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PARKS FOR THE PLANET FORUM

The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play

Monday, March 20, 2017

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If you do intend to write for your own organization either while you're here or after the session, please make sure to observe the Chatham House Rule (information on which is in your Welcome Pack). If you're in any doubt, do not hesitate to contact Louise.

We'll be updating our website with summaries from the panels and interviews with our Fellows, all of which you can find on the session page: www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/574

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@JaimeZaplatosch #Running with my new friend @mariadekruif, exploring #Salzburg during the @SalzburgGlobal #SGSParks 8 miles/12.8k



Participants take part in a warm-up exercise at The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play

How children benefit from nature

Oscar Tollast

Around 50 experts from different generations and sectors convened at Salzburg Global Seminar to set a new agenda to promote access to nature for children and communities in growing urban centers. Participants are meeting at Schloss Leopoldskron for the third *Planet for the Parks Forum – The Child in the City: Health, Parks, and Play*. They will aim to propose strategic recommendations to be shared at the 15th World Congress on Public Health to be held next month in Australia.

Huge numbers of people have moved to urban areas around the world. Enough decades have gone by that people are beginning to sense they are missing something. Experts are looking at the positive experiences of nature and how that helps physical health. Research undertaken suggests that the more access children have to nature, the better for their health and wellbeing.

Speaking to participants, Richard Louv, author, and co-founder of the Children & Nature Network claimed children who play in natural play spaces tend to be more creative.

The tide is beginning to turn. Louv said, "There's far more interest in thinking about cities as places that connect people

to nature." He referred to research that indicated children in the US who spent a third of their day outdoors performed better regarding academic improvement than pupils in other schools who did not.

Louv said the barriers preventing children from going outdoors were "intense." Electronics are a barrier, he claimed, but more attention needs to be paid to other obstacles, such as fear of strangers. With so much tech entering children's lives, we need to balance that with nature.

Louv suggested the ideal student is the student who has both skills learned from the natural world and the virtual world. Environments are at risk of narrowing children's senses, making them feel less alive. Louv said, "We need to begin seeing this as a human right. Any less than that, it will not be taken seriously."

However, as long as environmental education is only spoken about by environmental educators, children lose out. Louv said, "We need a bigger boat." This conversation requires a bigger constituency.

When wider audiences start talk about a nature-rich future, people can begin to envisage what that might look like. Louv said there needed to be a social movement for balance, bringing conservatives and liberals together. The work without that larger social force "will be impossible," he warned.



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Martin Spray: “I am totally convinced about the need to invest in the education of younger generations”

Fellow discusses Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust and success of “Inspiring Generations” program

Andrea Abellán

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) stands for the protection of wetlands and nature areas with a growing focus on urban environments. Its chief executive, Martin Spray, runs the rule over nine wetland parks which cover some of the UK’s most diverse wilderness. He sat down with Salzburg Global’s Andrea Abellán while attending *The Child in the City: Health, Parks, and Play*, and discussed how he hopes to connect people to nature.

Martin Spray took over the work of the Wildfowl & Wetland Trust’s founder, Sir Peter Scott, in 1991. He pushed forward Scott’s “visionary ideas” to make them a reality. The painting, representing the founder’s “last great vision,” currently resides in Mr. Spray’s office and continues to inspire his work within the organization.

Before passing away, Scott illustrated his plans to build a wetland park in the heart of London. With more than 250,000 visitors a year, the London Wetland Centre has since become a reality. The Centre attracts visitors from all over the world, and imitations of its design are visible in countries such as China and Dubai.

Spray considers increasing the organization’s reach and influence his biggest success. He says, “I am especially proud of having helped to take the ideas of an incredible founder to a 21st-century context.” Mr. Spray highlights the role played by the big, diverse team working to make the WWT projects function. Professionals from a wide range of sectors – from researchers to marketing specialists – have joined forces to make natural areas attractive for civil society.

London’s Wetland Centre has a playground and educational materials where children can learn about more than 200 bird species visiting the site. It also has a cafe, a shop, and comfortable seating areas with panoramic views. Everything is planned to make a visitor’s experience enjoyable. Spray explains, “It’s all addressed to connect people to nature.”

Apart from work in its wetlands centre, the WWT takes an active role in training projects, restoring wetlands, and



water management-related initiatives. These efforts include working with sustainable drainage systems and natural water-treatment systems. It also runs the “Inspiring Generations” project, which enables around 60,000 students – most of whom from deprived areas – to visit Wetland Centres each year.

The program, funded by the bank, HSBC, educates both teachers and children by enhancing their environmental awareness. Spray confesses the project is something very close to his heart. He says, “I am totally convinced about the need to invest in the education of younger generations. They are who are going to take decisions in the future and who will take the world forward. This [idea] is the main focus of the Inspiring Generations program and also the main reason why I’m in this seminar.”

Spray became interested in nature at a very young age. Supporting his passion, his parents quickly became used to seeing him running after lizards, butterflies, and any other animal which crossed his path. After spending almost the first half of his career in the government sector, where he learned “a lot about management skills,” Spray spent several years working as a volunteer for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). From this volunteer work, he was offered a full-time position, which opened the doors to a career in the environmental sector. In 2013,

his work regarding nature conservation was recognized by Queen Elizabeth II, who awarded Spray a C.B.E, “Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.”

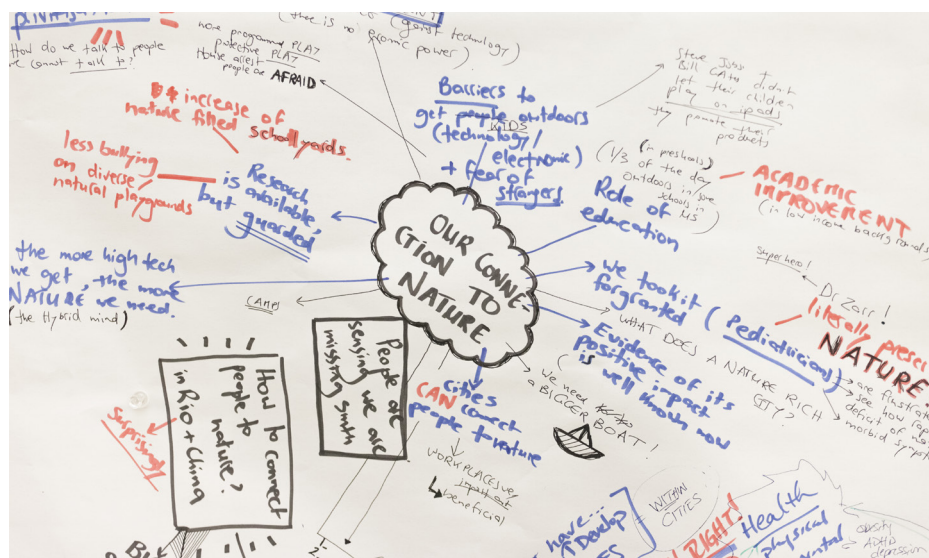
In 2015, Mr. Spray took part in the inaugural session of the *Parks for the Planet Forum*, titled *Nature, Health, and New Urban Generation*. Spray says this program has had a lasting impact on his thinking.

He says, “Meeting other Fellows made me realize that there were people all over the world facing similar issues and using the same language to talk about them.”

This session became a source of inspiration that led to a switch in his organization from a pure conservation perspective to a more people-centered one. He hopes this year’s session will help him go back home with renewed energy once again.

Spray defines himself as a positive thinker and believes citizens can be persuaded to develop more conscious and sustainable attitudes. He believes the focus should be on finding the best ways to inspire them. He has observed a growth in environmental awareness among people over the last decades, but he recognizes the “battle has not been won yet.”

Spray says there is a lot of work to do to create healthier environments and provide better access to public spaces. While Scott’s “last great vision” may have been achieved, Spray’s work has only just begun.



Designing differently: What can we change and what is the demand?

There are several ways as to how parks and protected areas can better meet the needs of children. However, to begin with, there is perhaps a greater need to identify how these areas can become more accessible, and what changes are required to ensure children can spend more time in nature.

Participants at *The Child in the City: Health, Parks, and Play* have been asked to consider what individuals and organizations can do to develop more child-friendly parks and protected areas. They have also asked themselves what the children involved actually wanted.

Regarding the latter, the ideas which came forward varied in detail, from short responses such as fun, freedom, and risk-taking, to detailed responses outlining concepts such as “The Right to Play.” In the eyes of participants, they believed children wanted safe public spaces which were decriminalized and provided opportunities to express their interests and desires.

Some participants suggested through their ideas that greater focus should be paid to children’s creativity. One participant said children’s play should be observed to capture what they want, while another participant said they should see children as active agents who can bring about change themselves.

Adults were viewed as an obstacle by one participant, who called for them to behave more like children to allow fun and learning to continue.

To ensure these changes are possible, participants considered what steps could

be made. Their ideas covered areas from accessibility and education.

Children could become more familiar with nature and green spaces by including them in their day-to-day lives more often. They could spend their lunch break on green schoolyards, bring nature into classrooms with plants, and finish at an earlier time in the afternoon to allow more time to be outside. Nature can play a stronger part in the school experience, right from Kindergarten. These ideas require the support of parents, schools, and city officials.

Outside of school, there could be intergenerational design sessions involving parents and children, allowing people of all ages to have community ownership of a public space. Children and adults can be encouraged to become “citizen scientists,” monitoring the nature that exists around them.

Another actionable step is to maximize the use of existing assets in the city, such as temporarily using land which remains unused for creative and fun purposes.

Individuals and organizations need to work together to ensure children feel safe in these open spaces. This could be achieved by asking children what frightens them and valuing their opinions. Parents’ and guardians’ fears should also be noted and listened to.

These ideas and others will continue to be worked on as participants look for equitable, practicable, and cost-effective solutions which involve children.



#FacesOfLeadership

“When I was little, I was a bit deprived of playing outside, because the house where I grew up was in front of an avenue. So our parents would not allow us to go outside, because it was dangerous, since there were cars passing by. We were lucky; we had a backyard, so we played a lot there. So we would create scenarios... it was just about creating different worlds. Sometimes we would just put a tent in the backyard, and stay there, and my mom would let us sleep outside. So she made everything possible for us to be able to play in the house...

Building and making stuff, creating worlds, has always been part of me, which led me to study architecture. But when I finished, I knew I didn’t want to build houses or buildings, so I started to work in theater. After that I did a Master’s in Narrative Environments, which really opened my eyes, because it was really transdisciplinary work... During that time, I was very lucky to be part of a grant that was an initiative of the EU to develop urban installations that would solve problems. We got to travel to different cities, and create artistic, engaging, playful experiences for people to activate spaces... I realized this is what I want to do, I want to tackle the future in a playful way with public space... I guess the defining moment was when my mom let me play.”

Leticia Lozano is head of Playful City at Lab for the City in Mexico City. Lozano is passionate about designing innovative and immersive experiences and is interested in exploring the dialogue between people and space within different cultures.

Hot Topic: “Why is it important that we integrate nature into future urban development?”

Denise Macalino

“I really think that [nature] is essential to who we are, and how we’re built. I think our bodies, our minds, our spirits are reflections of creation. We’re made of water, we’re made of earth, we’re made of the same minerals. We need sunlight. It’s what our bodies need, what our spirits need, what our souls need. I think that urban development and urban spaces are toxic without clean water, and without green leaves, and plants. I just think it’s essential; it’s who we are. We are nature. How can we live without nature? I think parts and natural spaces are really crucial for new ideas to be introduced, and for people who are wounded to heal, and for cultures to connect, for reconciliation to happen.”

Jacob Virden

Hope Community’s Parks & Power
Campaign, USA

“Cities provide the everyday habitat of currently more than 50% of the world’s population. They will be even more relevant in the future, meaning they will be the everyday human habitat for most of the world’s population – up to 75%. The way in which cities are designed is the ways in which we will live our everyday lives. How we get to work, where we buy our food, how we interact with our neighbors, how we decide to interact, or not interact with strangers. Importantly, for sustainability science, is the way in which we design nature into the cities. Are we going to provide nature experiences in everyday life for the people, for the vast majority of the world’s population, or not? If so, what kind of nature experiences? Nature experiences are of extreme importance for children to develop that psychological trait called “connection to nature.” This is one of the major drivers for pro-environmental behavior.”

Matteo Giusti

Phd Student at Stockholm University,
researching Sustainability Science, Sweden

“I was thinking about whole systems today, because there was a lot of that conversation today. I think that it’s super

important. If 75% of the world’s population by 2050 will live in cities, I think there’s a great opportunity [there]. We can assume a lot of these people are going to move from the countryside to cities, right? We know that. We know that economic prospects are probably moving people from the countryside to cities. I really would like to start thinking and pushing groups like this to start thinking about not only implementation of parks and green spaces, but more importantly mitigation or prevention. We know people that are moving from the countryside to the city most likely have been living in nature for thousands of years. There has to be talk on the reasons why people need to move... The implementation of green spaces, to be able to be effective, will have to be done with input from communities they’re serving. I think that conversations like this sometimes oversee that... You have to have a cultural perspective of who’s moving where, to be able to understand what the needs are. If you design from top to bottom, that may not necessarily work.”

Neftali Duran

Project Leader of Nuestra Comida Project,
USA

“It’s super important. We see a lot of implications for the type of development that’s happened over the last 50 years. We have really focused our planning and development on a car-centric model, and [we’re] not really thinking about the health and happiness of people. We’ve kind of engineered a healthy lifestyle out of our cities. It has become more difficult for people to be physically active and have a sense of belonging and have a public life. There has been a real deterioration of public life in our cities. This has a lot of implications for health and wellbeing. We see increases in depression and anxiety, and a lack of a sense of belonging in our communities. I think the way that we plan our cities, design our cities, has to be carefully considered from the perspective of the child... but it’s for all people – with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.”

Amanda O’Rourke

Director of Strategic Planning, 8 80 Cities,
Canada

Weekend Highlights

A selection of photos from the weekend’s activities, taken by Ela Grieshaber. These and more will be made available on Facebook and Flickr.





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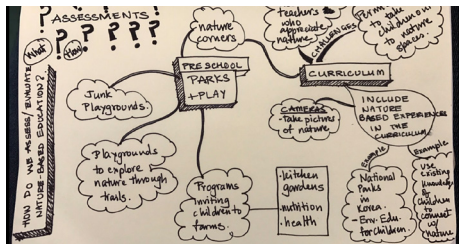
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@SruthiAtmakur #visual notes and #mindmaps for Day 3: Session 1: (Re) Designing Approaches with Parks and Play. #SGSparks



Participants from The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play pose for a group photo

Incremental change to transformation

Oscar Tollast

Ideas and words can change the world, but without the right execution, the majority of people will fail to benefit. With that in mind, participants at Salzburg Global's session *The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play* have received insight into how they can leap from incremental change to transformation.

To help them, participants have heard several case studies taking place in different areas around the world.

Reimagining the Civic Commons is a U.S. initiative supporting placed-based efforts to catalyze lasting change through the creative use of civic assets. It has involved engagement at all levels and has encouraged prototyping. Storytelling is important to its core. Participating cities such as Chicago and Detroit can learn from one another.

How Housing Matters is an online resource which depicts how quality and affordable housing can benefit everyone. It collected the research, refined the message and told the story. It built a bigger boat to bring more people on board.

In 1965, the idea of a Garden City was put forward in Singapore - not a concrete jungle but a place where people wanted to live. People now talk about the "city in the garden." The first transformation involved reframing the issue. The second concerned

housing. The third change involved connected parks. After being expelled from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore survived by transforming itself. To survive, participants heard you need the best resources and best investment.

There is a campaign in the U.K. to make London the first National Park City. The campaign draws on principles visible in national parks but ties them to an urban environment. The campaign has used maps, data, and voices from those in London. It has gained traction through local councilors and is reaching the decision-makers. In two years, it could be a reality.

The Urban Land Institute's primary audience is the private sector. Materials, messages, and activities are geared toward them. The private sector can fund parks and enhancements and become a powerful ally. Projects like Complete Streets and Vision Zero are based on a core set of shared values, which rely on a coalition of partners. Both started small and scaled upwards. They share the responsibility for action between professionals and individuals.

A speaker said to create a transformation, a list of ingredients is required. This includes setting a goal, having a unique insight, having a value proposition, a theory of change, partners, customization, maintenance, and the ability to learn.

Have a bold vision, a coalition of partners, a story to tell, and leverage the evidence.



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Dima Boulad: “It is necessary for our society to have open spaces where individuals can interact”

Fellow discusses need for The Beirut Green Project and creating alliances with other countries

During the Salzburg Global session, *The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play*, participants have learned how valuable the role of open space can be in post-conflict countries. Dima Boulad, co-founder of the Beirut Green Project, is one of the reasons behind that. Salzburg Global's Andrea Abellan sat down with Boulad to find out more.

The Beirut Green Project is a social initiative, born with the aim to assemble the concerns of citizens seeking to develop a more liveable city. With 0.8m2 of green space per person, Beirut remains below the Wealth Health Organisation's standards which recommend every citizen should have at least nine square meters of green space. Boulad says, “Some citizens do not recognize the access to public spaces as a right they can claim, and this is what we aim to change.” The Project has run awareness campaigns and organized many social events.

The consequences years of war have had on Lebanon remain visible. In some areas, the country lacks basic facilities such as electricity or access to water. Outages of these services remain frequent. Complicated circumstances such as those above make it harder to place the development of green spaces as a priority in the minds of politicians. The goal of non-profit organizations such as the Beirut Green Project is to make clear that in spite of the urgency of meeting basic needs, citizens should not have to waive other civil rights such as the opportunity to enjoy public spaces.

Boulad highlights the significance public spaces have in post-conflict areas. Boulad says, “In Lebanon, we grow up in a culture of fear. It is necessary for our society to have open spaces where individuals can interact with others. Accessible public areas might help to change our habits, break



the bubbles where we live and therefore, improve our relationships.”

Boulad says the work of advocates such as herself is not easy in Lebanon. She says, “It is very hard to have the attention of the government and to manage to get things done. Taking part in a Seminar like this can facilitate our jobs as it allows to create alliances with other countries from which we can learn and get aid.”

Maria de Kruijf: “We will be able to improve our projects and have a better view of citizens’ demands”

De Verre Bergen Foundation associate discusses projects being undertaken in Rotterdam

During discussions at Salzburg Global's *The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play*, participants have debated issues around accessibility, equity, and the need to open up green spaces to everyone. Maria de Kruijf, a participant, and associate at the De Verre Bergen Foundation spoke with Andrea Abellan to discuss how she has previously sought to create stronger communities within a city, and how this may apply to work moving forward.

Nearly half of the population in Rotterdam - the second largest city in the Netherlands - have an immigrant background. More than 170 nationalities live together in this metropolis located alongside Europe's largest port. Concerns related to multiculturalism emerge frequently. De Kruijf, as an associate for De Verre Bergen Foundation, is one of many looking to address these concerns and create a stronger and more equal place to live. De Kruijf started her career as a high-

school teacher, a job she decided to leave while looking to get involved in projects that “could have a positive impact not only on certain groups of people but on a whole city.”

At De Verre Bergen Foundation, De Kruijf's efforts are focused on Rotterdam. De Kruijf says there is a lack of dialogue between the cultures represented in the city. De Kruijf explains, “People who have lived in the Netherlands for years might feel intimidated by recent immigrants. The financial crisis cost many jobs, and there are some groups blaming foreigners for this.”

De Kruijf also has concerns surrounding the rising inequality between population groups in the city. De Verre Bergen Foundation, founded in 2011, seeks to overcome these challenges by supporting diverse social ventures. The organization follows a holistic approach designed to foster real integration. One of its latest projects has provided 200 Syrian families



with accommodation, language courses, and bureaucratic support.

De Kruijf feels very positive regarding the outcomes achieved at this session. She says her interaction with other participants has made her reflect on the need to “invest time in talking with different social groups to learn what their demands are. In this way, we will be able to improve our projects and have a better view of citizens' demands what hopefully will help them to feel greater represented by our programs, especially when it comes to a program about their own public spaces.”



Working Groups: Looking ahead and narrowing down outcomes

There are multiple paths the conversations surrounding parks, protected areas, cities and children can be taken. Participants at *Child in the City: Health, Parks, and Play* have been asked to consider several questions to guide their thinking as they look to push forward a new change agenda.

The aim is for this agenda to take a form, something tangible which can be shared. To get closer to this goal, participants have asked themselves what children need from green spaces and parks, and how to improve access to these areas.

Participants have asked themselves why they want to connect children with nature in cities. It stems from concerns about children's health to wanting to include the voice of a child in the decision-making process. Children can help create a culture where they can be and feel a part of nature, acting as "stewards."

To provide a stronger connection, participants believe we need to address children's perception of safety and ensure there are cross-generational solutions. Existing infrastructure can be used to address issues with nature-based solutions.

One working group suggested all children around the world are in a situation where their access to nature is at an impoverished level. Wilderness experiences could provide a good solution, but these aren't practical for everyone.

Instead, children could innovate the green spaces they do have access to. Disused pieces of land, such as power line corridors, could be turned into green

spaces. Funds could be provided by the power line companies to transform them.

Transportation is a barrier to getting people to a park, and into it. Access is a financial issue, as well as a geographical issue. One solution is to promote free travel to a national park on a select day each month.

Children have a right to play in nature. Community engagement and co-creation can develop solutions. Basic experiences such as Open Streets or "grow anything" concepts could get people hooked. Cities could also be measured with regard to their nature score, benchmarking themselves against each other.

Participants called for children to connect to a "meaningful" nature experience on a daily basis. Outside actors have to address the different needs, and abilities children have. Awareness must be raised among caregivers, and more should be done so children can have a nature-rich experience in a walkable distance. Low-cost transport to nature could exist through partnerships. There can be a greater shared use of existing spaces for the wider community as well.

During this session, participants have shared many thoughtful ideas but the time has come to present them in a succinct, crisp, and memorable fashion.

They will consider which audience they want to put their message across to and whether they need a preamble which reaches out to more than one stakeholder. One participant concluded a compelling and emotive case is required.



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"I was a programmer, and I was so busy creating a new software. I was very happy but so busy. There was no time to hang out with my kids – I have two kids. Then,

I got cancer, and I had to get rest, and during that time, it was my first time to spend a long time with my kids. I realized

I had to teach or show them that the world is very big and exciting. So when I was a kid, I was watching the Discovery Channel, and I found that [kind of]

knowledge isn't taught in school. I wanted to have that for the kids, so that's why I started TEDxKids. The kids who attend TEDx as speakers are sometimes alone because they're very unique. They say they're very happy meeting people who think like them. I feel like I could create the community for the kids...

When we talk about the environment for kids, it's only adults talking about it... It's good to involve the kids to discuss with adults about it."

Ryuta Aoki is the founder and CEO of VOLOCITE Inc., a design firm which supports communities in creating innovative products, services, and systems. Mr. Aoki also founded the first TEDxKids event in Japan in October 2011.

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Hot Topic: “What are the main issues we need to address to optimize well-being in a growing urban environment?”

Denise Macalino

“First of all, I think children’s well-being needs to be more on the municipal agenda in cities around the world. At the moment, children just go under education or health, but there isn’t a focused look on children’s needs across disciplines and across service areas. [There definitely isn’t] across issues that are not traditional areas, like dealing with children in [terms of] transportation and mobility, open space and green space. So I think by having a closer look at what children’s needs are, and a focused structural way within municipalities, which would require going across silos and bringing different departments together, to think about the holistic needs of children and their families, would lead to a much greater impact for children... [Young people] are often seen as a problem that needs to be solved, and not part of the solution... There’s so much energy and creativity in these human beings – these young human beings. If we leverage that, we can help them to change their environments to make it better for everyone.”

Daniella Ben-Attar

Bernard van Leer Foundation, Israel

“I look forward to taking back from here, and further conversations, scale-up strategies. There are a lot of good ideas around. We need a concerted effort to spread them to more cities and communicate them in an easy way. There’s a vibrant discussion, but it probably needs to become a more inclusive discussion about people who are working on issues such as community economic development. In particular, community gardening, urban agriculture, [and] food access, so that it’s not a conversation limited to people thinking about parks and large green spaces, but thinking about green spaces of all sizes.”

Andrew Moore

National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, USA

“Today’s session really helped me to see the bigger picture... But also [to] see

the beauty in thinking small. One of the stories we heard about someone who fell in love with nature when they saw grass peeping through the street cracks and realizing that many of our communities and children just don’t have access to urban green spaces or parks. How do you come up with innovative solutions to incorporate greenery to very condensed, very vulnerable, low-income communities, where people often are disconnected from transport systems? The discussion we had was very insightful in getting opinions from people from different countries and different contexts.”

Xanelé Purén

See Saw Do, South Africa

“If children can’t access nature or parks, how can we include isolated children? Such as handicapped children, or children from isolated families? If we say children, we have to think of [all] children. We have to use the design to [accommodate] every child.”

Ibuki Ozawa

Chairman and Founder of NPO PIECES, Japan

“When I started my work, I recollected my past and thought I had a very good experience over the years. That became a power to overcome my hardships that I’ve faced. I realized that the children in the current era don’t have that kind of experience when they’re young. They don’t have the experience of playing, so they never know how to handle some hardships. I wanted to give children those experiences, and my work started at this point... children aren’t notified that they have a right to play.... When we say something to them directly, it becomes education. I wanted to let them know unconsciously and in a natural way. But it was hard for them because they don’t have any idea of what to do for play, which is one of the main challenges in supporting their wellbeing in an urban environment.”

Haemoon Phyen

Miracle Playground, South Korea

Session Highlights

A selection of photos from *The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play*, taken by Ela Grieshaber. These and more will be made available on Facebook and Flickr.

