.
- Safety and accessibility of streets, pedestrian zones and city squares for children require certain traffic limitations. If individual parked cars can sometimes even be included in a game (hiding), continuous lines of parked cars make streets more dangerous due to reduced visibility. Noise and accident hazards also limit the possibilities for playing on pavements along busy streets and in their vicinity(4).

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#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Hart (1979) quotes for groups of reasons that make places attractive to children:
- the playing role;

- the social role (because someone lives there or because something is happening there);
- the commercial role (because something can be obtained there);
- aesthetic role (because it looks like that).

Younger children (pre-school and first grades) mention „commercial“ and „social“ roles more frequently, while the functional and sometimes – though much rarely – also „aesthetic“ role are emphasized by older children. Natural sites, hiding places and places with a good view are popular, while among the elements various forms of water and forest (although mostly forbidden), trees and fences prevail. The contact with nature has a special role in the child's world. Children find nature the most interesting when they can establish active relationship with it and when it is an integral component of their environment.

- <sup>2</sup> An interview about free time and playing habits of children in the city (how much, when, where and with whom they play, what are the criteria for choosing their playing place) and about their needs and desires. The interview included children and parents at the Tivoli playground, fourth grade schoolchildren (10 – 11 years old) at one of elementary schools in the Center as well as their parents and teachers.
- <sup>3</sup> This was also confirmed in the interview (Golobič 96) where the same answers (well managed open – above all green – areas and a higher level of traffic safety) were the most common when people were asked about the general quality of the living environment and about measures that would make the city more children friendly.
- <sup>4</sup> Roads with traffic density of over 600 vehicles per day are too dangerous and too noisy for any form of playing to take place. If the number exceeds 200 vehicles per hour, pavements along a road and its vicinity are unsuitable for playing as well. Apart from traffic density, the speed is also important – it has to be limited to 30-40 km/h and possibly assured with speed barriers (Grosse-Bachle et al., 1993).

*For literature and sources see page 37*

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## Planning and/or Project Approach to Organising Public City Space: several examples of squares in Croatia

### 1. Introduction

In the second half of the 20th century public urban space is undergoing a significant change. The functionalistic planning approach has contributed to a gradual loss and neglect of the most important values of urban space: the street, the square and the park; actually new terms, such as „pedestrian areas“ and „green areas“ are emerging. These surround „singularly“ placed buildings in the form of „dots“ or „sticks“ that define neither the street, nor the square or the park. These are ar-