



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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Integrating Children Into Urban Space Design: “Play Without Barriers” Project

The key of raising the quality of built environment is creating widespread urban awareness. The common tendency to see built environment education as only a part of vocational training is the main problem against broadening the urban culture. This attitude results in keeping social urban awareness at an unsatisfying level.

This study focusses on the importance of increasing urban awareness of urban youth and children while presenting an educational model named “Play Without Barriers” (PWB), which is designed also as a child participation project. PWB, which was brought to life in Bursa –Turkey, aimed to provide necessary knowledge for young urban dwellers in order to participate in the urban design consciously. The secondary goal of the project was to produce a preliminary design for a playground where disabled and non disabled children can play altogether.

Therefore the educational schedule was designed in order to give the proper theoretical and practical knowledge convenient for making children, the potential users of the playground, produce a design for their own needs.

The attendees of the project were chosen in order to design an inclusive playground in which all users could feel themselves involved. The participants were aged between 8-14 years old, as this group was the most appropriate group to learn and benefit from the built environment education, meanwhile being the potential age group to use the playground. Also all of them were either residents of the playground’s neighbourhood or students of the schools nearby. There were a total number of thirty participants six of whom were disabled. This participant profile added an integral perspective to the project that was considering the needs of different groups of children and promoting equality of opportunity.

The most distinctive aspect of PWB as a participatory built environment education program was building an urban space according to the design supplied from children’s own work. There were many shareholders of the project including city council, local municipality, NGO’s and academicians which made it possible to nourish different aspects of the PWB project. The academic background was useful for structuring the 28 weeks long educational phase. The existence of NGO’S and city council supported to construct a participatory approach and the local municipality worked as a facilitator in application phase of the project in the field both in administrative and financial terms. The PWB playground is projected to be completed at the end of April 2016.

From the beginning of the project PWB aimed to raise awareness on urbanism and citizenship, make urban youth take actions against urban issues related to the public life. PWB achieved most of these goals by strengthening the common life perception, making children and youth request their demands about built environment and present solutions for the problems they criticise, encouraging the participants to enhance civic engagement with the urban life.

It might be predicted that if there would be a chance to maintain this project with larger groups, the urban culture could be widely disseminated. In this case, with a more conscious urban community, it would be possible to retrieve a more qualified and sustainable built environment from which all citizens and institutions would benefit.